



From Our Senior Pastor:

## How God Guides Us



by PASTOR STEVEN CHIN

Many of us are faced with difficult decisions. Some may have to decide where to go to college or whether to accept a job in another state or country. Some of us may have to decide whether to marry a certain person or not. Older people may have to decide where and when to retire. Even churches have to make decisions about staffing or facilities, which may have long-term consequences.

We can analyze the different options, listing out the pro's and con's. But sometimes there is no clear choice. We, as Christians, seek God's desired will in these important matters. But how does God guide us?

Let me share some principles based on God's word.

### 1. God can and wants to guide us.

*"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."* Psalm 32:8 (ESV)

We should be happy that the Lord wants to guide us. He is all knowing. He knows the future and what is best for us. He wants to be our Shepherd to lead us in the right path. Of course, we need to be His sheep or a Christian first. But the sheep need to be willing to listen and follow the Shepherd.

### 2. A prerequisite to knowing God's will is a willingness to do it without knowing what it is first.

*"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

God wants us to have faith in Him, not just for salvation after we die, but for our lives here on earth. He wants us to entrust our entire life into His hands. Many Christians want to know God's plan in advance to decide whether they want to follow His plan or not. But God wants us to be willing to obey Him without knowing His plan in advance. We are to lay down our personal desires before the Lord and be willing to follow Him no matter where it takes us. It may be that the Lord wants us to follow our passions or gifting, but we

must be willing to lay it aside to seek His glory first to accurately discern His will.

### 3. God gives wisdom to His children who ask for it in faith.

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind."* James 1:5-6 (ESV)

We are invited to ask in prayer for wisdom in making decisions. Then we must have faith that He will guide us. So don't be afraid to ask God for wisdom. He welcomes our prayers. Our loving Heavenly Father will answer our request if we have confidence in Him.

### 4. God guides us with the Scriptures.

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

The principles found in God's word can help us to discern God's will. God conveys His wisdom to us largely through the Bible. Someone has said that 90 percent of God's will for our lives is already revealed in the Bible. For instance, if a Christian is thinking about marrying a non-Christian, he or she should consider 2 Corinthians 6:14.

### 5. God can guide us using the wise counsel of mature believers.

*"Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."* Proverbs 15:22 (ESV)

Sometimes that counsel can come from a Christian brother or sister who has a lot of wisdom and life experience. It can come from a pastor, a parent, or close friend. They may not be able to tell you exactly what to do, but they can give you insights to consider. We should be careful not to just seek the advice of people who agree with us, but also approach people with a different perspective.

### 6. God can guide us with the Holy Spirit — sometimes with a vision, or a whisper, or by opening and closing doors.

*"And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but*



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*the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."* Acts 16:6-9 (ESV)

*"And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper."* 1 Kings 19:12 (ESV)

We may wish God would tell us what to do through an angel or a miraculous sign. I personally have not heard God's audible voice or seen a vision. But He has closed and opened doors to guide me. Sometimes I can sense God's leading as I spend focused time seeking Him in prayer.

There were times in the past that I was anxious that I may miss God's sign or message regarding His will. But God is not trying to hide His will from us. He wants to make it clear to us. So don't worry about God's part. Be concerned about our part, whether we are willing to follow Him. Let me end with this quote:

**"God always speaks loud enough for the willing heart to hear."**

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## No Magic Bullets



by PASTOR KEN LIU

Years ago, I was sitting in Starbucks with my mentor and sharing with him the discouragement I was experiencing in ministry. I was a recent graduate from seminary, and was serving as a youth pastor in a Taiwanese immigrant church in Northern Virginia.

When I first started, I was eager to make an impact for the kingdom of God, and was excited at the prospect of growing the youth group and developing the ministry to include young adults and families. But as the honeymoon period started to fade, my initial aspirations hit reality. The youth were there because they had to be there. For those who had the choice, many chose not to come. Personal friends of my mine who had moved into the area didn't want to give our church a try. Even my own brother elected to go somewhere else. Due to my own immaturity at the time, it was hard not to

take things personally.

After all the venting, my mentor paused for a moment, and gently responded, "Don't worry about those who aren't here. Love and invest in those who are here. And if you stay here long enough, most of them might end up being your future leaders."

"How long are you talking about?" I asked.

"At least 5 to 7 years", he responded.

[gulp]

Honestly, this wasn't the advice I was expecting nor desiring. I was hoping for a quick fix and magic bullet to turn things around. But as I took time to reflect, I saw that the problem began with me. I cared more about the idea of a growing community rather than the community itself. I cared more about who wasn't there rather than who was there. I cared more about myself and my reputation as a leader. I knew my heart needed to change. I also knew I needed to change my perspective on ministry, or I was not going to last.

