



GRACENEWS

A Grace Baptist Church
Quarterly Newsletter



Photo by Matthew Kalapuch on Unsplash

From spiritual orphans to a united body of Christ: **Pastor Ian** explains how our shared story of the gospel is the key component of our sense of belonging as a church community.

“ In calling us to Himself, God demonstrates that He is the God of belonging. ”

You are not alone.

In 2007 Stanford University published a series of studies¹ that identified belonging as a primal psychological lever in the elevation of a sense of happiness and well-being. It showed that isolation quickly harmed a person's sense of well-being, as well as his or her intellectual achievement, immune function and health. Even more surprising? The research showed that even a single instance of exclusion could undermine well-being, IQ test performance and self-control.

Perhaps this is why belonging is such an important theme in scripture. In Psalm 25:16, David acknowledged this need and cried out

to God, “Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.”

According to Gregory Walton, the primary author of the studies, the most consistent component in a sense of belonging was a shared story. For believers, this is the story of the gospel. In calling us to Himself, God demonstrates that He is the God of belonging. He presents Himself as “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows... He settles the solitary in a home (Ps 68:5-6).” And He offers us the constant comfort of His presence (Deut 31:6; Is 41:10; Prov 18:24; Matt 28:20).

In GBC we believe that though we come

from diverse backgrounds, the same God has called each of us to belong: to Him and to one another. At one time we were all spiritual orphans, alone and without hope in the world. But in His mercy, God initiated a belonging intervention. And now in Christ, we who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself became our peace. He has made us one, and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:12-14).

We are not alone! We believe to belong. I pray that each of us would seek deeper belonging and personal accountability this year by joining a small group within our Grace CG network! Ω



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We welcome your feedback:

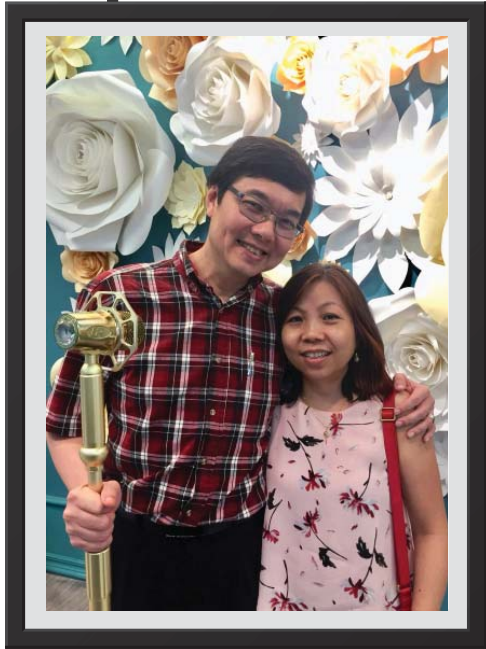
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1. First published in 2007 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, and now available here: <https://tinyurl.com/social-belonging>

FEATURE

Why I Belong

In the sermon on Eph 2:11-22, we were exhorted to belong to a community so as to illuminate the glory of God. In this article, GBC members Jonathan Yao, Paul Wu, and Poh Gee and Patti Koh penned their thoughts on why they chose to sink roots in GBC, and call GBC their family in this season of their lives.



Jonathan Yao ▲

It was during my schooling days in the mid-1980s when I first visited GBC regularly. It was most edifying to experience the then-deacons' (like brothers Tony Chan and Lee Chung Cheong) humble teaching, and to be shepherded at Grace Bible School on Sundays. Desiring to be baptised and become a member, I joined a baptism class. To my dismay, the teacher told us that the class was suspended as the church was undergoing a split. I was away from GBC during that tumultuous period and joined FCBC instead.

After a while, the Lord indicated that I should return to GBC. In 'coming home' to Grace, I was met by brother Fock Siew Wah who ministered to me and was most concerned about my spiritual growth whilst away. The first ministry I joined after returning to Grace was the evangelism committee with brother Michael Wee, and we had the privilege of conducting our first ever outreach to business professionals. Eng Meng and I were also invited to join our first care group by brother KY Leong and his dear wife Carol. Why did I return to be a member of and serve in Grace? **It was because of the lives of men and women of faith who have built me up spiritually:** they have taught faithfully, served selflessly and loved lavishly at Grace.

