



Newsletter of Holy Light Church (English), Johor Bahru



March 2021 Issue

From A Pastor's Desk

HLCE Theme 2021: A Life of Faith and Gratitude - *Be Faithful and Thankful Always*

By Rev Dr Chuah Seong Peng

The year 2020 has been a particularly challenging year for many. The year 2021 looks even more challenging with the continuing surging pandemic and the winter monsoon with its heavy downpour that some places have been badly flooded. To face another new challenging year, I believe a life of faith and gratitude is a good way to live.

A life of faith and gratitude go together. When we live a life of faith trusting God, it leads to gratefulness as we receive God's blessing that has been promised to us. Thankfulness in turn fuels and builds up our faith in God. Indeed, one of the best ways to build our faith is to live with thankfulness in our life. When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He asked them to live a life of faith, trusting Him to take care of them. As they received all the

blessing of good things and enjoyed His presence with them, they were thankful to God. Such thankfulness built up their faith in God. Thankfulness produces a healthy, growing and productive faith. Gratitude is a sure sign one is on a faithful path with God and is a mark of spiritual maturity. The more matured you are as a Christian, the more thankful you become.

There are a few reasons why I think this is a good way to begin our life for the New Year. Firstly, together with rejoicing and prayer, Paul tells us this is the will of

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God for us to live the abundant life in Christ in 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18, *“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Secondly, this is good for our health especially in the face of the pandemic. As Proverbs 17:22 tells us, *“A Cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”*

Thirdly, prayer with thankfulness in the heart is a key that releases the peace of God that surpasses all understanding to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus in times of anxiety and troubles. Paul shares this spiritual truth with us in Philippians 4:6-7, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

The Normal Christian Life

But more importantly, a life of faith and gratitude is the normal Christian life disciples are called to live on earth facing challenges as pilgrims on the journey.

In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul gives us some keys to live this normal Christian life of faith and gratitude facing our challenges. He wrote,

“since then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthen in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

For Paul, in the normal Christian life, Jesus Christ the Saviour and Lord go together! When we receive Jesus as Saviour, we also receive him as Lord. As we begin our Christian life with Jesus the Saviour, we are to continue the journey with Christ the Lord! Therefore, as we have received our salvation in Christ, let us continue to live and walk in obedience to Christ the Lord. We walk not run. It is a daily step by step, steady walk toward a goal.

Grounded, Growing, Grateful Disciples of Jesus Christ

In this walk with God, Paul exhorts us to live as *the ‘Grounded, Growing, Grateful Disciples of Jesus Christ’*. Firstly, we are to be grounded in Christ. We grow deep in Christ as we grow up in Christ. We are to be rooted deep in Christ like a tree receiving nourishment, nurture and sustenance from Him. We are to be built up like a building with strong foundation that gives stability and strength to withstand the storm of life. To do so, we are to build with Christ as the cornerstone, and the apostles and prophets as our sure foundation.

Secondly, we are to grow in faith maturing in Christ. We are to 'GO and LEARN' in Christ' school of discipleship and grow in spiritual maturity. Be humble and teachable, study and learn together as a body of Christ even as the Holy Spirit our Teacher leads and guides us.

Thirdly, we live a life of gratitude to God. As God helps us to be firmly rooted in Christ, being built up in Him, and being strengthen in our faith to grow in maturity in Christ, our walk in Christ would result in overflowing thanksgiving to God for what He had done and is doing in our lives. It is not just a feeling of gratefulness in our hearts but an overflowing superabundance thankfulness that something comes out in our life. We live not only with gratitude in the heart, but also lift up our hands in thankfulness to serve and glorify Him.

2021 – Year of Faith and Overflowing Thankfulness

Therefore, in the coming year let us live this life of faith and gratitude. Focus on Christ - His gentle grace and sovereign power. Focus on Him, not ourselves or problems. Walk in Him, spend time knowing Him and loving Him, study the word, pray, talk to Him, sing to Him!

Let our hearts be filled with overflowing thankfulness and live for His glory.

Let us begin each day with overflowing gratitude in our hearts, minds and hands as the psalmist proclaims in Psalm 118:24 (NLT), *"This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it."* Begin each day with thankfulness for our salvation and all the many blessings He sends. Ask God what we can do for Him in response to His love and faithfulness, grace and mercy for us.

Let us together as a church live with thankfulness, continue to sing praise in His presence.

Psalm 95:2 RSV *"Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"*

We will be singing with the psalmist in Psalms 16:9, 11, *"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."*

His peace, joy and love will be with us, in us, and among us overflowing to others. We will have the peace of Christ in the heart, wisdom of the Spirit and serve God for His glory!

Have a bountiful blessed New Year overflowing with thankfulness!

God be praise! Glory to God in the Highest!

Covid-19 Vaccine - A Providential Blessing of God? Will You Take It?

