

GRACE *news*

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Grace Baptist Church is a disciple-making church that transforms lives with the gospel and love of Jesus Christ.

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illustrations by Tan Cher Ming

Unity in the body of Christ

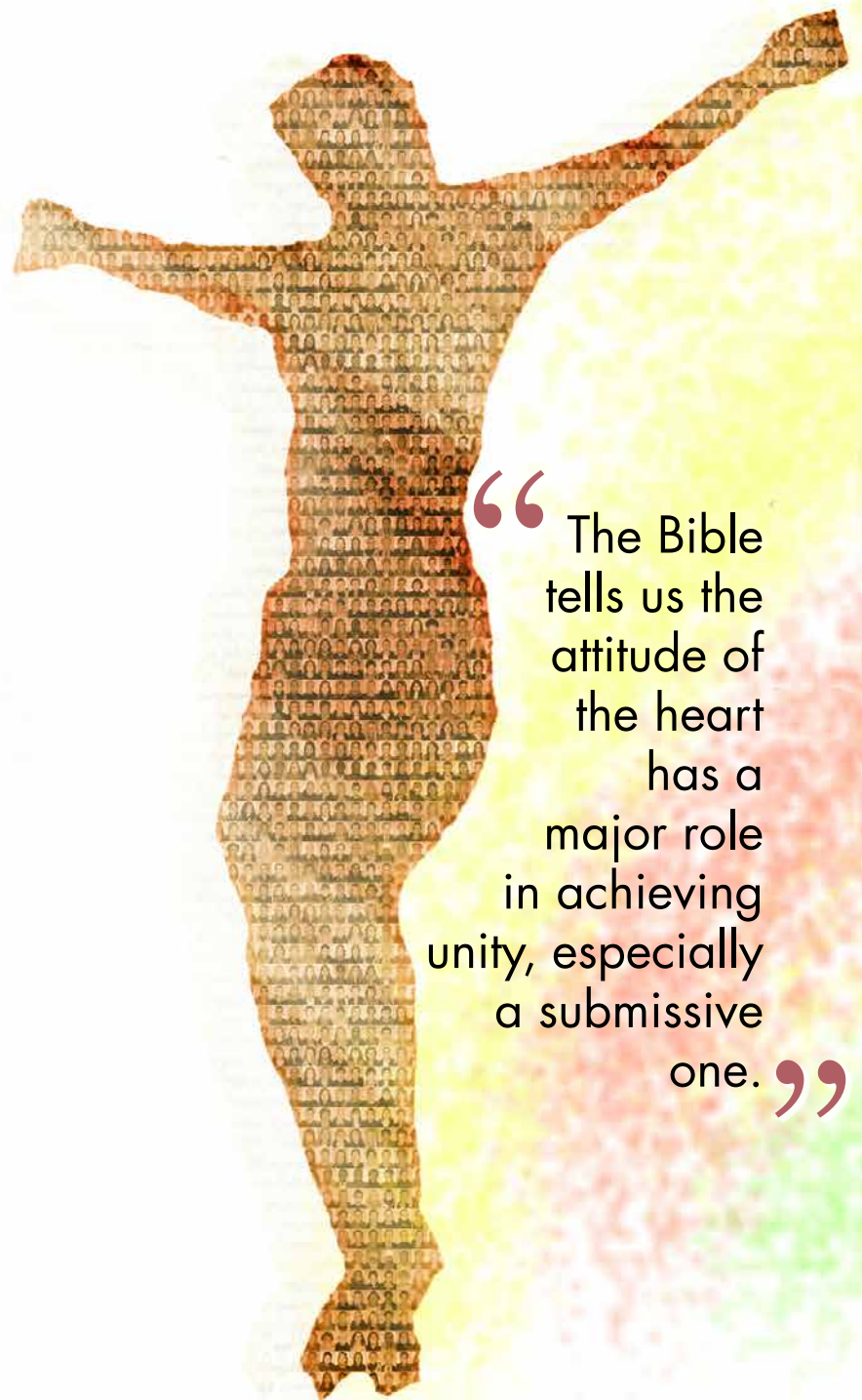
Pastor Arnold Wong describes submissive relationships in the Bible that lead to unity in the church.

