



From Our Associate Pastor:

Seek the Peace of the City



by PASTOR DANIEL CHAN

Around 593 B.C., Zedekiah, who was appointed as the last king in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, sent two messengers to report on the current status of the nation to Nebuchadnezzar. After finding out, the prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter and asked two messengers to bring it to the Jews who had been exiled to Babylon.

The Jews were exiled on at least four occasions. The first time happened in 605 B.C., when King Jehoiakim angered Babylon by aligning himself with Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, plundered some of the possessions, and took away a group of elite members, including the prophet Daniel. The second time happened in 597 B.C. when Jehoiakim and his son, Jehoiachin, were still aligning themselves with Egypt. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar sent a great army across the border, and up to 10,000 residents

were exiled to Babylon. However, many Jews did not accept that this was a lesson that God had given them. In 593 B.C., a false prophet declared that he received a revelation from God that those who had been exiled to Babylon would return home in two years. Jeremiah realized that this fake news would have a big influence, so he wrote the aforementioned letter, beginning with these sentences in Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NIV):

“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’”

Jeremiah asked the Jews in exile to settle down, live a productive life, and start families. Instead of living like strangers, they should seek the peace of the city, because the peace of the city would become their peace.

The Jews in exile at the time probably would have various feelings. Some might feel depressed. Others

might feel helpless and resigned themselves to fate. Some might even feel indignant, while others might even conspire to inflict damage. Nevertheless, through Jeremiah, God was asking them to actively contribute to the local society.

God asked them to do so even though the Jews were forced into exile. Today we freely choose to live here, so we are even more obligated to engage ourselves in the healthy development of our society and to seek the peace of our community. As a matter of fact, our community has high expectations of our church and our congregation. We saw this from the comments expressed from community members during our PDA application process. Among the members of our congregation, quite a number are involved in jobs that serve the community. I hope that they will be models for us, encouraging us to contribute to society through difference channels.

In light of this, the pastoral staff and elders have decided on “Seek the Peace of the City” as the church theme for next year. Under this theme, we will encourage people to be engaged in activities as individuals, in fellowships, in committees, or as part of the whole church that show our care for the community. We also welcome suggestions and ideas.

Joint Chinese Retreat:

Making the Paths of the Lord Straight



by SOPHIA DING,
CHINATOWN MANDARIN

It was a Friday when I entered 120 Shawmut Ave., and I saw on the television a promotion for the Chinese Congregation Retreat. The retreat theme is how to follow Jesus Christ in the 21st century. At that moment, I realized the theme is a good lesson for our generations, especially the young. I was still doubtful at the time of signing up because the time of the retreat was also my interview for citizenship.

Praise the Lord that He used a gentle and still voice to encourage me to sign up for the retreat. Dur-

ing the whole two days of the retreat, I had the chance to be with brothers and sisters across the generations in the auditorium, as we prepared our hearts together to grow spiritually. This is an experience that I have not been through before. We are like a big, warm family, eating together, living together, strolling together in the woods, and together making the paths of the Lord straight.

On the topic of “paths,” the retreat sermons left a lasting impact in my life, especially the words from Pastor Chiang that we must make the paths of the Lord straight. “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways.” (Luke 3:5 – ESV) In this modern age, our life is filled with things that we can see, and things that cannot be seen, things that we can prevent, and things that cannot be prevented. These things are like curved paths, rough paths, high mountains and

low valleys. They can be stumbling blocks to our own and other people’s feet. When hearing this sermon, I reflected and asked myself whether my life is also filled with difficult and curved paths, stubborn and deep valleys, and proud and high mountains. Afterwards, I can only shake my head with a sigh! However, praise the Lord that He allows me to be vigilant and always examine my life for any signs of godly transformations. The Lord also always prepares me to be His witness and helps me to share the good news with my beloved friends and family members.

In this hectic and busy 21st century, this church retreat allowed us to slow down. While we were still, we examined the core of our faith and obedience to God and cleaned out the messy threads that coil around our lives. Give thanks to the Lord! What a blessing!



Table of Contents

<i>Seek the Peace of the City</i>	1
<i>Making the Paths of the Lord Straight</i>	1
<i>Meet Our New Staff</i>	2
<i>Lion and Lamb</i>	2
<i>Following Jesus Together: Celebrating Our Unity in Diversity</i>	3
<i>Reflection on East Asia Short-Term Missions Trip</i>	4
<i>Gloria a Dios!</i>	7
<i>Trafficking Hope After the Social Responsibility Conference</i>	8
<i>Pastoral Residency Reflection</i>	8
<i>Duties and Responsibilities for BCEC Members to Attend Our Annual Meeting</i>	9
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	11

MEET OUR NEW STAFF



Greetings! It is my pleasure introduce and share a little bit about my wife, Susan, and myself to you.