By God's grace, we ended up staying for ten years. I started to care more about who was there rather than who wasn't there. As the youth grew up

and went off to college, some unfortunately, never came back. Some left for other churches. However, a good number of them stayed. Many of them began to invest in others and became leaders of various ministries and offices of the church. Many of them reached out to their coworkers and friends and eventually our ministry "grew up."

When I look back at those years, I am reminded of God's faithfulness in building His church. I also learned the value of long-term, relational ministry. From time to time, I do get tempted by "quick fixes" and the latest magic bullet. There are certainly helpful things we can learn from other ministries, but undergirding it all must be the simplicity of loving people and making disciples of all generations for the long haul.

One of the many reasons why Monique and I are excited to be a part of BCEC is the opportunity to dig deep roots, love people, and to be a part of what God is doing here. We ask for your prayers, as we seek God's will together and take meaningful steps to see our ministries flourish for God's glory.



*Panama Short-Term Missions:*

# God Always Has a Way



by CARMEN HO,  
NEWTON ENGLISH

This was my first missions trip. I signed up when I learned about the opportunity shortly after getting baptized. I wanted to learn more about serving in the missions field, as well as to grow stronger in my faith.

The main purpose of the missions trip was to help out with the children's Vacation Bible School (VBS) in Changuinola, Panama, an area of banana plantations. Prior to arriving in Panama, I did not know how exactly I would help out. Upon arrival, it was decided that I would be a teaching assistant for the ages 13-16 class. We taught the students Christian songs, Bible lessons, and arts and crafts. They had a wonderful time bonding through games (they love charades!).

Being a teaching assistant was both a challenging and humbling experience. I felt that God was teaching me how to be adaptable and flexible. For example, I don't speak Spanish. I had to depend on others or use body language to communicate with the chil-

dren. In addition, I also had not expected that I would teach the children how to sing in Mandarin (the children requested it). Furthermore, I did not expect that I would have to tend to a toddler girl who showed up with her bigger sister, but was too afraid to separate from her sister to attend a class her own age.

Looking back, I now see how God had been preparing me for this trip. A few years ago, I took up a job, which required frequent travel to mainland China for weeks at a time. These trips boosted my literacy in Mandarin from knowing nothing to being proficient in the language for VBS. I was also blessed with more opportunities to visit my toddler nephew in Hong Kong. During these visits, I learned more about how to interact with toddlers (I had no prior experience).

This short-term missions experience also reminded me how blessed, spoiled even, I am. We had the opportunity to visit some of the students' homes in the nearby village. Most of the children have 4+ siblings, all living in a tiny space with minimal belongings. When we presented gifts to the children on the last day of VBS, they were extremely happy. The gifts



included toys like bouncy balls and stickers, clothes donated by local community, and some snacks. The children were so elated even with such simple things.

This missions trip was quite meaningful and an eye-opening experience. I learned a lot from everyone (team members, local Christian volunteers, and even the children), and see that I still have a lot to learn. This short-term missions experience helped me see God's hand in everything. Even though we can prepare a lot, things don't always go as planned or unexpected circumstances arise...but God always has a way. We have weaknesses and inadequacies, and God uses them to help us rely on Him. I feel very blessed, and I am grateful for this opportunity to be part of the Panama short-term missions team. I hope you would consider joining a missions team as well!

# Being God's Witness for All to See



by STORMY LEUNG,  
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

I started off my 2018 with the Panama short-term missions trip. Along with six brothers and sisters, we were blessed with the opportunity to teach 13-16-year-old students in rural Changuinola, Panama at their Vacation Bible School (VBS) in two different locations. This was an extremely challenging task for me, as I do not speak or understand much Spanish. However, I am thankful that God has given me this opportunity to serve Him. Throughout the five days of VBS, I was able to learn more about my students and their lifestyle. We got to visit some of their homes and speak with their parents. Many of the students were willing to learn about God's Word, English, and even Chinese. On the first day, we had a total of 30 students;

by the last day, we had more than 50 students. Praise the Lord!

We had worship and Sunday service in a local Chinese church in Changuinola. The pastor gave a message on Philippians 2:12-18. Through this message, I was greatly reminded that I should constantly be a witness of God for all to see, not just to those that I will encounter on mission trips. God's call for us is a lifetime mission to serve Him.

On this short-term missions trip, I learned a lot about the Panamanian culture and lifestyle. I was able

to improve my Spanish a little bit by the end of the trip. Most importantly, I learned how great God's love is for His people and the need is great for us to fulfill His Great Commission. It continuously amazes me how God is at work all the time everywhere.