Unity among believers is one of the highest desires of God as well as one of the most difficult to achieve. We all have our own ideas about what, why, when, and especially how things should be done. If not addressed, the furtherance of the Gospel can be greatly hindered and the spiritual welfare of the church be put at risk.

The biblical exhortation to be united has been a long standing plea from the beginning of the church, i.e., 1 Cor 1:10-13; Eph 4:1-6; Php 2:2. The New Testament addresses this topic by exhorting us to be united and instructing us about the kind of heart a believer should have to help promote, maintain, and achieve unity. For example, in Philippians 2:1-8, all believers are exhorted to be united around the same purpose and goal. Then they are instructed to have the same heart attitude as Christ, who was humble, selfless, and submissive to the will of God.

Have you ever thought about the important role submission plays in promoting unity? Without it, there would be paralysis, disunity, and chaos. Christ was submissive to the will of God the Father (Lk 22:42). In our general interactions with other believers we are encouraged to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21, NLT). From Eph 5:22-6:9, the Bible addresses specific relationships like wives submitting to their husbands, children to parents, and slaves (employees) to their masters (employers, managers, supervisors). Elsewhere, believers are instructed to submit to government authorities (Rom 13:1-7). In the Church, believers are encouraged to “Obey your leaders and submit to them...” (Heb 13:17). Younger men are to be subject to their elders (1 Pet. 5:5). Except in the case where the actions and decisions of leaders are morally or scripturally against the expressed will of God, believers are to submit to those above them (Dan 3:8-16; Acts 5:27-32).

Unity in the body of Christ is essential. The Bible tells us the attitude of the heart has a major role in achieving unity, especially a submissive one. Where is your heart? Ω

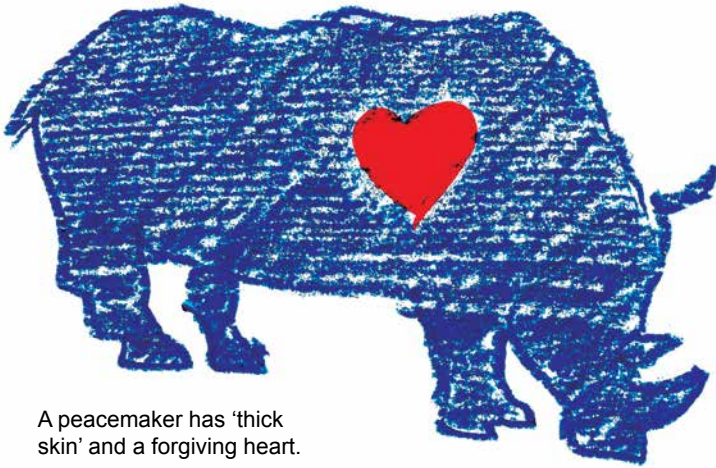


“The Bible tells us the attitude of the heart has a major role in achieving unity, especially a submissive one.”

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UNITED WE STAND

*We would all agree that church unity is important as a mark of obedience and a testimony to the world, but how does it play out in practice? We often blithely assert that what we have in common as Christians counts for more than any other thing that could potentially divide us, and yet conflicts still occur. Let us learn from three church members – **Cheong Hee Kiat, Helen Chee, and Chan Kim Hoong** – on how they practise and promote unity in their different roles.*



A peacemaker has 'thick skin' and a forgiving heart.

Cheong Hee Kiat: Peacemaker in the Making

Unity is important because the Bible commands us to be united: in Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians and elsewhere. In 1 Corinthians, Paul compares the Christian church to a body having parts (members) with different functions, which need to work together in harmony and unity so that the whole body can thrive. Psalm 133:1 tells of how good and pleasant it is when God's people live in unity. Our Triune God works in perfect unity as an example for us to follow. So we should obey!

But even without such exhortations, we know that if any group of people is not united, it cannot move well together, cannot be as effective, and cannot achieve much beyond the capabilities of its individual members. We all know this in the secular world. While this is also true of the church, the lack of unity is also a bad testimony, dishonours God, weakens members' spiritual relationship among themselves and with God, causes the church to lose its primary focus, and allows the devil easy entry to do his work of wrecking the church. We don't want that!