I was born and raised in Massachusetts, where I grew up attending a Korean church. It is also where I dedicated my life to Jesus as a youth. I graduated from UMass Amherst with a degree in linguistics in 2011. Upon graduating, I felt called by the Lord to serve in the local church. I pursued that calling by spending two years serving in college ministry in Amherst. I continued to pursue that call by enrolling at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) for my Master of Divinity, where I graduated in 2016. I served in other ministry roles, including serving Asian American youth in the New England area before joining the pastoral staff at BCEC.

I met Susan, who is currently a Master of Counseling student at GCTS, and got married last year in October 2017. Susan grew up in Maryland and went to school at University of Southern California (USC). She worked in



Welcome lunch for our new staff at Newton Campus (8/19) — From left to right: Monique Liu, Pastor Ken Liu, Patrick Lin, Christine Lin, Susan Lee, Saul Lee, Pastor Barry Lam, Sophia Lee

various positions in the DC area for several years before enrolling at GCTS in 2015 to pursue her call and heart for counseling.

Susan and I are both excited to be a part of the family here at BCEC! It is exciting for me personally to be a part of BCEC because of several connections that I have to the church. It is also exciting for me to be a part of what the Lord is doing in Boston and Newton through BCEC. I

am looking forward to serving the youth at Newton and seeing them grow as men and women of God to make a kingdom impact in their communities and relationships.

Thank you, and I look forward to meeting and serving alongside you!

— Saul Lee

Lion and Lamb



by PATRICK LIN

I am not a mighty lion, nor am I willing to be a scapegoat. In the past, I was incredibly jealous of eagles who could fly freely in the sky seemingly without a care in the world, with their laser-sharp eyes and even sharper claws catching whatever prey they could spot.

The person I am now thinks, “How can our God be a mighty lion and a scapegoat at the same time?”

Over the years, my experiences have led me to discover that there are a lot of choices in life: you can choose to be constantly choked by invisible chains and locks, shutting yourself up in a dark, enclosed space, but you can also choose to live freely under the guidance of God. Choosing to live freely in Christ is not a form of luxury or greediness. It dawned on me later that this was all due to the grace of God.

All throughout my student years, although being alone had its freedoms, and I always longed for someone I could lean my shoulder on and share life’s ups and downs together with. I am someone who fears being alone and finds solitude unappealing. I found myself feeling even

more alone while away from my home country. Meeting my wife and starting a family with her seemed to be a normal part of life, although I saw many young couples around us constantly struggling and arguing. Later on, I realized that Christ was using His everlasting love to love us. It dawned on me later that this was all due to the grace of God.

Growing up in a strict household, I was taught that it was necessary for me to inherit my culture and work hard every day. However, I did not understand the reason behind this, and it went unsaid that the outcome would be either honor or shame. Nevertheless, this lifestyle did not leave a deep impression on me. Other than learning English and Japanese, I also learned biblical Greek and Hebrew. After I came into Christ’s embrace, I suddenly found a new meaning in life. For it was Christ who took on the burden of all sin as our precious scapegoat, and Christ who carried all honor like a mighty lion. It dawned on me later that this was all due to the grace of God.

After becoming a Christian while in college, my whole perspective and outlook on life completely changed. Confessing my wrongs and apologizing to my family pulled us even closer and strengthened our bond. I discovered that loving my wife was the same as Jesus loving the church: the willing to sacrifice one’s life for the other. Loving my children was to teach them the

Word, guiding them along the path that led to God. It dawned on me later that this was all due to the grace of God.

When I first entered the workplace as a young adult, it was my natural instinct to be competitive and be the ultimate best at everything, for this was the only way I could keep my job and sustain a living. Gradually, I started to acknowledge my own limits and recognize others’ strengths, making many different friends along the way. My office was reshuffled and jobs got cut again and again, and there were times when the road ahead of me seemed uncertain and unexpected. I know it was under God’s care for our needs that I was able to keep working there. It dawned on me later that this was all due to the grace of God.

Even serving in church is also under His plan! From living at home as a child to moving out as a student and worker and spending a year in Lowell, I witnessed the renovation of a church and worked with many brothers and sisters in Christ. Being here now in the Newton Mandarin congregation is all thanks to God: I was sent out, guided, and looked after by God on the road of life. It dawned on me later that this was all due to the grace of God.

I am thankful, for Christ is a mighty lion who has broken free from our chains of sin, and He is also a scapegoat who has shouldered on the burden of all our sins, seeing us as precious treasure.