*He told them, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road."* Luke 10:2-4 (NIV)



1) Students from one of the two Vacation Bible Schools 2) Visiting our students and their parents at home after VBS 3) Teaching the 13 to 16 years old students English 4) Our afternoon VBS class, which had more than 30 students every day

*Nepal Short-Term Missions:***Love the Little Children with Christ's Love**

by NEPAL SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAM

**Lorraine Ho (Chinatown English)**

As a Missions Committee member, I'm trying to figure out ways in which we can optimize our resources to reach the most people who are in need. What is our church's role in world missions? How can we bless others without hurting the efforts of local believers and missionaries by overtaking their work in such a way that the locals cannot replicate with their own resources? How can we get involved in finishing the Great Commission by helping to plant churches amongst peoples who have no access to a church?

Short-term opportunities can have long-term impact. By God's providence, I found KidZ at Heart International, which focuses on empowering and training teachers to engage children to know and grow in Christ. I am particularly excited for the opportunity to serve through this organization because I am able to merge my two passions together, namely world missions and children ministry.

Nepal turned out to be the perfect fit since January is not a busy month in Children's Ministry, and it is the only location KidZ is sending out a team. It is a country of great spiritual need. It can also be a strategic place to invest energy because Nepal can be a sending ground of missionaries into neighboring Myanmar, India, Bhutan, Tibet, etc. Annie Tran, who has been faithfully serving in Children's and Youth ministries for many years was able to join the team. Missions with KidZ at Heart enabled Annie and I along with 2 other teammates to train over 100 participants from 33 local churches in how to effectively minister to children through multi-day workshops in Nepal's capital Kathmandu and Pokhara from January 12-27, 2018.

**Nepal's Profile**

Nepal's population is 26 million. Its main religion is Hinduism, and the Christian population is estimated to be 1.4%.

Nepal is roughly the size of New England, has 152 unreached people groups within its country. Unreached people groups are any ethnic or ethnolinguistic group without any Christians evangelizing to them.

According to UNICEF, 42% of 26 million Nepalis living in Nepal are under the age of 18. This makes investment in children and adolescence very important to the future of the country.

A quarter of Nepal's population lived under the poverty line in 2010. Although there's some improvement in its economy and the government is

stabilizing after more than 20 years of unrest and leadership changes, jobs are still hard to come by. Families are broken up as many Nepalis migrate overseas to seek work in the Middle East and other parts of Asia.

**Pleasant Surprises**

God sprinkled many pleasant surprises in unplanned activities of our trip. Even chance meetings did not happen by chance, but were meant to be an incredible encouragement to us and open the window for us to see a glimpse of what God is doing in the land of idol worship.

It is not uncommon for new believers to be disowned by their families in Nepal or get beaten by their neighbors when their new status is made known. Although Nepal just passed a law last year that makes it illegal to convert a person to another religion, faithful Christians continue to share the Good News with their friends and family. For instance, one of the staff at our hotel started chatting with me and asked if I'm a Christian. He was delighted to find I'm a believer and shared with me his conversion experience. Even though he attended a Christian school, he had never gone to church. One day, his friend asked him to go to church. He politely refused, thinking he didn't want anything to do with the Faith. God had other plans for him though. That night, he had a vivid dream. He was tossed into a lake of fire. Desperately screaming for help, a door opened, and he saw a man dressed in a white robe, reaching out to him to pull him out of the lake of fire. He interpreted that Jesus was the one who saved him. He started attending church and is diligently following Christ ever since, even though his family has disowned him as the result of his conversion. He is trying to support himself by working the overnight shift at the hotel while he attends college. It is so cool to hear stories like these to know God is so active, seeking out the lost. Sometimes, it only takes an invitation to attend church or a gospel tract or friendship to completely change someone's eternal destiny. We just need to ask God to do the rest.

**Dark Forces**

Spiritual warfare exists everywhere, but it is more apparent in other parts of the world. Perhaps, the intensity of idol worship elsewhere spurs on more the spiritual activities. We've heard a number of stories while we were in Nepal. One stuck out. Tenzin's father is a local pastor who traveled to Tibet on a regular basis to share the gospel with his relatives there. At one point, the family moved into a new apartment. Soon after the move, Tenzin's three-year-old brother would get sick with unexplained ailments. One night, as the family huddled around the sick boy, they heard a scream and a loud thud. It sounded like someone jumped off the roof and landed on the ground. Tenzin's fa-



1) A beggar outside the Buddhist temple 2) A pile of bricks left of a Hindu temple from the devastating earthquake in 2015

ther ran outside to check out the situation. Their neighbors did as well, but found no trace of any incident. The next day, the boy's condition took a turn for the worse and had to check into the hospital. Sadly, her brother passed away soon after. The family later found out from other neighbors that the new apartment they moved into was cursed. Tenants did not stay beyond a few months because the apartment was haunted by a spirit. The neighbors believed the spirit was that of a woman who lived there and committed suicide by jumping off

the roof. It is hard to fathom that spirits can cause such harm, even the death of a child.

