

It Ain't Over Till It's Over

By Eld (Dr) Alex Tang

Jeremiah 32:8–12 (NIV)

⁸ “Then, just as the Lord had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, ‘Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself.’ “I knew that this was the word of the Lord; ⁹ so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰ I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. ¹¹ I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy—¹² and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard.

At this stage of the MCO, many of us are existing in a state of limbo. Our earlier enthusiasm for learning new languages or writing a book is forgotten as we linger in our existential anguish. Some guys have given up



shaving and others, house cleaning. We are COVID fatigued from the overconsumption of social media and streaming services. The prophet Jeremiah must have felt the same way as he was tied to a post in the courtyard of the royal palace for speaking out against the king. Outside Jerusalem was certain death as the Babylonians were besieging the city, much as the SARS-CoV-2 virus is

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besieging us today. It was in this context that Jeremiah made a real estate transaction. He bought a field in Anathoth! It would have seemed crazy to the guards in the courtyard and the rest of Jerusalem that Jeremiah bought this piece of land. Did Jeremiah not know that the Babylonians were camping on that piece of land? And when the Babylonians break through the city walls, the land title deed would be worth less than toilet paper!

It will seem to be the height of stupidity to have hope that there will still be a nation after the Babylonians are done with it. Eugene Peterson refers to Jeremiah buying a field, “There is more here than Babylonians at the gate; there is God in your midst. Judgement is here. But don’t despair; it is God’s judgement. Face it. Accept the suffering. Experience the chastening action. God is not against you; he is for you. God has not rejected you; he is working with you. “It is a time for distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7).” “Why do you cry over your hurt?...For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the LORD” (Jer 30:15,17).” (*Run with the Horses*, p.173)

Let us continue to spur one another to the hope that one day the pandemic will be over. We have to trust God that He will restore our civilization again. We do not know what will emerge post-Covid. Life will never be the same as before. We have to come to terms with that. It will not be life as

usual. It will be a new global era as we pick up the pieces after the pandemic. What is certain is that our faith in God should remain the same, if not stronger. God has not abandoned us. God is with us. He is our hope in these dark days. Jeremiah, in spite of all his sufferings, understood this. Jeremiah 32:42–43 (NIV) ⁴² “This is what the Lord says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. ⁴³ Once more fields will be bought in this land of which you say, ‘It is a desolate waste, without people or animals, for it has been given into the hands of the Babylonians.’

That is why Jeremiah bought the land. It was not a crazy act but one of hope and faith. Therefore, in this time of darkness and fear, let us invest in something that will be of value post-Covid-pandemic. God has shaken the world and reveals, which is of value is not your portfolio, your titles, your assets, or your accomplishments. The people who are standing between us and total destruction are not the high flyers, the bankers, or politicians. It is ordinary people called to do a task – healthcare workers, delivery persons, sanitary workers, NGO workers, and others – who risk their lives daily. Those who have to leave their families and venture out to the battlefield daily. Not for money, for often we do not pay them enough. But for duty and love for their fellow human beings.

Let us invest in the lives of others in these unsettling times. Here are some suggestions:

- Pray for the frontliners for protection and health
- Call/Zoom/Whatsapp someone to encourage them
- Take part or support NGOs who are delivering food to the poor, needy and sick
- Volunteer to take someone who needs transport for their hospital appointments
- Check that your neighbors are well
- Open religious buildings, which are empty now because of the pandemic, to the homeless
- Think of ways you can help those who will be jobless when the MCO is lifted
- Think of ways you can encourage hope and faith in your faith communities
- Stay at home, social distancing, hand washing to break the chain of infection

This is not the end of our way of life. It is a stop, pause and reset on our way of life. God is not done with us yet, and neither are we. As someone said, "It ain't over till it's over".

From A Pastor's Desk

Living With New Normal Of Worship To Our Lord

By Rev (Dr) Chuah Seong Peng



We are living in unprecedented time. Never have we seen such strange phenomena in life. The air is pure but wearing a mask is mandatory. Roads are empty but no one is going on a long drive. People have clean hands but shaking hands are forbidden. Friends have time to sit down together but they cannot get together. This is because Covid-19 is an unprecedented pandemic. Never have the world in this generation experience such an attack from a virus on this scale.

