

BCEC CONNECTIONS

From Our Senior Pastor:

Ministering as the Second Fiddle



by pastor steven chin

God has blessed me to serve at BCEC for over 40 years. As I intend to retire later this year in October, I want to share with you in

three articles the journey that the Lord has brought me through and some of what the Lord has taught me over all these years. In my previous article in BCEC *Connections*, I shared how my ministry began as Assistant to the Pastor. In this second article, I want to share some reflections in the position as Associate Pastor. In the last article I will share about my experience as Senior Pastor. I hope my testimony can be an encouragement to others and can give glory to the grace of God.

My service at BCEC began as Assistant to the Pastor working under Pastor James Tan and later Pastor Jacob Fung for six years. The decision by the church to start a parallel English ministry in 1983 was a major turning point for our church and me. It provided opportunities, but it also presented challenges.

In the beginning, the English worship service was similar to the Cantonese service. However, slowly, changes were introduced such as worshipping using contemporary spiritual songs not found in the hymn book. Also, instruments like guitars and drums were introduced. To many at that time, these seemed to be "radical" changes. There was much debate, prayer, and patience needed to introduce these new ways of doing ministry. I learned there are many different perspectives to ministry issues even though we were all Christians. Change sometimes may have to come gradually. Nevertheless, change needs to happen or else your ministry will become obsolete.

Another challenge was the transient nature of the English congregation. Many in that congregation were people who moved from other parts of the country to Boston for school or work. Having an engineering background, I wanted to build a strong foundation of leaders first. However, the foundation kept needing to be rebuilt every year, as people moved away. It was quite discouraging to me at first, but God helped me to adopt the mentality of the manager of a minor league baseball team (I am sorry to use this American sports analogy, but this is what God used to help me to accept my role). My job was to prepare and equip people to serve effectively and faithfully in the church they will eventually end up, which may not be BCEC. Indeed, over the years, I have seen many A PUBLICATION TO INFORM, INVOLVE, AND UNITE THE BCEC EXTENDED CHURCH FAMILY

of our past members go on to be pastors, missionaries, or key lay leaders in churches all over the world.

The process of how I got ordained is somewhat interesting. Because there was a concern about unity as we started an English worship service, the leaders insisted that the whole church have communion together once a month. As a result, the English congregation would end its Sunday School early on the first Sunday of each month and come to the sanctuary in 249 Harrison Ave. to observe communion together at the end of the Cantonese service. But, as we grew in number, people had to stand through the ceremony, as there were not enough seats. The church then decided to have Pastor Fung come to the English worship each month and officiate Holy Communion. But after a while this became a burden on Pastor Fung, so he decided it would be better to ordain me, which would allow me to officiate Holy Communion. Also, ordaining me would signal that the English congregation was no longer just youth, but had come of age and deserved to have its own pastor.

It was not something I was thinking about. In my experience, within the Chinese church, only those who were older and preached in Chinese were pastors. I must admit I was uncomfortable to be called "Rev. Chin" or even "Pastor Chin." So I agreed to be ordained if I could be called "Pastor Steve." I was ordained on June 10, 1984 and promoted to become Associate Pastor. Because I only had received minimal seminary training and was now preaching regularly, the church allowed me to take a sabbatical and a leave of absence to earn my Master of Theology. I took my wife and two children to seminary in Dallas from 1987-1989.

A famous conductor said, "The hardest instrument in the orchestra to play is second fiddle." With my promotion to Associate Pastor, I had now become "second fiddle." It has been a difficult position for many English-speaking ministers to serve under a Chinese-speaking senior pastor. There are differences that include language, culture, values, and philosophy of ministry (how to do church) that can cause disagreement. But, despite this challenging situation, Pastor Fung and I were able to work together for 21 years.