### Now is the Time

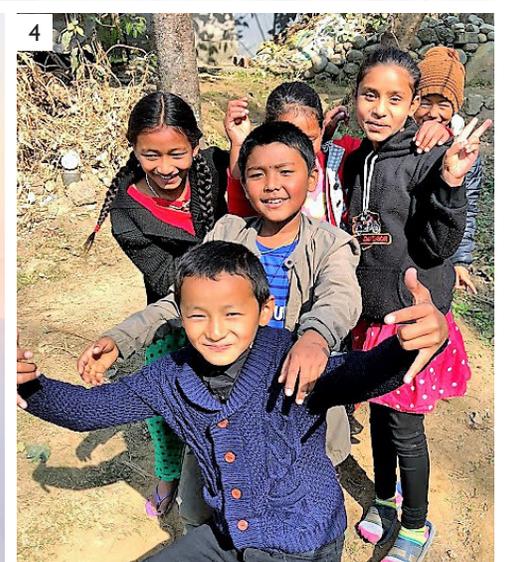
Conversing with some of the church leaders, I sensed their deep desire to see churches planted in all areas of Nepal and missionaries would be sent to places where there's no gospel witness. That said, there are many blockages for young people to stay at their churches. Many churches are legalistic and give off the vibe that young people need to conform to the traditional ways. Outward appearance is more important than inward transformation. Many youths are struggling with relational issues without the support of the body of believers. Now is the time to help the local churches and their leadership to give them encouragement and ideas in how to engage their children and youth, so their churches will continue to grow.

### Annie Tran (Chinatown English)

During our second week in Nepal, I had a chance to meet the youngest participant of the

KidZ Ministry Teaching Certificate Training. His name is Risen, and he is 10 years old. Being so young, I had to ask him why he was participating in this intensive, four day, seven hours a day training and not playing outside with friends. He shared how he was encouraged by his current children's ministry teacher and some of his older friends at church to participate due to his involvement with their church's children's ministry. As a 10-year-old boy, he has taken up the role of being his teacher's assistant and being the substitute in the event his teacher had to be absent from the ministry. As I witnessed him go through the training, I noticed little things about him. He was bold in his praises to God during worship. He was quite vocal, as he shared his answers and ideas with his small group. And he listened attentively when we presented our training material to the class and diligently took notes to follow along. Meeting this precious boy was a big encouragement and witness to me because he was a living example of what God can do when we put in the time and effort to love our children with Christ-like love. No one

forced him to do any of these things. He stayed for the training willingly. He wanted to learn and see how God can teach him. As I spoke with him more, I asked him what were his favorite things to teach during children's ministry. Right away, he listed Jesus, His miracles and our opportunity to have eternal life with Him when we believe in Him. As I got to know Risen more, I clearly saw that he had a big heart for his family, his country, Nepal's government, and for the orphans of Nepal. Some things we wouldn't think a 10-year-old child would care about. Although I may not see Risen again (unless God chooses to cross our paths), his story has become my personal encouragement to continue loving and discipling children to Christ-driven lives. Because he is my living example of what God can do when an adult courageously pours in time, attention, and love onto a child who needs God.



1) Our team was able to train Nepalis from over 33 churches in two cities during our two-week stay. 2) Nepalis young and old go to the temple to pray and worship their gods. 3) Treated the children from a children home to a sunrise excursion with the Himalayan mountain range in the background 4) Children we met during our church visit

## Keeping It Fresh



by VINCE LAU,  
NEWTON ENGLISH

**D**o you know what “TIOB” stands for? It is the acronym for Together in One Bucket.

This is the English-speaking youth ministry at our Newton Campus. While the name came just a little later, the youth ministry started the very same day that BCEC started worship services in September 2003 at the Newton Campus. It is hard to believe that TIOB is fifteen years old now. In fact, more than half of TIOB alumni have graduated from college and some are even married. The two constant goals of TIOB for the students have been “to get to know and love God better” and “to get

to know and love each other better.” These have not changed.