Following Jesus Together: Celebrating Our Unity in Diversity



by MENG YUAN RUAN,
CHINATOWN MANDARIN

Several months ago, I knew that our church would be holding a joint picnic. I was a little worried; seven congregations using three different languages would gather in one place. A combined event is a good way

to practice unity. After all, our church theme this year is "Following Jesus Together: Celebrating our Unity in Diversity." Pastors often mention unity. I do not feel comfortable interacting with people who speak other languages. I have discovered my worry is unnecessary.

Praise the Lord! The picnic went smoothly. The night before the picnic, we had fellowship, and then we had to set up the place early the next morning. Pastor Andy's wife, Jennie, suggested we prepare food for the drivers, so that they could have more time to rest. We laid all kinds of good food on the lawn, and everyone dug in!

We exercised together, played badminton, and frisbee. Spending time with brothers and sisters who

speak different languages is not so scary. Indeed, everybody enjoyed it, and it felt like we were a family. Although we may not know each other, there are no barriers. Everyone had a joyful smile on their face, which was so great!

I remember Jennie said that a lot of brothers and sisters prayed for this event. I am so forgetful about praying for our church. I hope that I learn to pray for more for unity within our church. Being in this big family, I am grateful to those who worked and prayed so hard behind the scenes, so that we had the opportunity to be together, to enjoy the abundant provisions in the nature, and to experience unity in our church.



East Asia Missions:

Reflection on East Asia Short-Term Missions Trip

by EAST ASIA SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAM

Peter Wong (Team Leader, Newton Mandarin)

Thank God for sending workers to different places in the world for His Kingdom! This year is the fourth year that our church sent a short-term missions team to the territory, which was seriously destroyed by the catastrophic earthquake. This year, the team faced more challenges than before as the places we went had both human and natural difficulties. Since God called us to go, by faith we stepped out of our comfort zone and with the prayers from our church members, we experienced God's protection and power to carry us through. We witness that He is faithful and trustworthy. His provision for His children is really beyond what we can plan or imagine. To God be the glory!

This year, God called nine brothers and sisters with their family members from our church together with BCEC teams to serve together this summer. Even though we are in different stages of life and different cultural background, we really appreciate how God brings us together to serve in harmony and unity. We experienced what the Psalmist said, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1 - ESV) God protected us from interruption of local officials and serious sickness. He gave us opportunities to hold parenting talks, to train local church leaders, to teach English classes in elementary grades, to share God's love through serving, as well as to share the gospel with participants. It was so wonderful and joyful to see children praying to God to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. We witnessed God answering their prayers and they learned that they could pray through life's difficulties.

In addition, we also visited churches and had fellowship with brothers and sisters there. Their trust in the Lord and their humble serving in the church left unforgettable memories in our hearts.

We pray that God will give them strength to overcome all the difficulties in the future. In our last visit to a church in a village, a teen earnestly asked me whether we could hold teens camp next year, and two elders invited us to come in 2019. I really wanted to firmly give a positive answer, but I know it depends on His guidance. I pray that we can come back to serve.

We pray that what we have done will glorify His Name and He will continuously take care of His churches there! Here are reflections from some of our team members:

Joanna Wong (Newton Mandarin)

I am grateful for the opportunity in serving on the East Asia short-term missions team again. I'm amazed by how God is working in this country, especially as exhibited in the faith and kindness of broth-

ers and sisters. Even though they are going through hardships in churches, they are still faithful to God. I'm also grateful to see children accepting Christ because their faith is exactly what we should learn from.

Daniel Ting (Chinatown English)

This was my first missions trip, and I was humbled and amazed by God's work during our journey. We had a large team, which was worrisome from a security perspective, but we also had a larger group of people lifting us up in prayer. That made a huge difference. Though occasionally naughty, the kids were enthusiastic and to our great joy, God opened the way for us to share the gospel with them. And although I had difficulties expressing myself in the local language, God helped me through each class.

Several things struck me about this trip. The first was God's faithful and constant protection. One of the nearby churches had experienced severe persecution just before we arrived, but God safely carried each and every one of our team members to our destination and back (the mosquitoes also flew around us like guardian angels, but we believe this was incidental). We initially thought it was too risky to share the gospel or sing overtly religious songs, but God had prepared the situation such that we were able to. The kids listened to the gospel message attentively, and they loved to sing songs about God's love for them! Another thing that inspired me was seeing the faithful service of the teens who came with us. They had great rapport with the kids and helped in so many ways with the classes. Lastly, I was thankful for the many team members who went out of their way to encourage others. One time, when I was feeling unsure about leading a class, a member of our team unexpectedly walked up to me and gave me a word of affirmation, which immediately strengthened me to continue on.