“...we have a responsibility to keep the peace and be ready to help in resolution and reconciliation when we can.”

One more thing: if we keep a constant eye on unity, we can also be reminded of, and more readily adopt, those characteristics and habits described in Ephesians and Colossians which help us to live in unity with our fellow Christians.

I see my role as a peacemaker as anyone else in the church would – we have a responsibility to keep the peace and be ready to help in resolution and reconciliation when we can. Jesus called peacemakers blessed – it is important to Him. We should not allow a conflict to fester, and worse, spread to involve others. It is easier said than done, but at the very least, we should not be contributing to the messiness by gossiping, taking sides, judging without all the facts, and adding coal to the fire. In other words, don't get involved out of curiosity and especially when you cannot help!

My first strategy for peacemaking is spiritual – I pray for the situation and persons involved and trust the Holy Spirit's intervention, in His time. I strengthen myself with biblical instructions, and try to get the conflicting parties to view the importance of unity. Next come the practical strategies – listen (there are always two sides to the story); help each side to see the other's viewpoint (bring parties together in a safe setting and encourage open sharing); be patient (some conflicts are deep-seated and long-drawn); be realistic (some differences are not humanly-reconcilable; we must be realistic in our expectations about what we can do, and how we expect the matter to be resolved); try not to be judgmental or take sides; and watch the tongue (James 3) (don't gossip or betray confidence).

If I am in a situation where I am offended by someone, I pray and seek the Lord's wisdom and protection, especially at the point of provocation or offence, and try to see the offending party as a weak, fallible human being like myself, needing tolerance and forgiveness. I look at the bigger picture and reflect on my position – is my pride involved, or do I put peace and unity between the other party and within the church (if the conflict blows up) above my own self-interest in the matter? Patience helps (it comes increasingly with age, I find!) and a listening ear, too – I try to see the other person's perspective and if needed, ask the person about it. Then I reflect – did I upset, or do something wrong to the person? I aim to forgive even if I am wronged – it is actually good for the soul because keeping grudges can really eat into me and poison my inner being. 看开一点 is something I try to be better at. My good relationships with others can also be affected (especially perceived 'friends and supporters' of the other party), which are just as important to preserve. We should overlook the offence, if only to obey the Lord (Prov 19:11).

All easier said than done, but we must try our utmost. Ω



The Rebuilding Steering Committee: Helen is standing in the back row, first from the left. Hee Kiat is the first from the left in the front row.

Helen Chee: Secretary to the Rebuilding Steering Committee (SC)

The family at GBC is unanimous in believing that God has called us to rebuild our physical premises for His glory. This dictates only one acceptable response – that we stand united in this matter in obedience to His guidance.

Rebuilding is a major undertaking in faith and execution, requiring the commitment and participation of the entire congregation, every step of the way. Being united means that we pray humbly and continuously for His enabling and wisdom, commit to resolving differences of opinion, accept others' views with grace, and work together to solve problems as they arise. Being united is a demonstration of God's love in action – strengthening our relationships with each other even as it greases the progress of the building programme.

There are many areas in the project which draw differences of opinion; some examples are the design and layout of the facilities, number of classrooms to provide, and whether to use pews or fixed seats in the sanctuary. The SC welcomes diverse inputs and ideas and steers these to closure by seeking professional views from our architects, engineers and competent parties in our congregation, adopting best practices, weighing the trade-offs of cost against functionality, studying compliance with local building regulations, and most of all, undergirding every decision with prayer. The conclusion we seek is that members feel their inputs have been solidly considered and that the final decisions are God-directed.

To God be the Glory! Ω

“Being united is a demonstration of God's love in action.”

Chan Kim Hoong: Care Group Member

iCare, one of the Care Groups in GBC, was formed in August 2010 and is led by Khee Peng and his wife Nan Yoong. Setting godly examples of sacrificial love, they received overwhelming support from the CG as leaders despite being the youngest members (1 Tim 4:12). Their key motivation and desire is for CG members to grow in their walk with God, studying His Word and being accountable to one another, with those stronger in faith supporting and encouraging the weaker ones (Heb 10:24-25).

