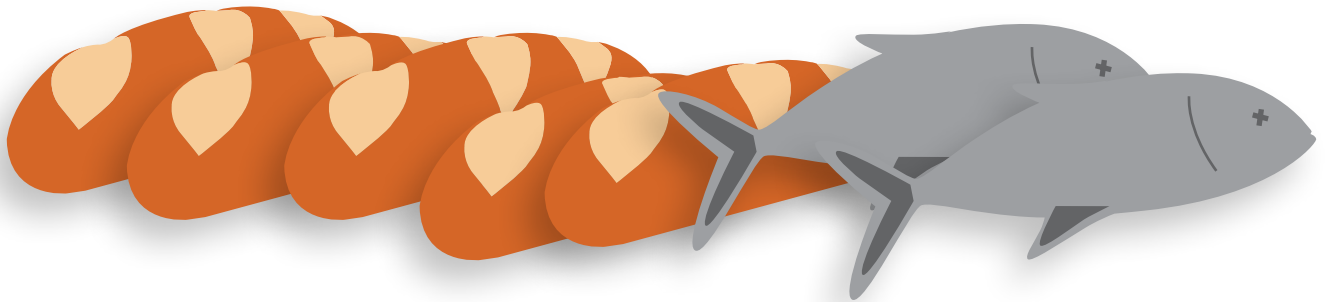


GRACE NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter of Grace Baptist Church Limited MICA (P) 030/04/2011 January - March 2012



Editorial

GOOD TO WORK ON GOOD WORKS

As we enter into 2012 it is not too late to examine ourselves and ask whether we are doing enough to reach out to the disadvantaged, the lost and those who need help. There are some who believe that GBC is weak in the area of good works, and that we should be doing something to change this aspect of our church culture. How kind are we? How willing are we to extend kindness to others, especially non-believers? How often do we even see the needs around us and do something to help? The Editorial Team hopes that this issue of Grace News will set you thinking over some of these issues relating to kindness. Do read the articles by Pastor Arnold and Pastor Bobby for some ideas and inspiration.

Other highlights include an interview with Mr Chan Wing Cheong as he leaves us to return to Australia, spotlight on the Seniors' Ministry, and a write-up of the mission trip to Kunming, China, in August last year. Also, don't miss our regular book review and children's corner.

Last but not least, we've had a makeover and hope you like our new look!

Wishing everyone a blessed New Year,

The Editorial Team

Kindness

Pastor Arnold Wong



Recently, my wife and I were taking the bus to an event. To my horror, the bus driver said we would have to transfer to another bus. Because of the distance and rain we would probably be late. Then a complete stranger shouted out that if we got off with her, she would show us how to get to our destination on time. We alighted and she helped us cross a busy street, guided us through a maze of malls, led us down to an MRT station, and pointed us to a sign directing us to our destination.

Our hearts were touched by her kindness to us. We were lost and complete strangers and yet she was willing to help us. We couldn't thank her enough. Because of her kindness, we were reminded and motivated to show kindness to others.

The Bible tells us that all of us, the deserving and undeserving, experience God's kindness. In the Bible, the word for 'kindness' is often translated as 'good' (Ps 106:1; 145:9). His kindness is seen in nature (Ps 65:9-13); events in history (Ps 145:1-7); instructions

in His Word (Ps 119:65-68); and in situations where people are in need, ie the afflicted (Nah. 1:7), and poor (Ps 68:10).

His greatest act of kindness to mankind is His plan of salvation from the consequences of sin (Tit 3:4-7). Salvation is not a result of our good deeds, but a result of



Because we have received God's kindness, as God's children we are to be kind and exhibit kindness

putting our faith in what Christ accomplished by dying on the cross for our sins. In fact, God's kindness is meant to bring us to the point of repentance (Rom 2:4).

Because we have received God's kindness, as God's children we are to be kind and exhibit kindness (Col 3:12; Eph 4:32). This is possible because of God's Spirit working in us (Gal 5:22).

As God's people let us be kind and show kindness, not merely because it is a good or nice thing to do, but because we have experienced God's kindness, and being kind and showing kindness is the thing to be and do. **Ω**



Worshipping by reaching out

Pastor Bobby Lee

I want to speak on a subject that is very dear to my heart – community outreach. I am specifically referring here to acts of compassion to the poor and marginalised neighbourhood around GBC. What motivates us to perform such acts? One answer would be that we are fulfilling our responsibility and ‘duty’ because God is pleased with us for taking care of POWS (an acronym for Poor, Orphans, Widows). But that answer is insufficient. A better answer is ‘WORSHIP’. Please read on...

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man...worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal in missions...the goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God.”
John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p 11)

Why acts of compassion? Simple. How do we ‘do evangelism or missions’ if the context of our lives does not square with the text of our message (the Gospel)? Does our understanding of the Gospel merely refer to an eternal life of bliss in heaven that

has no bearing in the physical realm?

