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GRACE NEWS

A QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER

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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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The theme of this issue of Grace News is that of renewing and keeping covenants. As we prepare to occupy our new building, it is critical that we do not get caught up in the excitement and busyness and thus neglect to consider our spiritual readiness. We should prepare our hearts to receive this great blessing with a solemn commitment to be faithful and obedient. **Rev (Dr) E N Poulson** sets us in the right direction by reminding us of the spiritual revival that accompanied Nehemiah's rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. May we be equally serious in keeping our covenant to God and obeying His commands as a church.

While we are grateful to those who have made alternative facilities available to us, we are all excited about the prospect of moving into our own new church building. But after we make that move, what's next? Will it be simply a change of place and time? Or will we allow the LORD to 'make all things new'?

Catch a glimpse of what might be, by reading the book of Nehemiah. Of course, the reason for the rebuilding described in Nehemiah is entirely different. When the Israelites were released from captivity in Babylon, a remnant returned to Jerusalem and discovered that the temple had been defiled and destroyed by enemies of the Truth. In contrast, our building was demolished and a new one built in order to make the best possible use of freehold property that is fully approved for religious activities – a rarity in Singapore.

In Nehemiah's time there was a seven-day religious holiday in the seventh month, when

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all the people gathered in Jerusalem. Ezra the scribe read aloud from the book of the Law of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy) 'from daybreak till noon'. Because the people spoke different dialects, Ezra had helpers who 'made it clear and gave the meaning so the people could understand'. The rest of the day the people applied and obeyed what they had learned. This continued for seven days. But they wanted more. On the 24th day the people stood and read from Scripture for three hours, and spent another three hours in confession and worship.

Nehemiah 9 verses 5-37 record a psalm the people sang to express what they had learned, and to help them remember it in the future. Verse 38 says they renewed their covenant with the LORD, and put it in writing as a witness that they determined to walk in His ways, and to give all that was needed for ministry and maintenance of the temple. In other words, there was a spiritual revival. The temple would be used for prayer and service, not for business and entertainment.

As we prepare to occupy our new sanctuary, I admonish us all – pastors, teachers, helpers at every level, older members and younger – to let God do a renewing work in our hearts. The church is not just to be a new building in Mattar Road, but a place where members and friends can worship and enjoy fellowship, and where the whole community knows they can encounter the GOD who loves them. Ω

FEATURE

Living Out Our Marriage VOWS_{by} Faith



Alongside our spiritual covenant with God, He has also instituted the covenant of marriage, which some of us enter into. **Jonathan & Eng Meng Yao** here explore the significance of the marriage covenant, and share how the VOWS acrostic may be put into practice in marriage, as well as in our personal relationship with God.

When we took our marriage vows on 3 November 1990 we entered into a covenant before God and man “till death do us part”. We would be the first to say that our marriage has gone through numerous challenges, but we are ever cognizant of God’s grace which allows us to work through those challenges in His enabling power. His supernatural grace has seen us through what in our own strength would have been impossible to handle. Here are a few thoughts on our journey of faith over the years.

V: Be vulnerable by daring to share and bare yourself emotionally and spiritually to your spouse. This speaks of sharing, praying and seeking to grow together, even as we recognise our own insecurities, longings, dreams, successes, past, fears, failures, etc. We learnt the use of the ‘5/5’ exercise to help us be better listeners to each other. Each person takes turn to share for about five minutes whatever he/she is experiencing in the heart. The other party is not to respond but simply to listen intently to the person sharing. From experience, it can feel like the longest five minutes we’ve ever experienced, as we learn to listen instead of mentally trying to solve problems. For inspiration, we turn to the creation story of that first marriage found in Genesis 2:24. Even in that sinless state, the emotional separation of the husband

(wife) from his (her) parents is needed so that he can “hold fast to his wife, and ... become one flesh”. While the physical intimacy is evident here, it also speaks of the deeper emotional intimacy exclusively found in marriage: “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (verse 25). There was honesty and vulnerability between the two.


O: Oneness in marriage is about two becoming one. This may mean: one in heart (same heartbeat, knowing how one’s spouse is feeling), one mind (same goal, help him/her fulfill it), one body (belonging to another). This is different from closeness, which is just being together but not having the deep emotional and spiritual connection. Ephesians 4:32 reminds us to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you” which helps remove barriers to that oneness. As a family, we took up an overseas ministry assignment partly so that we could build inter-dependence toward oneness in the context of a cross-cultural ministry. We have to continually remind ourselves to pursue oneness not just closeness.

