



wITNESS



Deeper:
Church Camp 2023
Highlights from this year's camp



Clinging to Hope in the Face of Eczema
A testimony of healing



Blessed to be a Blessing
Takeaways from a mission trip to Bintan



What Makes Us Human

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The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect
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in Singapore.

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Relational Holiness:



REV BARNABAS CHONG

Holy Love for God and for Humankind

What is Relational Holiness?

Relational holiness is about pursuing holiness within the framework of relationships.

Love is the common thread and foundation of relational holiness. God loves us and in response to His love for us, we love Him, we love one another within the Christian community and we love those outside the Christian community – that is the heart of the Christian faith.

In his article, *Relational Holiness: An Integrative Paradigm for Our Time*, Thomas Jay Oord said:

“God’s love for us and our love in return, as well as our love for neighbors and ourselves, resides at the core of Christianity.”

Love leads us to holiness. Loving God wholeheartedly and with the purest intention is a profound expression of relational holiness. And we do so because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

With the abundant love of God in our hearts, we then love each other within the church family, also with the purest intention for the good of one another. When we do that, we are building relational holiness among

fellow believers. This is critically important for us in our witness to the unbelieving world. For Jesus said, “by this [love], all people will know that you are My disciples.” (John 13:34,35)

Relational Holiness is 360-Degree Love

Holy, sacrificial and unconditional love, found in the Christian community is the window through which non-believers see the love of Christ. This a 360-degree love that is visible any time anyone looks our way, no matter where we are geographically, when we are at work and at play, in the public and private arenas, within and beyond the church, in the good times and the bad. They see unconditional, sacrificial love and they see Jesus working in us, for us and through us.

Threats to Relational Holiness

However, the way we relate with one another today is gradually changing as a result of sins of every kind. Modern day trends that threaten human interaction and relationship include diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) philosophy and also artificial intelligence (AI). Some have expressed concerns that AI could increasingly bring irreversible damage to love, friendship, cooperation, and teaching, among other important social values.

How Artificial Intelligence Could Change Humanity

In his article, *How AI Will Rewire Us*, Nicholas A. Christakis said,

“Parents, watching their children bark rude commands at digital assistants such as Alexa or Siri, have begun to worry that this rudeness will leach into the way kids treat people, or that kids’ relationships with artificially intelligent machines will interfere with, or even pre-empt, human relationships. Children who grow up relating to AI in lieu of people might not acquire ‘the equipment for empathic connection.’”

Christakis cited the case of American journalist, Judith Shulevitz as an example of the potential trouble AI could bring.

She wrote,

“Shulevitz herself says she confesses things to Google Assistant that she wouldn’t tell her husband. If we grow more comfortable talking intimately to our devices, what happens to our human marriages and friendships?”

AI will only grow more powerful over time, and what it is able to do because it is emulating human behavioural patterns at an exponential rate is anyone’s guess.

Larry Page, co-founder of Google said,

“Artificial intelligence would be the ultimate version of Google. The ultimate search engine that would understand everything on the web. It would understand exactly what you wanted, and it would give you the right thing.”

AI may give us the answers we want and the solutions to complex problems. It may even make us a lot of money, but it cannot offer a person in need a warm hug, a comforting voice nor an empathetic heart, and AI can never be uniquely original (as each of us is an original). In short, it cannot be fully human and this is where the church steps in. We can and must offer the good news of Jesus Christ to a badly damaged world, and relational holiness is key to our witness.

While AI could work for our benefit, in the hands of the wrong people, it could become a great evil. In applying AI technology, we must therefore put in place principles and practices to prevent the erosion of human relationships and the loss of humanness. These practices must stem from the constant pursuit of relational holiness – holy love for God and for humankind.

As our generation faces a new day – an era in which AI could potentially rule the world, the church of Jesus Christ must love God relentlessly, follow Him radically, love one another unconditionally, and love the unbelieving world with the love of Christ.

Deeper: Church Camp 2023



From 5 to 8 June 2023, we had our Church Camp in Putrajaya Marriott Hotel with speaker Mr Joseph Chuan.

It was a wonderful time of going Deeper in our relationship with God and each other. Here are some highlights!

The Prodigal Son: A Singaporean Version

BY JACKY CHENG

I was initially hesitant to sign up for Church Camp as I was struggling financially after losing my main source of income. This was the sixth time I had to turn my life around, after losing everything in May 2022. But despite this heavy burden I was carrying, I ultimately took the step of faith to register for the camp as I sensed that God wanted me to be there.

Living in the World

I was brought up in a household with mixed religions and I would visit both temples and churches during my primary and secondary school days. However, I did not really take my faith seriously even though I had been to Christian rallies and crusades, and even took Bible Knowledge as a subject in secondary school.

I started my first “unregistered” business at the age of 16, striving to become rich and successful by the age of 30 – a goal which I achieved. By age 27, I was drawing a five-figure income and was able to semi-retire. Money had become my primary focus and I would tell people that it was my god. I had become very full of myself.

Experiencing Church

I was led to CMC by chance. I saw a banner for the Alpha Course on the building and decided to attend it to understand God

better. At the end of Alpha, there was an initiative to start a Care Group. I attended it occasionally, but my focus was still very much on my business.

In 2006, I had the opportunity to set up a business in Kuala Lumpur and I would only attend church and Care Group whenever it was convenient for me. As much as I proclaimed that I was a Christian, I was enticed by worldly pursuits and had succumbed to various temptations. I knew God intellectually, but my heart was not there. Furthermore, I also found it difficult to connect with the traditional nature of church services which was not my preferred style of worship.

In 2021, I had to return to Singapore due to the pandemic. On one occasion, I decided to attend CMC and I felt that the service was very different from my previous experiences. Ps Edwin Wong’s style along with the vision and direction for the church appealed to me. After attending a few more times, I felt that I could call CMC my home once again. I started attending Care Group more regularly after that as well.