To forge unity in the CG, an iCare chat group was created. This has proved useful for sharing encouragement from the Bible, prayer needs, blessings, and updates of each member (including their families). The CG members stay connected constantly and uphold one another outside of the usual CG meetings. In the words of one member, “We never feel alone.” Outside of CG meetings, informal small group gatherings are often initiated to further strengthen bonding and for members to share about their walk with God.

CG members carry out simple acts of love (1 John 3:18), such as buying and bringing food to those who are sick, praying for those travelling overseas, and ministering to one another emotionally and spiritually. These help to lighten each other's burdens, and contribute greatly towards building a genuine concern for one another. The CG has learnt to submit to one another out of reverence for God (Eph 5:21), and in so doing to serve with humility (Eph 4:2) and sensitivity. Above all we aim to live out Christ-likeness in our daily lives (1 Cor 11:1).

The saying ‘the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts’ is certainly true of submission. Submission forms the basis for unity and is vital in preserving harmony in the church, in a Care Group and in any relationship (Phil 2:1-4). Ω

“The CG has learnt to submit to one another out of reverence for God.”



The Care Group iCare: Kim Hoong is standing second from the left.



Members of the DS Team, from left to right: Nehemiah Chong, Quek Nee Kiah, Seah Wei Cheng, Deacon Leow Wen Pin, Ellen Seah, Heng Wen Xiu, Ann Rodis, Elder Eddie Tan and Matthew Koh (2nd-in-charge).

*Through this interview with **Ann Rodis** from the DS team, we see that serving in a church ministry teaches one to live in submission to others.*

Can you give us a brief introduction about yourself?

My name is Ann Rodis. My husband Dan, my son Jacob and I have attended GBC since June 2013, and became members in November 2013.

Please tell us more about the ministry in GBC that you are involved in.

I am a member of the Discipleship Seminar (DS) Team. DS ministry supports GBC's vision to be a "disciple-making church that transforms lives with the gospel and love of Jesus Christ" by providing faithful Christian education that serves the whole church.

How does your involvement in DS help you to grow in terms of submission and unity?

In general, being involved in any church ministry is always an exercise of submission to one another. We work with brothers and sisters with different ideas, preferences and perspectives from us, so we have to learn to be open-minded and respectful and give value to each other's suggestions and opinions. I am glad to say that I have found the DS Team members to typify submission and unity. The DS Team submits continually to God and we are united in our common purpose to nurture GBC members in Christlikeness. Everyone is given space to grow and I feel that none of us monopolises the best ideas.

“The DS ministry supports GBC's vision by providing faithful Christian education that serves the whole church.”

GBC exhorts its members to demonstrate submission and unity. How is DS doing so?


Submission is a pre-requisite to unity. Sadly, to secular people, submission suggests weakness. In contrast, one Christian article I've read recently says this: biblical submission is from the heart, motivated by faith, hope, and love, resulting in self-sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of submission. So, unless we follow Christ, it will be difficult for us to submit to our brothers and sisters in Christ and thus unity in the church will remain elusive.