These experiences gave me faith in God's provision and His promises that His word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). It made me better realize how wonderful it can be when believers in Christ express love for one another, and how powerful persistence in prayer is. As the song says, "God will make a way, where there seems to be no way."

Romy Li (Newton English)

I used to think that little kids were extremely annoying and too much work to be around. After a week teaching at the camp in the city, where our church's missions trip took place, I had completely changed my view on the matter. I was so surprised that the kids seemed to genuinely like singing the worship songs, even though they couldn't possibly pronounce and understand the English as fast as the songs went. During class time, the kids were obedient and tried their best to listen intently to the material all the teachers prepared. We had special programs for the kids other than reading and writing English, including phonics, character building, and a special



craft/event at the end of each day. By the end of the first day, I was sure that I would be coming back next year, because the pure joy pouring out from the hearts of these innocent children really touched me, whether they were learning English, singing songs, or making crafts.

I can't speak for all the teachers and classes, so I will just share a few experiences I had in the first grade. On the first day, I was surrounded by a group of around 15 kids, and I was quite annoyed because they all seemed to want attention of some sort, and I didn't want to attend to them. Grumpy because I didn't want to lead the English songs and I was jet lagged and tired, I tried to ignore them, but they kept trying to get on my good side and please me. Finally, I decided to at least try to be nice to them and try to get to know them better. I learned that some kids loved to color and draw, some loved English, and some loved singing and dancing. I found myself intently coloring in between the lines of coloring books, patiently helping some kids sound out longer words, and dancing and singing my heart out with them, even with a raspy voice and sore body. We often high fived each other upon arrival, and I grew to love their sweet voices and happiness for such simple things. Soon, I even loved to lead the kids in activities. I sang in the morning, led games during class, and helped with crafts in the afternoon, all of which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Kids in my class adored prizes. I am a bit sheepish to say that we kind of bribed them a little with prizes, trying to calm them down by talking about the idea of getting a toy car or glittery purse. At the end of each day, I would bring out the box of prizes, and each kid with five stars would come up and pick a prize. It was a huge deal, and everyone would love coming up, getting a standing ovation, being envied for the prize they picked out, and proudly sitting back down. It was also one of my favorite parts of each day.

On Tuesday, the younger helpers led the water balloon games. The kids were mad that they got wet but we didn't, and they thought we didn't give them enough balloons. So, on Wednesday, we tried again. A plan was made and we filled double the amount of water balloons as the day before. We were determined to make it right, and right it was. Everyone, even the older kids, enjoyed it (especially the part of the plan when they got to pelt us with water balloons). My heart jumped with delight each time a balloon bursted onto someone, and made them very wet. I got a scare every time a kid popped a balloon on my head. By the end of the day, most teachers looked like they had come out of a swimming pool, while the kids looked

like they just took a light shower and toweled off a bit. It was the best end-of-day joint activity for all.

When we were spreading the gospel to the kids, almost every single one of them decided to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. It made me so happy to see them being serious about God, receiving prayer from an adult and getting a glove that had colors each representing a part of God's promise to man. It was like a miracle from heaven that so many kids were so quick to accept God.

Usually I hate writing and journaling, but since this was literally the best week of my life, I decided to journal every day so I could remember every moment of the missions trip. Every day I spent with the kids and the team was truly a blessing from God. I yearn to not only have the memories of this week in my heart, but also do it again until I can't anymore. The leader was so kind to every person on the team, and we all pitched in. It was a journey of amazing teamwork and fun times. We went to many enjoyable places, had delicious food every day, and slept in fairly well conditions. I looked forward to camp each day, probably more than most kids. I think I can speak for everyone that it was very worthwhile, and I thank God for the opportunity and experiences He gave me. As I write this I am sad because I miss each child so much, but I am also joyful because most have accepted the chance to become a child of God.

I hope that after hearing my story, many more people, especially teenagers like me with a lot of energy, will help out next year, too. I learned that although some kids are a bit more dramatic than necessary and can be annoying at times, if they are given the right kind of attention, love, and care, we will all be able to bring out the best in them. I think that the kids learned so much that can bring out their best potential, but I certainly feel that they still taught me much more than I taught them. While I taught them English words through my mouth and hands, they taught me through their hearts and souls how to be kinder than is necessary and really just love unyieldingly.

Kathy Chan (Chinatown Cantonese 3rd Service)

This trip to East Asia definitely opened my eyes to a wider horizon. In this short-term missions trip, God let me see the great and amazing work He is doing in different people and places. In a place with no religious freedom and insufficiency of both physical and spiritual resources, I instead saw the perseverance of the Christian brothers and sisters there as they clung even tighter to their faith in God. I remembered the first time I was leading worship there. Once I saw their passion in their worship, I could instantly sense their intense and unadulterated love for Jesus. This scene alone made me reflect on my own serving direction as well as how I should approach various aspects of my life. Personally, I felt that I did not bring much benefit to the locals, but rather it was the locals changing me and pushing me towards further spiritual growth. God's work is indeed amazing!