By Rev Dr Chuah Seong Peng

As we face the Covid-19 pandemic, we are thankful that the vaccine has been made available in such a short time. For Malaysia, the government has purchased the vaccine and will soon be rolling out the vaccination program. Will you receive the vaccine with confidence and gladness or are you still contemplating whether you should receive it? To help us make an informed and discerning choice, I like to share some information available on the vaccines – its nature and types, technology and production, safety, side effects and efficacy.

Types

There are many vaccines being made and marketed presently. For our practical discussion, we will only look at three main groups according to how they are made. The first group is the mRNA vaccine by Pfizer-BioNTech given in two doses 3 weeks apart and Moderna in USA given in two doses one month apart. The second group is the vaccine using viral vector by Oxford AstraZeneca from UK and Sputnik from Russia, and the third is using inactivated virus by Sinopharm and Sinovac from China.

Technology

The mRNA vaccine works on encoding the viral protein. It uses the messenger of the genetic code to produce protein as antigen to stimulate an antibody respond to the virus. It is easier and faster to produce through standardized chemical synthesis in quantity suitable for mass production. For those who are concerned about mRNA vaccine causing potential harm, they should note that the RNA does not integrate itself into the host genome and the RNA strand in the vaccine is degraded once the protein is made. Therefore, there is no residue effect on the body.

The viral vector and inactivated virus work as a viral protein that stimulates the body for an antibody response. The viral vector vaccine uses a low-pathogenic virus, which are largely harmless and alter them into viral vectors that will produce the same protein as the disease-causing virus. The inactivated vaccine uses killed or inactivated virus particles that pose no harm to the body. They are produced through biologic means that involved culture and harvesting, thus are more time consuming and labour intensive to produce.

Why so fast?

Some of us may wonder how the vaccine is made available in such a short time when conventional vaccine

production in the past can take up to ten years or more. Are the safety and efficacy compromised? Was it done in a hurry bypassing the stringent scrutiny required by health and government authority?

There are a few reasons why this is possible. First, the practical and urgent need of a vaccine in fighting the pandemic is a strong push factor. But behind all these, I see a providential blessing that God has put in place regarding the technology and ability to produce the vaccine in such a miraculous time. To start with, the making of vaccine using viral vector and mRNA vaccine are not a totally new technology. There have been research in this area for other illnesses like HIV, Ebola and other viruses for more than a decade. The only thing new is that it has not been made for mass production. Covid-19 pandemic posed an urgent practical need to work into this mass production. Great advances have been made in this area of genetic science over the years. Imagine the test kit for detection of the virus was made available even one to two days after the genetic code was revealed!

The work started the moment China provided the genetic code of the virus in January 2020. The work could start for there were readily available existing facilities for its research and production. Pfizer has their research

centre and factory in USA (Massachusetts, Michigan, St Louis) and Belgium. Moderna managed to source out one of the world largest pharmaceutical service firms like Lonza to produce it in USA (Portsmouth, New Hampshire) and Switzerland. The easy availability of volunteers and candidates to participate in the study and the present of a 'live laboratory' with the ongoing pandemic in the world to assess the effectiveness and side effects of the vaccine is a definite booster. In the past, vaccine production occurred after the pandemic, making it more difficult to assess its safety and efficacy. In addition, the huge government funding and speedy approval by FDA contributed to quicken its production and availability for use. In view of their amazing speed of production, are they safe and effective?

Effectiveness

These vaccines are effective in preventing, reducing the severity, and possibly the infectivity of the illness. From well documented scientific studies, the two-dose mRNA Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines showed efficacy of 95%. UK Astra Zeneca vaccine showed efficacy of 62-90% (Average 70%). These are remarkable efficacies if we compare it to flu vaccines which is only 40-60% effective. The regulatory approval from WHO for vaccine efficacy

threshold is 50% and above. Unfortunately, for Sinovac there is no well documented medical studies available from China. However, the study of Sinovac in Indonesia showed an efficacy of 68%, in Turkey 91%, and in Brazil 50.4%, after very mild illness was included (78% if only mild and severe cases were included). Sinopharm claimed efficacy of 79% from its Beijing Institute of Biological Products but did not disclose crucial details. Russia says its Sputnik V vaccine has an efficacy of 91%.

There are some preliminary results that show the vaccine reduces the severity on those who are infected after vaccination. It helps to reduce serious stage IV and V illness, thus cutting down the need of ICU care and ventilatory support. Also, there is evidence that their infectivity could be lowered, i.e. less chances of spread to others. All these remain to be confirmed with future study.

Safety and Side effects

All the reports from the vaccine studies showed them to be safe. In terms of side effects, some common reactions after vaccination are redness, swelling, or pain over the injection site. Fatigue, fever, headache, aching limbs are not uncommon in the first three days. These reactions are normally mild and subside after a few days. The

only serious fatal side effect of concern is anaphylactic shock that may occur rarely. Compare this to the risk of death from the covid-19 infection, this is very much lower. This can be seen from the present Covid-19 pandemic in the world where 2 million out of 101 million infected cases have died, a fatality of about 1 out of 50.