The Prodigal Son Returns

A few days before the camp, I went to Malaysia to handle some business matters. On the night before the camp, I had



supper with a good friend of mine. Halfway through the supper, I started to feel very uncomfortable and after about an hour, I started to vomit. It worsened throughout the night, and I was worried that I would not be able to drive to the camp venue. Thankfully I met my Care Group members who gave me medication and I managed to make my way to Putrajaya Marriott Hotel. However, I continued to feel unwell and had to rest in my room during the first day, missing the first evening session. The whole episode felt like a spiritual attack that manifested as illness to prevent me from hearing the Word that God had for me.

Thankfully after a good rest, I managed to attend all the subsequent sessions. The camp speaker, Joseph Chean, shared many of his own experiences and setbacks which I could relate to. My pride, ego and even manipulative ways were so evident in my business. I felt that God wanted me to humble myself and trust Him, especially in this dark valley season of financial struggle that I’m going through.

When Joseph shared his experience of hearing God say, “I do not want to visit you, I want to stay,” I broke down. I knew I had

many visitations from God in the past, even when I was giving in to the temptations of the flesh. But I had always desired God to “stay” so that I could have a deeper fellowship with Him.

Many points that Joseph shared resonated with me, so much that tissue paper was constantly in my hand. God was real, God was there, God met me as my heart desired.

My experience at Church Camp has brought me closer to God, and I believe that I’m on the journey back to where God wants me to be. I wholeheartedly identify myself as a prodigal son, on a path of repentance and with an earnest desire to deepen my relationship with God.

I hope that my own experiences will be a source of comfort for those who have someone close to you who is a prodigal son or daughter. Keep praying for them, for God is gracious, faithful and merciful!



JACKY is a goal getter and super achiever. As a Life Coach for Gen Y and Z, he loves to help them unleash their talents and God-given purpose in life. With a never-give-up attitude, he strives to inspire, coach and provide practical solutions to the younger generation.



Let Us Ride on Inter-Generational Wisdom!

BY DR GLORIA KONG

At a special prayer meeting before our long-awaited church camp, I felt burdened to pray for the item of 'Family' in CMC. I shared at the prayer meeting that we should continue to pray for "Family" at three different levels: (1) our own biological family (going deeper in intimacy with our loved ones); (2) the church family in Christ (going deeper in relationship with one another in CMC); and (3) the ultimate Family – as a Child of God (going deeper as a Child of God). As the camp unfolded in Putrajaya, I witnessed how family relationships at all three levels were addressed during the camp. Many experienced healing and restoration. I was awestruck by the visual of the six generations gathering in six groups, as prompted by Mr Joseph Chean - those below 20 years old, the ones in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and those aged 60 and above.

Being an educator in the topic of *Human Life-Span Development*, I was overwhelmed with joy and excitement that we (CMC) form a huge multi-generational church family - from the youngest to the oldest; from the purest to the wisest!

Often, we focus on things that can go wrong in our inter-generational relationships. For instance, we spend a lot of our time and

energy in ensuring children and teenagers behave and pursue the right and narrow path. We worry that our young adults may abuse their new-found freedom. We are concerned that our midlife adults are going through terrible trials and crisis. We lament that our older adults are getting too laid back and becoming a burden to the younger generation. While all these are legitimate concerns, addressing them should not be the main focus of our lives. It is an important part of our journey, but not the whole. **The other equally essential part is to have a more positive perspective and dare to hope for better productive outcomes in our inter-generational relationships.**

Every stage of human life is marked by specific developmental tasks. Understanding these tasks will not only help us understand each other better but will also help us to 'ride' forward with, and gain wisdom from every generation.

Young children are in the business of learning about their world with little contamination from the cynicism of the world. They are fearless in their exploration. This is a stage of life where Jesus identified as having 'child-like' faith. **So, the wisdom of this young generation is the sense**

of awe and wonderment!

Teenagers are in the business of searching and forming their identities. **They are full of energy and idealism, because they see most things as possible.** The wisdom from this group? It is the high energy and the can-do spirit. Thus we have our own 'Igniters' in CMC!

Our young adults are in the business of forming new family units, developing their careers, and fine-tuning their identities. Experts believe that this is a stage for 'love' – building meaningful relationships. **Talking to a young adult, you will find that they are more than capable of prioritising the important things in life as they are facing competing demands from their multiple roles in life.** The wisdom from the young adults will be their analytical and critical thinking skills. They may not be as 'wise' as their previous and older generation yet, but they are great in the application of knowledge and in the process (through analytical and critical thinking skills) of becoming grounded in their approach to life.

Midlife adults are the ones who are in the 'been there, done that' group. They may sound naggy and grumpy sometimes as they are in the quest to leave a legacy for the younger generation. **They wish to provide the younger generation with the shortcuts and cheat-codes to life without having them go through the painful exploratory process.** As such, they are often anxious about the younger generation getting into trouble, and hope that they can help the young ones avoid the mistakes they themselves had experienced before. See beyond this anxiety, you will find that the midlife adults are creative in their approach to life, i.e., they have more effective solutions to address life's issues. If teenagers and young adults can view the midlife adults as a pragmatic and creative source to provide an effective perspective to life situations, you have tapped into the wisdom of this generation.



The older adults are considered the age-group that embody the most crystallised knowledge – which experts call 'wisdom.' However, many may find that they are slower, and sometimes not too focused in conversation. That is because they have so much life experiences that can easily distract their concentration. If we are patient enough to listen, this is where we can find the gems of life because of their sheer amount of 'lived' experiences.

Just as with everything in life, too much or too extreme of one thing, even the good, is not helpful, or even detrimental to the best. While every generation has its wisdom and strength, it is unwise to anchor exclusively on the wisdom of just one generation. As a CMC church family, we have the privilege of riding on the wisdom of every generation. **Therefore, let us allow the wisdom of each generation to moderate and enhance our own life-stage specific natural tendency, lest we become too extreme and narrow-minded in our approach to life.**

The wisdom of each generation is meant to be honoured. As a family-in-Christ, if we can do this more in our community, we can really become a multi-generational church that can go further in our outreach through the spread of the fragrance of Christ!



GLORIA has worshipped in CMC for more than 20 years, and she currently serves in the Family Life Ministry. She teaches *Human Life-span Development* at a local university. A clinical member of Singapore Association of Counselling and Association of Christian Counsellor (Singapore), Gloria runs a private practice, Gloriousruin Counselling and Psychotherapy. She is a mother of a young adult and two teenage sons.