Fifteen years is a long time. In fact, when TIOB first started, Facebook was not even in existence, and now it is “old fashioned” in the eyes of the youth. There have been so many different other new ways students interact with each other since then. While God’s message of love and forgiveness remains the same, and is strong enough to stand on its own, more and more we are challenged with different ways of capturing and maintaining the attention of students. TIOB has tried to help students understand who God is, what it means to have a relationship with Jesus, and how to build meaningful fellowship. How can we do this without finding new ways to connect and to communicate with the youth of today? Over the years, TIOB has incorporated different ways of achieving

its goals; these methods included youth retreats, missions trips, field days outside, large group activities inside, food-creating competitions, church sleepovers, small group activities, student worship teams, just to name a few. Over the years, the pastoral staff has been very supportive in meaningful ways: Pastor Tom, Pastor Enoch, Randall Myers, and even Pastor Steve have come to visit us. Now under Pastor Ken, we embrace a new era of change and promise for TIOB to meet the needs of the next generation. In fact, as I write this article, tomorrow Pastor Ken and the current youth counselors of TIOB will be participating in an all-day workshop at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to learn how to work with the youth of today. This is just another way we hope to be “keeping it fresh” at TIOB.

## Signs of Grace



by PASANG DROLMA,  
NEWTON MANDARIN

**T**o me, 2017 was filled with struggles and challenges, yet it was also a year with abundant blessings from God.

Within the short period of a few months between July and September, I faced and experienced mentally and physically draining sufferings and great spiritual temptations. My dear sister suddenly passed away, my beloved Tibetan pastor rest in peace at a relative young age, a pastor whom I had served together for many years left his position to join missions, and my close coworker and prayer partner decided to leave ACCESS. Such unexpected and sad news and surprising changes brought me spiritual agony and pain. The saddest and most discouraging part of it all was facing my miseries and weaknesses at the same church where I had served the most, given the most, and poured out the greatest amount of love, causing me to feel spiritually lonely and hurt. However, praise the Lord that “naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.” (Job 1:21 – NIV) These ordeals and spiritual valleys were opportunities from God for me to fully and genuinely experience the salvation of the cross, learn spiritual lessons, and comprehend God’s work. In the midst of loneliness and peace, I invested more time in prayer, Bible reading, worship, and drawing close to God. Relying on His grace and believing in His promises, with the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, I learned to be humble and obedient and to seek His will during suffering. As described in a verse familiar to Christians, “we

know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28 – NIV).

God’s will is His command and His promise to us, and it is also the purpose and direction in life that we seek. When Pastor Daniel Chan approached me to ask if I would be willing to prayerfully consider to be nominated as a deacon from the Newton Mandarin congregation, my first response was to seek God’s will. If I had listened to my body and considered my weaknesses, I would have no intention to serve as deacon. I had many valid and strong reasons to decline: I was the Executive Director of ACCESS in charge of the administration and outreach activities of a non-profit organization; I was serving at different positions in the Newton Mandarin congregation; I was a consultant and coworker for an evangelistic ministry serving Tibetans in Nepal. These positions were already taking up a lot of my time and energy. As a single mom and single woman, I had my own reservations and struggles. The Bible also lists strong qualifications of a deaconess: “In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything” (1 Timothy 3:11 – NIV). I was concerned that, because I expect a lot from myself and pursue perfection, I would add extra stress and responsibilities to myself. In addition, based on my knowledge, abilities, strengths, and experience, and especially because of the fact that I don’t speak Cantonese and lack fluency in English (which is my third language), I worried that these factors would interfere with the ministry of a deacon. However, “‘for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8 – NIV). God used different circumstances and His word to encourage and

comfort me: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9 – NIV) The Bible also teaches us to “stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58 – NIV) I thank God for granting me courage and grace, so that during times when the church is in need, I am willing to put aside my own thoughts and ideas and obey the guidance of God and the authority of the church. In October 2017, I became a deacon of BCEC in charge of internal and external communication. As someone who was born and raised in the Tibetan highlands and only started learning Chinese when I was nine, I became one of the deacons of a church with 1200 members and seven congregations, thanks to God’s mercy, election, salvation, and blessing. This is tremendous grace, a huge blessing from God, and “the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (Revelation 14:6 – NIV). I firmly believe that my wisdom, abilities, and honor are limited, “but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Corinthians 1:27 – NIV).

As I am a new deacon, there are expectations, whether they are from the church, the congregation, or myself. I hope that the management and ministries of our church will have revival, change, and breakthrough. Such expectations are both a source of stress as well as motivation. A communication deacon is a new position added by BCEC in 2017. There is no transition from a previous deacon who can pass along any experience or insights.