I learned submission, respect, patience, and prayer. As the Associate Pastor, I focused on helping my Senior Pastor be successful. It allowed us to build up trust, so that Pastor Fung gave me a lot of freedom in decision making and allowed me to build up the English ministry in the way I thought best. For instance, there was a new emphasis on children's and youth ministry because they are the most open to the gospel and because they represent the future. Thus, we started ministries like Project Destiny, Teen Volleyball, and Vacation Bible School. Sometimes people ask me if there was ever a time I felt like leaving BCEC. There was a time that I seriously disagreed with Pastor Fung theologically. It had to do with who could take communion. The church had limited communion only to those who were baptized already. But what if a person became a Christian at a conference? We welcome them to the family of God. But then we do not allow the new brother or sister to share in the family meal of Holy Communion. To me, it did not seem right. But after much thought and prayer, I realized this was a Senior Pastor's decision, and I was not the senior pastor. Each of us are responsible to the Lord for the tasks He has entrusted to us.

There were certainly many other disagreements, but Pastor Fung and I were able to work together in harmony and unity. This resulted in a fairly stable pastoral staff with no church splits or major staff departures. Despite our inadequacies, we saw the Lord bless the church with numerical growth over those 21 years from 175 people to 750 people. We give glory to God for His grace.



Pastor Steve, Pastor Tan, and Pastor Fung with their families at the 25th-anniversary banquet (1986)



All three Senior Pastors at the 40th-anniversary banquet (2001)

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My Sabbatical Report



by pastor daniel chan

My six-month sabbatical will end on April 22. BCEC personnel policy states that the purpose of a sabbatical "shall be

limited to academic study, research, writing, missionary work, or any other activity subject to the approval of BOE." Obviously, going to the beach everyday was not in the mind of framers of the policy. Therefore, let me give a short report of the work I have done during the past several months.

I chose to write during my last sabbatical in 2012. At the end, I was able to finish the biography of a Chinese theologian. It was eventually published by a publisher in Hong Kong and was later nominated to a biannual book award competition in the social science category hosted by an association of Hong Kong publishers. The result will be announced at the end of May 2019.

This time I also chose to write, but the scope is much larger. I plan to write about a dozen famous theologians in church history who were also pastors. I wish to investigate how their pastoral experiences informed and influenced their theology. Likewise, I wish to see how their theological convictions influenced their pastoral practice.

When I was in seminary over 30 years ago, I observed that half of the smartest Asian students wanted to pursue doctoral studies after they fin-

ished their master's degree. Their ultimate goal was to enter the world of academia. I have no objection for such aspiration, but I was surprised by the percentage of students having this idea. From a Kingdom perspective, I think we only need 5% or less of our seminarians to go down this route. What bothers me more is the idea that students with the highest GPA should pursue scholarship and teaching. Those with a lower GPA can safely go into pastoral ministry or missions.

An Italian classmate told me that many Italian families with Catholic background considered it an honor to have a family member entering the ministry. In addition, they took pride in sending their smartest children to seminary to become pastors and missionaries. I wish Chinese Christian families will do the same. Furthermore, I wish seminary professors would encourage their best students to consider church ministry before academia. Send the best graduates into ministry!

Fortunately, recently some writers began to see the importance of pastoral experience to theological thinking. They published books like *Augustine the Bishop and Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy.* However, there are numerous other influential theologians during the more than 1,500 years between Augustine and Bonhoeffer, who, I would like to argue, considered themselves a pastor first and a thinker second. Their commitment to pastoral ministry needs to be made known.

I have read a lot of books in the past months. For a while, I went to the theology library at Boston College nearly every day. I wanted to read primary sources and secondary sources of those pastors-theologians mentioned above. Unfortunately, I read a lot but produced little. When I saw the industrious scholarship of writers, I loathe to put ink on my paper hastily. Time flies by quickly. I can only hope to complete this project, by the grace of God, after my retirement.

Besides writing, due to the fact that I was staying in town, I more or less have to respond to people's needs or requests. I preached and provided consultation to a few Chinese churches in the area. I participated in the examination and ordination of two Chinese ministers. I officiated or participated in seven or eight funeral services. I answered inquiries and listened to complaints. I was interviewed by out-of-state church leaders seeking advice about ministry. I acted as temporary legal guardian for someone who was judged to be incompetent of making decisions. I also made quite a few visitations. I don't feel right to tell those people to go away because I am on sabbatical. After all, I am a pastor first and a writer second. In the last weeks of my sabbatical, I have also completed a Boston University certificate course on mental health of the elderly.