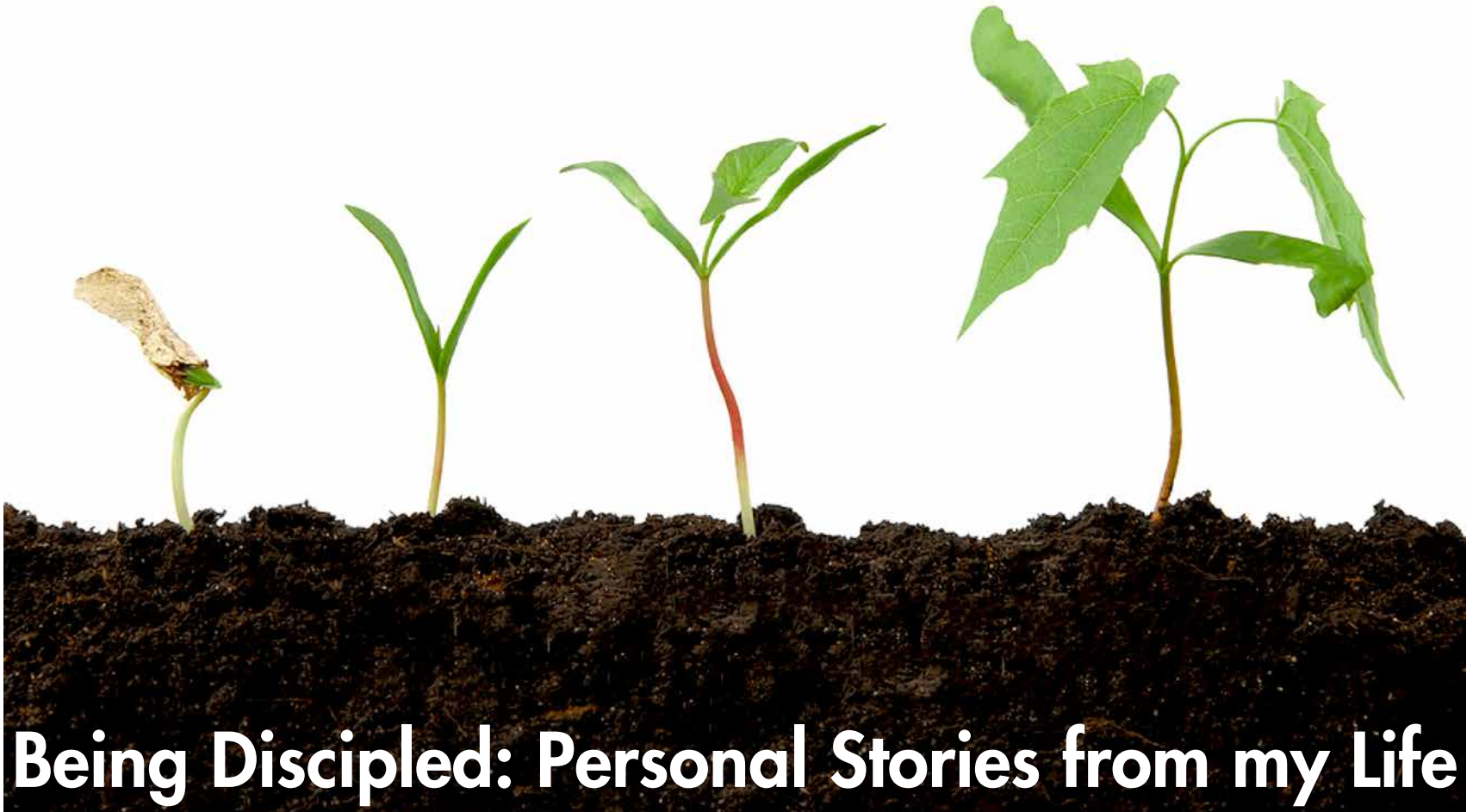
By providing faithful teaching centred around the person of Jesus, the DS Team aims to develop GBC members as imitators of Jesus Christ who express their love for God through loving their neighbours. We have even taught about submission and unity during our three-part series on (a) Church, (b) Genesis — Deuteronomy and (c) Mark's Gospel.

What fruits have you witnessed in terms of submission and unity?

The spontaneous and generous help of GBC members: those who faithfully attend the DS sessions, who cheerfully help to prepare the Annex and the DS lesson handouts without being asked, who pray for us, etc. And also the teachers who spend much time preparing their classes despite their busy schedules. All these are manifestations of loving submission and unity. On behalf of the DS Team, I would like to thank them all.

Your final words?

Be part of a more united GBC by being equipped in Christ-likeness through DS! 



Being Discipled: Personal Stories from my Life

One person's Christ-likeness impacts another, and a disciple is made over time. Pastor Oliver Chia shares his journey of being discipled by two men he encountered in his life.

When “disciple-making” is mentioned, many of us tend to get cold feet. Part of the reluctance is due to our perceptions – we think that disciple-making is best left to experts or at least to those who have got their life together. Disciple-making is simply life on life – as we point each other to Jesus and live out the Christian life together; in response to the grace of God given to us in Christ Jesus.