One of the best ways to assess the safety is to look at the effects of the millions of doses of vaccines administered throughout the world so far. The only notable rare and fatal side effect comes from anaphylactic shock in a few cases. US authorities reported 21 cases of severe allergic reactions from 1.9 million vaccination from 14-23 Dec 2020. These individuals have past history of severe allergy. A case of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenia where platelets dropped severely caused the death of a doctor in Florida, America was documented. This reaction is also found in other vaccines like MMR vaccine.

Because the vaccine is new and being scrutinized closely for side effects, we are to be careful when we receive reports and news of alarming side effects. A portion of people might experience medical events unrelated to the vaccine. For example, the death of 23 elderly in a Norway home. But on closer examination, these deaths

could not be attributed to the vaccines directly as they were critically ill at the time of vaccination and could have died from their serious basic disorders. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health issued a statement that there was no link established between the vaccine and post-vaccine death. WHO echoed the same sentiment on 22 Jan 2021. Others, like a sporadic case of the Portuguese nurse who died two days after vaccination, is still being investigated. An American nurse passed out after vaccination, but according to her, “she has an overactive vagal response and passed out with pain from anything – six times in the past six weeks!”

In summary

There are many vaccines available in the market. They may have different efficacy but they all have met the efficacy threshold set by the WHO. Their benefits far outweigh the risk of the disease. Even though they were produced in “record time”, no shortcuts were taken in the clinical and scientific process. The vaccines have been shown to be safe and effective and ready for use to prevent the Covid-19 infection.

For an effective immunization program to fight any diseases, herd immunity needs to be established. To do so, at least 70% of the population of the world need to be immunised. Therefore, it is our moral duty to

respond prudently and with some urgency when the vaccine is offered to us. I strongly encourage all of us to receive this vaccine and thank God for His providential blessing. In addition, we can be thankful that with this new research and breakthrough in mRNA vaccine technology, we can look forward to future novel therapeutic options such as vaccine treatment for cancer. Existing research on cancer vaccine for prostate, skin melanoma, brain glioblastoma and blood cancer are ongoing. Similar vaccine work on viral infections, both acute like Influenza, Ebola and Zika, and chronic like HIV and Herpes Simplex are being carried out.

Let us pray and work to fight the pandemic. In the meantime, continue to practice safety precautions of washing hands, wear mask, stay home, avoid crowded places and keep a safe distance from each other. Exercise regularly, eat and rest well. Most of all, keep well and happy and close to the Lord. At all time, be of good cheer for a cheerful heart is the best medicine.



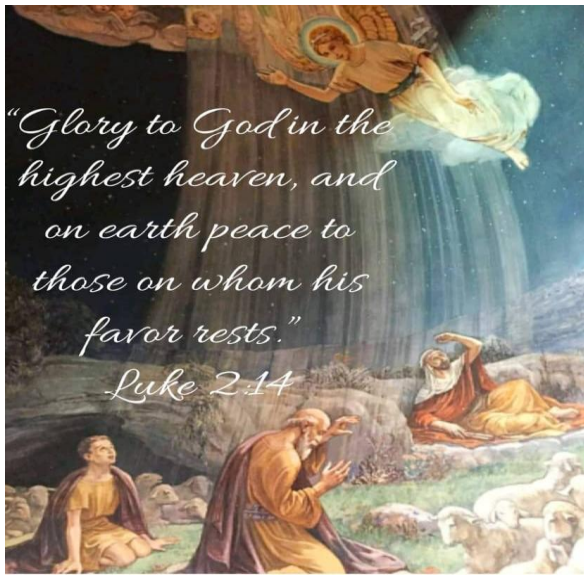
The Heart Of Christmas: Love, Hope, Joy

By Dr Alex Tang

Summary

The Heart of Christmas is Love,
Hope, and Joy

Text: Luke 2:8-14



And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

I. Introduction

What is the heart of Christmas?

Every year, I would go to Singapore to look at the decorations for Christmas in Orchard Road. Not this year because the border is closed due to the pandemic. It is interesting to see the various decorations and the bright colorful light up. But these decorations are either about the Christmas tree, Santa Claus and reindeers. I have yet to see a decoration about the birth of Jesus. Where is the Christ in Christmas? Is the heart of Christmas, Christmas sales and fancy dinners? Is the heart of Christmas about money and gluttony? Everywhere people will go into debt, using their credit cards to buy things, and spend the rest of the year repaying the loan. Is the heart of Christmas about greed? I want this, and this and this.

So what is the heart of Christmas?

II. Bible Exposition

A. **Love** (v.12). 12 “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

(1) Love is when God became a Man.

There is a powerful hymn written by John Walvoord, “Love Was When” Love was when God became a man, locked in time and space, without rank or place. Love was God, born of Jewish kin, just a carpenter with some fishermen. Love was when God became a man, down where I can see,

love that reached to me. Love was God, dying for my sin - and so trapped was I; my whole world caved in.