Beyond all these sabbatical tasks, I have been paying attention to and praying for important decisions facing BCEC. I am thankful for my colleagues covering my ministry during my absence. Once I return to my post, I hope to quickly get up to speed and be helpful in finding solutions to BCEC ministries.



Prayer Walk at Chinatown Campus and Newton Campus (4/12-4/14)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER

Be a Blessing to Others in Need



by karen liao, chinatown english

> I had forgotten how heavy super-sized boxes of baby wipes weighed. Had it been almost a de-

cade since the last time I bought these? Back then, I bought them for my babies. This time the wipes were for women who needed them.

I heard about Route One Ministries at the last Social Responsibility Conference. Route One Ministries reaches women who are exploited by the sex industry. It is a ministry for women by women. Outreach volunteers from Route One visit strip clubs to befriend, talk with and pray for dancers. Often the connection starts with the gifts that volunteers bring for the women.

To an outsider, the list of items included in these gifts can be puzzling. Baby wipes? Cartoon bandaids? Coloring books? Baby wipes are essential for personal hygiene while at the club. Band-aids help with painful shoes. The cartoon characters on them give the dancers a little piece of childhood that many have missed. Coloring books help pass the time and can relieve stress while women wait for their turn. Just understanding the gift was eyeopening for me.

Over the last couple years, the Web of Women team has been praying for ways that we can gather women to serve others. After hearing about Route One, I was struck by the dancers' need for the hope of the gospel. I wanted to help. I may not be able to directly minister to these dancers, but I can organize a service project.

We got in touch with Angie, a volunteer at Route One, and she sent us a list of items to include in care packages. She was happy to receive any number of

packages, but let us know that 72 gifts would provide every woman from each club a gift. I admit that I was not sure we could put together that many gifts.

In February, the Web of Women hosted a breakfast to assemble care packages for Route One. I cleared a couple tables and put the heavy boxes of baby wipes on them. Women from the Chinatown English congregation brought other items for the gifts: band-aids, ibuprofen, lip gloss, hand sanitizer, and nail polish.

I explained the work of Route One and the purpose of each of the items. We got right to work packaging gifts and writing notes saying, "You are loved" or "You are precious." It was encouraging to see us working together to bless other women. After the gifts were assembled and wrapped, we prayed together. We prayed for the women who would receive the gifts and the women who would deliver the gifts. In the end, we had 84 gifts! I am grateful for this opportunity, and pray that we may find more ways to bless others.



God is Always at Work



by JAY LEUNG, CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD SERVICE

y current employer was kind enough to give their staff a

whole week off during this past Christmas break. I started mine with a bang: hitting the strip club on Christmas Eve. Of course, the truth is that I never went inside, since I also brought my wife there..... I better give you all the whole story.

Most of you may be aware that BCEC's Charity Fund supports an organization called Route One Ministry, which reaches women exploited by the sex industry. The ministry seeks out these women to build a relationship with them, care for and pray with them, with the hope that they can first know of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and that they can also eventually exit the sex industry and no longer have to sell themselves for survival. Last year, the Social Responsibility Conference also invited Route One to discuss their ministries in detail. Since then, there had been some brothers and sisters who asked how they can help; in fact, some of them later detailed their experiences in BCEC *Connections*!

In mid-November, one of Route One's invitation was asking brothers and sisters from various churches to attend a care-package assembling party. I was not able to make it. However, Bonnie, the director, later informed me that they needed some volunteers to deliver these finished gifts to the dancers during Christmas at the clubs. I discussed this with my wife, and she was quickly on board.

In mid-morning Christmas Eve, we made our way to the Emmanuel Gospel Center (Route One's base) to meet with a Route One staff and any other brothers and sisters who were also willing to brave the snow that day. The staff gave us a brief introduction on, among other things, what we would expect to encounter, how to approach various people like the dancers and the bouncers, and that, uh, dudes are not allowed to actually venture into the strip clubs. The gals will handle all the business.

Afterwards, we packed all the gifts into the car and off we go. Once we safely arrived and parked by the side of the club (my only serious non-spiritual task), we prayed quickly for the people we would see and interact with and that the gifts will be a blessing to the dancers. My wife and another sister then stepped out of the car, gathered all the gifts, and walked with purpose to the club. All I could do was keep praying for them, but I did not feel helpless or out of place. All along I knew that God wanted me there to do whatever He needed me to do. At least I am good at driving in the snow.

