

GRACE NEWS

//////////////////// a quarterly newsletter of Grace Baptist Church MCI (P) 081/03/2016 issue 04.2016 //////////////////////

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

Finishing the Race

In tandem with the actual rebuilding of GBC, Grace News' metaphorical church now has the foundation, the structure and the internal connections. What is still lacking are the finishing works. Some might say that these are just cosmetic, but our outward presentation is not something that can be dismissed out of hand. The 'software' is just as important as the 'hardware', especially when it comes to attracting non-believers to the gospel. What might be the spiritual equivalent of finishing works? We think of the fruit of the Spirit, practical love, gifts put to use, the living and working out of our faith. The idea of finishing well also comes to mind – the seeing through of the things we start in God's name.

Pastor Arnold Wong picks up the baton and runs the final lap in more ways than one, as he reminds us in his article below that finishing well is a result of the consistent faithful input of God's word and dependence on Him in all our challenges. Grace News would like to take this opportunity to thank Pastor Arnold for his regular faithful contributions over the years. His quarterly articles always provide a strong biblical foundation for the issue under discussion, and are always turned in on time and with an exact word count (not a small achievement, as many writers can testify!) Thank you Pastor – we are truly grateful.

In August we had the pleasure of watching athletes compete in the XXXI games of the Olympiad. It is impossible to forget some of the stunning performances by athletes in their specialties. One of the biggest highlights was witnessing Singapore's first Olympic gold medal winner take the podium. The games gave us many memorable moments and life lessons to treasure.

Paul often used athletic metaphors to teach spiritual truths. In fact, as he faced his eventual martyrdom in a Roman prison, he used the athletic metaphor to summarise his life. No matter what our age or status in life these three descriptions are worthy characteristics to embrace in our spiritual lives.

First, Paul says, *"I have fought the good fight"*. Paul looks back on his life and ministry and says he has fought well or put in a full effort. The word *'fought'* literally means to engage in conflict in an athletic contest or in a military conflict. It goes without saying that every believer is engaged in a spiritual battle with the forces of evil – within themselves and in the world (Eph 6:12-18). In Paul's life he experienced all kinds of attacks – personal and physical (2 Cor 10:10; 11:23-27), philosophical and theological (Acts 17:15-34; Gal 2:4). He knew what it was like to be *"afflicted in every way but not crushed... persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed"* (2 Cor 4:8-9). Every believer needs to remember they are in a spiritual battle every day of their lives and they must fight long and hard with the grace and resources that God supplies (2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13).



“In order to finish well in our spiritual lives, we have to set aside all our burdens and the encumbrances of sin that may hinder us, run with endurance, and keep our eyes on Jesus.”

Secondly, Paul says, *"I have finished the race"*. Paul says he has completed the course laid out for him by the Lord. Finishing is important – maybe even more important than winning. In order to finish well in our spiritual lives, we have to set aside all our burdens and the encumbrances of sin that may hinder us, run with endurance, and keep our eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:1-3). We have to keep focused on winning an imperishable crown from the Lord (1 Cor 9:24-25). Every believer needs to remember to finish the plans and purposes God has set for their lives by overcoming every obstacle that will prevent them from happening.

This brings us to the last clause, *"I have kept the faith"*. The word *'kept'* means to keep by guarding or to watch over. The word *'faith'* refers to convictions based on hearing. This means Paul stayed true to the gospel and guarded and taught its truths as God revealed them to him. He identifies this in other passages as *'sound teaching'* (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13). Every believer must stay true to the truths of God's word by knowing, understanding, applying and passing them on to future generations.

So let's live a life worthy of the Lord by fighting the good fight, finishing the race and keeping the faith. Ω