Carey Lam (Chinatown Cantonese 3rd Service)

John 4:24b (NIV) says, "[His worshipers] must worship in the Spirit and in truth." The most memorable thing from this East Asia short-term missions trip is that I had an opportunity to share my faith and testimony to the local Christian brothers and sisters from various life stages and social statuses. God allowed me to see that true unity can overcome differences in origin, social standing, and educational level, among many others. Whether it is the pastoral leadership, the recently converted laborer, or a farming mother, they persisted in their weekly worship gathering in spite of insufficiency or constraints from their surrounding environments. Thank God that He used this trip to help me reflect on my own hesitation to serve in various capacities and to be more involved in the church. I realized that believers only need a willing heart to serve and to humbly obey God.

Meihua Li (Chinatown English)

Ever since I returned from my short-term missions trip to East Asia back in 2015, I always remembered the kids there and wanted to go back to teach them English and to serve them. Two years passed without corresponding action, as school and work prevented me from doing so. However, this year God touched my heart to put down what I was doing again to do His work again in East Asia, and this time I even invited my fiancé (Daniel) to go serve together.

God once allowed me to see His wonder and awe through this trip. Initially there were not enough students attending the summer camp that is part of the trip, but in the end there were eight more students than what we initially projected! Praise the Lord! The local minister later shared that because of unfavorable weather, they never had a chance to go promote the camp, yet God still gave us more students than we bargained for. God indeed listens to our prayers and would not let our efforts go to waste. I also want to thank my prayer warriors for their fervent prayer on our behalf.

My favorite part of the day is when we were worshipping with all the kids. Their booming voices made me strongly experience the wonders of worship, the words from the songs reminding me of God working wonders within the team. "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31 - NIV) To be able to trust in and rely on God each day during this trip is a blessing.

I also want to thank God that during the camp I was able to share the gospel with the kids, as well as use some Christian-themed materials for my classes. These exceeded my expectations. As the government continues to oppress Christians, God allowed me to see that the local Christians need much encouragement, so that they can persist in their faith and continue to meet together to worship. Pray that God can strengthen their faith and lead them on their spiritual journey.



Chaomin Li (Newton Mandarin)

This was my first short-term missions trip. Truthfully, I was not expecting anything special to happen at the start.

I want to share first about what happened during the preparation phase before the trip. We heard that the political environment was tense, so after discussion, we initially took out some of the more sensitive words out of our worship songs. We also confirmed that there were only about 20 kids attending our camp before we departed. Later we heard that because there were torrential rain, causing heavy mudslides in the area where we were soon heading to, causing our families and relatives to suggest that we should not go. The weather was so bad that even our taxi driver also suggested we should not head there. All these definitely tested our faith, and there were times when I would suspect if I made the right choice in joining this missions trip. Yet Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV) noted: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Praise the Lord that this short-term missions trip had many instances that proved God's trustworthiness. It gave someone with little faith such as myself multiple times to experience God's presence and blessings through prayers and His grace.

In one of my wife's Wechat instant messages, my wife mentioned that she experienced God's abundant blessings through this short-term missions trip, and I agree with her. Just as one of the worship songs says: "All of God's blessings must be counted, all of God's grace must be remembered; all of God's blessings must be counted, it will cause you to be astonished yet thankful and compel you to sing praises." Yes, we must count our blessings and to thank Him for His amazing deeds and leading of our lives! I will list out some of the blessings we received from our trip below:

1. Praise the Lord as we had an almost-perfect team. In our concluding meeting as a team, I used the word "flawless" to describe our team and how we complement each other. Our leader's planning was thorough and full of love; our counselors were full of wisdom; our teachers had wonderful linguistics. We had our abundant meals prepared by our supporters but seemingly prepared by professional-level chefs. We even had our local pastoral staff serving humbly as our chauffeurs. Our young teaching assistants were adorable and energetic.
2. Praise the Lord that our comings and goings

were safe and peaceful, and for the most part our health was excellent. Even though one of the young teaching assistants did have oral inflammation, that quickly went away as well.