Paul Wu ▼

Shortly after our arrival in Singapore, Yahsin and I were introduced to GBC by my colleague Ho Chung. The children ministry was booming then (just like now), so it was a wonderful place to bring up our kids; we were also warmly received by Eddie and Peter's Care Group (CG), and later George and Helen's CG.

Years went by rather peacefully. However, as I struggled with starting up a company, my character defects started to surface and before long, my family was suffering below the seemingly calm surface. God surrounded GBC with many dedicated pastors with sound teaching, and we also joined George and Helen's CG with families similar to ours. Yet I was too proud to change, until one day I could not stand the pain anymore and I confessed my sins to Pastor Arnold. I was surprised by his acceptance of me. Pastor Arnold was like an angel sent by the great Physician – through many consultation sessions, he helped me to work through my sins, and set me on an ongoing course of recovery and restitution one step at a time.

Upon reflection, I must say that it is not that I have chosen GBC, but I belong in GBC when I open my heart to God through people in GBC. With a new heart, I start seeing and feeling GBC differently, even though it is still no different from what the Bible says: we are created by one God, sinners saved by Jesus, born of the same Spirit, and we work together as one body to bring the good news to the world. I feel this through the worship service, CG, CLOBS, choir, Gracehaven outreach and tuition ministry.



FEATURE

◀ Poh Gee & Patti Koh



We have been members of GBC for about 27 years. Our children have grown up here. We have good friends here. There are many folks here who are precious to us. GBC is home to us. There were times when we visited other churches. Some were during our vacations while overseas, and some were when we were taking breaks to worship elsewhere. We found that visiting new churches were often refreshing times as we enjoyed their different liturgies and the beautiful architecture of their cathedrals. However, we realised that church is more than Sunday services, and church is certainly not a building. Church is a community of believers to whom we belong and for us, it is GBC.

Living in community is a joy but it can be a struggle as well. We will continue to struggle as we relate with one another for as long as we remain in our unredeemed bodies. **God in His providence uses our struggle to sanctify us. He places in our hearts a greater need for Him and a stronger desire for church unity.** With the Lord's help, we hope to endure to love and to enjoy being loved here in the family of GBC. Ω

The Church: A Radical Kind of Belonging

Claire Low expounds on the radical nature of belonging to a church community, and challenges us to love one another radically through serving in practical ways and meeting spiritual needs.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God... (Eph 2:19)

What does it look like to belong to a church? For some, it means attending service every Sunday. For others, it includes attending care groups and church activities. But belonging to a church is much more radical than that! Belonging to a church reflects our belonging to Jesus, and that is a relationship more intimate than anything you can imagine, and compels us to love those in God's household in extraordinary ways.

Loving one another in extraordinary ways actually starts in very ordinary ways. Meeting up over coffee or lunch, helping to babysit for new moms, inviting people over to your home, writing a note to the elderly to encourage them, sending care packages to overseas students and missionaries – these are some examples of ways that we can get to know this household that we belong to. God uses us to grow His kingdom when we take risks and invite outsiders in.

As we get to know one another, we also start to see the needs, struggles, joys and sorrows in this household. Here is where we are called to love radically: How will we encourage the couples who are struggling in their marriages? How will we reach out to those who have fallen away? How can we speak truth to those who are causing division? How do we care for those who are depressed? How can we offer godly wisdom to those who are making career choices? We cannot really belong to a church yet not bear one another's burdens.

Belonging to a church comes with responsibilities and privileges! We have the responsibility of journeying alongside one another, and the glorious privilege of seeing one another grow. And we do this until we see Christ face to face. Let us strive to be that kind of an extraordinary household that outsiders want to belong to.