W: Woo is the intentional pursuing of another with the singular intent of knowing the person more, and seeking to win his or her heart over and over again. As we age we change, and so does our spouse. **While we often watch our children like hawks, observing and seeking to understand them as they grow, how attentive are we to our spouses through different seasons of life?** We are to keep our romance and passion burning: date nights, hugs, kisses, saying ‘I love you’. May we never tire of pursuing our spouse this side of heaven. Some practical examples for us include spending weekday breakfasts together, giving her flowers not just on special occasions, and mobilising the children to celebrate dad’s special days. Jonathan overheard an ‘uncle’ sharing at a flower stall that it is SOP for him to give flowers on his wife’s birthday. How much more for us as believers, who know that our spouse is a gift from Him to nurture and love.

S: Being Holy Spirit-dependent means living moment-by-moment empowered by Him to do what He wants in and through us. Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled with the Spirit by faith. Just as we came to know Christ by faith, likewise we are to live out our lives by faith. Without the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, we would be spiritually powerless to fulfill our marriage vows. Being dependent on the Spirit also means undergirding our marriage in prayer in total dependence on Him.

May we be found faithful in our journey of faith as singles or in marriage. Shalom. Ω

FEATURE



RECOLLECTIONS & RESOLUTIONS

At this pivotal moment, poised between old and new, members of the Rebuilding Steering Committee share their thoughts. The first is a reflection of past blessings, while the second is an exploration of possible ways to share God's goodness in the future. In both cases, the challenge is for us to use the new building in creative ways to bless the community around us, to the praise and glory of God.

Great God, Great Blessings

Our Great God has blessed us in so many ways: a freehold plot of land, an opportunity to increase the building plot ratio to 1.4, a new adjacent MRT station, an upcoming, rejuvenated community... just to name a few.

But without a doubt, the greatest blessing is that our Lord Jesus Christ is the key cornerstone of this church rebuilding effort. His protection and mercy are also upon us. We saw this in the 50-ton crane-toppling incident in April last year, which was resolved without any injuries or significant physical damage. We experience it tangibly and continually as the committees and sub-committees, comprising members from both congregations of GBC and with varied backgrounds and opinions, work together to overcome the many challenges. We marvel at the passion of the fund-raising efforts and selfless giving. We notice it in the innumerable contributions, both big and small, of the professional personnel and volunteers that He has directed to this project. He has provided much opportunity for us to humbly learn from each other and to show care, love, and encouragement to one another in the Spirit of Christ.

The heartbeat of the new GBC building is Christ. Without Him, it is just a mass

of brick, glass, concrete and steel. This project is an opportunity for GBC to demonstrate what He really means to us. May we be worthy of this calling and demonstrate Christlikeness in the way we love one another and the community. All glory and praise be unto Him.

A New Building, A New Beginning

By the third quarter of this year, Lord willing, we will be worshipping in a spanking new sanctuary with a much-expanded capacity. The building will be all new, with new spaces, new facilities and new installations.

But most of us who have been looking forward to this are not 'new'. And the question we should ask ourselves is: "What will we bring with us to 17 Mattar Road?" Will we be settling back into what we have been doing before, and using the spaces in the same way as before? Even as the multi-million-dollar hardware is being constructed, it is imperative that our church consider how the software – policies, processes, ideas, perspectives, opportunities and mindsets – can be refreshed to fit this new beginning. Can we, as we have done in the physical realm, demolish our old mindsets and habits in order to reconstruct better ones to take us into the future? Can we revisit our old ways

of running the church and organising how spaces are used, and consider some refreshed perspectives? Some ideas: innovate on maintenance (we won't have a live-in janitor anymore) and establish a security set-up that allows for a warm and welcoming though safe environment; e-booking of rooms and facilities; open spaces and even a café for 'outsiders' to engage us in a non-intimidating setting, thus improving on how we worship and fellowship. Let's get our creative juices flowing to generate ideas to turn a cold, silent building into a lively user-friendly house of God.

Yet it should not be just about us. The new premises ought not to be exclusive to us, but should also serve as a channel of blessing to others – fellow Christians, Christian-based organisations, our neighbouring community, and non-believers we are reaching out to. A 24-7 (perhaps) place where God is worshipped, magnified, and served 24-7. Let us not have a building that is used mostly on Sundays only. ***Our building is costly to build, but it will be even more costly, ultimately, if we do not share this gift from God with others who are not from among our midst.*** Let us all give this some thought, and together work on ways to bring the larger community into our new building to experience our God's goodness. That will surely bring glory to Him! Ω

EVENTS



28-29 OCT REFORMATION CONCERT: WE TOLD THE STORY OF JESUS

Last year's Reformation Concert, held at Calvary Baptist Church, was an extended effort which involved over 120 members of the GBC family. While the majority of the participants formed the choir and musicians, many people also performed roles behind the scenes, from ushering to design to marketing. The participants interviewed here by Grace News represent a range of ages, professions and interests. These accounts give a glimpse, not just of what the respective responsibilities entailed, but also of the different means through which God communicates with each of us.