I remember two men who have discipled me. One was Kim Meng – an older brother in Christ in church; and another was Michael Haykin, my Church History Professor at Southern Seminary. Both **taught** me about Christ and the Christian Life and **modelled** it for me.

I was a young Christian in my 20s when I met Kim Meng. I had just been baptised at Grace Baptist Church and been a member for a few months when Kim Meng casually asked if I would like to meet him weekly for a simple fellowship over breakfast. I was eager to grow and learn about what it means to be a Christian and said yes. This marked a period of significant growth in my Christian life. From Kim Meng, I learned how to read the Bible and let the Bible “read” me – we spent 6 months reading through only the first three chapters of Ephesians. I learned how to pray through the Psalms – letting Scripture shape my prayers. What impacted me most was watching and learning from an older brother in Christ live the Christian life with conviction. It put flesh on what I was reading in the Bible.

I was an older Christian in my 30s when I met Michael Haykin. I was doing my seminary studies at Southern Seminary and took two modules on Church History, taught by Dr Haykin. In the midst of his teaching and instruction, he often met me over lunch. He had a passion and love for Christ and for the Church. What really

shaped me was his approach to Church History – he taught about living, breathing Christians from the past who lived their lives trusting and obeying Jesus Christ in their own particular times. These past saints motivate and inspire me to press on in my ministry.

For both men, their impact in discipling me came not from their qualifications. Rather, they lived their Christian life before me and shared what they had learnt from the Bible and from Christ. Discipling another comprises of instruction and imitation as we teach from the Bible and model what it means to live it out. Both men discipled me, because they too have been discipled, and because they love their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and in their joy they cannot help but tell and point others to him. **Ω**

“Disciple-making is simply life on life – as we point each other to Jesus and live out the Christian life together; in response to the grace of God given to us in Christ Jesus.”

5 Apr Baptisms

We had the joy of witnessing the baptism of Andrea Quah, Ashley Tan and Joseph Ng this Easter Sunday. We give thanks to God for their faith and love as they openly declared their confidence in our God and went through the waters of baptism to publicly identify with the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.



24 May Commissioning of Deacons

L-R: Lam Lup Meng, Mok Chuan Xin, Ngo Thian Chye, Seah Kah Yin, Tan Kim Cheng and (not in photo) Leow Wen Pin being commissioned as deacons. We thank God for these faithful servants who have come forward to serve. We pray that as a church, we will continue to gather around them and support them, offering words of encouragement and sharing their loads - all for His glory.



3 Apr Good Friday

On Good Friday, we confessed as a Church in prayer our sins of turning away from God and not taking His divine sovereignty seriously.



30 May Philipians War Games

Following the success of last year's Nehemiah war games, the YA ministry organised the second Youth-YA war games, this time based on the book of Philipians. A variation of "candle-fight", a GBC favourite at youth camps, the war games provided an opportunity for the youths and young adults to get to know each other over an afternoon of fun and games.



5 Apr Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of our King Jesus; because He lives, we can now move from the land of the dying to the land of the living!



16-20 Apr **Visit to Roslin Orphanage**

Stephanie Gautama, Jena and Philip Tang teaching the Roslin children Bible lessons and crafts.



Karina, Karini and Monica Besah at the Roslin Montessori School.

27 Jun **Children's Outing to Jacob Ballas Gardens**

The children, with their families, enjoyed the morning with singing, fun and food. Some young adults led in games and performed a skit about the story of Gideon, and Pastor Bobby gave a short message on how God preserves His people.

Reaching out to the young ones in Kampuchea

Deborah Teo shares briefly about her missionary journey to Cambodia and her involvement there with *Project Khmer H.O.P.E. (PKH)*. PKH was started by St Andrew's Cathedral. It aims to alleviate poverty among Cambodians and to share God's word with them.

Currently I serve as an English teacher at the PKH (Trang) Centre in the Chom Bok province of Cambodia. The Centre operates before-after school sessions, mainly for students of Chom Bok Primary School, in Trang village. Daily, about 200 children come to the centre for meals, English tuition, and lessons from God's Word. I work alongside the Cambodian teachers and pastoral staff.