The pandemic has brought great distress to many. It has upset our routines, conveniences, and brought untold sufferings to some especially the vulnerable, the old, the sick and

the disadvantaged. Many businesses have suffered and are suffering. People's daily livelihood have been severely hampered. Some have even lost their loved ones but have little time to mourn and unable to give them a good normal sent off. The economic repercussion and toll after the pandemic cannot be calculated or fathomed even at this time, for no economist has ever dealt with such challenges in his/her life.



Since the pandemic is unprecedented, no one really knows the virus well enough to combat it with confidence effectively. Indeed, we are learning new things about the virus and new methods of treatment day by day. We are bombarded with all sorts of information and news, some really sounded illogical and far-fetched, even hilarious at times. Thus, we can only conclude that no one really knows clearly what to do. That's why we see the United States of America, the strongest, wealthiest, and most technologically and scientifically advanced country in the world, has failed and ended up being the epicenter of the pandemic in the

world. So how do we face the pandemic and prepare for the coming days? Be vigilant and careful but not to act out of fear.



As a church, we thank and praise God that we can continue to worship Him in Spirit and in truth even at times like this. He has given us new ways, with the new technology, to worship Him. Be bold and courageous. Learn new things and acquire new skills and tricks to come to worship Him. Continue to meet together through virtual space of digital platform like Zoom or others, worshipping and listening to His Word, studying, praying, encouraging, and spurring one another towards love and good deeds.

Let us take comfort that in the midst of all these uncertainties, we have a sovereign God who is all knowing and in control of our lives. Live with thanksgiving in our hearts, that we have a Father in heaven who loves us, saves us, constantly watches over us and cares for us.

Whatever challenges or troubles that come our way, be it in our family, our business, career, study, or our health and wellbeing, we can be sure of where our help will come from. Our help will come from our Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let our foot slip. He who watches over us neither slumber nor sleep. He will keep us from all harm and watches over our lives. What a great assurance we have! So do not fear.

Take comfort and understanding from the Word of God that the pandemic is not unexpected, for the Scripture tells us clearly that we are living in the last days where things will get worse until the coming of our Lord again. The important message from the Lord for us is to be ready at all times for His return. What we need to do in such times is what Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 5:15-18,

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

We are to be sober and wise by being filled with the Spirit. Do not be fearful but with the Spirit's help, be discerning to know how to filter all the news and information that come to us. Join with each other, the nation

and the world in taking good precautionary measures to fight the virus. Live not with despair but rather see this as an opportunity for us to share the gospel of His kingdom knowing that the Will of God is for His kingdom to come here on earth as it is in heaven. Therefore, draw close to God and shine forth the light of Jesus in this dark world to expand His kingdom on earth.

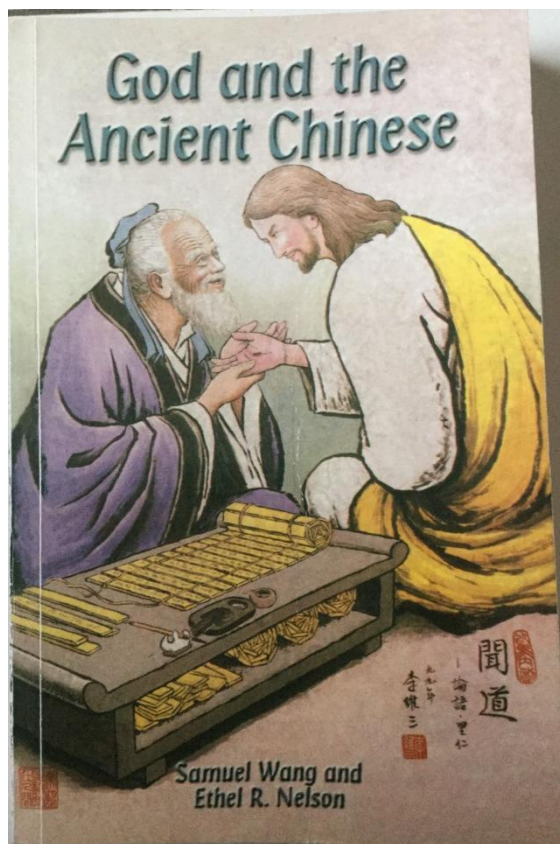


Jesus tells us that the church has to go and preach this message of the kingdom to all nations before He will come again. To hasten the return of our Lord again and take away our sufferings in the world, heed His command as well as see it as our duty to proclaim the good news seriously and urgently to those around us and beyond.