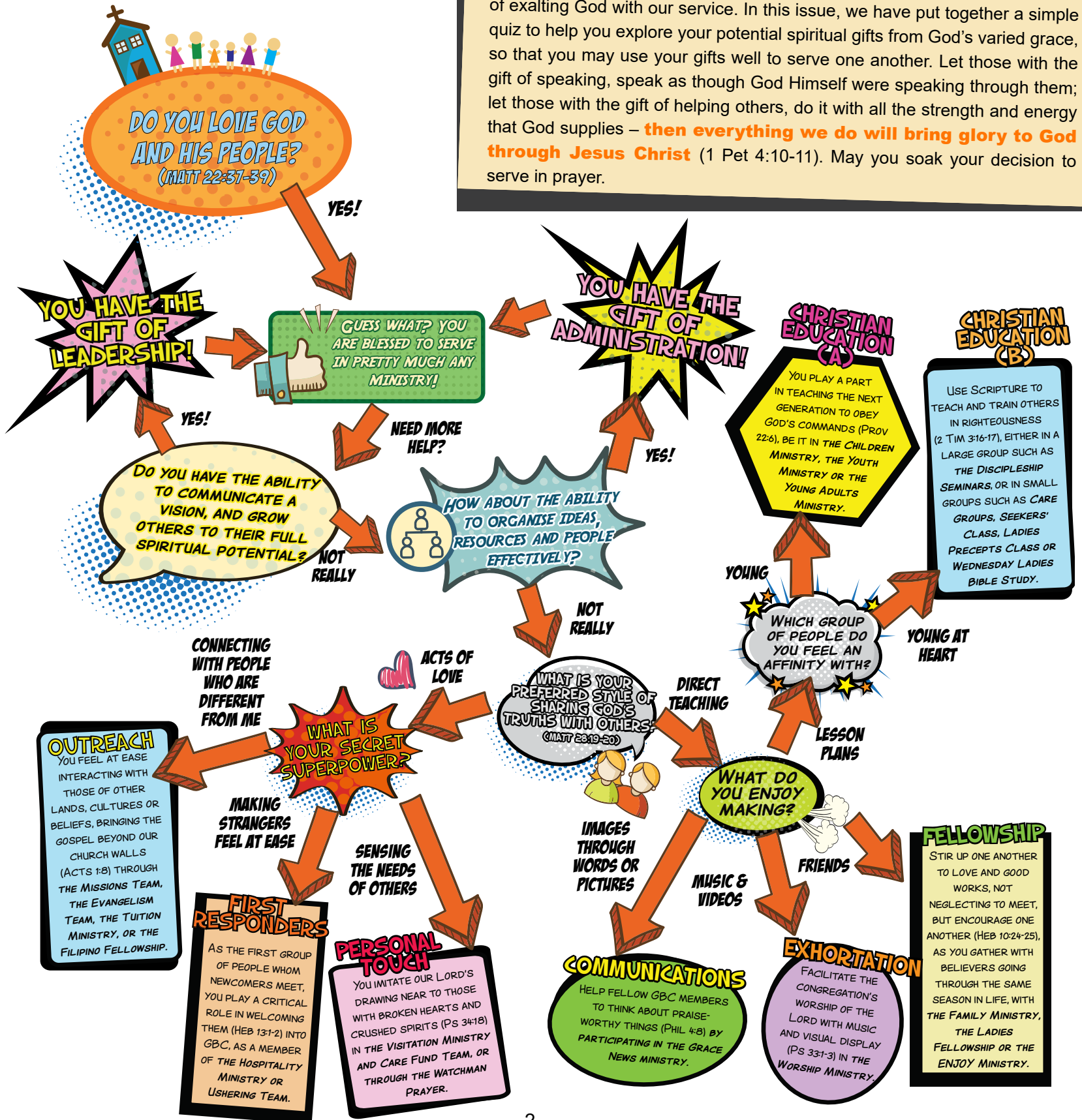
THE MINISTRIES OF GBC

WHERE SHOULD I SERVE?

by Heng Wen Xiu

"Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. **In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well.** So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." (Rom 12:4-8)

In the previous issue of Grace News, Kim Hoong gave an overview of the various ministries of GBC and the 'Five E' model that centres on the themes of exalting God with our service. In this issue, we have put together a simple quiz to help you explore your potential spiritual gifts from God's varied grace, so that you may use your gifts well to serve one another. Let those with the gift of speaking, speak as though God Himself were speaking through them; let those with the gift of helping others, do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies – **then everything we do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ** (1 Pet 4:10-11). May you soak your decision to serve in prayer.





Dialogue in the DARK

“LET US OBEY THE CALL IN FAITH, ENTER THE EVERLASTING LIGHT THAT SHINES BRIGHTLY, AND REFLECT THE GLORY OF JESUS TO A WORLD IN DARKNESS.”

Ngiam Xing Yi describes the Gracehaven outreach in July, and reminds us that we are called to lead those who are lost out of spiritual darkness and into the marvellous light of Christ.

In 1959 a Singaporean man murdered a British colonial master in cold blood after seeing him mistreat a fellow citizen. Immediately he fled across the straits to Johor Bahru to escape punishment, and stayed under the radar for 40 years, rearing livestock in a secluded kampong and marrying a Malaysian. When the Singapore Presidential Elections were being held in 1999, he sneaked back into Singapore to position himself as a candidate.