But we must ensure that we do not substitute acts of kindness for the proclamation of the Gospel. That is why we must be clear that evangelism and acts of compassion in our community should be viewed as distinct but inseparable activities in which proclamation is not only central but also the chief priority.



How do we ‘do evangelism or missions’ if the context of our lives does not square with the text of our message (the Gospel)?

We must continue to integrate the various church-based conduits of compassion, namely, the Tuition Ministry, the Reading Programmes, the community visits, and the seminars on life skills on the one hand; and petitioning God on the other hand. I value zeal, energy and hard work. But I am reminded that God is the One who adds the favour, blessing and true power to make anything of eternal value happen. Ω



Kindness in the community: a recent account

Pastor Bobby Lee

Last month, a man in his 40s came to the church looking for help. When I realised he could not talk, I got him paper and a pen and for the next 20 minutes we ‘communi-wrote’. I found out he was hungry and poor and needed some money to buy lunch so I wrote that I would buy lunch on condition that I visit his home. It was heart-wrenching. His family photographs showed a young man with dashing good looks. An accident reduced him to what he is today.

When we deal with the poor and downtrodden, it is easy to give them money, utter a prayer and send them on their way. Nothing wrong with that. But I believe they need something else beyond money – they yearn for dignity. When we parted, I could see that his eyes were beginning to tear up. At that moment, I came to a closer appreciation of what Jesus must have felt when he looked at the crowd and how he was moved with compassion by their condition. Ω

Grace News asked some of our church attendees if we should extend good works with the ultimate aim of sharing the Gospel, and whether we would continue if the recipients explicitly state that they will never be open to accepting Jesus. Here are some responses:

“...LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.”
(MATTHEW 5:16)

The Gospel and

Kindness

“I think doing good works should come out from every one of us, naturally if I may say...”

“We should (continue to extend good works even if the recipient is not receptive to the Gospel) and in particular we should meet needs when we are in a good position to do so.”

“I liken it to Mother Theresa: just simply caring and working amongst the poor and sick is enough to cause people to ask where she got her inspiration and strength from...”

“I continuously keep in contact with them even though they are not open to the Gospel. I notice that they themselves try to avoid me. Yes, it is a struggle for me when I have to decide how much more or longer these people need help.”

“...To avoid programmes or goodwill being abused we should offer programmes that are designed with a time frame.”

“So...what differentiates a church from a charity or community centre?”

“I think it’s wrong to place the Gospel as the end and doing good deeds as the means. We do good deeds because our lives have been changed by the Gospel...Of course we want to share this word with others, but...even if we don’t get a chance to say it (truth of the Gospel) outright, people will see our deeds and glorify our Father in heaven.”

“If not what sets us apart from humanitarian workers? While we can host annual visits and organise large-scale events, if the Gospel of the Saviour who came to save lost sinners is not preached, we still have not brought them the true treasure.”

“...the Great Commission is for us to make disciples of all nations. If all we do is pre-evangelism activities without any eventual Gospel proclamation, then I think we fail to respond to what Jesus called us to do.”

“THE ultimate good work is to share the Gospel. Sharing the Gospel...is the only motive. When we led an English class for Chinese students in the past, it was explicitly Christian and they welcomed it (why did we even doubt they would?).”

“Kindness is a command from God.”

“We know the ultimate goal is for us to preach the good news to all who are willing to hear. However, we are also to love our neighbour, which means we should show kindness and do good works even if we know that the person may not be receptive to the Gospel.”

“I don’t know if we should call it ‘good works’ if the ‘good news’ is not involved – there must be good works if the news is really good! The sharing of the Gospel is something that we are commanded to do, but conversion of another human being is not something we are responsible for.”



Healthy tofu need not be boring, as demonstrated by Ryan Wong.



There was a great turnout of seniors on Gadgets Day.



Participants getting advice from young savvy members on the use of their handphones, cameras and laptops.



There was a good teacher-student ratio on Gadgets Day.



Committee Members from left: Wee Soo Jong, Boon Hon Lin, David Chan, Seah Kah Yin, Pastor Arnold Wong.

After he had been at GBC for about two years, and after speaking to a number of seniors, Pastor Arnold concluded that there was a need to start a Seniors' Ministry in the church. Accordingly, in the last quarter of 2010 he had two meetings with selected seniors to determine the need to establish such a ministry.

A working committee was then formed in Dec 2010, comprising the following : David Chan, Seah Kah Yin, Wee Soo Jong and Boon Hon Lin. Chan Wing Cheong and Ai Hwee were also roped in as consultants due to their extensive experience in this area. The working committee met a few times to brainstorm on the direction that the ministry should take and the types of activities to organise for seniors. It was a struggle to say the least.