Therefore, in the coming days, continue to live with our new ways of life and to worship our King. Focus our eyes on our Lord Jesus Christ and keep ever closer to Him and worship and serve Him and go and preach the gospel to all nations as we look forward to His coming again! To God be the glory!

Did God Speak To Ancient Chinese?

By Dr Ngeow Took Fah



One reason why indigenous Chinese generally and historically resist Christianity is that they regard it as a foreign religion, incompatible with their culture. No less important is the closed door attitude and policy of their rulers who were mostly hostile towards outsiders and viewed them as barbarians or, worse still, subversives. However, there were exceptions. For example, Tang emperors did welcome the arrival of Nestorian preachers in the ninth century, and Ming emperors accepted the Jesuits and even allowed them into the imperial courts.

China has a long history. Ancient China refers to the legendary period when it was ruled by kings Yao, Shun, Yu, and later, the three early dynasties of Xia (2205-1750 BC), Shang (1750-1100 BC), Zhou (1100 - 256 BC), before Qin Shi Huangdi unified China in 221 BC.

Ancient China was essentially a theocratic state. The people believed in the God of Heaven known as Tian 天 or Shangdi 上帝 and prayed to Him for blessing and mercy. Their rulers received the mandate to rule from their God of Heaven which could be withdrawn in the case of malevolent rulers, giving way to the birth of a new dynasty. Mencius said: 'They who accord with Heaven are preserved, and they who rebel against Heaven perish'. No wonder the Chinese referred to their country as the land of God or Shenzhou (神州)

Ancient Chinese apparently knew about certain major events recorded in the book of Genesis, as evidenced in their written language. Some of their characters were constructed with biblical stories hidden in them. For example, the character for boat 船 has, besides the radical on the left, eight mouths on the right, depicting Noah and his family of eight surviving the great flood in the ark he had built. The character for righteousness Yi 義 depicts a lamb on top of 我 me, thus signifying the blood of the sacrificial

lamb covers my sin so that I stand righteous and justified before God.

Many parallels between Chinese history and the Bible can be found in ancient Chinese writings, typically in the so-called Four Books and Five Classics (四书五经). These are the canonised texts prescribed for the imperial bureaucratic examination of every dynasty from Han (206 BC - 220 AD) to Qing (1645 -1911 AD).

The Four Books are:

The Confucian Analects: a collection of his teachings and sayings.

The Great Learning: on a ruler's virtue and love for His people.

Doctrine of the Mean: on ethical responsibilities of a ruler and a superior man.

The Works of Mencius: the second most important Confucian scholar.

The Five Classics are:

The Yi Jing: written by four sages over a period of 2000 years.

The Shu Jing: history of China and her relationship with Shangdi.

The Shi Jing: the world's oldest anthology of poems.

Li Ji: principles guiding and governing a nation, a family and a man.

The Chun Qiu Annals: history of Confucius' state of Lu.

All nine books have been translated into English by Rev. James Legge, a missionary from London who first came to Melaka and later moved to Hong Kong. Such was his interest and zeal in Chinese culture and writings that he spent twenty years translating these canonised books. He returned to London and eventually retired as the professor of Chinese language and literature at Oxford University.

Dr. Ethel Nelson, a retired pathologist with a missionary hospital in Thailand, and Samuel Wang, a Chinese American from Sinim Bible Institute in Tennessee, co-authored the book 'God and the Ancient Chinese'. In exploring the presence of God and His involvement in ancient China, they relied heavily on Legge's translated works. They were able to show that the God of Abraham was also the God of Heaven to whom the ancient Chinese prayed in times of need.

The book began with a scripture from Isaiah 49:12 where the authors seek to affirm that the land of Sinim referred to China, and not Aswan of Egypt as stated in some bible versions such as NIV. Jesus told His disciples that many would come from the East at the feast of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11). Besides KJV and NKJV, some bible dictionaries also agree with China as the land of Sinim. This would then account

etymologically the use of prefix sin in words like Sinology, Sino-Japan war, Sinophobia.