After only ten fast minutes, the ladies came back out. They reported that they were only able to leave the gifts with the bouncers, but that they would then pass the gifts to the dancers. When we returned to our initial meeting place, someone later told us that Route One volunteers had actually tried to visit this club before, and the club denied them entry and even rejected their gifts outright the first time. Thus, it was an improvement already to see our gifts being accepted this time.

As I reflected back on this now, I honestly didn't feel like I did much. I woke up earlier than normal on a holiday, drove safely, and didn't go into the strip club. Still, while we may not know how God works at times, God is always at work. Maybe all He really needs me to do are little things, and it'll somehow add up. Let's continue to pray that God will do His work and that we can be His vessel when He calls us to be that!

Building Relationships and Serving Our Neighbors Together



by eric chan, newton english

On Friday, March 29, the New Community small group that meets at Newton Campus took advantage of the extra Friday in the

month to take in a scrumptious dinner at the new Joyful Garden located in the Watertown Mall. In celebrating two sisters' birthdays, we filled our stomachs with mayo shrimp with taro, salt and pepper fried squid, and beef. During this meal, we decided on an optional collection of money to go towards the purchase of toiletry. By God's grace, we collected about \$140.

Why toiletry, you ask? Well, despite needing to keep ourselves clean and well groomed after taking in a filling meal, the purchases actually went towards supporting the Hope and Comfort toiletry drive currently taking place during the months of March and April at the New Community campus. While the small group had the idea to head over to Target to purchase toiletries, we realized Target's prices were not conducive to maximizing the amount of toiletries we could donate. Instead, we used the money to purchase toiletries via Amazon. We purchased shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and body wash in bulk. For example, we bought a case of 90 antiperspirant for approximately \$40!

Hope and Comfort is a Needham-based organization that aims to provide personal hygiene products to those in need, especially to youth in an effort to improve health and wellness. This is because welfare programs, such as SNAP, do not cover such products. They are often expensive to purchase, and buying them takes money away from other necessary items such as food and transportation. New Community's drive is part of the Newton Police's drive, as they reached out to religious organizations all over Newton to support them.

We hope and pray that this act can lend a hand to neighbors who do not have the means to purchase personal hygiene products.



Boston Rescue Mission



by justin gee, newton english

One hundred and twenty years ago, Boston Rescue Mission (BRM), a Christian organization located between downtown Boston

and Chinatown, was promoted as "a bar room transformed into a life-saving station." It's current motto is "transforming lives at risk." This April it is celebrating God's goodness and its 120th anniversary.

Once every other month, BCEC sends a small team of volunteers to spend a few hours at BRM. During the Joy in the Journey sermon series, our small group learned about loving God with our minds, hearts, and hands, and we wanted a way to live that out together. So, our group has visited BRM twice. It's been so much fun and a low pressure way to introduce new friends to our small group.

We meet about 3 p.m. at church, and walk up from 249 Harrison Ave. to BRM. BCEC brings Chinese



food. John Wong, the coordinator, has arranged to have the food delivered, and someone from the restaurant was outside BRM waiting for us to unload the trays of food to bring inside. We walk into the mission and are greeted by BRM staff. One of the people down in the kitchen introduces himself as Daniel, who is the chef there.

Daniel starts giving us directions about where you can put your coat, hang your purse, store your bag, and asks if we'd like to put on an apron.

Daniel thanks us for coming, explains a little bit about himself, gives a few ground rules, and short explanation of what will happen. We begin our service time with a short group prayer.

The people who live at the facility will eat first from about 4-5 p.m. Then they will open the doors to everyone from 5-6 p.m., and then it'll wrap up after that.

The previous night, Daniel, the chef, had gotten a donation of sirloins from the capital grill, which he had made into a simple preparation of steak tips, onions, and mashed potatoes. There are also some donated desserts. We will serve it all to the residents and guests. It's uncertain exactly how many people we will serve, and often it varies greatly, but they always seem to have enough.