Reaching Young People: A Gentle and Quiet Whisper

BY JOSHUA SNG

We sat with each other on a scarred wooden bench, pockmarked over the years by countless teachers and students, outside an unlit and unused lecture theatre.

She had texted me to ask if she could be excused from an ongoing lesson and if I could sit with her at a nearby bench until she was more able to cope. Honouring my personal commitment and promise to my students, I dropped whatever I was doing then and held space with her for as long as she needed to, until she was comfortable to return to class.

Within that span of time, we chatted a little. I asked her if she was okay. She said she was most days, but some days were harder than others. She told me that her gerbil had passed away earlier in the year. I offered my condolences and shared how devastated I was when my schnauzer, Asterix, died of cancer in 2013.

But mostly, we kept silent.

The encounter I described above was a pivotal moment in my eighteen-year journey as an educator.

It made me remember what was truly essential and crucial to me as an educator who has been granted the privilege to care for and sow into the lives of young people placed under my charge.

It also made me realise what students and young people need above all else from the adults in their lives.

Recognise and Honour the *Imago Dei* in Them

In my line of work, it is too easy to lose sight of the fact that young people are works in progress.

We become agitated when they do not follow rules to the letter. We lament when they appear to be less resilient and purposeful than previous generations, especially our own. We are outraged when they challenge

“They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”
And He said to them, “Render therefore to
Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and
to God the things that are God’s.”

Matthew 22:21

our norms and rebel against the restrictions we impose on them.

Yet, despite the challenges of engaging and working with young people, do we recognise that they too bear the *imago Dei*? They are people made in the image of God and bear His likeness.

And because young people bear His likeness, they possess immeasurable value and are treasured by God (Genesis 9:6). Furthermore, we adults who have temporary charge of them, have the duty to render them unto God (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25).

The Greek word, *apodidōmi*, translated as “render” in the English Standard Version (ESV) translation of the Bible, has the connotation of giving back or restoring what belongs to us only temporarily.

In this context then, we must ask ourselves these questions of eternal consequence:

How have we cared for and grown the young people that God has placed under our temporary stewardship?

In what state will we restore them to God?

How can we care for young people in a manner that will please and delight God?

Encounter, Stay, and Be Present

Where I teach, the school day begins with a twenty-minute period where form teachers carry out administrative duties such as taking attendance and informing students of upcoming school events.

It is one of my favourite times of the school day because it can be far more than just administration time.

During this precious pocket of time, I take the opportunity to look intently at each student (think Peter and John in Acts 3) to discern the state of their well-being. If a student looks exhausted or distressed, I check in on them and find out the cause behind it. If need be, we retreat to a more private spot outside the classroom to engage in deeper conversation.

The point of the matter is: do we intentionally place ourselves in situations and locations where we can encounter young people?

And having encountered them, do we stay with them long enough to offer them the gift of our time, attention and presence?

These questions drive me to always drop whatever I am busy with at any given moment to visit my students when they have to rest at the sick bay or when they text me to indicate that they need someone with whom to share their burdens.

I always recall and am inspired by the accounts in Mark 5 and Luke 8 of Jesus’ encounter with the man from the Gerasenes.

After healing the man of the demons that plagued him, Jesus did not simply give Himself a pat on the shoulder for a job well done and go on His way. Instead, He stayed with the man and the man sat at His feet, probably enjoying one of the greatest and most profoundly life-giving conversations of all time.

In fact, Jesus stayed so long that the herdsmen who witnessed the demon-possessed pigs drown themselves in the lake had time to make their way all around the Gerasenes to tell people about what had happened, and return to the sight of the man, clothed and of sound mind, sitting with Jesus.

Listen to and Truly Hear Them

A great mystery that I have pondered about for the entirety of my journey as an educator is why many students are more willing to share their struggles and problems with their teachers than with their parents.

The answer is probably multi-faceted but I would propose that the extraordinary capacity of educators to simply listen without judgement or attempting to offer quick-fixes and solutions partially explains this phenomenon.

It is not the case that every educator is superhumanly empathetic or patient, but our profession demands that we be able to offer wise counsel to young people. And this is only possible if we truly listen and hear what young people are saying. Not just what is

How have we cared for and grown the young people that God has placed under our temporary stewardship?

said explicitly, but also seeking to parse subtext and what is unsaid.

Do we truly listen and hear the young people in our lives?

Whenever I am tempted to give anything less than my complete attention during conversation, I recall the Lord Jesus in John 4.

I think about how He intentionally situated Himself at the well in the blazing noon heat that He might cross paths with the Samaritan woman who was so traumatised by the judgement of others that she fetched water at the most inconvenient time of day.

I think about how He bridged the age-old social, religious, ethnic and gender divide by asking her for a drink of water.

I think about how He really listened to and heard all she had to say, without judgement.

I think about how she felt so truly seen and so truly known and so truly loved that she simply had to tell everyone else about Jesus, because she could not contain her joy.

After a little over an hour, she thanked me and made her way back to the classroom, calmer and lighter of spirit.

All she needed was a safe space where she could be still and return to equilibrium. And in that moment, a safe space equated to having a trusted adult hold space with her.

No words necessary; just embodied presence.



JOSHUA is blissfully married to Joanne and a father to their five children. He leads a CG called AWAKE! and serves in the Family Life Ministry. He has been in the education service for 20 years.



Loneliness: No Longer a Silent Epidemic

BY TONIA GOH

I was only fifteen when I chose “loneliness” as a topic to write for a composition paper. Thinking back, my motivation for writing may have sprung from an observation that loneliness ran deep and wide around me, even as a teen. I witnessed my grandfather facing health issues, and feeling lonesome and withdrawn. He was later survived by my grandmother, who felt desolate and empty as a widow for many years.

Growing up in church, I had good friends who were divorced or single, sharing about a yearning to connect, a pining to belong, and to use St Augustine’s expression¹ — “at last to belong, to make a satisfying relationship, to feel valued, to feel there is a pervading meaning in one’s life if only it could be found.”