The board of deacons and I need to pray continually, share with one another, and develop a vision and goals for our ministries. Using my limited capabilities, I hope that I can serve our church at my position to promote change and development in several areas:

### **1. Increase the sense of belonging, responsibility, and participation of our congregation**

Last year when I was involved in our Annual Meeting, church expansion, missions conference, and other ministries, I realized that many in our church do not participate and support churchwide activities and decisions, even though we have so many members and seven congregations. This was evident by the number of people attending these events. I hope that there will be more promotion, publicity, mobilization, and communication in future events and ministries, so that our church members will understand our messages, pay attention to event updates, raise their interests, and understand the importance and necessity for our seven congregations to unite and to complement and support one another.

### **2. Promote a platform for healthy communication**

The church is God's family and the home of God's children. The ideas, suggestions, commendations, praises, criticisms, and admonishments by each family member should not be neglected. However, because Chinese people value seniority, avoid confrontation, and practice self-preservation, our congregation tends not to express their views or suggestions in public or during our annual meeting. Instead, they prefer to whisper to each other, threatening our unity. Moreover, we sometimes do not follow the Biblical principle of speaking the truth in love, simply for the sake of unity. Therefore, I hope that we can encourage our pastors, elders, and deacons to communicate more openly and honestly, clearly revealing their positions and personal opinions while listening and collecting opinions from others when they make decisions and develop policies. Using such a platform for communication, perhaps we can drive and promote the exchange of ideas within our congregation, building a platform that extends both from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top.

### **3. Build personal relationships in harmony**

BCEC has seven congregations, three languages, and intercultural and subcultural differences. Building churchwide relationships are not trivial, but each of us can make our own contacts, and we can use these for promoting interactions and mutual assistance between our congregations and contributing to church unity. I especially hope that,

## REMINISCING AND LOOKING FORWARD – BENJAMIN TANG

BY JAMES LAM, NEWTON CANTONESE

Ben, I first met you more than 20 years ago. I remember at the time, your pleasant smile and warm affection quickly drew in others around you. You were not the type who boasted. You were a thoughtful person; you would always have a new perspective whenever we talked. You were exceptionally good at Chinese, and picked up writing-related work for church.

A few years back, you suffered from a stroke, which impacted your health on a great level. You told us that you could not perform any laborious tasks, and your actions and speech slowed down. This brought a lot of frustration and worry to you. Even so, you acted as a counselor at every evangelistic meeting. Despite the weather, you stood on the street with others to hand out flyers in hopes of spreading God's Word for many years. From the moment you became Christian up until now, your devotion to spread the Word never wavered. You loved to grow spiritually in Christ, thus assisting at the library and Sunday School became your favorite way to serve. At the same time, you encouraged our brothers and sisters at church to deepen their understanding of God's Word. You always believed that hymns brought one closer to God. To you, being able to praise God through singing amidst our choir members was an immense blessing.

In between all of your serving, you did not get caught up in the chaos, and knew that there were times of peace, quiet, and self-reflection before God, too. You attended every prayer meeting, on Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings, waiting calmly for God's guidance. I recall some times when there were just a few of us, standing in front of God, with tears rolling down our cheeks, admitting our sins, and changing ourselves for the better. Through the Lord's words and healing, our souls were cleansed.

Today we have lost a praying companion, or more specifically, we have lost a praying companion on Earth. However, you pray for us in heaven now. Your thoughts for family and those who have yet to be followers of Jesus, the brothers and sisters who were sick, and church—these were your prayers on Earth, and I believe that they are also your prayers in heaven.

If life was not measured with the span of time, you would already have a rich, bright, and colorful life!

I look forward to reunite with you in heaven one day.

*Editor's Note: Benjamin Tang was a brother from the Newton Cantonese congregation. He went back to the Lord on November 9, 2017.*

during my term, each deacon including myself can make arrangements and create opportunities to have meals with brothers and sisters from different congregations, so that we can encourage and listen to one another and establish accountability in our ministries.

### **4. Strengthen our team of information and technology for external marketing**

We live in an era of constant advancement in technology, so our church needs to keep pace in our different facilities. These abundant resources are blessings from God, and they can be used as tools and equipment for sharing the Gospel. If our church can assemble a team for making audio and video recordings and storing files, we can view images at our annual meeting to review the signs of how God has blessed us. In addition, BCEC has an active and positive influence in Chinatown and the Chinese community, so I hope our church events involving local outreach and social responsi-

bility will develop better publicity in the community, increase our reputation, and enable us to be the salt and light in our community.