The objective of the Seniors' Ministry is to help seniors 'finish well' through serving God and fulfilling His purpose in their lives.

The Seniors' Ministry is also a platform to fulfill needs in the following key areas:

- How to deal with/manage stress.
- How to deal with doubts.
- How to understand and manage medical issues.
- How to deal with/manage emotional and relationship issues.

To kick off the Seniors' Ministry, the first stage will be to develop bonding among the seniors at GBC (estimated to take roughly one to two years). The second stage will be to look into how we can reach out to the community at Macpherson.

The committee covets your prayers that God will enable us to plan and organise activities to meet the differing needs of seniors at GBC. There is also a need for more volunteers to serve as committee members and to assist in the preparation of refreshments.

The committee welcomes ideas and suggestions for future events for seniors. Kindly contact any of the committee members or the church office with your ideas. Ω

Activities held in 2011

- Talk on *Successful Ageing* by Dr Pang Weng Sun – 18 Jun 2011.
- Talk on *Dietary Nuggets for Good Health* by Cheong Ai Tho cum demo on *Healthy Diet/ Foods* by Ryan Wong – 27 Aug 2011.
- Talk on *Making your \$s go Farther & Longer* by Sean Seah – 24 Sep 2011.
- Gadgets Day (Reach Out, Touch Someone) – 26 Nov 2011.

Possible activities for the first quarter of 2012 include a visit to the Botanic Gardens/Museum and a 2/3-day cruise.

conversation with

I was pleasantly surprised at the 2010 Church Camp to find out that Chan Wing Cheong, our Church Administrator par excellence, is such a sporting person. Quite belying his reserved nature, he kissed his wife Ai Hwee on stage while performing in Talent Night! He is the man behind the smooth running of the church office, supported by his efficient team. Here are some excerpts of my chat with him.

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On 9 November 2011 you completed 12 long years in GBC as Church Administrator. Why did you take up this post?

After working 35 years in the banking industry, of which 11 years were in Sydney, I asked myself, "What's next? Is there something more meaningful to do in life?" I was then serving as a member of the diaconate in my Sydney church. I sought to work full-time as an administrator in mission organisations in Sydney. By divine appointment, a GBC leader visited me and shared with me the need for a Church Administrator. I decided to serve in GBC – where I had my roots since 1959.

You worked for many years in a bank prior to joining the church staff. What are the differences and similarities you see in running a church office and a corporate office?

Dealing with people from different backgrounds presents the same challenges in both contexts. You need to exercise professionalism and support the visions of the organisations, though their end objectives are different. In a corporate setting, the focus is competitiveness, career advancement and fulfillment. In a Christian environment, all believers are equal in God's eyes and are committed to keeping Biblical values in all that we do. It is tougher to manage a church office, as we need to be more understanding, patient and forgiving.

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Top right: Wing Cheong and his loving wife, Ai Hwee.

Above: The young couple in their dating days!

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You are a serious 'no-nonsense' person, but your speech is peppered with humour. How would you describe yourself?

People find me very serious, as it takes me a long time to interact freely with them. I would rather take plain rice at home than eat with strangers at a banquet table. However, God is fair to all. Despite being a reserved person, I have a little gift of making people laugh so that they will not find me totally boring.

What were your most memorable moments or encounters working in GBC?

Every Sunday morning when I look across the sanctuary, it is a blessing to see that my friends (less than 10 now) who grew up with me in GBC 50 years ago are still healthy and steadfast in faith. How comforting it is to see younger leaders succeeding older ones, reminding me of the words of the hymn 'Find Us Faithful'.

What is the kindest thing a church member has done for you and your family?

An older member has been consistently praying for my wife for many years, since she was a nursing student. They only got to meet each other in GBC more than 20 years later. God is wonderful indeed. This member continues to pray for our family.



Seah Yen Goon

EVENT SNAP SHOTS

Baptism 16 Oct 2011



We rejoice with (L-R) Daphne Gong, Ellen Wong, Victor Tay and Ryan Thomas Jacob at their recent baptism into Christ.

Evangelism Symposium 29 Oct 2011



Evangelical outreach programmes conducted in 2011 were reviewed.

Youth Camp “Imitators”

12-16 Dec 2011



Brainstorming on what it means to be united as a church.



Our youths had great fun at the camp!

Ramesh Richard Outreach

20 Nov 2011

“Beyond Happiness”



Dr Ramesh Richard speaking about the paradoxes of happiness.



A rapt audience.

Christmas Celebration

25 Dec 2011



The church offered worship as a gift to Jesus this Christmas.



Songs of worship a cappella - the human voice is indeed the greatest musical instrument created by God!