Loneliness, a profoundly emotional experience, is, in fact, hard to define. It is commonly known to involve painful feelings of disconnectedness from and abandonment by others. Loneliness is different from a state of solitude. On a more complex level,



A lonely teen, Jack⁸

As a mental health practitioner, it is heart-wrenching to attend to depressed and anxious youths as my young clients. Often enough, they are lonely. And frequently, I find that it is loneliness that is causing the depression and not the depression causing the loneliness. What parents fear most is being unable to read the red flags of hidden pain and then risk losing young lives to impulsive suicide.

There are many factors linked to loneliness. An observation for me is the popularity of digital forms of communication. This neither helps foster social skills and communication nor enables teens to form a healthy sense of self with their peers. Time spent on social media means decreased availability to create meaningful connections necessary for authentic in-person interactions. Video gaming is one example of this. People can build “relationships” through multiple-player video games or even a strong sense of community online. However, these are different kinds of relationships from in-person interactions.

15-year-old Jack would tell me, “Even though I have friends, I didn’t feel like they responded to how I felt, and I felt extremely lonely!” He said that it was hard to share with anyone. “If I tell someone, I am seen as weak, and I don’t wish to give in to that weakness when I am lonely. If I do, people whom I have a good relationship with will distance myself from me.” Jack’s parents worry for him.

I often act as a bridge for teens and parents to have some meaningful discourse. It is often said that parental relationships with their teens is the best predictors of their well-being. One tip I found useful from Jay Stinger, a US therapist, is to spend time with them. Try to spend 100 one-minute conversations with your teen rather than a 100-minute conversation in one sitting. In the many one-minute spaces, learn to suspend judgement, talk less, and listen well. If given permission, normalise their fears and anxieties, and share with them stories from the collection of your own classic tales of – Who is not afraid or lonely

Tom Dumm, who wrote:

“Loneliness as a Way of Life.”² defined loneliness as “the experience of the pathos of disappearance” – as though an element of our world vital to us has become lost to us. As human beings, we can anxiously imagine our existence being shaped by our singularity and aloneness.

Today, loneliness prevails at problematic levels worldwide. It is no longer a silent epidemic.³ Although not a mental health disorder per se, researchers have found that loneliness is associated with a range of adverse mental health outcomes, including chronic illnesses.⁴ It is particularly identified as a risk factor for depression. Interestingly, the United Kingdom and Japan had even appointed their own Ministers of Loneliness to tackle social isolation crises and climbing suicide rates⁵. In Singapore,⁶ one in three youths reported feeling lonely, and older Singaporeans are not spared the increasing perception of loneliness as they age further.⁷

in growing up? Assure them they will survive well.

Christine⁹ lonely in the midst of the community

Some people feel the loneliness even when in a relationship or surrounded by people. I met a young lady named Christine who told me she was experiencing a ‘quarter-life crisis’ of loneliness even though she has an illustrious career and is busy with various ministries in the church. For Christine, the community does not seem to be the social answer to the malaise of loneliness.

It is true. On this side of heaven, community life has no shortage of disagreements, frictions, tensions, and conflict. Christine questioned the church’s role – **If the church community is a means by which God restores men of sin and draws us back into the life we have been created for, can the Christian community also banish the pain and desolation of loneliness well?**

Pain being transformed – An invitation towards solitude.

In an insightful article by Myles Werntz entitled The Solitude of the Saints, he quoted Billy Graham talking about loneliness as part of a theological condition of sin. After the fall, “the roots of loneliness were planted in the human soul, and it has been inherited by every inhabitant ever.” In other words, we can never leave loneliness completely as part of the human condition.

It is henceforth not true that the Christian community has failed when loneliness persists, **but instead, it “offers us the kind of accompaniment that can help make sense of and bear loneliness without it turning into despair,”** according to Werntz.

Would it be helpful for Christine to celebrate the presence of the pilgrims that journey with us, to remind each other that pain can be transformed in Christ? This does not mean that loneliness will go away, but it will instead bring forth a new way of enjoying God’s presence.

I don’t have an answer for Christine. I offer

instead that we tarry with our loneliness, ponder over it, embrace it, and ask of it for an invitation to attend to our pain with Christ. Perhaps then we may be able to attend to the pain of others and receive the gift that they might give us, bringing loneliness to bear.

¹ Augustine, Confessions, X. xxvii (38), trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 201

² Loneliness as a Way of Life – September 30, 2008, by Thomas Dumm (Author)

³ Surkalim, D. L., Luo, M., Eres, R., Gebel, K., van Buskirk, J., Bauman, A., & Ding, D. (2022). The prevalence of loneliness across 113 countries: Systematic Review and meta-analysis. *BMJ*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2021-067068>

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, April 29). Loneliness and social isolation are linked to severe health conditions. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved November 9, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

⁵ 1) Ryall, J. (2021, April 23). Japan: ‘Minister of loneliness’ tackles mental health crisis – DW – 04/23/2021. *dw.com*. Retrieved November 9, 2022, from <https://www.dw.com/en/japan-minister-of-loneliness-tackles-mental-health-crisis/a-57311880>

2) Birnstengel, G. (2021, April 23). What has the U.K.’s minister of loneliness done to date? Next Avenue. Retrieved November 9, 2022, from <https://www.nextavenue.org/uk-minister-of-loneliness/>

⁶ <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/teens-youth-mental-health-disorder-nus-study-support-parents-resilience-3448571>

⁷ <https://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/allnews/impact-of-loneliness-on-life-and-health-expectancy#:~:text=Nationally%20representative%20data%2C%20collected%20from,those%20aged%2080%20and%20above.>

⁸ Jack is not a real client but a fictionalized composition of the many narratives that I have witnessed in my work as a counsellor.

⁹ Christine is not a real client but a fictionalized composition of the many narratives that I have witnessed in my work as a counsellor.

¹⁰ <https://comment.org/the-solitude-of-the-saints/>

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwVplg-w7bw>



TONIA is a counsellor and has her own private practice. She is married to Kay Kheng, and they have four boys. Her oldest, Josiah, is 25; her middle young men, Matthew, 23, and Silas, 19; and her youngest, Elijah is 16.