I wonder whether we can ever imagine what it is like for God to give up his Godhead and take on the form of a human being. And not only a human but starts out as a fetus in Mary's womb. We talk about baby Jesus. I am sure we are aware of how helpless a baby is. He needs to be fed and washed and cleaned. Imagine God, who is all-powerful and who with one word brings creation into being, take on the form of one of his creatures as a helpless baby.

What type of love would make one take such a step? When I read about St. Francis of Assisi, I marvel at the love of the man. He came from a rich family but he gave away all his riches. Then one day, he met some lepers. He was revulsed and turned away. That night, he felt such love of them in his heart that the next day, he went back to them, gave his horse to them and kissed their wounds, and stayed among them. The lepers were the outcasts. The unclean. St. Francis's love for the lepers allowed him to do what he did. Yet, that is a tiny fraction of what God's love for us is when he limited himself as one of us.

(2) Love is forgiveness.

Love is also forgiveness. It is God's love for us that brings us forgiveness. God knows that if He did not do anything, we are all condemned.

Doomed for the eternal fire. It is a love that offers us forgiveness.

In South Africa, during the days of apartheid, the blacks have been brutalized by the whites. When Nelson Mandela became president, he started a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation where the cases of abuse of powers were investigated. The victims were often called to bring charges against their aggressors. There was this black lady who lost both her husband and her son to a particular police officer. Both the men died in prison. So on the day of the hearing, the police officer feared for the worst. He was sure that the victim would ask for the harshest penalty on him. He was shocked when he heard the lady said. "I forgive you as Jesus have forgiven me. The only thing I ask is that you come to visit me once a month and have tea with me and we will talk". Love is forgiveness.

B. Hope (v.11). 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. There are three keywords here: Savior, Christ, Lord.

(1) In God's Promises

Our hope is in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him that we receive our salvation. Our hope is also in the promises of God. All that we have, all that we believe in is the promises of God. If God does not deliver on His promises, we are lost. The birth of

Jesus is proof that what God has promised is coming to pass.

Ephesians 4:4. 4 There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(2) A Better Future

There is also hope for a better future. This world we are staying in is a broken world – full of sufferings and pain. Because of the birth of Christ, we can look forward to a time when there is no pain and sufferings. We can also look to God to help us to live in this world.

Romans 8:20,21. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

C. **Joy** (v.10,14). 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

(1) Immanuel – God with Us.

Matthew 1:23. 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -

which means, "God with us." The joy came from the reassurance that God is with us. That no matter how far we have fallen from Him, He is with us. He will never abandon us.

John 10:27-29. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

(2) Immanence – God within us

Our true joy comes from knowing and experience God. And God now lives in us. When Jesus died and ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. And it all started with Christmas.

III. Lessons for Us

The heart of the Christmas message is not shopping, buying or eating. It is love, hope and joy. Jesus Christ's birth is an important historical event. It is the most important pivotal event in the whole history of the world. That is why dates used to be written as B.C. and A.D. B.C. is Before Christ and A.D. is Anno Domini (Latin 'in the year of our Lord'), After Christ. Nowadays, some people use the word C.E. that means Common Era. But Common Era still dates from the birth of Christ.

Tears: Ultimate Sign Of Deep Feeling

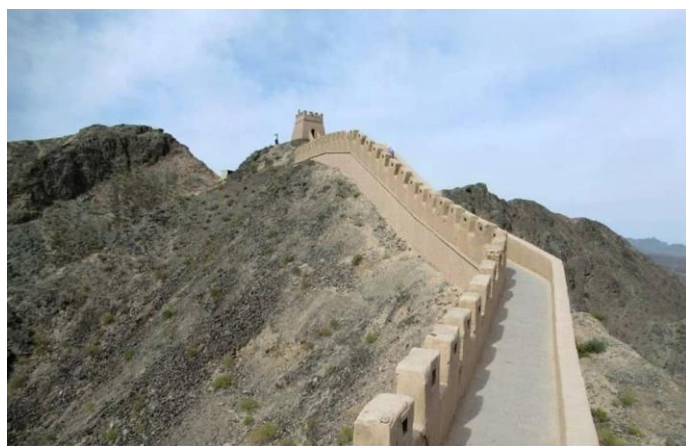
By Dr Ngeow Took Fah

Man is a gregarious animal. In his interactions with his fellow beings and environment, he depends on intuition and emotion which he is endowed with. Psychologists have long recognised that we are capable of various kinds of deep feelings or emotions, in response to different situations. Furthermore, cultural studies involving the United States, South America and Japan confirm a universal relationship between facial expression and emotion. For example, a tearful face is a convincing sign of a sorrowful heart, regardless of ethnicity. But it takes a computer wizard who is worth his salt, to interpret the many facial expressions represented by emoji.