In the past few months of being at GBC, Eugene and I have been blessed to have many of you share our lives. Here are a few photo snippets of us building roots to belong here. Ω



Top: Kids' entertainer

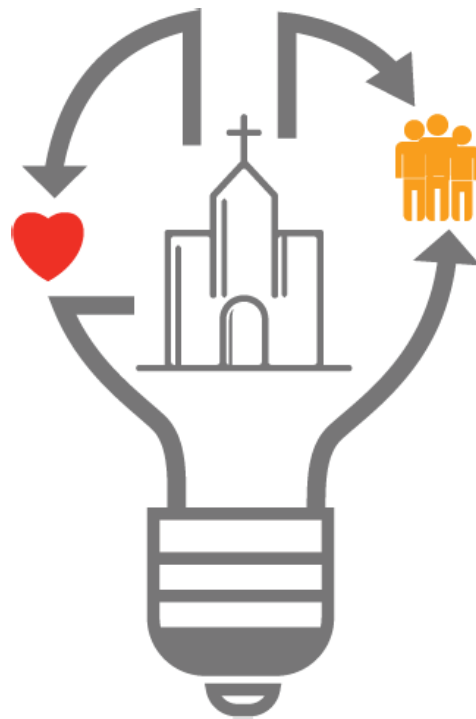
Middle: Baby shower for Sachi, Huijing and Andrea

Bottom: Celebrating birthdays!



Church – God's Wonderful Idea

Tan Yee Kiat provides a biblical perspective of what it means to be a member of a local church, and the significance of this in building up the body of Christ.



If I am already saved, then why do I need to go to church? What is the point of belonging to one? Is it not possible to believe in the gospel yet not attend a church? Wait, did Jesus Himself attend a church?

To really understand what God desires to say about the church, we need to pay careful attention to what the New Testament (NT) says in its totality and not 'pick and choose' our favourite texts.

Church – Shepherded By Elders

There are in fact a lot of terms used to describe the church in the NT. Apart from a gathering (ekklesia – a word that means assembly), it is also called a flock (Acts 20:28), a household (1 Tim 3:15), the body of Christ (Col 1:18), the new holy temple (Eph 2:21-22), and so on. The richness of each description probably deserves a reflection in its own right.

God has specific instructions of how the church should be run. After Paul laid out the qualifications for elders and deacons to Timothy, he also wrote, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Tim 3:14-15)."

A similar instruction was written to Titus: "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might

put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you... (Titus 1:5)" Luke also noted Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood (Acts 20:28)."

Hence, we come to membership. It is true that the word "membership" is difficult to find in the Bible, but it is a way for the overseers of Christ to identify and know His flock. The members are people of the particular gathering of Christ in any church – for this article, the people at GBC.

To be a member then is no different from stating a willingness to be shepherded by overseers. God designed His church to be shepherded by overseers called elders, whose main role is to impart truth and live out truth as an example to members, so that they may be transformed into Christlikeness. Furthermore, Hebrews 13:17 lays down the weightiness of this task: "Obey your leaders

***"To be a member then
is no different from
stating a willingness to be
shepherded by overseers."***

and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

Church – Built Up By Saints

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ... (Eph 4:11)"

Did Jesus say in Matthew 16 that He will build the church? But how? Remarkably Ephesians 4:11 tells us the saints are equipped for the work of ministry to build up the body. That is how Jesus intends to use people like you and me for this work. And that is why it is so important for us to belong. We participate in the work Christ has left us on earth to do. The shepherds (and many others) are given to equip the saints to do Christ's work.

Given all that the NT has to say about church, will we still treat this special gathering that we have been called to so casually?

We have been called out to gather and belong. Some of us struggle with gathering and attending. Some of us perhaps struggle with giving up our time to participate. Some of us struggle with subjecting ourselves to another. Therefore, let us ask God for help in this matter. Ω

MISSIONS

The Burden of University Ministry In a Post-Christian Society

Barnabas Lin has been ministering through the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) in Chicago for the last eight years. During his academic sabbatical last year, he sought God's guidance for his future steps in ministry, and here he shares with us the questions he wrestled with. We thank God for giving him the discernment and clarity needed as he continues to witness to His grace.

Why am I in the United States?