My Identity, In Love

BY JJ

As a kid, I was always taught that if you want something, you'd have to earn it. But what about things that could not be "earned"? Take family, for example, where no child gets to choose his or her parents, nor do parents choose their children. Or what about relationships, when breakups happen and friends console you by saying, "You deserve someone better"? Does that mean that I was responsible for earning the love of another human? These were questions that I never had answers to, and neither did I intend for them to be answered, simply because I feared the truth.

I could earn lots of things – money, career, grades, possessions, and even respect – all of which I didn't fear because, with enough time and effort, I could. Yet, the concept of love in my mind was such an elusive thing. Then, extrapolating from what I was taught,

if I had to earn everything I wanted, and I wanted love, how do I earn love? Can love even be earned?

Years passed and these unresolved issues faded into my subconscious. Fast forward to 27 June 2023, the start of Christ Methodist Church's Prayer Retreat at Changi Cove. I came with no agenda and an open mind (simply because I had no idea what to expect, nor what to ask for). And in that time, I came away from the retreat with one clear message from God.

It was on the second day, about five minutes before my alarm rang when I woke up. While I was still groggy, this sentence popped into my head - "You are as good as my love for you". The phrase was as clear as day, but I had absolutely no idea what it meant. So, I got up, silenced the alarm that

had just started ringing, and went to get ready for the day. As I stepped into the shower, the lyrics of For You Alone by Don Harris, popped into my head and I began to sing,

"You are as good as my love for you". not just anyone's love, but God's love.

"You are the peace, that guards my heart, my help in time of need..."

And just as I finished my shower (and after multiple rounds of the song), I thought, "Could the phrase this morning be from God?" In hindsight, the answer was so obvious, but I knew that not everything we hear might be from God.

(That, and it was 6.40 am when I woke up!)

I quickly got dressed, took out my iPad and googled, "God's love", and the first result was a verse from Ephesians 3:17-19, which says, "... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

And at that moment, it clicked...and I broke down.

"You are as good as my love for you", not just anyone's love, but God's love. God's love, in its fullness, is wide, long, high, and deep. This love surpasses all knowledge and was given so that we could be filled to the measure of the fullness of Him (not partially, not a fraction, but completely full!)

I am as good as His love for me. Words could not even begin to describe this love. The love that meant death on the cross, the most cruel and gruesome death penalty known to mankind, till today. Was I really that good?

I broke down, not because I felt I was undeserving of it, but because I knew I

was undeserving of it. I was neither the model kid, nor model student, nor model citizen, nor model Christian. Yet, God thinks I'm as good as His love? The Almighty Creator of heaven and earth just literally told me that I am that good. I couldn't stop my tears from flowing.

God didn't just cement my identity as His beloved child, but had answered the question in my subconscious that I had buried, years ago, out of fear.

I grew up in a broken (Christian) family, and lived a life filled with broken relationships. In my mind, I was probably going to continue having broken relationships throughout my life, because, why not, right? Did I deserve to have a complete family? Maybe. Did I deserve to be loved? Probably, but depending on who you ask. And at this moment, do I deserve to love, and be loved? Yes. And the answer would always be a resounding yes in the eyes of the Father.

I deserve to be loved because He loved me from the very beginning. In Jeremiah, it says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart..." - Jeremiah 1:5

He loved me enough to give me life, to be birthed successfully, from infancy to who I am today. Everything I have and knew came from Him. And because He first loved me, before I was even formed, as a child of God, I can now proudly proclaim, I deserved to be loved, and I deserve to love – because He first loved me.

And to all my brothers and sisters out there, don't ever let anyone take this identity away from you.

JJ regularly attends CMC and prefers to remain anonymous.





Clinging to Hope in the Face of Eczema

BY JONATHAN WONG AND TIFFANY GOH

When our son, Isaac, was about three months old, we discovered that something was wrong. We would wake up in the middle of the night to his cries and a blood bath. We would discover that he had ripped off his mittens, resulting in broken skin all over his limbs, and his bed sheets bloodied. Before we figured out how to manage the scratching, we often found ourselves waking abruptly in the middle of the night to check the baby monitor and ensure Isaac had not been scratching and gone undetected. Desperate to understand his condition and to find answers, we joined parent support groups on social media and spoke to anyone who cared to listen to our struggles.

This led us to consulting an NUH paediatrician and Isaac was formally

diagnosed with eczema, which was triggered by food allergies. We received a mixed bag of responses from sharing our struggles about Isaac's eczema. Those who had eczema or had loved ones who did, could empathise with our situation. Others encouraged us to count our blessings since Isaac did not have a condition that would otherwise impair him.

The reality of managing Isaac's eczema was truly debilitating and took a huge mental load and toll on our family. It affected several areas of our lives, the major one being diet. We had to be very careful of the kinds of food we exposed Isaac to, and kept close tabs on new foods that were being introduced to him. At the same time, complete avoidance of foods was not

recommended as the body might develop an allergic reaction to those foods. The cycle was vicious. Test food > eczema flare up > affects Isaac's ability to play, focus and sleep > sleep deprivation affects everyone's moods > Isaac's lack of sleep would also slow down the rate of eczema recovery. Hence, you can imagine the dilemma we were constantly faced with, when deciding whether or not to introduce new foods. Naturally it was a period of high stress and our marriage also hit rock bottom.

Feeling helpless, we committed and surrendered Isaac's eczema condition to God. Every night, we got down on our knees and prayed for healing over Isaac's skin condition. We held on to the hope that he would one day outgrow his allergies. Meanwhile, we brought him to a private eczema specialist and tried Traditional Chinese Medicine. None of these worked. We could only continue to pray for him to get better.

Fast forward to January 2023, we continued to manage Isaac's condition and earnestly considered relocating to Australia because we thought the weather during the cooler seasons would do Isaac's skin some good. We prayed for God to give us a clear indication of whether this was the path we should take and He answered us with a bacterial skin infection, triggered by the dry weather during our visit to Perth in March. Miraculously, Isaac's skin cleared up after the infection, with a significant improvement to his baseline condition. The next obvious step was to shelve our plans to relocate. Our friends joked that Isaac had to be hit by a skin infection in order to improve.