Would you have accepted him as a candidate? Neither did the children from Gracehaven.

“But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”” (Ex 3:11-12)

Just like Moses, all of us feel helpless, unworthy, and even useless at times. Waist-deep in our sin and guilt, how can we have confidence to do anything that seems beyond us?

On 23 July 2016, GBC volunteers joined the children from Gracehaven at Ngee Ann

Polytechnic for Dialogue in the Dark. For an hour, participants experience everyday situations such as crossing a bridge, walking through a void deck, and chilling at a café – with a twist. Everything is done in complete darkness, with a blind guide providing verbal instructions on how to proceed. My own guide was Thomas Yong, one of the oldest athletes to represent Singapore for bowling in the ASEAN Para Games.

The boys in my group initially responded with scepticism: “I’m not scared of walking in the dark.” “The guide must be wearing night vision goggles.” As doubt and uncertainty grew while navigating through the darkness, however, trust in our guide deepened. Having lost his sight in a bomb accident almost 40 years ago, he was now leading us firmly and skillfully.

The irony of being guided by the blind was not lost on us. We had to practise childlike faith in our guide and listen to all his instructions, trusting that he was making the best decisions for us. This lesson later resounded on a figurative level as the children from Gracehaven reconsidered Moses’ position. Just like Moses, we all like sheep have gone astray, lost in the darkness, and are frantically groping for surety in our lives. We do this out of fear, which often leads to avoidance. Lead God’s people out of Egypt despite being a murderer? “Please send someone else.” Throw off the stigma of being a troubled youth and achieve what no one thinks I can? “I’m scared.” Contribute actively in GBC’s ministries or fundraising efforts? “Who am I to do so? I’m unknown

and unworthy, the holier ones can do it.”

Yet we are constantly called to follow and obey in faith. God is our guide in the dark (just like our guide Thomas!), instructing us on where to go and how to get there, promising that we will eventually escape the surrounding darkness. “But I will be with you,” He promises, giving us a reason for our blind faith. And blind it often seems, for just as Moses was promised a sign that he would only experience many years later, we rarely have visible grounds for our faith at the moment we are called. This is precisely what inspired the writer of Hebrews to explain faith as the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

Our hope lies not in our weak and sinful selves, but in our eternal Guide who takes the initiative to call us. In the dark, the Gracehaven children thought they had to fend for themselves until Thomas called out to us. In the dark, Moses never imagined that he would have to return to Egypt, until God called out to him from a burning bush. In the dark, we sinners are lost until God calls us out of darkness into His marvellous light. No one can ever find his way out of the dark unless someone greater calls and leads him.

Jesus’s call is simple: Follow Me. And He is no blind guide, but the greatest ever Shepherd King. Let us obey the call in faith, enter the everlasting light that shines brightly, and reflect the glory of Jesus to a world in darkness. ☪

The Tuition Ministry

-AN OPEN DOOR-



Low Lai Sai has been serving in the Tuition Ministry since the late 1980s, with some short breaks in between. In Lim Rui Wen's interview with this quiet man, we get a glimpse of his service and commitment through the years.

What moved you to serve God through this ministry?

In my early years as a Christian, I was looking for a way to serve God. I chose tuition since it did not require me to have good English – I could teach mathematics instead. It also provided an opportunity to reach out to the MacPherson community.

I had first heard of the name of Jesus in primary school. Although I only accepted Christ much later, Jesus still gave me hope and peace, especially when I was faced with fear and uncertainty. Because of this, I saw the importance of sharing Christ to children at a young age. This would give them the opportunity to experience Christ's love, and possibly provide them with the same hope and peace I experienced.

What has kept you persevering through all these years?

What has kept me persevering is experiencing God's faithfulness. I also view this ministry as a door that opens the church to the community. **People will not walk into the church if there is no 'door' for them to walk through. The Tuition Ministry helps to break down barriers both for the children and their parents, opening doors for them to enter the church.**

When they are familiar with some people in the church and find it a friendly place, they will be more willing and ready to come for events here. They will also find it difficult to reject our invitation. It is important to keep this door open to the community. Hopefully we can have more open doors besides tuition.

Another motivating factor is to see the children improve in their mathematics. It is rewarding to see that the effort put in does make a difference.

What are some things you desire for these children (and their families) through this ministry?

I wish to see the children become better persons, not only academically but also in their character. Along the way, I also hope to plant the seed of the gospel and God's love in their growing years. Hopefully, this seed will bear fruit in their lives and in their family members' lives too.