The first 18 years of my life, God chose to rear me in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. I have thus often wondered if God might be calling me back to Asia. However, in this past year it has become clear that I am to stay in the US. Not only have global missiologists been writing about this, but I also have been sensing for a while that Christianity in the US is not doing well. I see this sickness first hand at many levels in the American society and have an overwhelming burden to minister the gospel of Jesus in a proud society that doesn't see its sickness.

This was confirmed to me in conversations with mentors and with my dad, as the questions that I am asking about theology and ministry are all clearly missiological questions that only apply to post-Christian countries. Because the US had its day as a 'Christian Nation', people are either closed to, suspicious of, or ambivalent about the Christian message. My hope is that the next 5 years will be spent trying to figure out how to minister the gospel effectively in this post-Christian society.

Why am I still doing University ministry? Should I be moving into local church planting ministry?

I am no longer in my twenties and as I returned to campus last August, it was clear to me that



Barnabas Lin teaching at a retreat in Jan 2018

there is a significant age gap between incoming university students and me. Nonetheless, the university is the educational institution of any society. It's where people with big questions come to learn how to think. Hence, it became clear to me that this is the place in the US for me to minister, to (1) reach non-Christians whom we live in close proximity with (i.e. evangelism), and (2) disciple Christian students to think Christianly about the world and about their discipline

of choice and their vocation.

With the local church, there is an opportunity to partner with a church planter to support a church plant that is looking to plant a congregation at the border of an Asian American and African American neighbourhood. While my primary call is to minister in the secular university, I am excited to help in any way I can. I have continued to be a part of the same local church and small

group for the past nine years, but I am looking forward to ways I can support this church plant.

Practical Ministry Implications

To be effective in this next season of ministry in a post-Christian nation, I will need to gird up and study. In 2019, I plan to shift over to full-time study to really focus my energy on finishing my Masters of Divinity, specifically in how to preach and teach the gospel in a post-Christian society.

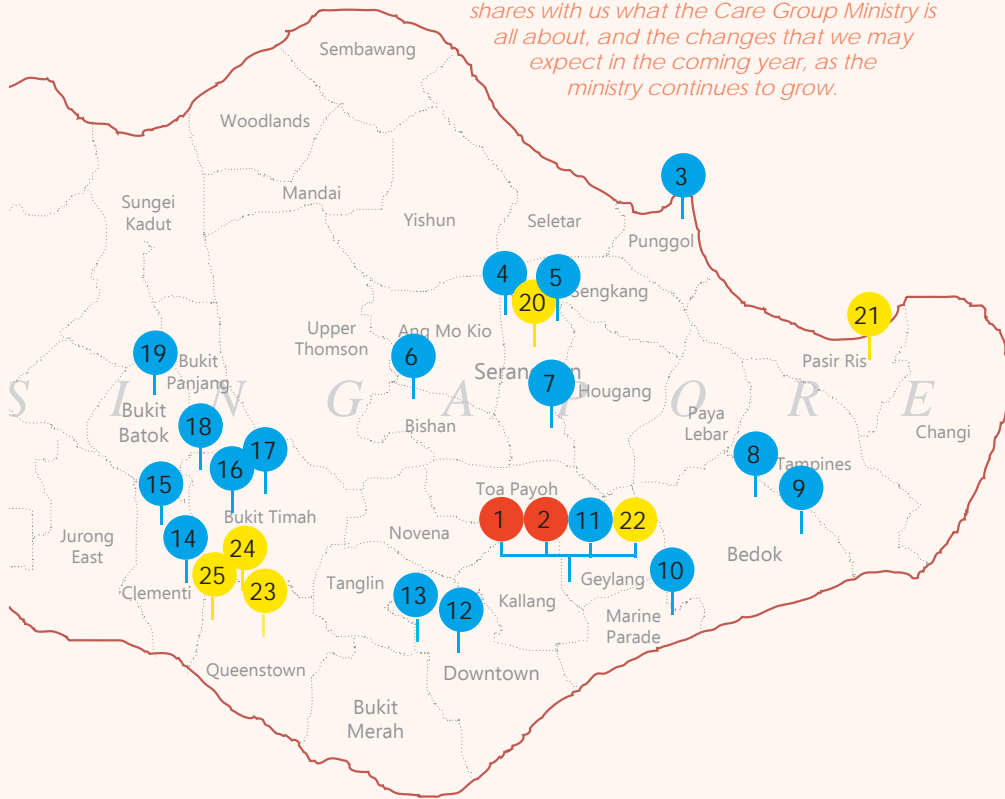
Second, as I mentioned earlier I have discerned a unique calling as a missionary from outside the west, sent to the west. The Lord further affirmed this calling as IVCF invited me to direct one evening of Urbana Missions Conference (web: www.urbana.org/meet-team) – the largest student missions conference in the world. God has used this conference to mobilise thousands of missionaries globally. I will be directing the Gospel in Action plenary in December 2018 and have been tasked to identify one pressing global missions issue to bring it before 16,000 students. Gospel in Action will be built out of Revelation 18, and I'd appreciate your prayers as I know that God has a word of prophetic mercy for the North American church. May He give me wisdom and discernment for how to craft a plenary session to bring this word to this generation of students and missionaries. Ω