5 April 2023 was a day we celebrated and remembered God's goodness! Isaac went to school in his uniform (bermudas and short sleeve-shirt) for the first time. His teachers exclaimed that they almost did not recognise him because they were too used to seeing him in scratch sleeves and

long pants. More than that, it was the first night that we put him in a regular two-piece pyjama with his hands and feet exposed. For the first time in a long while, we did not have to endure his ear-piercing cries as we covered his hands and feet and secured them with surgical tape.

Praise the Lord! We could finally B-R-E-A-T-H-E...

The battle over Isaac's eczema is far from over; we still have to manage his triggers and the occasional flare ups. But we know we can cling to the hope in our Father, who loves us and is with us every step of the way. For anyone struggling with something you think no

one else can fully understand, our God is one who hears, sees you and knows your every fear. We pray this verse reminds you that He cares for you:

But now, this is what the Lord says – He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Isaiah 43:1-2



JONATHAN and TIFFANY have been attending CMC since 2017.



Reflections over Kopi

Kopi Whiff A Mission was a sharing and equipping session for missions work at CMC. Pastor Siew Chye reminded us that outreach is not just another church programme, but is part and parcel of being a Christian.

I recalled Pastor Barnabas and Mr Joseph Chean stating the same point in 2017, when CMC declared it a year of missions. That year, I went on two mission trips, one to Phitsanulok, Thailand, and one to Bangalore, India. At *Kopi Whiff A Mission*, we were asked to reflect on where we go and what we do regularly. During the discussion and sharing, it was made very clear that we do not need to go overseas to do mission work.

That was the “ah hah” moment for me.

The team believes that as the LORD has loved them, they can express and share God’s love with others on a regular basis too. They shared that they gather to pray almost every Saturday morning. They would then proceed to buy breakfast for those working at the 3838 Eating Place at Siglap.

Through this Saturday morning activity, they built relationships with the workers and the stall owners. The good relationships grew to include gatherings, including a Christmas party organised for the coffee shop working community.

We were brought to the coffee shop the following Saturday morning to observe how the team blended with the breakfast crowd and lived out their faith by blessing others. During our debrief in church, we heard that a few of the coffee shop workers have come to know Christ. Praise the Lord!

That day, I went for my regular six-weekly haircut and decided to share this with my hairdresser. She listened and expressed amazement. I cannot help but feel that when you share, you bless, and you are blessed. From *Kopi Whiff A Mission*, I heard, saw, and now know that missions are so doable. When you do it, you will experience God’s presence and a sense of fulfilment. I am now more willing than ever before to share God’s story.

Lean Keng Im

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35



Initially, I joined this course because I wanted to learn how to share the gospel with others. As I journeyed with God and got closer with Him day by day, I felt an unusually strong desire to share my faith with those around me. Prior to the course, whenever I shared the gospel, I would feel this overwhelming sense of fear and anxiety, due to the possibility of receiving judgement. As such, I had this misconception that in order to share the gospel successfully, there must be the right combination of words in order for others to be truly convinced. As a result, I was scared to speak about the Jesus I know with those around me, and refrained from it.

On the most unexpected Sunday, *Kopi Whiff A Mission* was showcased during the family news, following the week that I had been struggling with this fear. At that moment, there was a prompting in my heart to sign up for the course. I decided to give it a shot and attended the course the following Saturday morning.

At the beginning of the course, I was expecting them to provide a ‘formula’ as to how we should be sharing the gospel. However, what amused me was the topic that was being emphasised the most, which was sharing the love of Christ through our actions instead of our words.

The speakers then spoke about their experience of going out of their way to show the love of God to the hawkers at ‘3838 Eating Place’ over a few years, which eventually led to some of them receiving Christ.

I was stunned! Not once did they mention that there should be a series of ‘correct’ words that should be used. Instead through their actions, they showed that there was a Jesus who cares. Towards the end of the course, a weight was lifted off my shoulders and I no longer felt pressured to have the exact ‘right’ words when I share about my faith; I could prove to others that my Jesus is real, through the love and care that I show towards them.

For in John 13:34-35, it says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” It was after attending *Kopi Whiff A Mission* that I began to realise we do not have to be the most fluent of speakers, or the most charismatic, to win the faith of others. Instead, by our actions will others come to believe that there truly is a Jesus and a body of Christ.

Joshua Cho

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

Matthew 25:40



My journey in outreach started from DISCIPLE class. “Love” in the Bible is an active verb. We are to “do to others as you would have them do to you”, (Luke 6:31) and “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40).

Serving the community is an act of obedience because the Bible said so. I started out at the Community Fridge and after two years, God put a burden in my heart to do more for my neighbours; to be missional. I knew about the initiative through a group of brothers who were ministering to those in a coffeeshop at Siglap and wanted to find out more. It affirmed the call to do more, that what I have been doing is charity and not missional. It was humbling.



There’s no shortcut to it. God calls us to radical generosity – in the giving of our money and time – to joyfully give until it hurts. To me that means sacrificing more of my personal time, which like money, has not been something I was willing to give more than a “tenth”. But it is what God desires and the only response is to obey. I won’t say I am enjoying myself like it is fun. But not doing what Jesus wants me to do makes me feel like a hypocrite and my words of worship empty. I think my heart has joy and peace that comes from knowing I am doing what God wants me to do.

Goh Siow Yune

Blessed to be a Blessing



In July 2023, a team from CMC went to Bintan for a weekend mission trip.

The team ran activities at a children's centre that is run by a local Methodist church and visited homes. Here are some of their reflections!

I have been attending the DISCIPLE programme and challenging myself to put into practice what I have been learning. The Bintan mission trip was a weekend trip, and I was free during that particular weekend in July. I prayed and felt convicted to sign up, so I did!

There were two key takeaways that left a lasting impression on me.