According to Nelson and Wang, there are many occasions recorded in the canonised books, where Shangdi spoke to His Chinese prophets, who were either the rulers or the sages like Confucius, Mencius, Lao Zi, Mo Zi, Xun Zi and others. It is interesting to note that the Chinese word for prophet is made of two characters: 先知, (xian zhi, meaning first to know). As stated in Shu Jing:

Heaven gives birth to kings,
Heaven gives birth to teachers.
The kings and teachers are assistants
of Heaven,
To teach the people the love of
Heaven.

Ancient Chinese believed that their God of Heaven is a God of love and that all His commandments are based on His love. The sage Mo Zi revealed God's love in a passage that is almost identical with Psalm 104. Another sage Mencius declared: 'Love is the most honourable dignity conferred by Heaven, and the safest home in which man should dwell.' Confucius' golden rule states: 'Do not do to others what you would not wish done to yourself'. This is fundamental to both Confucianism and Christianity.

The Book of Genesis recorded a world wide flood sent by the God of creation, in the calculated year of 2348 BC. It happened in China too, as stated in Yi Jing. King Yu was credited with successful drainage of flood water and later was awarded the Mandate of Heaven to found the new dynasty of Xia.

Just as in the case of the great flood, Egypt's seven year famine also occurred in China around 1766 BC during the Xia dynasty. In 1455 BC, God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to deliver them from oppression and restore the faith of their father. In China, a similar exodus took place when Shangdi instructed the ruler to move the capital from An in Shandong province to Yin in Henan, taking about the same length of time as the Israelites and for the same purpose of leaving an unclean, corrupt place.

The Chinese character 'dao' 道 is hard to define and can have several meanings. Depending on the context, it can mean the way, the word, to speak or to know. It was the wise old sage Lao Zi, the author of the 5000 word Dao De Jing, who personified Dao as the Holy One and called Him the Almighty. We now understand that to the ancient Chinese, Dao is God the mighty and Lao Zi's role was comparable to that of John the Baptist, to herald the coming of the Holy Man. With the coming of Christ, Dao is

synonym for the Way (to heaven) and the Word (of God), both being metaphors for Jesus.

It was Mencius who prophesied the coming of the Holy Man or a King, 500 years or more from the time of Confucius death in 479 BC. He added: 'We have waited for our Prince. When He comes, we may escape from the punishments under which we suffer'. A similar prophecy was made by Daniel in the Old Testament, that 70 weeks (490 years) from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 AD would be the coming of Christ, His anointment and crucifixion.

Did God reveal His great plan of salvation to the ancient Chinese? The answer is found in Yi Jing, the Book of Change, which is the foundation of all Chinese classics, philosophy, Confucianism and Daoism. Even though the name of Jesus or Christ never appeared in any of the canonised books, His presence can be deduced from the following passages in Yi Jing,

1. Thunder and rain set in. The image of deliverance. Thus the Son of the King pardons offences and forgives sin.

2. This is the person who is called the Great Man. His character matches with Heaven and earth, His light shines like that of the sun and moon. When He acts before Heaven,

Heaven does not disagree with Him. When He follows Heaven, He adapts Himself to the time of Heaven.

3. It is only the Holy Man who understands how to press forward and how to draw back. He knows life and death as well, yet does not deviate from the righteous way.

4. Although with struggling and hesitation, His mission and action came out just and right. Stepping down from a noble position, He assumed a low position, thus winning the hearts of all people. This passage without doubt parallels Philippians 2:6-11.

Regrettably, there was no mention of His crucifixion and resurrection. However, to my surprise, even the enigma of Christianity, the Trinity or Godhead, was cleverly explained by Lao Zi. What is remarkable is that the passage has its parallel in 1 John 5:7,8.

The Dao exists as one,
One exists as two,
Two exists as three,
And three create everything.

Nowadays, it is customary to address God the Father as Tian or more endearingly, Lao Tian Ye 老天爷。Shangdi is Jesus the King and 'Shenlin' the Holy Spirit.

Just as in the Bible, there is a so-called 'silent' inter Testament period of 400 years, God seemed to be silent to the ancient Chinese after the Shang dynasty when people turned to ancestor and idol worship. With regret and deep sorrow, Confucius declared: 'The great Dao is lost'. Dao was taught throughout the years from Yao until Mencius. Even though both Confucius and Mencius taught reverence to Heaven, the true knowledge of God had been lost by their time.