3. Praise the Lord that our habitat for the trip was pretty good, and the facilities in the school was above my expectations as well.
4. Praise the Lord that we had good devotional and praying time daily throughout the trip.
5. Praise the Lord that there were close to forty kids attending the English class. They liked our classes very much and were very involved.
6. Praise the Lord that there were no political pressures such that we could sing our worship songs freely, and we did not need to change any words in the song lyrics.
7. Praise the Lord that the kids enjoyed the worship songs very much. When the pastor called for the children to give their lives to Jesus, many kids responded to the calling.
8. Praise the Lord that eight fourth or fifth graders in my class confidently committed to Christ.
9. Praise the Lord that we had a chance to attend the local churches there, allowing us to better understand the environment they are in, as well as to get to know the brothers and sisters there.
10. Praise the Lord that we had a chance to go to the site of the previous earthquake and the museum there. I definitely felt the need to not be only respectful to nature, but also be reverent to our God who is the creator of all.

I also want to share about an experience with prayer, as this made me truly realize that our God does listen to prayers. On our second day of our trip, we were initially planning to play water balloons (where you bean other people with water-infused balloons). However, per the weather forecast that Monday, the chances of rain would be very high on the day after; indeed, it rained heavily on Tuesday morning. During the morning class, we told the kids in our class of our plans to play outside in the afternoon, but the plan would be scuttled if it was raining. As we were telling the kids about the weather, I suddenly thought of the fact that my fellow teacher just taught the kids about God creating the sky and water on the second day. Suddenly I was compelled to ask the kids about whether we should pray to God that He will give us good weather in the afternoon, and they said yes. Therefore, I led the kids to offer such a prayer. The sun came out at noon, and I reminded the kids to continue monitoring the weather and pray. As we reached 5 p.m., the weather was gorgeous, so it was time to go out and play!

As we all happily run outside, I talked to them again about the weather and our prayers, and one kid innocently offered, "I will never trust the weather forecast again."

I asked, "So what will you do if you have a need and difficulty to deal with?"

The kids exclaimed, "Pray!"



Praise the Lord that these kids have such pure and innocent hearts; it is no wonder that in the Gospels, Jesus remarked that the kingdom belonged to children such as these. Praise the Lord that through this prayer episode I experienced even more deeply His power and faithfulness. We have sung the song "A Child of God" in this trip many times with the kids, and they like it a lot. I want to share with you all:

"A child of God, do not despair, lift up your eyes and look up,

God is in heaven, day and night, and always watching over you,

Even with difficulties, even with suffering, you are still in His hands,

He will make all things work and cause your cup to overflow.

Do not look at the environment, do not look at yourselves, Those who rely on Him shall renew their strength,

God will listen to every prayer, so do not give up,

Never ever forget that you need to persevere to the end.

A child of God, do not despair, lift up your eyes and look up,

God is in heaven, day and night, and always watching over you,

Even with difficulties, even with suffering, you are still in His hands,

He will make all things work and cause your cup to overflow.

Do not look at the environment, do not look at yourselves, Those wait patient on Him will soar on wings like eagles,

A child of God gets to enjoy His peace within His love,

Never ever forget that you are a child of God."

Carri Zhou (Newton Mandarin)

I am very grateful that our team was very united, and even though we sometimes have different opinions, we were very patient with each other to arrive at a consensus. From our daily routines to worshipping, doing devotions and reading the Bible together, as well as having debriefings and reflections at night, it really helped us not just on that particular day, but the day after as well.

The local leaders graciously took care of us. Because the distance between our lodging and the teaching venue was somewhat far, walking there would have taken twenty minutes on one trip, and it would have been unbearable under the hot weather. Therefore, they made three to four trips each day to transport us, and sometimes they had to make additional trips on top of that when one trip was insufficient to take everybody. However, they never showed annoyance, and their kindness touched us. I am grateful that we were

able to serve God with these brothers and sisters.

I also want to thank God for the sisters who cooked for the summer camp and also brought a few youth to help out. They made food that were suitable to our tastes; the local kids liked it as well. One of the students told their mother that "The food here tastes even better! They even have chicken wings." The youth who joined were able to bring more energy and get the kids to be more active and involved in their games, as well as arts and crafts, especially when they were playing water. Almost everybody's clothes were wet, but they were also super happy! I am thankful that God gave us these children, and pray that they will continue to be remain joyful in their spiritual journey.