Although I have these ideas, I know I can still learn a lot from others. I hope to listen to constructive feedback and comments from our spiritual leaders and congregation and do my best when serving God's family and His children. Of course, I understand my prerequisite and my priority need to be regular communication with God through Bible reading and prayer. Without a close relationship and regular communication with God, I will not be able to fulfill my duty as a deacon. I hope that you will earnestly pray for me, so that I may accomplish His will and not my will. May God help me, so that "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13 – NIV).

# Caring for the Oppressed



by PASTOR KENNETH KWONG

During April 6-8, the Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) will be hosting our annual Social Responsibility Conference, and our theme will be “Trafficking Hope.” Ever since our last conference on “Justice 101 — Biblical Justice and Race,” congregants have expressed in post-conference surveys that they would be interested in related topics. Therefore, this year we want to more comprehensively explore oppression that is happening in modern societies, particularly human trafficking. Through various messages and workshops, we hope that we can collectively learn the harms caused by this sin. However, even before the conference, we can explore some Biblical passages and understand how God sees oppression.

## Those who were oppressed in the Bible

According to the Bible, from the beginning God has already shown caring eyes towards the oppressed. In the Bible, the oppressed are referred to as the “alien,” “fatherless,” and the “widow.” It is likely that they must have experienced being sold. In the Old Testament, there are 18 verses where these three words appear together, showing they belong to the same category. The prophet Isaiah also reminded the Israelites to “defend the oppressed,” particularly to “take up the cause of the fatherless” and “plead the case of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17 – ESV)

Why were the “alien,” “fatherless,” and the “widow” in Biblical times easily oppressed by others to the point where they could be sold into slavery against their will? That was because they either had no breadwinner to provide for them, or have the necessary capital or skills to sustain a living, so they were in a position where they could be easily exploited. Aliens may become nomads because they were sold rather than of their own volition; remember Joseph? He was in Egypt only because he was sold to Egyptians in the first place. As for the fatherless and the widow, if they lost male figures in their family, it left them with no source of income, because men was regarded as the primary and the only suitable breadwinner in ancient times. Widows and orphans, most likely with no ability to fend for themselves, were often left at the doorsteps of slavery. This was also the experience of the Israelites in Egypt. The patriarchs enjoyed prosperous years in Egypt when Joseph was the governor, but once Joseph passed and his political influence waned, the Israelites, despite their population outnumbering the Egyptians, also became victims of oppression. When God rescued the Israelites, it was not only because He needed to fulfill His covenant to Abraham (Genesis 15:13), but He was also releasing the oppressed from their suffering.

## Why should we care for the oppressed?

The first reason is to remember how WE were saved by God, as Deuteronomy 24:17-18 (NIV) says:

*“Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.”*

God reminded the Israelites to not mistreat the oppressed, because they had also been oppressed, and they were freed only because of God. One of the Greek translations of the word “remember” was also used within the New Testament to remind Christian believers to remember Jesus Christ through the Communion. Both the Israelites and Christians were saved by God, the former being released from actual slavery from the Egyptians and the latter from the bondage of sin! As we were both saved by the grace of God, the aforementioned command given to the Israelites should also apply to Christians! We should be gracious and compassionate, especially to the oppressed.

Another reason is that this is an action that would be pursued by believers seeking spiritual growth. James 1:27 (NIV) says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” Believers should always remind themselves that they will have to answer to God for all that they have done. However, for the devotion that God desires from us, James noted that it is not based on how much we read the

Bible or pray, how punctual we are with attending church services, or even how much money we put in our offering! Rather, it comes from whether we have helped the oppressed with tangible actions. Therefore, we see that acts of love are essential to our spiritual maturity, but at the same time, they can be easily forgotten.

A third reason is when Jesus Christ returns, He will judge us on whether we have cared for the oppressed. In Malachi 3:5 (NIV), it was prophesied that when the Messiah arrives, He will exact justice: “So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me.” When Jesus returns again, He is to shine the light into darkness and bring to the surface all injustices and sins, which include acts of oppression. As Christians, we have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel and bring forth the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth, as well as to be salt and light to the world. We also cannot ignore acts of fraud, oppression, and perversion of justice; it does not align with our calling and responsibilities as Jesus’ representatives on earth.

These are just some of many Biblical passages that implore believers to care of the oppressed, and we do not have the time to discuss them right now, but we hope to explore them in further detail during our Social Responsibility Conference through our speakers!

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER

### Mini Grant Project: Christmas in November



by JERRY HUANG,  
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

This past November, BCEC’s English College Ministry held an event that we called “Christmas in November.” The naming might be a little odd, but on a Saturday afternoon in early November, it truly felt like Christmas in a small room on the second floor of 120 Shawmut Avenue.