◀ Samuel Chan (violinist, Pri 4 pupil)

I started learning to play the violin when I was four. On Sundays I play the offertory for junior church. Some of the rehearsals for the concert took place in the evenings, so my mother would pack dinner. I also learned to manage my time, since the concert dates clashed with my exam period. On the day of the concert I had a fever. I spent the whole day resting at home. That night I was a little afraid, but everything went okay. My grandmother watched me perform. She said it was good. One thing I learned from the experience is that I enjoy playing the violin for God. I just got back my exam results – I did better than I expected. I think He has blessed me.



▲ Julian Chow (marketing, digital marketing consultant)

I work in marketing, I joined the Reformation concert team to use my skills in service of the Lord. Our team planned the sales, publicity, and outreach to the different Baptist Churches.

This was not just about fundraising; more importantly it contributed to the spiritual rebuilding of the church. Through our announcements, we gave thanks, we rallied support, and we asked for prayers.

As at the time I was writing my Master's thesis and also preparing for my wedding, I didn't know if I could fit in the time, but when you're committed God will pave the way for you to serve.

To me the biggest lesson has been that God is involved in the outcome. At the beginning we were worried about the ticket sales, but eventually everything came together. Ω

More encouraging testimonies by participants of the Reformation Concert can be found at the following address:
<http://bit.ly/2hPBMXk>

▼ Low Poyen (choir, semi-retiree)

In August my son Eugene asked me about joining the choir. I said, "You know I can't even sing the right note, are you sure they want an elderly person like me?"

Looking back, I must admit my soul has truly been blessed by the experience. The story of Jesus was retold in the most vivid way, by the lyrics of the songs themselves. I was truly moved by each and every song, and by the contemplation of their deep and meaningful significance.

All the participants played different roles in making the concerts a success for the glory of God! The team effort made this a truly 'blended worship' for everyone.



▲ Gloria Ng (choir, working mother)

I'm from the Chinese Congregation. I like to sing, and to serve God with my voice. I joined this choir to serve as part of a bigger 'Grace family'. The focus on this concert was on Solus Christus – the person of Jesus Christ. Its structure, from the story of creation to the resurrection to Jesus' second coming, served as a good reminder of the truths in the Bible, and our core beliefs as Christians. As we were singing the songs it felt like an act of worship. We were internalising the lyrics.



From L-R: Poyen, Hee Kiat, Eugene

EVENTS



WELCOME PS IAN AND SHERRI 23 OCT



We warmly welcome Ps Ian Buntain and Sherri to GBC! We give thanks to the Lord for leading them to shepherd us here at GBC, and pray that the Lord will bless them richly with His guidance and wisdom. We also pray that we will love and support them as we grow in the body of Christ.



The annual Comms Cup – an inter-generational bowling friendly – was held at SAFRA Superbowl this year. In all 19 people participated, with the youngest being 11 years old and the oldest 70, making up a total of five teams. The Senior Team emerged the winner yet again, having won the cup every year since its inception in 2014!

COMMS CUP 12 NOV



YA BLOOD DRIVE 13 NOV

The YACG (Young Adult Care Group) went for their first ever blood drive as a CG at Blood-bank@Dhoby. Slightly over 20 YAs turned up, but after stringent screening only seven were deemed to be fit to donate. Nonetheless, all found it a very insightful experience. It is the YACG's hope that this would be a meaningful activity for the whole church to 'show our love for our neighbours, sacrificing time and blood to love others as we love ourselves'.

EVENTS

BAPTISMS & TRANSFERS 11 DEC



We thank God for the willingness of (R-L) Andrew, Juslyn, Grace and Stephanie to come before us to testify publicly of their faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ before taking the step of baptism. We also welcome Elvira (far left) and Samantha to the GBC family through transfer of membership. We commit as a church that we will speak courage and strength into their lives and provide a safe place where they can exercise their spiritual gifts and test out all that God desires them to be.