Another function of tears is to maintain a film of fluid that prevents the eye from getting dry, and from irritation caused by trauma, foreign body and inflammation. Anatomically, the tear gland and the tear sac are far apart. Tears secreted by the tear gland move imperceptibly across the surface of the eye to the tear sac before draining into the nasal cavity via the nasolacrimal duct. The invisible lacrimal apparatus thus acts like a pair of wipers that clean the windscreen of a car. Dry eyes are not common except in the elderly. When present together with dry

mouth, it is known as Sjogren syndrome, an autoimmune disorder.

Outpouring of tears is the usual manifestation of grief. It is seen not only in the mourners but also in others who are moved by empathy. The impact of grief may even extend to the environment through unknown mechanism. This is shown in the well-known Chinese story concerning the building of the Great Wall of China. Thousands of farmers were forced to leave their farms and sent to work at the construction sites. Many died from exhaustion, malnutrition, diseases or



fatal injuries, and never returned home. One woman, named Meng Jiang Nu 孟姜女, ventured into the cold barren north to look for her husband. Her effort was futile. Nobody could give her any information. She cried and prayed day and night until a section of the wall suddenly crumbled and collapsed, exposing heaps of human skeleton of workers. Somehow she found the remains of her husband and so was able to give him a proper burial. Today, a temple stood at the eastern end of the Great Wall

overlooking the Yellow Sea, in memory of this woman for her courage and chastity.

Does this story sound similar to the biblical account of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:2-5)? Of course, there are many differences between the two events, but one thing is common and intriguing: the wall fell without the use of explosives.

Not all tears are tears of grief. Tears of joy are seen in people who are exhilarated by the fulfilment of what they have earnestly prayed for. They are manifestations of a faithful and thankful heart. A biblical example would be Hannah who was childless and being the second wife, had to tolerate insults and humiliations from her rival, the first wife. 'In bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord' (1 Samuel 1:10). God heard her prayer and granted her plea. She gave birth to Samuel whom she dedicated to God.

In the days of the Chinese emperors when people were unaware of treasures in heaven, they recognised and celebrated four occasions of joy: wedding night, top in imperial civil service examination, rain after months of drought and chance encounter with an old friend in a foreign land. Invariably tears of joy appeared on such occasions.

I recalled a song that says 'rain drops keep falling on my head'. It led me to

visualise King David crying 'tear drops keep flowing down my face'. This happened after his adultery scandal was exposed by Nathan and God meted out punishment on him. He confessed his sins against God, repented and declared: 'the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart' (Psalm 51:17). Tears of repentance earned him God's forgiveness.

Another biblical personality known for his inexhaustible tears is Jeremiah the weeping prophet. For 40 years, he was prophet to Judah until Babylon came and conquered the land. Such was his sorrow at the rebellious Jews that he cried: 'Oh that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears. I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.' (Jeremiah 9:1). His warning to the Israelites was repeatedly ignored. 'But if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride. My eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive' (Jeremiah 13:17). Nevertheless, he was also reputed for his endurance.

After the fall of Judah and destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews composed and sang this Song of the Exiles. 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion' (Psalm 137:1). They wept over the plight of captive Jews, their love for Jerusalem, and their anger against the enemies. If only they had heeded Jeremiah's warning.

In the New Testament, Jesus wept on seeing the body of Lazarus who had been dead for four days. It is natural that we weep over our parents' or siblings' death. Jesus considered Lazarus his friend. His tears were an expression of his love and compassion for a fellow human being.

In the case of Peter the apostle, Jesus predicted that he would deny his master three times before the rooster crowed. At the court house of the high priest, he suddenly remembered Jesus' words to him just when the rooster crowed, and he was deeply hurt by his conscience. He wept bitterly as he left the court house, his tears flowing out of remorse and shame.

The figurative use of tears can be found in the book of Psalms, e.g. 'Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaths with him.' (Psalm 126:5,6) Salvation deserves the greatest joy, and the song of joy is accompanied by tears of joy. Charles Spurgeon says: 'Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. Tears of earnestness beget tears of repentance'.

'You have fed them the bread of tears, you have made them drink tears by the bowlful' (Psalm 80:5). God's wrath with the Israelites resulted in their perpetual tears of repentance and prayer, and their cry for restoration.

'Thou tellest my wanderings, put thou my tears into thy bottles. Are they not in thy book?' (Psalm 56:8 KJV, in NIV bottle replaced by scroll.) Mourners in Egypt and Palestine used to collect their tears in tiny glass bottles to be placed in the tomb as a gesture of love and respect for the deceased. Here, David pleads with God to keep his tears in a bottle as a record of his many wanderings caused by his enemies pursuing him.

The Chinese have the concept that a he-man is stoical about shedding blood, but shedding tears is abhorrent to him. Now that we know weeping is not a sign of spiritual weakness but a mark of deep emotion, what can we do with a brother whose face is tearful? Paul gave a simple answer: 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn' (Romans 12:15). Here we have Jesus as our example.