I remember having one student who was very weak in his studies and also had very poor behaviour. I did not know how to discipline him. I had scolded him and even chased him out of the class before. However, I knew that this would not help, so I asked God for wisdom in handling this student. God changed my perspective and made me realise that he needed love and care. I gradually changed my way of handling him. The class noticed my change and began to learn diligently too.

What challenges or disappointments have you faced in this ministry?

The main challenge for me is following up with them after they leave primary school.

As I only teach primary school classes, I lose contact with them once their PSLE is over. Unless I call them or meet them or their parents in the market or neighbourhood, I do not know what happens to them subsequently.

Some disappointments I have faced include hearing that a student has dropped out of school, or having students who were not willing to accept our help. There are students who may not be very good in their studies but they don't come back after attending for only one year or drop out after only a few months.

Can you share some instances of how God has encouraged, enabled, or affirmed you in this ministry?

I see God's faithfulness. He has always called the right people at the right time to serve in the ministry.

I also see the love and compassion in our teachers past and present. Some teachers go the extra mile to bring students to and from church on Sundays, and bring those with learning disabilities for assessments and professional help.

Just this year, God has enabled this ministry in a special way: He opened up to us the RC (Residents' Committee) premises in the void deck of an HDB block in the neighbourhood, thus allowing us to be closer to the community. (This is a temporary arrangement until the church rebuilding is completed.)

What do you thank God for and what are you asking God for regarding this ministry?

I thank God that He has put a burden in people's hearts to serve in the Tuition Ministry all these years.

I also thank God that I got to know my neighbour when he sent his children to our tuition some years back. It was through this neighbour that we were able to secure the RC premises for this year.

Most of all, I thank God that some of our past students have received Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

My prayer is that GBC's outreach programme will not be limited to just this ministry. We must open more 'doors' to reach out to the community. Some of our students and their families actually come from China and India. Perhaps the Tuition Ministry could be a platform and a stepping-stone for other opportunities. ☺

Josiah's Reformation

- Lessons for Spiritual Revival -

With the Reformation Concert just around the corner, Lam Lup Meng looks at the spiritual revival of King Josiah and challenges us to apply the same principles in our own lives.

Reformation Day on October 31 marks an important event in the church calendar. On that day in the year 1517 Martin Luther sparked a movement which we now call the Protestant Reformation, when he nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The five 'Solas' that emerged from the Reformation brought back the authority of the scriptures (*Sola Scriptura*), the sufficiency of Christ through faith in Him (*Solus Christus* and *Sola Fide*), the grace of God in our salvation (*Sola Gratia*), and the ultimate aim of giving glory to God in all that we do (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

Throughout history mankind has always been prone to wander and drift away from God, being led astray by the sinful nature. But God through His grace leads some to spiritual revival and reformation through the leadership of kings, prophesies, events and circumstances. We see numerous examples of this in the Old Testament. Let us take a look at the example of King Josiah of Judah to see what undergirded his spiritual reformation and revival, and to identify the lessons we can learn from it.

From 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34 we know that Josiah started his reign in Judah at just eight years old. Under the reign of his father Amon and grandfather Manasseh, Judah had become a place of idol worship where altars were erected to worship Baal and other gods. The people had been led astray to commit evil in the sight of the Lord. When Josiah took over, he began to seek after the Lord and started to purge those places of idol worship. While restoring the temple, the Book of the Law (which most scholars agree was the book of Deuteronomy) was discovered. Josiah, upon hearing its words read to him, was convicted and tore his clothes in repentance. He then proceeded to institute religious reforms through the reading of the word of God in public, made a covenant with the Lord to keep His commandments and also restored the Passover celebrations (2 Chron 34:29-



35:19). 2 Kings 23:25 describes Josiah as one "who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him."

From the life of Josiah we can make a few important observations on spiritual revival and reformation:

1. The word of God is central for spiritual revival and rebuilding. It was the word of God that convicted Josiah to repent and begin spiritual reforms.
2. Truth from the word of God will lead us to true worship of Him. Conviction of truth from God's word led Josiah to worship God free from idolatry. God's word brings about radical change that pleases Him.
3. Spiritual revival begins with the desire to seek God. Josiah began to rule at a young age, but one of the first things that we know about him was that early on he "began to seek the God of David" (2 Chronicles 34:3).

We are at the final stages of our preparation for the Reformation Concert, which is entitled "Tell Me The Story of Jesus".