The kids joining the summer camp were unique. Based on what the kids' attires and possessions were from the first day, their family background seems to be decent and not lacking. They were quite energetic and friendly, and they were attentive during classes. What was striking to me during classes was that their hands would be on the table, and they would raise their hands to answer questions. When called upon they would stand up to provide the answer, and when it is meal time, they would volunteer to scoop rice for their fellow student, as well as clean up after meals. It was only later that I would know that these students were kids whose parents had to leave their hometown to work, and that they may only see them once or twice a year. Therefore, they never had much opportunity to experience parental love, and they had to grow up quickly on their own, thus showing an unnatural maturity belying their age. Seeing this broke my heart, and I could only pray that God would enter their hearts and comfort them Himself, letting them know that the love of Jesus Christ is so deep, everlasting, and unchanging. May He disperse seeds of hope into these kids and let Himself grow within them. In the next couple days, the kids would gradually become even more friendly, open, relaxed, and trusting, and we were beginning to develop a closer bond with them as well. During our own break time, we would play with the kids, and one night we all went on a tour of a particular pedestrian-zone area displaying extensive indigenous Qiang influence. Thank God for allowing us to love these kids using the same love that He showed to us, as well as for opening their hearts to accept Jesus Christ into their lives. We always tell these kids that in the future whether they are going through happy or sad stretches, they need to pray to Jesus, our Heavenly Father in heaven. In Jesus, we do not need to fear anything in our lives. Amen!

Dominic Republic Missions:

Gloria a Dios!



by GRACE WOO,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

Hi, my name is Grace Woo, and I was part of the Dominican Republic short-term missions trip team that served in Santo Domingo from July 25 to August 1. I had experienced, learned, and seen so much in less than a week! Our team of six adults and three youths partnered with the pastors of local churches in the inner city to share the gospel. I would like to share how God used this trip to change me.

There is a notion that one must be an evangelist to go on a missions trip. This was my belief during my first short-term missions trip, and I was pressured by others and by myself to bring at least one person to Christ. But after this missions trip, I realized that the LORD of the harvest has different roles for each person on every trip. Some to reap, some to sow (1 Corinthians 3:6-9), while others to teach or encourage other believers and so forth. I believe that one of my main tasks this time was to encourage other believers. When I was preparing for my trip, I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to write a testimony about what God did for me in my architectural study. It did not make sense to me at that time. "Shouldn't I be writing a salvation testimony for a missions trip?" Thankfully, I obeyed God, typed out my testimony and promised to



share it only if my leader asked for someone to share a testimony. Well, my leader did, so I volunteered to share my testimony at a local church. Normally fearful of public speaking, I was completely fearless, and I felt rather joyful and clear-minded while sharing my testimony on stage. Afterward, a lady from that church gave me the tightest hug ever, a couple of people thanked me for my testimony, and a teammate said that it was encouraging.

Gloria a Dios! Glory to God! I did not bring a single person to Christ on this trip, and neither did I feel prompted by the Holy Spirit to make an altar call like last trip. However, I did my part as the body of Christ. For no matter how seemingly simple, small or "unspiritual" the work God has for us, we must obey even if it was out of our comfort zone. After all, what if Jesus had disobeyed and refused to leave His heavenly comfort to come die for us?



1) Medical outreach in Capotillo 2) Leading Sunday worship service in El Dique Church 3) Vacation Bible School in Margara 4) Vacation Bible School in Alma Rosa 5) Leadership training for local pastors 6) Our spiritual family in Christ

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER

Trafficking Hope After the Social Responsibility Conference



by CHUAN YI YAP,
NEWTON ENGLISH

What is “human trafficking”? Having grown up in Asia, when I see these words, I think of a dialect term, which translates literally to “snakeheads.” This term refers to gangs who smuggle people against their will to other countries to become slaves and prostitutes, or to beg for money on the streets.

I attended BCEC’s annual Social Responsibility Conference back in April of this year, and heard a talk from Cara from Route One ministry. I had never heard of this ministry, and I learned that it serves ladies working at strip clubs in

Massachusetts. After listening to this talk, I also realized that ladies at strip clubs could also be victims of human trafficking, as they are being forced to do what they are doing. Prior to this, my impression was that ladies enter the industry willingly for the “glamour and easy money.” I was wrong.

Based on Cara’s talk, strippers do not make much typically. They have to pay a stage fee to perform and a fee to the “house mother” to look after their belongings. The “house mother” also sells baby wipes to the ladies often at a huge profit margin. With these expenses, it is possible that they end up not earning any money for the night.

To help them leave the industry, Route One sends female believers to visit the ladies at the strip clubs and to build relationships with them, bringing little gifts such as packets of baby wipes or cookies. Each gift has on it a note “You are treasured.” Out of curiosity, I visited the Route One website, and I was pleasantly surprised by

the extent of help Route One is providing for the ladies. These include resources for food, shelter, job, child care, and legal advice.

With a much better understanding of the circumstances and plight of the ladies, and seeing what Route One is doing for the ladies, I was inspired to help, too! Coincidentally, a friend who attended the conference with me was also very motivated to contribute. We decided to donate baby wipes to Route One. With help and coordination from the Social Responsibility Committee, four boxes of baby wipes were delivered to Route One.