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MINISTRY FOCUS

Caring Through Care Groups

Ever wonder what goes on in a Care Group? Lim Song Huat shares with us what the Care Group Ministry is all about, and the changes that we may expect in the coming year, as the ministry continues to grow.



Find a suitable Care Group



Meeting Days

- Wednesday
- Friday
- Saturday

For more information contact:

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info@gracebaptistchurch.sg

What is the Care Group Ministry about?

The Care Group (CG) Ministry consists of the CGs and a co-ordinating team. Currently, there are 25 adult CGs (excluding Young Adults and Youths) involving 300 people. At GBC, we believe that CGs are microcosms of the church. A CG is a safe and effective platform where our members gather regularly to study God's word, and to build a sense of belonging, accountability and care for each other (Heb 10:24-25). Through personal and communal study of the Bible, members discover God's will for their lives and develop a deep and vibrant relationship with God. When facing challenges or experiencing sorrow, members receive from one another comfort, encouragement and exhortation to live a life of faith in God despite their circumstances.

The co-ordinating team comprises of Oliver Chia, Lim Song Huat, Ngo Thian Chye, Lee Siang Teck and Winnie Lam. The team aims to provide broad directions and support for the CGs, including CG leaders' training, sourcing of materials, and encouraging more people to join a CG.

What is happening in 2018?

We started the year with a CG Celebration Night on 13 Jan 2018. The event was well-attended by about 60 people from different CGs. There was an ice-breaker game, some discussion time, and a video presentation on 'one another-ing' in the church. There was great interaction amongst all who came, so everybody made new friends and had fun along the way. It was also very encouraging to see some new faces who were not yet part of any CG, but came

to explore joining one.

Also, after concluding the study of the book of Acts last year, the CGs are embarking on the study of the book of 1 Timothy for the first few months of the year, in line with our pulpit series and theme of 'Believe, Belong and Behave'.

What are the changes?

We are intensifying our efforts to encourage more people in GBC to join a CG, and establishing more 'inter-generational' CGs. Therefore, we have uploaded a map of the locations of our CGs on our church website. We will also contact all our first-time visitors and help connect them to a CG. In addition, Pastor Eugene will invite some young couples to form an 'incubator CG' with him for a six-month period, before disbanding this group and sending out its members to

launch new CGs.

Another relatively new initiative is to get the CGs to serve alongside other ministries within the church. For instance, CGs have been rostered to provide food for the hospitality table on Sundays – it has been a joy to see CG members working together to serve the larger GBC community. Other areas include outreach projects such as Gracehaven and mission trips.

How may we pray for the CGs?