Through the interweaving of scripture and song the concert aims to show that the entire narrative of the Bible points to Jesus Christ. Thank God for the encouraging participation of various church ministries, such as the Worship Ministry and the Children's Ministry, as well as the contributions of those involved in the prayer journal, discipleship seminars, publicity and graphic design. There are many others who have dedicated the time and talents necessary to make a concert of this size a success: it is indeed a church-wide endeavour.

We embark on this journey as a faith-building exercise in conjunction with fund-raising for the physical rebuilding of the church, coming together as brothers and sisters in Christ and declaring the truths of God's word through worship in song. God's word and worship: these are two of the ingredients that formed the basis of Josiah's reformation. Let us pray together for God to give us the third ingredient, which is the desire to seek after Him and hunger for His word, for only the grace of God and the work of His Spirit can bring true transformation.

Soli Deo Gloria Ω

GBC 57TH ANNIVERSARY : UNITED IN CHRIST 7 AUG 2016



In his first and likely last anniversary sermon, Ps Arnold reminded us that very often we resist change out of fear. Though we should cherish and honour the past, we should be alert and courageous to seize the opportunities and changes that lie ahead as we move into our new building and welcome a new pastor. We have an unchanging God who will see us through as long as we keep faith in Him.



We had the unusual experience of celebrating this year's anniversary in the Cultural Centre of SAJC. As both the English and Chinese congregations came together to celebrate our shared history and continuing strong ties, we were reminded of our unity throughout every part of the service, and in the words of every hymn.



LADIES FELLOWSHIP FLORAL ARRANGEMENT 20 AUG 2016



The ladies enjoyed their beautiful time of fellowship as they came together for a floral arrangement session led by Winnie Ang. The floral designs were similar, but each one expressed the individual creativity of its maker with subtle differences – just like us as God's children!

CHURCH REBUILDING PROGRESS 3Q 2016



Bird's eye view of the site in late Aug 2016. We thank God for the great progress made with the superstructure work almost completed!



Staircase ready for casting.



Cable trays and electrical trunking being installed. Across all levels, surface treatments and some finishes were applied.



We are grateful to the GBC member who donated some tiles for the construction.



Site inspection by the Building Construction Authority (BCA) and the Accredited Checker.



Church office walls erected.

YA RETREAT 9 TO 12 SEPTEMBER 2016



Through talks, workshops, discussions, and time spent together in prayer and bonding, our young adults learnt about the inner life of the Christian during their annual retreat at Bayu Marina Resort in Johor Bahru. We thank God for the fruitful and meaningful time of learning and rest, and pray that our young adults will continue to abide in Christ and encourage one another in their walk.

Touching Lives in Our Own Backyard

Michael Chee reflects on lessons learned from GBC's Great Commission Month, which took place in July.

This year's Great Commission Month (GCM) featured five speakers who challenged us to consider how we can obey Jesus' command to share the gift of salvation with others. Each speaker brought a different perspective to missions, ranging from what we can do at home to a grand vision of transforming peoples along the Silk Road. A message that was packed with tips on how to translate godly intention into action was delivered by Rev Lam Kok Hiang, who began by drawing our attention to the Psalmist's plea to the Lord to: 'Make your ways known to all the earth' (Ps 67). Rev Lam reminded us that the imperative to share the gospel arises from our first having received salvation and many rich blessings from the Lord. He reminded us that in an uncertain world we should treasure the comfort and stability we enjoy in Singapore.

Some associate 'missions' with distant lands and unfamiliar cultures, but Rev Lam gave some down-to-earth tips about sharing the gospel with people we can readily access. He invited us to open the eyes of young family members by taking them on short mission trips to neighbouring countries. In such settings, talking about the gospel can be woven into time spent dispensing simple but life-changing advice on things like dental hygiene – pointers that take no special training and only a willing heart to communicate.

Singapore is a hub for unreached students from the region, and befriending them, offering a meal and simply lending a listening ear can open doors for God to work. As for the many foreign workers who build our homes, offices and more, Rev Lam shared how his church annually turns the tables by organising a role-

reversal banquet. In that celebration, members serve the foreign worker guests as waiters to show appreciation for their contribution to building Singapore.

Instead of sowing discontent and negativism on social media he challenged the congregation to present positive stories and the work of God in our lives as opportunities arise. He ended by reminding those with skills honed through their careers to lend their knowledge and experience to mission organisations as informal advisors, multiplying the effectiveness of the professional staff.

God blesses those who seek Him and strive to obey Him. Let us take to heart the exhortations we heard during GCM and go about touching lives in our own backyard! Ω



Teh Seng Chuan spoke passionately about bringing the gospel to unreached people groups along the Silk Road.