We're reminded to simply treat all people with dignity, and they should expect to treat us the same. Daniel is part of the staff there, and knows most of the people. They are his friends and fellow coworkers. He has a gentle generous way of working with people. And John is there to answer questions as well. Daniel is not just the chef there, but was a client as well, and has been where many of these people are. As explained, the clients come in at 4 p.m., and we say hello, how are you, and try to get to know them a little. Two hours pass by quickly.

If any group or individuals would like to participate, we suggest you contact John Wong from the Social Responsibility Committee (SRC). He goes six times a year, and would love to bring new volunteers.

As a group we walk back to the church. It was a chance to do something not just fun, but meaningful together. It's been a reminder to be grateful and to be a small group that serves with our minds, hearts, and hands.





Marriage Enrichment Retreat



by david lee, newton cantonese

The Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER) helps young and old couples feel held, healed, loved and beheld by an immortal, invisible

God. It did wonders for Caroline and me in recovering the love in our relationship. There is just something special and magical about spending three days and two nights with 11 other couples, as well as experiencing inspiring worship songs, eating scrumptious food, sharing touching personal experiences, being exposed to a well-oriented curriculum, and being in a Christian community in a rural environment in New Hampshire.

Last fall, when we had only been part of BCEC Newton Campus for a a couple of months, Teresa Wong approached us at church and mentioned she had signed us up for the Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER), which was going to be held in March of 2019. She said we must attend. We looked at each other and wondered what this retreat was all about and why Teresa signed us up without our consent. It was not until much later did we realize that was just "friendly" encouragement, and she did not really sign us up. However, after talking to couples that have attended MER in the past, we were very encouraged and decided to enroll in the Seventh Annual Cantonese Marriage Enrichment Retreat.

Caroline and I have been married for 29 years and ever since we started dating, one thing remained the

same - bickering among ourselves. We were constantly arguing about who was right or wrong. There must be a winner and loser to each fight. Both of us wanted to be the winner, but after each fight, we felt we had both lost. The constant fighting not only strained our relationship throughout these years, but it also affected our two daughters. We wanted them to pick sides when we fought and that caused unnecessary hurt and anxiety for them. The marital strain also affected how we treated each other's parents. All these tensions between us created damaged relationships in our family that seemed impossible to repair. Caroline had been a Christian for 17 years, and I had recently accepted Christ and been baptized for less than a year. One major question still hung over us. Now that we were both saved, loved God, and knew our eternal home was going to be in heaven, why was there still seemingly not much joy in our marriage? Weren't we supposed to know to love each other as God loved us? Why were we still arguing and fighting all the time over trivial daily matters? Why were we always asking God to change our spouse but not ourselves? Why would our spouse always think we treated others better and take our better half for granted? One major question snowballed into many more questions, which seemed endless. We both thought this MER retreat might be a good starting point in providing some answers to our questions and helping us put an end to our cycle of fighting.

MER not only provided answers to many of our questions, but what we gained at the retreat turned out much more than we expected. The curriculum is based on Christian values and applied in practical, easy to follow ways. Our leading couples were knowledgeable and compassionate in helping us under-

stand how we could improve our marital relationship and restore our marriage back to the intended form; united as one and sanctioned by our Holy Father. The communication and practical skills we learned improved our understanding for each other and fostered love and forgiveness in any conflicts. We cannot say our marital conflicts have been completely resolved. MER offered prescriptions, and we need to put the tactics we learned to work daily just like taking our prescriptions. Since coming back from our retreat, we have been applying the knowledge we acquired from the retreat on a daily basis. We do see the light at the end of the tunnel. We know God loves us so much and wants our marriage to be in unity with Him. Praise be to our Lord and all honor and glory to Him! We are happy that we made the right choice in attending this inspirational and practical three-day retreat. It was an awesome experience! We highly recommend MER to all couples, especially young couples. Regardless of how long you have been married, come to this amazing, life-changing retreat!





God as Our Ultimate Parent



by monique liu, newton english

I confess upfront that sharing about parenting is probably one of the hardest things for me to do.

Perhaps it's because I still struggle with it daily. Perhaps it's because of the unrealistic measuring stick by which I tend to gauge my progress. Perhaps it's due to the soul-bearing and pride-crushing nature of sharing the day-to-day reality of life rather than the idealized and sanitized version I would rather share. It's tempting to privatize the uglier parts of my parenting journey, while publicly championing the more palatable parts. It's difficult to share when I don't feel ready, when I don't have it all together, when I still struggle to learn the same lessons over and over again.