A change in political system is another cause for the decline of Dao. Subsequent emperors disregarded the Mandate of Heaven and turned China into an autocratic country where the throne became a heritable royal property, regardless of meritocracy. The influx of Buddhist monks and mushrooming of temples since the first century resulted in Buddhism being the dominant religion in China along with indigenous Daoism.

So it is my fervent hope that more people will come to know the intimate relationship that once prevailed between the God of the Bible and ancient Chinese, so that contemporary Chinese can discard their bigoted view of Christianity as a foreign religion. It cannot be more foreign than Buddhism.

Teo Family Update

Dear friends,

Greetings! And remembering each one of you during this Good Friday and Easter weekend as we remember the Lord's death and resurrection! This year's Easter celebrations certainly will not be celebrated in the "usual" way where we can gather in a church building for a time of corporate worship but will have to be commemorated through joining an online streaming service or listening to some worship service at home. The virus has certainly changed the way we "do church" and even the way we do missions has to change in order to adapt to the current pandemic. We pray for wisdom for church and mission leaders, and for those in the field, whose work and ministry have been drastically affected, that God will continue to help us to adapt and stay relevant in the midst of the challenges of the day.

For ourselves personally, our earlier plans to start work with OM Canada in mid-March has been delayed. The Movement Control Order (MCO) imposed in Malaysia has caused a delay as we were not able to obtain some documents that the Canada immigration had required. The immigration department, when processing our work permit application, had required us to produce a No Criminal Record from both Malaysia and China. We started working on getting these done, but due to the MCO, we are currently still not yet able to collect the documents that

we need to send to Kunming to apply for the China No Criminal Record. So we have to wait out till the MCO is lifted. This afternoon the Prime Minister just announced that the MCO will be extended for another 2 weeks. But thankfully, the Canadian immigration has granted us a 3 months time extension to obtain these documents. We pray that we can get the No Criminal Records done as soon as possible.

During this time of waiting and delay, we often ask God what might He be saying to us. And often, He points us to the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert. The Israelites could have arrived at the Promised Land in less than 2 weeks but they had to take a detour of forty years. And as we thought about this story, we were directed to the passage in Deuteronomy 8:2 when God said to the people, "Remember how the Lord led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands". Yes, I think this is a testing period for us!

This phase of our missions pilgrimage is like another milestone of faith lesson. We recall the first 101 faith and obedience lesson was when God first challenged us to leave everything behind and take the family to join the Doulos. Lesson 201 was when He challenged us to go to China. And now this is the third lesson 301 where again we need to re-learn faith and obedience - as the title of the book by Eugene Peterson aptly puts it - "A long

obedience in the same direction". During this process of long obedience, there are times when we struggle, when we doubt, when we feel we are not understood, when obstacles and delays arise along the way to distract us. But we have to learn again and again, faith and obedience. While getting the work permit approved is an important confirmation for us that this is the direction the Lord has for us, we remind ourselves that this is only another step to what lies ahead. There are still many unknowns and uncertainties ahead of us, adjustments to a new ministry and culture, many new things to learn and adapt to. We pray we may remain sincere and true, faithful to God in His call in our lives and to make a meaningful contribution to the new work ahead of us. We thank many of you who have been praying for us and who have encouraged us and supported us financially in this pilgrimage. We could not have continued this faith journey without your support and prayers.

During this Easter season, may God continue to direct our eyes unto Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.

The Lord bless you all as we celebrate His resurrection. Blessed Easter!

Shalom,
Chris and Joo Ping
April 2020

God's Provision And Grace

By Tina Lee Chuee Koon

I was asked by Elder Lee to share my testimony in Sinews as it is short of one article, which I agreed as I felt is time to give God the glory for what He has done in my life recently.

I was due for retirement this 23rd April 2020, having served my company for the past 40 years. Six months ago, my manager and staff asked me whether I would consider working on contract and my reply was why not as I have no plan as to what to do after retirement. Unfortunately, my Head of Department in KL didn't put much effort into this as he felt that it was not possible since no staff got extended after age 60.