CHRISTMAS 25 DEC



Our Christmas service began with Grace, Che Eng and Wei Tek lighting the Christ candle in the advent wreath, and proceeded with joyful carols and a thought-provoking sermon from Ps Ian. After the service the spirit of celebration continued as members and guests enjoyed fellowship downstairs over light refreshments.

YOUTH CAMP : REVEALING THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS 17-21 DEC



Our youth had a good time digging deeper into Genesis and getting to know one another better.

WATCHNIGHT SERVICE 31 DEC



Hearts were moved and encouraged as members shared about their ups and downs in 2016, giving thanks to God for His consistent goodness to them regardless of circumstances.

REBUILDING UPDATE 4Q16



The new building at full height. L1 and L2 house the arrival plaza and car parks, L3 the fellowship area and church office, L4 the sanctuary and L5/Attic the meeting rooms and landscaped open terrace.



Meeting rooms on Level 5 (Attic Floor).

FAREWELL DINNER FOR PS ARNOLD AND EFFIE 29 DEC



The church got together for a final dinner with Ps Arnold and Effie to commemorate their 8 years of faithful service with GBC before they returned to America. Tributes in the form of photos, videos, handmade gifts and even trivia poured out from the members to thank the beloved couple for their love for the church.



MISSIONS

Christmas Love Box

Towards the end of every year you will have heard appeals from the Missions Committee (MC) for love offerings to be given to the Christmas Love Box (CLB). You may have wondered what exactly is this Christmas Love Box? You may even have made an offering, despite having only a hazy idea of what it entails. Simply put, it is a collection of items carefully chosen to encourage and bless our missionaries at Christmas. In addition to financial gifts it usually also includes personal appreciation cards and letters, and certain gifts from home that our missionaries may have difficulty obtaining in their host countries. It is a gesture of love to assure them that we appreciate their good work and that we are standing with them as they labour for the Lord.

This may seem like a small matter, but it means a great deal to the recipients. In the accounts below, our missionaries share with us how the CLB has encouraged them in their service and has helped them feel remembered and appreciated. Let us thank the MC for the thought and effort that they put in every year to get appropriate gifts for each missionary. A big thank you to our missionaries and to the MC!



Illustration by Rebecca Sob, 11 years old

“‘Christmas is a time for giving’: that is a cliché. But the yearly Christmas Love Box is not a cliché. I treasure this creative way of saying **‘we are with you’** (and with all the missionaries). Your thankful and encouraging hearts inspire me in the gospel ministry. Thank you for your love and faithful support.”

“My heart smiles when I think about the gifts received via the CLB:

- Posted to me when I was stationed overseas, and arriving before 25 Dec – a testimony of early preparation and thinking ahead. My housemates were blown away by the care of my home church.
- I was asked for my “CLB Wish List” – an indication of good stewardship.
- Specially delivered to my doorstep by MC – demonstrating personal commitment, effort and love.
- I appreciated the involvement of Sunday School children and youths who wrote personalised Christmas cards.

Thank You GBC!
Thank You Missions Committee!”

“CLB by GBC reflects love and concern towards missionaries both locally and abroad. It has been a long-held tradition that is cherished by those on the receiving end, as well as by those who uphold and endorse it. **Blessed are those who give generously towards those who serve the Lord.**”

“The CLB was **a great encouragement** to us during our first term in Thailand. At that time we were new to the mission field, and often felt lonely and lacking emotional support. Our children were young and had many needs. We remember one year our oldest child had a great interest in birds, but good quality books in English were hard to find. We were so surprised and thankful that year to receive two colourful volumes on birds of the world! The CLB is a good way to demonstrate our love for missionary families in their first term, especially those living in remote places.”

“Christmas GIFT Box is recognising:

- G** – God as the source of all good gifts (James 1:7);
- I** – Impact of being blessed to be a blessing;
- F** – Friendship as shown through the love of those who gave;
- T** – Thankfulness in our response to the human and divine Giver of all good gifts.”



Graphic by D3images - Freepik.com

CHILDREN'S CORNER



I PROMISE (MAYBE, SOMETIMES, PERHAPS)

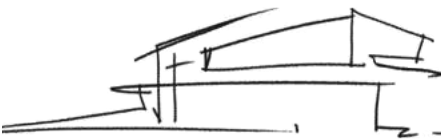
By Rachel Wong

Have you ever made a promise that you did not keep? I have, and I'm sure you have too. "I promise I will tidy up after my play date. I promise I won't eat chocolate before dinner, etc." But oops, it didn't quite happen in the end. Sounds familiar? Really we should call them maybe's, not promises!