Paul also suggested seeking the God of all comfort. 'The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God' (2 Corinthians 1:4). Through keeping in touch with God, we receive peace and comfort, strength, encouragement and hope to overcome our trouble.

This may sound like a trite statement to some people, but we should remind ourselves of

Proverbs 3:5-6. 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.'

However, a useful lesson we can learn from Job's three friends: When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognise him and began to weep aloud. Then, they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was (Job 2:12-13). This approach may be applicable when trouble seems too big or complicated to be resolved with mere words. What the person needs most is our presence showing that we care, even though we feel we must say something spiritual or insightful to encourage him.

Tea Family Update

November 2020

Dear friends,

October is a time when the salmon make their way back to the place where they were first hatched. It is still a mystery how these fishes know how to find their way from the sea, thousands of kilometers away, to swim back to their birthplace. When we went for some walks along the trails nearby, we managed to see some of these salmon swim upstream in the river; they had to swim against the water flow, went over rocks and obstacles, waited and waded in the water, and pressed on until they reached their final destination. After they spawned, the salmon died at the place where they were hatched. As we pondered over their arduous journey, we are reminded that our journey in life is filled with challenges too and we have to be patient to press on and to keep on keeping on. The extended pandemic has certainly affected all of us in different ways and we continue to trust that God is Sovereign and will help us through this.

The weather has begun to get cold and the leaves on the trees have started to change colors to give a beautiful sight to the autumn colors. They reflect the majesty of God's creation and they also remind us that there are different seasons of life that we go through. We are grateful to the

Lord for this season of our lives, for a new chapter of service where we can be nearer our two daughters. In mid-November, we moved to a smaller one room apartment and is located very close to both Amanda and Leanne. We are thankful we can see them more often.

Chris is gradually getting acquainted with the office matters. The Covid situation has certainly affected the missions world and all our short term trips had to be cancelled this year. For next year, OM is allowing only short term trips that are two months and longer. Of course, our co-workers in the field have also been affected in different ways and we also continue to pray for wisdom and patience as we all go through this pandemic situation together and find new ways of doing missions. We had the privilege to get to know an ex-OMer who is now 75 years old, and he and the wife are still actively serving amongst international students. He has been very kind to link us up and network with a few people here. Due to additional social gathering restrictions imposed here, it is not convenient to meet up with people. Apart from our admin work, we have been praying about getting involved with some local ministry. We got to know about some work amongst middle eastern refugees here from Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and we are in the initial stages of exploring the possibility of participating in this ministry. Please pray for the Lord to guide and direct

us as to how we can do friendship evangelism to share the love of God to this people group.

We do miss Malaysia, family and friends back home. Starting from zero here has not been easy, and we continue to slowly find our way around and make new contacts and friends. We would continue to covet your prayers for us as we look for more partners in ministry, both in prayer and finance for next year. Pray also we can be channels of blessing and encouragement to the people we meet, both online and in person and that our lives may be effective instruments for God's kingdom work here.

Keep safe and God bless you and family. Please do keep in touch and drop us a note as to how we can be praying for you too.

Shalom,
Chris and Joo Ping
Email: molek27@gmail.com
WhatsApp: +6016-7360529

Tea's Update

January 2021

Dear friends,

Wishing our dear friends A Blessed and A Happier 2021! Praying that the new year will bring a renewed sense of hope after a very challenging year for many of us and the world. In spite of all that is happening in and around the world, we continue to acknowledge the Sovereignty of God and put our trust in Him.

Joining the Dots

When I was very young, I remember a little activity that I enjoyed which was joining the little black dots in a picture book. After I have finished joining all these little dots, the picture becomes clear and I can then make sense of lines that I have joined from the mass of little black dots on the page. Over the last few months, I also begin to see God joining the little dots/events/people that He placed in my path and somehow all these link together. A few months ago, we were introduced to two young people involved with middle eastern refugee work. Through that acquaintance, we got into a network of people who are also involved in this ministry and I then got to know the missions pastor of a church here. Quite soon afterwards, he invited me to join their Global Mentors team where the team meets online weekly to encourage and grow together, focusing this year on spiritual formation. The Global

Mentors team make a special effort to meet up with their missionaries on the field over zoom. Together, they are currently going through a book by their pastor "Survival Guide for the Soul". Through this, I also get the opportunity to join the Kairos Course starting this month. I also am looking forward to learning more about the refugee ministry work and slowly trying to make a few new middle eastern friends. During Christmas, we helped to distribute Christmas gifts to two Afghan guys and Joo Ping made friends with an Afghan lady who has been here for only 2 months with her two children and another Turkish lady. We realize there are many opportunities for ministry here among the middle eastern refugees and we are still praying and learning how we can be more involved in this friendship evangelism. We pray God will continue to extend these dots and our future ministry in the coming year.