Firstly, please pray that all CGs will continue to focus on the study of God's word, and foster a strong sense of Christian community, resulting in spiritual growth for all members. Secondly, pray for more leaders to be raised to lead new CGs, and more people to be willing to join a CG. Ω

MINISTRY FOCUS / EVENTS

All meetings are scheduled fortnightly unless otherwise stated

1	Mattar Road	2	Mattar Road	3	Punggol
	Chong Miauw Suang		Sarah Tang		Jena Tang
	9:30 AM		weekly 8 PM		8 PM
4	Serangoon	5	Serangoon	6	Bishan
	Tan Kim Cheng		Carrie Chong		Helena and Steven Ngiam
	8 PM		weekly 8 PM		8 PM
7	Serangoon	8	Bedok	9	Bedok
	Leow Bok Wee Gerald Lau		Shige Mori Philip Lim		Tan Khée Peng
	8 PM		8 PM		8 PM
10	Telok Kurau	11	Mattar Road	12	River Valley
	Seah Kah Yin		Sherri Buntain		Tan Cher Ming Joey Raju
	8 PM		weekly 10 AM		8 PM
13	Tiong Bahru	14	Commonwealth Avenue West	15	Sunset Way
	Toshiyuki Mori		Eric Chan Evelyn Ng		Tan Chong Tien Lee Chung Cheong
	8 PM		8 PM		8 PM
16	King Albert Park	17	Rifle Range Road	18	Bukit Timah
	See Kwang Yew Kong Chuan Wei		Lim Song Huat		Eric Tan Joel Tang
	8 PM		8 PM		8 PM
19	Bukit Batok	20	Serangoon	21	Pasir Ris
	Tan Chiu Hee		Tan Yee Kiat		Charles Tan Lee Siang Teck
	8 PM		7 PM		5 PM
22	Mattar Road	23	East-West	24	Holland Village
	Chan Yoke Meng Esther Chan		Paul Wu George Yeo		Tan Wei Quan
	2 PM		8 PM		3 PM
25	Dover	Profiles Working adults Ladies Retirees Intergenerational			
	Matthew & David Koh Cheng Yuxi				
	4 PM				

CG Nite 13 Jan 18

The CG Nite was attended by about 60 people. There was an ice-breaker game, some discussion time, and a video presentation on 'one another-ing' in the church.



Commissioning of Fedora Teong 28 Jan 18

The church prayed for Fedora Teong prior to her three-year term in Thailand with OMF.



Baptism of Noah Tan 11 Feb 18

We rejoiced with Noah Tan as he professed his faith and his desire to obey Christ by following Him in baptism.



Evening Expositions with Professor D A Carson 8 - 9 Mar 18

It was a joy to see our fourth floor sanctuary completely packed with brothers and sisters from different churches and even around the region and beyond, as we partnered Project Timothy and ETC Asia to spend two evenings studying Romans Chapter 3



and 4 with Professor D A Carson.

At the end of his sermon, Carson reminded us that we are "children of the

promise" together with Abraham and Israel who walk with God "by faith", and to trust in His word and promises.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The Three B's



2nd B: Belong

By Rachel Wong

Do you remember the story of the ugly duckling? The ugly duckling didn't fit in with the rest of his family – he was bigger and a different colour and he was better at swimming than his brothers and sisters. Even the other animals in the farmyard didn't like him. They pecked him and laughed at him and were so mean to him that in the end he decided to run away.

We all like to feel we belong, whether it's to our family, our school, our group of friends, or our church. Sometimes we want to belong so much that we change things about ourselves just so we fit in with the group: we wear similar clothes or we talk in the same way and pretend to like the same things as everyone else. We don't want to be an ugly duckling: we don't want to be different and stand out from the crowd.

But the important thing is, you don't have to fit in in order to belong! You belong in a place because of who you are, not because of the things you do. The ugly duckling belonged to his family because he was born into it – he didn't have to be yellow and fluffy to belong. You don't have to wear smart clothes and

say, "God bless you" to everyone to belong in church! Nor do you have to be the same kind of person and do the same things as everyone else. You belong in church because you are a child of God and part of His people.

Belonging means having a place as the person you are. Fitting in means you have to change things about yourself in order to be accepted by others. Remember what happened to the ugly duckling in the end? It turned out he wasn't a duck like the others, he was a swan! He couldn't change himself into a duck no matter how hard he tried, that's why he felt he didn't fit in. However, eventually he realised he could be a swan and still belong, so he stopped trying to change himself and was much happier.

God has made you to be one of a kind too, so don't be afraid to be a swan – or an owl, or a flamingo, or an eagle. As long as you believe in Jesus you belong to God and will always have a place among His people, the church. Ω