It’s what we decided to call our own version of Operation Christmas Child, a service project organized by Samaritan’s Purse. Various ministries at BCEC have previously participated in Operation Christmas Child, where the goal is to fill an ordinary shoebox with thoughtful gifts for a needy child, who might not otherwise receive a Christmas present.

After choosing to assemble a shoebox for a boy or girl between the ages of 2-4, 5-9, or 10-14, we set off in search of presents. Most of us ended up at Target in South Bay, where we spent some time

shopping for fun toys, hygiene items, and school supplies. Each person used their own funds; suggested total contribution was approximately \$10-20. After returning, we assembled the boxes, including a Christian tract, a personal handwritten note, and a photo of our group. After praying for each child who might receive a gift, the boxes were then wrapped and dropped off at a local collection center, where they will be shipped to needy children around the world. We were able to construct a total of 18 shoeboxes, and the Social Responsibility Committee’s generous Mini-Grant paid to ship the boxes internationally (\$9/box) for a total of \$162.

As a ministry, we still have much room for the Lord to grow in us a spirit of generosity and compassion to serve those less fortunate than ourselves. While we did not personally meet those who received our gifts, we know that we were able to deliver not only the joy of opening a Christmas present, but also God’s love to the children who need to hear it most.

*“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”*

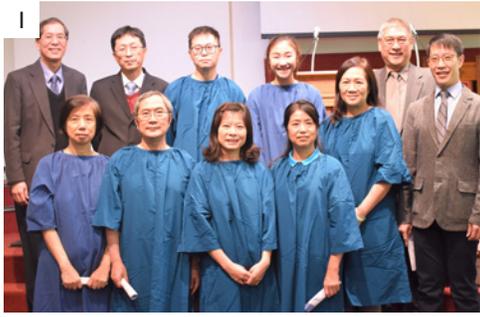
1 John 3:17-18 (ESV)



Advent Concert (12/2)



Servant appreciation dinner (12/11): Chinatown Mandarin ministries prepared a sumptuous dinner to appreciate all the staff, elders, deacons, and many more who have served in our church.



1-5) Baptism (12/3)



Community English Class: 6-7) Elder Bak Fung Wong and his wife Mei Kee encouraged the students at the conclusion of the fall semester 8) Graduating class



Chinatown Children's Christmas Party (12/17)



Christmas Carol at Quincy South Cove Rehab (12/23): Multi-generational brothers and sisters from BCEC sang Christmas songs to the elderly residents at Quincy South Cove Manor. We brought the joy and peace of Jesus to the house of elderly care.



2017 Annual Congregational Meeting (10/29)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

- 10 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS  
*SPRING SEMESTER PLACEMENT TEST*
- 16 CHINESE NEW YEAR  
*OFFICE CLOSED*
- 16-19 WINTER TEEN CONFERENCE  
(HIGH SCHOOL)  
*ENGLISH*
- 19 PRESIDENTS' DAY  
*OFFICE CLOSED*
- 19-23 PDAS BREAK
- 23-25 WINTER TEEN CONFERENCE  
(MIDDLE SCHOOL)  
*ENGLISH*

### MARCH

- 3 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS  
*SPRING SEMESTER CLASSES BEGIN*
- 4 CHINESE SUNDAY SCHOOL  
*SPRING SESSION BEGINS*
- 11 COLLEGE RETREAT  
*ENGLISH*
- 11 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS  
*ONE HOUR AHEAD*
- 16-18 CANTONESE MARRIAGE  
ENRICHMENT  
*CHINESE*
- 30 GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE
- 31 EASTER HOLIDAY  
*NO COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASSES*

### APRIL

- 1 EASTER SUNDAY
- 1 BAPTISM
- 6-8 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY  
CONFERENCE
- 16-20 PDAS BREAK

### MAY

- 3 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
- 6 CARING SUNDAY  
*CHINESE*
- 13 MOTHER'S DAY
- 25-28 TIOBYOUTH RETREAT  
*NEWTON ENGLISH*
- 28 MEMORIAL DAY  
*OFFICE CLOSED*



Christmas celebration in various Chinatown Mandarin fellowships: 1) Bera Fellowship (12/1) 2-4) Paul Fellowship (12/22) 5) Timothy Fellowship (12/25)



6-8) Joshua 2 Fellowship mini-camp (1/26-1/28)

**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](mailto: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@bcec.net](mailto:helena.fong@bcec.net). We reserve the right to edit the submissions as we deem appropriate without notice.

Visit us on the web at [www.bcec.net](http://www.bcec.net)

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9-10) The children's activity organized by the Child Evangelism Fellowship during the Christmas Eve Service on 12/24 attracted children of all ages to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. 11-12) New Year Prayer Meeting (1/1)