First, I was struck by how faithfully the villagers brought the children to attend the children's ministry programme and how well the children remembered what had been taught. It is as Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Next, was the missionary, Tiur who hails from Medan. She is the lone missionary despatched by her home church to be based in Gloria Senggarang, the fishing village, that our team visited. She has been there for four years and runs the ladies' Bible study and ministry on Fridays, the children's ministry on Saturdays, and church service on Sundays. Despite flying solo and having family health issues back in Medan, Tiur remains faithful and radiates the joy of the Lord as a missionary. Meeting her, I was once again reminded of what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 9:37, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."

God was with us throughout our team preparation meetings, and definitely during the trip. Team unity was strong!

We prayed for smooth immigration clearance at Bintan, and we all got through smoothly. We prayed for good weather so we could make the motorised sampan trips to and from the fishing village each day, and we had good weather on both days. When we did household visitations, it rained but just briefly so we could still walk to the different houses. The whole team was kept safe and in good health. Indeed, "whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

If you are unsure about mission trips, commit it to prayer. Consider starting with a very short trip, like the Bintan one.

The Bible says it clearly in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is so true; my fellow trippers and I all came back from Bintan feeling blessed. Above all, giving of ourselves and our time to mission trips draws our hearts to Christ.

Joanna Yeo



Having been inspired by the church camp speaker's enthusiasm, I felt a burning desire to become a missionary. However, I questioned whether it was merely church camp fever or if it truly aligned with God's will for me. Encouraged by my care group leader, I decided to sign up for the Bintan mission trip, the nearest available opportunity after the church camp.

Taking baby steps, the trip lasted only two days and one night, with no leave application required. It was my first mission trip! We served in the children's ministry, and I was truly blessed to witness the childlike faith, especially evident during the worship sessions. The children were incredibly well-behaved, requiring minimal supervision during the craft activity. Although most of the team cannot speak Bahasa Indonesia or Teochew, by God's grace, we were still able to communicate with the locals.

My biggest takeaway is that there is always something we can do for His Kingdom if we are willing to say "Yes and Amen" to Him. God can use anyone to do His work, even with the limited resources of the local ministry or language barrier we encountered during the trip; He will bring people to Him.

For those who, like me, struggle to remember names, I decided to call all the kids "sayang" in Bahasa and it worked! Hope to see you on the next Bintan mission trip!

Michelle Chen



I have been keen to go on mission trips but have not done so in recent years as I had gotten busy. I felt like the year would pass me by once again without having served in this area, so there was a lot of motivation to sign up. I felt that the Bintan trip was a good opportunity as CMC goes monthly which is a great way of keeping in touch with the community.

I previously went on a mission trip to Thailand to teach the children English and celebrate Christmas with them. I thought this would be a similar experience and was open to contribute in whatever way I could.

During our community visit, I felt pain in my hand. This has happened before during similar occasions when it was related to praying for

people; I would feel the pain of people around me, and that was my signal to pray for them. This time round however, I did not have the courage to speak up about it, and the moment passed. It was a lesson for me moving forward, to speak up and ask if there is a need whenever God prompts me.

For those who are looking for mission opportunities, I would suggest that they give the Bintan mission trip a try. There is nothing like stepping out into the field to see what God is doing in different communities. In doing so, we are also able to better appreciate what we currently have.

Nigel Lauw



I was at Bintan for a holiday when I learnt how much the economy suffered due to the pandemic and thus the people and their welfare. It saddened me and I remember telling myself that I would be back. So, when I saw that CMC had a mission trip to Bintan, I felt a nudge to go. More than a duffle and tote bag I carried there, I also carried an expectation that the people there lived in a tunnel. A tunnel with dirty toilets, unclean water and perhaps a stronger dissatisfaction with life than others.

I could not have been more wrong. Not that they have sparkly clean toilets but what I saw there at Gloria Senggarang was so special.

I caught a glimpse of God's heart for the children at Gloria Senggarang. As the children entered the room one after another, I was just in awe of how happy they were. Happiness that was so pure, simple and contagious. Just as I thought I was there to teach them about who God is, they showed me who He is. I was then reminded of Matthew 18:3-5.

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me...”

His presence was tangible. I felt His love and care for these children.

This short trip also gave me the opportunity to witness the courage and conviction of a lady called Ah Tin who is in her mid-70s with a back injury. She continues to spread the gospel in that town where many have rejected her and frowned upon her actions. During the house visit on the second day, I saw a sense of urgency in the way she talks about God. A sense of urgency saying we must prepare the way for the King's return now.

There is just so much more to Gloria Senggarang and I believe there is an experience awaiting everyone.

Sandra Poh



I had always wanted to go for a mission trip but never had the opportunity to do so. I would also give excuses like it was not the right time or it was more important to settle my academic pursuits first. Now that I am overseas studying, it seemed even more unlikely for me to go on a mission trip, so the idea was put on hiatus.



I had not been up to date with the events happening in CMC, but my mum told me about the two-day mission trip that would coincide with the short two weeks that I would be back in Singapore for my winter break. Again, I started giving excuses, that the time I had in Singapore was so short, that I could not find anyone to go with, and the fact that I did not attend any of the briefings beforehand. But after thinking about it, I believed that God worked out my schedule for me to go. Since

the timing aligned perfectly with my arrival in Singapore the night before the trip, I decided to go for it.

Despite my slight apprehension about the entire experience due to it being my first mission trip, my unfamiliarity with anyone involved, and my feeling of incompetence having not contributed much due to missing all the briefings, I came to the realisation that I would be surrounded by like-minded individuals. These were people who had taken time out of their busy schedules all for the same reason of serving God and giving back to the community.

The first thing I noticed during the trip was how cheery the children were to see us. Taking into account their humble living conditions, it was amazing how little it took to bring smiles to their faces. Though I could neither speak Bahasa Indonesia nor dialect, I could see God working when we visited the homes of the villagers and the Holy Spirit convicting their hearts, slowly getting families to believe.

If you are thinking of going on a trip, I would say do not let apprehension or fear hold you back. Even if you feel inadequate or too 'new' of a Christian, just go for it because you are not doing this by your strength alone, but with His power, love, grace, and mercy. Take the step of faith and use the opportunity to view life with God together through a different lens.