In August 2011, a team from GBC went to Kunming, China to teach English during Baima Primary School's summer camp. After weeks of preparation with the Character First! materials the team arrived in China with great expectation.

Day 1 was a disaster. We suffered culture shock!

We knew we had to be flexible, but did not envisage that there would be no official welcome, while requests communicated to the school beforehand did not materialise. Scarcely two hours into the programme we were bombarded with negative feedback. "Your teachers speak too fast using long sentences." "You are torturing the kids, keeping them indoors for so long without a toilet break!"

Downcast, the team got together to pray. We prayed together twice a day, learning anew that it is 'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit'.

Day 2 began with renewed strength.

The timetable was revised with hourly toilet breaks and outdoor activities in between lessons. Things went quite smoothly from then on but the teachers still thought we were too ambitious.

A concert and exhibition was organised on the final day for parents. We prayed for fine weather as the concert was to be held outdoors. But it rained! Moving to the Music Room, only the parents could be accommodated, while the children were ushered in class by class for their performance. As it turned out, this was better. Parents could hear and see clearly while the kids were better behaved.

We prayed together twice a day, learning anew that it is 'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit'.

We received some very positive feedback from the parents after that. The provincial government officials who sent their children to the camp told our contacts to "inform them of such events next time".

Our mission was to teach lessons on Attentiveness, Gratefulness, Obedience and Truthfulness through stories, songs, handicraft and games. Instead we were taught wonderful lessons. We returned with a clearer vision of who God is and of His ultimate purpose for those who have yet to come to know Him.

Please pray that the seeds sown may grow and bear fruit. **Ω**



Students of Baima having their morning assembly.



The GBC team with some of the teachers at Baima.

**Project
Khmer H.O.P.E**

Dental work and teaching, Kampong Speu, Cambodia, 22-25 Nov 2011

(Clockwise from top left) Wee Thiem Heng, Benjamin Wee and Elizabeth Wee with a PKH nurse and dental patient; David Chan conducting a conversational English class for first year Hospitality Course students; Belinda Wee conducting a costume jewellery craft workshop for PKH and Seed of Hope childcare staff; Diana Seah conducting a business workshop for PKH staff.



Do you know what **kindness** is? “Of course I do!” you say, but can you explain it? Sometimes it is easier to explain what **unkindness** is. You probably notice when people are being unkind more often than you notice if someone is kind.

If you squeeze out a whole tube of toothpaste, do you think it would be possible to get it back into the tube? No way! Similarly, once you have done or said something unkind, you cannot take it back. Even if you say sorry, and the other person forgives you, the unkind thing is still out there. That is why it is better to be kind all the time.

We know kindness is important to God because it is part of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal 5:22. God Himself is kind,

as Isaiah 54:8 reminds us: “With everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD your Redeemer.’ God is even kind to people who don’t deserve it, as we see in Luke 6:35: ‘He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.’ Do you realise what this means? It means that we also should be kind even to people who are not kind to us!

During His ministry Jesus showed His kindness by helping as many people as He could. What about you? Every time you brush your teeth, try to remember the lesson of the toothpaste tube and be kind to as many people as you can. Ω

Rachel Wong



Book Review

One-to-One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian

By David Helm
(Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2011)

review by Pastor Oliver 'Ollie' Chia



“The church often puts its creative energy into initiating events, programs and classes specially designed to win people to Christ and help them grow in the faith.... And yet...we might still be missing out on something more dynamic... **that returns gospel growth to the everyday fabric of personal relationship, rather than relying on church-run programs**” (8-9, emphasis mine), writes David Helm as he sets out to introduce Bible one-to-one – a deeper, more meaningful activity of cultivating discipleship relationships.

What exactly is Bible one-to-one? Bible reading one-to-one is a variation on reading the Bible but done in the context of reading with someone. Due to its emphasis on relationships, Bible one-to-one can be for non-Christians, new Christians and for Christians ready to lead or serve.

Helm goes on to give simple steps on how to get started on Bible one-to-one and how to conduct a meeting. He also explains simply how to read

and interpret each genre of the Bible. He ends by sharing the story of how his friend came to Christ. He writes, “was it an event geared toward ‘winning’ him to Jesus? No, it really wasn’t. Neither was it a program or a class. It was something more organic, more relational. It took more than a year, but my friend became a Christian. **It was the power of the Holy Spirit uniting this man’s heart to the truth of the gospel found in God’s word, in the context of a simple relationship in which we gave ourselves to reading one-to-one**” (38, emphasis mine).

This book is recommended for Christians who want to be involved in discipleship relationships but are either apprehensive of what it requires or are unsure what to actually do. If you are thinking of being involved in discipleship relationships, pick up this book, read it and start doing it. It is really that simple. And in doing so, you are obeying and delighting in following Christ’s call to make disciples of all nations (cf Matt 28:19-20). Ω