Christmas Dinner

During Christmas, we were supposed to have dinner at home with Amanda/Ben and Leanne/Yang to join us over zoom. But as it turned out, on Christmas Day, Ben's younger brother was tested Covid positive (and subsequently his wife and kid). So to be on the safe side, on Christmas Day, we only managed to do a zoom dinner with our two children and their spouses. Well, we were not the only ones who had to do this on Christmas Day as Canada had imposed social gathering regulations due to the rising number of Covid

cases. Thank God Ben's brother and family are now feeling much better. And thank God that because Leanne works in a hospital, she was given the vaccine last week. Do continue to pray for protection for her as her hospital had two outbreaks already.

The weather here has started to get colder and it rains a lot here! We are learning to adjust to the weather and the shorter daylight hours. But God is good and He continues to encourage us in our journey of faith. Our prayer is, as a family we continue to walk closely with Him and to love Him and serve Him well. Thanks to friends who have taken the time and effort to drop us a note after reading our updates! Do keep in touch and let us know how we can be praying for you too.

God bless,
Chris and Joo Ping

Hands

By Dr Alex Tang

A short stubby hand reaches out to touch the coarse linen swaddling his body in a stable. The other hand reaches out and touches a soft gentle face, that of his mother Mary, and there is another face with bristly hairs on his face, his father Joseph. Moments before, these hands enfold the whole of all known universes, able to create something out of nothing, and bring order out of chaos.

Now,
these are
the
hands of
a small,
helpless
baby boy,
unable even to feed himself. These
are the hands of God incarnate.



A small hand reaches out to touch the gold lining of the walls of the Temple. The boy's hands are small, soft and gentle. These hands play with mud; making mud cakes and animals. Fingernails are stained as the hands patiently mold and form mud figurines. These hands point and gesture, chasing the thoughts of their owner as he argues a point with the teachers in the Temple. These are the hands of a young Immanuel.

A hand reaches out for a piece of wood. These hands are now hard; calloused at the tips and the palms, scarred on the fingers. These hands have worked at his father's carpentry

workshop for many years. They have learned to appreciate the feeling of good wood, to feel for the grain and to perceive the plane of the cut. They know how to handle tools, and know where to cut and where not to cut. They have made straight what was once bent and bend what was once straight. These are the hands of a carpenter's son.

A hand reaches out and begins to write on the sand, as an angry mob mills around, picking up stones and rocks. These men were ready to punish a woman caught in the act of adultery. The punishment was death by stoning. They hesitated as they read what a finger of the carpenter's son has written on the hot burning sand. Then their hearts burnt with shame. One by one, they tossed aside their stones and rocks and walked away. A hand reached out to the hapless woman and a voice said, "Go and sin no more" These are the hands of love.

A hand reaches out and touches a blind man's eyes. Eyes that were unable to appreciate the bright colours of flowers, the beauty of the setting sun or the smile on the face of a beloved one. "Do you see anything?" a gentle voice asked. The man looked and saw tree shapes walking around. Doubts began to fill his heart and hope faded. The hands touch his eyes again. Suddenly the world comes into focus. It is such a beautiful world. These are the hands of healing.

A hand reaches up and a voice asks for water. The Samaritan woman hesitates and wonders about this Jewish man's motive. It is late morning and they are alone. She pours water from her jar and watches as the man drinks from his cupped hands. These are not the soft, pale hands of a priest, scribe or rabbi, she notes. Her mouth opens in awe as these hands point to the sky to emphasis that true worship is neither here in Samaria or in Jerusalem but in spirit and in truth. These are the hands of spiritual globalization.

A hand reaches out and clasps its partner tightly in prayer. The body tenses at the mental struggle with the commitment required of the carpenter's son. Beads of blood form on his brows, flow down his face and fall on the garden's grass. The night is dark, the air heavy and the world is hushed at this significant moment in kairos time. The hand searches in vain for another human hand but his friends are all asleep. Finally, the moment of decision, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." The tense hands relax. These are the hands of a saviour.

A hand is laid out on a piece of wood and a heavy nail is driven violently through it. Tissues are torn, tendons cut, bones crushed and nerves scream out in pain as the brutal blow is struck. Then, as the cross is hoisted into the air, the hands tear as the weight of the body bears on them. These hands hold the body on the cross as the man struggles with his

breathing. A voice says, "It is finished." A dividing curtain somewhere tears and light shine through. These are the hands of Christ.

A hand reaches out to Thomas for him to examine. A day ago, these hands lay ashen and dead in a tomb. Thomas looks at the nail-pierced hands and his worship burst out, "My Lord and my God." These pierced hands hold a sobbing Mary Magdalene and clasp the trembling hands of his beloved disciple. They make breakfast for head-strong Peter. These hands were dead but now are alive. They bless the disciples as the man ascends to heaven. As the resurrected Christ sits on the right hand of God, his hands continue to intercede for his followers on earth. These are the hands of God.