Why Cambodia?

One evening in 1986, I met Kim, a missionary supported by GBC. Teaching was my passion and through Kim I learnt that I could be a missionary cum teacher. This was fulfilled in October 2013 when I joined the GBC Mission trip to Cambodia led by Tan Kim Cheng.

Previously, I always thought China was the field for me. I had a spiritual journey similar to Apostle Paul's calling to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Paul and his team tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. Instead, during the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia begging him to go over to help them.

I had spent 30 years trying to learn Mandarin well and serving in Chinese ministries. Despite many disappointments, my heart continued to ache for the Chinese people to be saved. Just like Apostle Paul who yearned to see the salvation of his fellow Jews but was called to serve the Gentiles, I have learnt to surrender to our God my desires to serve the Chinese. God's thoughts are indeed not my thoughts and His ways are not my ways (Is 55:8).

Pray for the young Cambodian Christians

The Cambodians living near the Centre are in poverty and mostly animistic in their beliefs and practices. I am particularly concerned for the young baptised believers. Many have responded to the Gospel and were baptised while in our institutions. However due to a hectic working life, many have also backslidden.

Please pray for authentic discipleship among the young believers! Ω

“God's thoughts are indeed not my thoughts and His ways are not my ways.”



Deborah teaching English to the primary school children at PKH (Trang).

Find out more about Project Khmer H.O.P.E. through this url: <http://www.livingstreams.org.sg/pkh/>

WHAT IT TAKES TO SUBMIT AND UNITE

Compiled by Cecilia Kang

Submission and unity are themes that often recur in the Bible and are widely talked about by theologians. It is challenging as it defies human instinct for self-interests and also includes prioritising the interests of others above and beyond our own. Jesus Christ showed from example by giving up his life for us. His act of washing his disciples' feet also exemplifies the degree to which we should be willing to go to submit to one another.

Why go through the process of submission? As Christians, if we focus on the end goal of sharing the Gospel, that can be the point of unity for us. This makes it easier to submit to one another.

What does submission and unity mean to you? Here are some thoughts from our fellow church members:

Submission is a requirement of following Christ, by submitting to his Lordship! "Take my yoke upon you" means letting someone else take control, which is Him. The Church is the bride of Christ and the CG is a part of the Church. So we need to humble ourselves to the Church and to each other. Humility is needed for submission. – **Joey Raju**

Submitting to Church and CG leaders and to each other; following the example of how Christ submitted in obedience to God. The passage that comes to mind is one that my CG and Pastor Arnold recently went through: Phillippians 2:3-11.
– **Becky Wong**

In 1 Peter 5:1-5, leaders are the appointed undershepherds of Christ to shepherd the flock of God. Christ himself is the Chief Shepherd. Leaders are to exercise oversight while members are called to submit to the leaders. We are called to clothe ourselves with humility towards one another. In Philippians 2, we are to follow the mindset of Christ who humbled himself and gave up his life to serve others. Similarly, we are to sacrifice ourselves to serve our fellow believers in humility.

In this way, the church will become united.

– **Tan Chong Tien & Tan Cheng See**

When visiting the Roslin Orphanage in Kupang, unity was easy to achieve as we were prayerful and submitted to the Holy Spirit rather than to the Church or any church representative. In contrast to Singapore where everyone has an opinion, over at rural East Timor, cooperation was crucial in working together and taking care of each other. Submitting to the Holy Spirit came naturally and easily there. – **Anthony Tan**

I think both require much effort, not just cursory politeness but a genuine effort from the heart to achieve real unity. To really care and not be merely perfunctory requires a genuinely sincere heart condition. One needs to be truly humble.

It means focusing on others more than ourselves; to be willing to inconvenience ourselves for others. – **Sandra Heng**

We Christians can be difficult people, and so unity among believers is not always easy. One thing that we learnt in our CG study recently about moving towards unity in our Christian fellowship is that we must always look out for each other's interest ahead of our own (Phil 2:3-4). To make it easy to remember, 'U' always comes before 'I' in unity! – **Stephanie Gautama**