I asked God for direction as I felt is time to give back to society and be a witness for Christ. There were a few options I was praying and looking at; Grab driver, Love Project, KBM, Hokkien, BB, and I remembered telling God that I still need finance to serve His Ministry.

By January 2020, my extension service seemed very bleak. Then came February 2020, my Head of Department in KL was transferred to another department and I have a new boss. He came on 3rd March 2020 to visit my branch and he mentioned to me whether I am keen to work as Contract Staff having heard of my contribution to the company. My immediate reply was, of course I am keen.

I remember very well when I received my yearly increment on 20th March 2020, I was shocked to know that my increment was above 20% which is beyond my wildest dream. Normally, the average increment yearly is around 5% and I did tell God that I can only enjoy it for 4 months as it was the beginning of the MCO whereby most of the staff are working from home except for operation staff. I was told that my recommendation letter for extension was ready pending HR recruiter to endorse it and since it is during MCO, I may have to wait until after MCO.

On 15th April 2020, just one week before my retirement, I received a message telling me that my contract extension service was approved for 6 months even though it was recommended for 12 months. The contract letter mentioned that I will still enjoy my existing benefits which includes medical, dental and optical benefits for both myself and my spouse. I am so glad and I still can't thank God enough for His provision and grace. Words just can't express my gratitude to Him, especially during this time. Covid 19 has caused so much uncertainty, havoc to the world economy, people are fearful over their jobs, businesses, etc. But God in His mercy can turn adversity into opportunity, despair into hope for His children. All the more we should realign ourselves and focus on Christ and not the circumstances as He is God of the impossible and He is all knowing. He will surely see us through this difficult period.

To God be the glory!

HUGE Love Project - Projek Sayur

By Kelvin Koh

On 22nd April, 2020 at 7pm, an 8-ton lorry entered Holy Light Church English compound at Ponderosa and unloaded 2 tons of vegetables onto the grounds of Hope School basketball hall. 17 cars and 26 volunteers (21 from Ihsan Johor, 3 from Ericsson Pet World, Desmond Leong and myself) unloaded the 70 baskets of assorted vegetables, sorted and packed them into more than 700 plastic bags. Everybody wore masks, gloves and were hand sanitized before entering the compound. Farrah from Ihsan Johor informed the Police at IPK and reported to Balai Polis Johor Jaya of our activity.

Over 700 families comprising the Orang Asli, the Rohingyas, some families in Malay kampungs and even government quarters received these vegetables. We even had extras to give to the clients of Love Project and the foreign workers around my shop in Molek 2.

The project's success came about with the cooperation of the donor, Mr Liew from Sin Lieng Enterprise Kulai, Kelapa Sawit, the transporter,

Mr Kumanan from Sooriya Udhayamt Malaysia, Kulai, Farrah from Ihsan Johor who with her 21 volunteers delivered the vegetables to the villages, homes and quarters.



Holy Light Church English Love Project led and coordinated the whole operation with the blessings and support of their leaders and were given the use of the basketball hall and the Ponderosa facility.

One Ihsan volunteer remarked, Muhibbah betul, orang Cina beri, orang India hantar, orang Kristian atur, orang Melayu bagi, untuk orang Islam berbuka puasa. This project was conceived primarily to provide something for the puasa season. Next project will be a dressed chicken for 100s for puasa.



14.5.2020



Break of Fast together with our Muslim volunteers



Projek Sayur distribution of vegetables to the poor.
8th May 2020





Projek Sayur distribution of vegetables to the poor.
15th May 2020



Projek Sayur distribution of vegetables to the poor.
16th May 2020



400 families received half a chicken from Aqina Farm, Ulu Choh

Sunday School in Kpg Jemeri on 29.2.2020



OA Ministry



Sunday School in Kpg
Rantau Panjang on 29.2.2020



Elder Lee passing
T-shirts & a guitar
to Pastor Yohanes
on 29.2.2020



Sunday School in Kpg
Jemeri on 29.2.2020



Medical Service in Kpg Jemeri
on 29.2.2020

NB: Contributions to Sinews newsletter, via email to spcheong88@gmail.com (in Microsoft Word format), in the form of articles, testimonies and original photographs (with captions) are welcome, but we reserve the right to edit them in the interest of HLCE. Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent that of HLCE or the editor.