Many hands now reach out to each other and their neighbours. These hands help the poor, defend the helpless, encourage the depressed, liberate the oppressed, comfort the distressed, gather the lost, build up the community, restore broken relationships, calm the angry, clean a cut, feed the hungry, lift the fallen, support the broken, pray for the hopeless, reach the unreachable, touch the untouchables, forgive the unforgivable, teach the clueless, feed the hungry, heal the wounded, empower the powerless, and demonstrate Christ-like character on earth. These are the hands of the Body of Christ.

Now, give me a hand.

Testimony

1) *By Kua Hwee Sim*

I attended Sunday School in BP Grace Church when I was 7 years old. Going to church was a family event as it was done weekly, as my grandmother, aunties and uncles participated in the church.

After my secondary school, I left BP and started wondering which church should I go to. In JB, I do attend services at the different churches in Mount Austin, Taman Molek and Holy Light Church (English).

During the Covid 19 pandemic, the real impact and the realization that although I have been going to church, accepted Lord Jesus as my Saviour but I have yet to be baptised, so I approached Pastor Gan on 1st September 2020 to be baptised as it is my part to formalize that I accept and believe that Jesus Christ is my only God and Saviour. At the same time to seek for His forgiveness.

The special classes conducted by Elder Lee is definitely a great help to refresh and acknowledge God's greatness in this world. To accept the fact that I am merely a creation of God and through his crucifixion I can establish a loving and honest relationship. This is a great feeling during the Covid 19 pandemic that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour.

2) By Shirley Tan Ah Mooi

I have a good education, strong family relationship with very supportive and loving parents and strong siblings bonding. My parents were very responsible and always ensured we had food on the table.

My working career was good and smooth sailing. Relationships with working colleagues and friends are also good.

Although my parents are no longer around, I am always grateful to them and will remember them as caring and loving and they will be in my heart till the day I depart from this world. I feel that their passing left an emptiness in my life.

For the last 1½ years, my health started to slide. I started to have chest pain and started to visit doctors, but sadly the doctors said nothing is wrong. Besides chest pain, body pain also started to show up. Lastly, after many rounds of doctors' visits it was finally nailed down to anxiety disorder. Currently, I am under medical treatment at Hospital Sultan Ismail. I am aware that this sickness is too heavy a burden for me to carry alone. I must put my trust and believe in God, our Creator who is

loving, holy and supreme and entrust my faith in God to lift the sufferings from me. I am now ready to have faith to begin my eternal and new life with Lord Jesus. I have trust and faith that Lord Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour and through Him I can find peace, rest and forgiveness, be God's child and find eternal life.

3) By Henny Lumintang

As a Christian, I pray, read the Bible and go to church. Previously, I did it as a routine, until one day I met with the late Auntie Bee Lay at Holy Light Church. I saw her life and how she was full of love with so much wisdom and knowledge, especially about the Bible. I could feel the love of Christ in her. I was attracted, so I started to seek His face in my quiet time and I asked God to give me the desire to love Him and to know Him more.

God started to mold me and my daily life is no longer the same again. God is always with me in my ups and downs in life. He showed me many wonderful things. The words become so real in my life.

Only when we are close with Jesus we can grow mature and bear more fruits. To God be the glory!

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.

Ps Yohannes is also helping the villagers, in this case the Lenchek family in Kpg Kerpai, to raise their economic situation through small business. The HLCE team were there to interact, encourage and pray for them.



Calvin handing over his old motorbike to Ps Yohannes





Florence donating 2 Flat Screen TVs and a laptop for the Gereja Anugerah Kasih HLCE



The HLCE team brought along gifts for the baptism and Christmas celebration in the villages on 18/12/2020.

We thank God for the following donations:

- 1) 120 school bags from Yap Kim Guan/Chen Ling**
- 2) 100 stationery sets from Derek/Sharon**
- 3) 50 sets of 9 Bible story each from HLCE**
- 4) 5 boxes of face masks and sanitisers**



18 new believers were baptised in Kpg Kerpai
on 18/12/2020

4 believers, including one who is
bed-ridden, receiving baptism in
Kpg Tanam, Rompin on
18/12/2020

Rev Raymond
Ho baptizing
one of the
believers in
Kpg Kerpai
on 18/12/2020



Achik bin Cantek who suffers a mild
stroke, being baptised by Pastor
Raymond in Kpg Kerpai on 18/12/2020

Baptism & Confirmation on Dec 27, 2020

**Sis Kua Hwee Sim
Sis Shirley Tan Ah Mooi
Sis Jessica Marie Antoney**

**Sis Wang Neen Choo
Sis Jana Yong Hui**



Received into membership

**Bro Nadarajan A/L Arumugam
Sis G.Sulochana A/P Gouriah
Sis Subetra A/P Nadarajan
Sis Henny Lumintang**

**Confirmation:
Sis Jessica Marie Antoney**



Sis Kua Hwee Sim



Sis Shirley Tan Ah Mooi