What are some of the reasons we do not always keep our promises? Sometimes we make a promise without meaning it, because we want something at that moment and are not really thinking about what the promise means. Or we might promise something and not even intend to keep it (which is actually a lie). Other times we forget we even made a promise in the first place! But what if you really try to keep your promise and you just can't? It may not be your fault, but it still means that you didn't keep a promise.

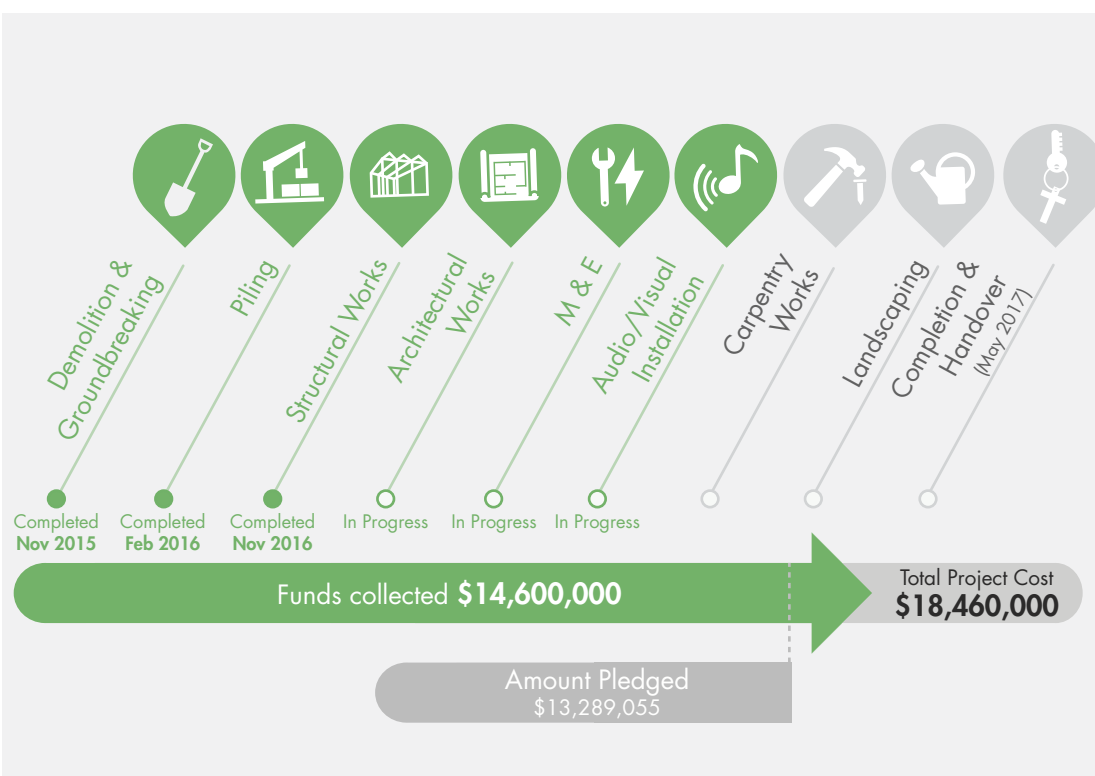
Do you know God has given us so many promises in the Bible that even scholars cannot agree on the exact number? Most people think that there are about 3000. Three thousand promises from God to us - that's a lot of promises to keep! Thank God that He is different from us; He always keeps His promises. Look at Numbers 23:19: "God is not like people, who lie; He is not a human who changes his mind. Whatever he promises, he does; He speaks, and it is done." (Good News Translation) God has already kept all His promises to us in Christ Jesus: 2 Corinthians 1:20 tells us "For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!"

How do we know that God keeps His promises? One important reason is that many of them have already come true. And because God is faithful and everything He says can be trusted, we know that He will keep all the other promises He has made too. Let's ask God to help us be promise-keepers too, so that we can be like God and show other people that we belong to Him. That way our promises will really be promises and not just maybe's. Ω



CHURCH REBUILDING

Updated on 31st Dec 2016



WE THANK GOD FOR

- ▶ Continued progress with the architectural, mechanical and electrical work all in full swing now.
- ▶ The Building Subcommittee's tireless service in driving all details of the building and stewarding the cost.
- ▶ God's enabling of members to give faithfully, sacrificially and cheerfully in tandem with the work of the fund-raising committee and the numerous fund-raising efforts.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

- ▶ Safety and continued vigilance of all site personnel, especially in this wet weather.
- ▶ GBC members to rally together to raise the remaining sum needed.
- ▶ Strengthening of the spiritual body at GBC.