If you asked me what my proudest parenting moments have been, I could probably mention all the times other people have complimented my children on their temperament, behavior, or achievements. These comments would falsely affirm that I was doing a good job, and I was doing enough. But what if you asked me about my worst parenting moments; the ones that have been the most heart-wrenching and demoralizing? What about the moments I would be ashamed to share, or fearful to bring to light? Would I be able to share the ones that reveal my deepest parenting regrets and failures? Would I be able to share the ones that reveal the unpleasant sides of who I am, the moments I only reveal to my family?

There is a false narrative in the world that says, if we do all that we should, then we will achieve whatever desired result we hope for. If I give enough love, provide enough resources, discipline enough, then my children will have the greatest chance at becoming successful, healthy, and whole people. However, the longer I am on this journey, the more it has become painfully clear to me that I cannot give them all that they need, try as I might. My sin gets in the way. Their sin gets in the way.

Sometimes seeing our failures as parents can be debilitating and cause us to despair. But what does God truly call us to do? Are we called to produce perfect children for His kingdom? If that were possible, would we still need his salvation? For me, parenting is being able to surrender all things before God and to cling onto *His* promises for my children and me. To cling onto the one thing that only *He* can provide. Jesus offers what we cannot offer to our own children. He offers the gift of salvation. The weight and perceived expectations of parenting can at times be soul-crushing. Yet Jesus allowed his own soul to be crushed, so that we might be renewed, restored, and made whole. We can feel free to parent as God calls us and not be devastated by our sin because *He* is the ultimate author of our faith and our children's faith.

Parenting, like any earthly relationship, is a faith journey, not just with our children, but with God, our ultimate parent. I can choose to fruitlessly wrestle away control from God and make it about me, or I can join in alongside the journey that God is already paving for my children. I can entrust them to the one who knows them fully and loves them deeply. As Christians, we can hold onto the promise that we will one day be made perfect in Christ. As we rejoice with our children in their growth and development, and walk alongside them in their failures and setbacks, we can boldly long for that day together.



High School Winter Teen Conference (2/15-2/18)



TIOB (Newton youth) Sleepover Weekend (3/23-3/24): The youth and counselors had a fun-packed weekend together with ice skating and sleepover at the Newton Campus.







Easter Sunday worship services for Chinatown and Newton English congregations (4/21)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY
8 THE TABLE ENGLISH
12 MOTHER'S DAY
24-27 SUMMIT 2019 NEWTON ENGLISH
27 MEMORIAL DAY OFFICE CLOSED
JUNE
2 CHINESE SUNDAY SCHOOL SUMMER SESSION BEGINS
2 PDAS FAMILY NIGHT ENGLISH
7 LAST DAY OF PDAS ENGLISH
8 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS SPRING SEMESTER ENDS
9 58TH CHURCH ANNIVERSARY
12 THE TABLE ENGLISH
I6 FATHER'S DAY
16 CHILD DEDICATION CHINESE
22-23 CHINESE JOINT RETREAT
JULY
I PROJECT DESTINY 2019 STARTS
4 INDEPENDENCE DAY OFFICE CLOSED
10 THE TABLE ENGLISH
22-26 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL NEWTON
AUGUST
4 PROJECT DESTINY FAMILY NIGHT
10 LEADERSHIP MEETING CHINESE
12-16 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL CHINATOWN
I6-20 BASE CAMP 2019 ENGLISH
17 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS FALL SEMESTER PLACEMENT EXAM
18 STEPHEN MINISTER COMMISSIONING













BCEC *Connections* is a quarterly publication of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church. We would love to hear from you!

If you would like to help with this publication (writing, translation, or editing), please contact Helena Fong at helena.fong@bcec.net.

Do you have a story you think would be a blessing to other BCEC members? Do you have a great photo of a recent church or ministry event you'd like to share? Please send your submissions, questions, or comments to helena.fong@bcc.net. We reserve the right to edit the submissions, as we deem appropriate without notice.

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Easter Baptism (4/21)