Ethan Ng

Songs for the Season

In 2020, the Worship & Music Ministry embarked on this project to release a series of singles. These songs are a follow-up from our first album, “Marked by Love” that was launched in 2019. After the many COVID-19 delays, we are thrilled to finally be releasing these songs! This is a continuation of the ministry’s desire to encourage songwriting and to harness the giftings that we have in the church.

As with the first album, the project kicked off with a call within the ministry to submit songs. We were so encouraged to have nine submissions, especially because these songs were submitted by a new batch of songwriters who did not contribute to the previous album.

We had to narrow down the selection and so a few of us went through the songs to look through the lyrics and melody. The songs that will be released were chosen based on their focus and theme.

Once the songs were chosen, the next step was to tie up the arrangement. This was done by our very own musicians. For our previous album, we had one band to arrange all the songs, but this time we wanted to widen the involvement and formed different bands to take on each song. This provided more room for creativity and allowed each song to have a completely different texture.

The Worship & Music Ministry’s hope is that these songs will minister to whoever listens to them, as these were all inspired by the songwriters’ personal journeys. We pray that the Lord will use these songs as an encouragement to those who need it.

Rupert Lim, CMC Worship Director



About the songs

His Coming by Jenna Lim *Out now!*

At the inception of this song, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the world seemed terribly bleak. Everyday, it was just article after article of bad news (pandemic death tolls, Myanmar coup, natural disasters etc). The lack of corporate worship and fellowship with the rest of the church community also pushed me to look introspectively into the deeper and sometimes neglected parts of my life.

It was easy to look around and feel discouraged. Yet wallowing in a state of languish was not helpful as well. As I waited on God about this discomfort that I was feeling, my heart yearned to worship but I had no words. I knew I needed to take some time to declutter my mind and put words to my convoluted thoughts. This led to the eventual birth of *His Coming*.

Just like how this song served as an encouragement to me, I pray that this song will encourage young and old to stand strong till the very end, to be courageous in trying times and to have Christ as our hope. The Bible says that Christ is coming and that He is coming soon. May this song give us kingdom perspective, and may it stir up a sense of urgency and purpose in the way we live our lives.

I look back at this whole songwriting journey with gratitude because I know that this was not the work of my hands. I simply do not have the natural talent or musical capabilities to write or produce a song. Yet five loaves and two fish before the God of miracles can only mean good things. Only God would remember the dreams of a young Jenna, who had a frivolous desire to write a song, and make my dreams become a reality.



Your Faithfulness by Ashley Lim *Coming Soon*

When the opportunity to write and submit songs came about, I was quite eager to try my hand at it as it seemed like a fun challenge. However, I had zero experience in songwriting, so I was initially unsure about what to write and how to even start. I decided that the best way to find inspiration for lyrics would be to look at my own life experiences and the perspective of who God is to me. That way, the message behind the song would feel more authentic and relatable to listeners. On top of that, I also wanted the song to contain lyrics that would prompt the listeners to glorify and lift up praises to our God for all He has done for us.

I started off by drafting some short phrases as potential lyrics. These were based on my personal convictions about God. From there, I tried to find a common theme to determine the main direction of the song. However, this was quite a challenge. At the start, I found myself writing a bit aimlessly. I struggled to find a song title as there was no clear overarching theme in my lyrics. Other times, I faced a mental block and got frustrated at how the lyrics and melody just were not lining up with my vision for the song. In fact, this song that is being released came about after I got frustrated at a previous attempt that I decided to scrap.

To share a little bit about the message behind the song, it reminds us that our God is faithful. He is with us in our dark moments, watches over us in every step we take, and constantly guides us towards the better path. From this reminder, we can feel comforted in knowing that we can rely on Him and His faithfulness, but also not forgetting to appreciate, thank and praise Him for this amazing amount of love that He extends to us.

I hope that each listener can find a part of the song that resonates with them.



The Price by Eugene Wang *Coming Soon*

The Price was written with the intention of creating a hymn-like song — like songs of old, where lyrics usually focused on theology and the message of the Bible — rather than the emotions and actions of man, which are very common in modern worship songs. Musically, I also feel that old hymns create an atmosphere of serenity and peace with its long flowing melodies that seem more like a telling of the writer’s personal experiences with God. Knowing that songs like these were sung by our forefathers a hundred years ago gives me confidence and comfort, because I know that it is grounded in Spirit and Truth. Because of that, it will always be relevant in every season of our lives and throughout the different generations.

The story of this song is simple — it tells of Jesus the Son of God, who came from heaven, paid the ultimate price for our sin, and was resurrected so that we too can be resurrected with Him. This narrative itself forms the foundations of our faith, and how we often forget to take a step back and look at the importance and beauty of it.

It is important to me that the songs of worship we sing and I write contain song lyrics that are theologically correct, and there is no better place to get Truth than from the Word of God itself.



Visit www.cmc.org.sg/cmc-worship for the direct links to the songs.

BAPTISED

BY IMMERSION

- MISS CHUA LEE-ANN
- MISS CHUA RAE-ANN
- MISS CHUA SU-ANN
- MS DIANA LEE
- MR EUGENE VOO
- MS JACQUELINE WOO

BY POURING

- *MASTER LEE JI HO
- *MS CHO SUNG YUN JUDY
- *MR LEE JAEHOON
- MISS ANDREA SIA XIN EN
- MASTER NOAH ELLIOT TAN
- MISS ZOHEY ANNA WANG
- MASTER LEON YEOW

*Family Unit

RECEPTION INTO MEMBERSHIP

- MS CHO SUNG YUN JUDY
- MISS CHUA RAE-ANN
- MISS CHUA SU-ANN
- MS VANESSA CHUA
- MS DIANA LEE
- MR LEE JAEHOON
- MS TEH RU EN
- MR EUGENE VOO
- MS JACQUELINE WOO

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EASTER 2023

TRANSFER FROM CHURCH OF OTHER DENOMINATION

- TRANSFERRED FROM NEW CREATION CHURCH
- MS VICTORIA TAN

TRANSFER FROM OTHER METHODIST CHURCHES

- TRANSFERRED FROM BARKER ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
- MR IAN CHAN

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