Leong Tzi Ping gave a 3-minute presentation in which he shared why he and Heidi persevere in their translation work among the Saluan people.

GCM also included weekly 3-minute presentations and posters featuring different missionaries and outreach programmes, as well as Discipleship Seminars devoted to the theme of the Mission of God from Luke's Gospel.



A FRUITY KIND OF FAITH

By Rachel Wong
Graphics Designed by Freepik



Do you remember that in our first Children's Corner at the beginning of this year, we talked about plants? We said that it is very important for our faith plant to have strong roots to help it grow well. All through the year our plant has been growing... I wonder what has happened to it now that we are almost at the end of the year?



Let's check how the roots are doing. But there's a problem – we cannot see the roots because they are in the soil. What shall we do? We have to look at the parts we can see to know about the parts we can't see. And the most important part of the plant that we can see (and taste!) is the fruit.



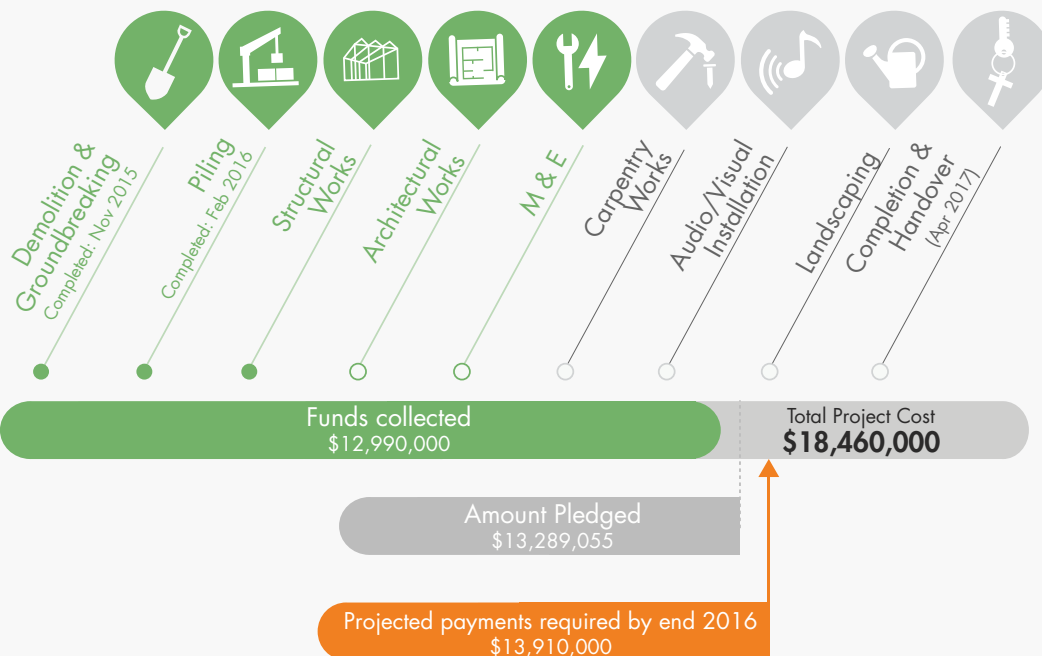
What kind of fruit do you think a faith plant would have? Yes, it's the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). When we trust in Jesus the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and helps us produce the good fruit that belongs to the Spirit. So just as good fruit come from good trees, if we are being changed by the Spirit on the inside, then we will show that change on the outside by the fruit of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. But if the Holy Spirit is not in us, on our own it is impossible to grow this kind of fruit.

Soon we will move into our new church building, and we pray that many new friends will come to join us to worship God. What can you do to make people want to come to church? The best thing you can do is to trust in Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit. The next most important thing is to show everyone that your faith is real by having really good, big, juicy spiritual fruit! Ω



Church Rebuilding Update @ 30 Sep 2016



WE THANK GOD FOR

- ▶ Smooth and successful completion of the critical work of laying of beams, casting and pre-stressing of Level 5 slab.
- ▶ Unanimity around the many major decisions on materials and facilities by the Building Sub-Committee.
- ▶ Incident-free quarter.
- ▶ The ~\$13m raised to date.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

- ▶ Work on the architectural and M&E aspects of the building which are in full swing now.
- ▶ Safety and protection of all the workers, from disease and possible site-related injuries.
- ▶ Our continued trust in God's provision as we give joyfully and labour together for His glory.