I feel thankful for the insights gained from the Social Responsibility Conference, and I feel blessed to be able to contribute. I hope you will consider praying about how to get involved. You can also contact the Social Responsibility Committee (srministry@bcec.net) or Route One directly for ideas.

Pastoral Residency Reflections



by ROCKEY CHAN,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

The purpose of the Pastoral Residency program is to provide Master of Divinity graduates an additional year of ministry experience through opportunities in church ministry. These opportunities help strengthen their ministry gifts, understanding general church polity, expand their perspective and understanding of various church ministries, and participate in planning and executing ministry programs. This program also helps in the spiritual formation of future pastors, as they experience some of the victories and struggles in ministry. And as my pastoral residency ends August 31st, I find myself reflecting how God guided and sometimes pushed me through various ministry experiences to prepare me for full time ministry. I would like to share what I learned during my time as a pastoral resident.

One of the most rewarding experiences was the opportunities to teach Adult Sunday School and preach. Even though I have taught a few years in College Ministry, my experience teaching adults have been even more challenging. I strived to engage adults to think about their personal theology and to live mis-

sional lives. Therefore, God led me to teach and lead discussions like Christian Ethics, Biblical book studies, and video content such as the 2014 movie Selma. I have learned as it is important to be proficient in the topics taught, it is equally important for the teacher (me) to allow the Holy Spirit to convict me through the topic of my own sins and weaknesses. The more I study and teach, the more I realized how much I do not know and required a humble heart to continue growing spiritually.

Understanding the daily decisions, previewing and reviewing of ministries, and long-term planning during the weekly pastoral meeting require humility and a servant attitude. I saw the pastoral staff emulate this during those meetings. I consistently learned more and more about the necessary and daily decisions pastors need to make for the health and growth of the church through the many church staff meetings. These meetings gave me a deeper understanding of how decisions and plans are made for the short and long-term care and growth of BCEC. I saw the complexity of ministry, as they may affect ministries from other congregations regarding material resources, people, and time. Every discussion, from the issue of security to deciding what to do for Mother’s Day, began with the following questions: Is this the best way to serve our congregation with our current capacity? How can I serve and help mature people in Christ?

Leadership opportunities as a resident helped me practice and be stretched in these areas. The most

transformative experience was the two short-term missions trips to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. I was given the opportunity to train and shepherd teams to serve alongside with local pastors in the inner city. God used these trips to strengthen my preaching and training skills by encouraging local church leaders. He showed in my heart where my human expectations of “perfect” leadership exceeded His expectations of me as a leader. God used these trips to reveal my personal blind spots, failings, and areas where pride still resides in my leadership style. When you go through testing, where reality and the situation causes you to doubt if you are called to ministry and lead, this is never an easy experience. Yet through sitting in that reality and acknowledging God is good and faithful is another step in leadership growth. Each new opportunity to shepherd convicts me more of God’s calling to full time ministry despite my human failings. I praise the Lord that nothing is wasted in God’s economy.

As I conclude the residency program and this article, my hope is that others would be encouraged to become a pastoral resident. My year went by very fast. There were many God moments where He reassured me of the path I was walking. There were also many moments God strengthened my skills and wisdom through my failings. I would like to ask for prayer for my family, as I continue to look for a full-time ministry position in the coming year.

Duties and Responsibilities for BCEC Members to Attend Our Annual Meeting



by PASANG DROLMA,
NEWTON MANDARIN

A country has its laws, and a family has its rules. The same applies to the church as a spiritual home. The church is the place where the congregation is called to gather together to worship God: “God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15 – NIV) Since the church is God’s family, we should use this position and standard to measure the practical function, spiritual condition, and congregational engagement of the church. It is generally accepted that the church is where God’s love is declared and His truth is preached, where the congregation is shepherded, cared for, and transformed, and where the congregation receives help and support. However, we often neglect to recognize that the church is also where there are rules and discipline, and church members have duties and responsibilities.

Every church has its constitution, structure, and regulations, and it has its traditions and culture. As church members, we should obey and respect the authority of the church, follow its system of rules, and conform to its traditions and culture. In addition, we should also do our best to offer suggestions for and be involved in the planning of the growth of the church, while fulfilling our duties and responsibilities as established in our church constitution.

It was 2014 when Boston Chinese Evangelical Church adopted our church constitution. Page 4 of the constitution has a clear and detailed description of the responsibilities and privileges of members. One of the articles deals with participation at our Annual General Assembly Meeting. BCEC usually holds its

annual meeting on the last Sunday of October. According to the by-laws, important decisions of the church have to be voted on by church members for approval. Twenty five percent of our church members have to be present to meet quorum, and all approvals require affirmative votes of at least two-thirds of those present. Regrettably, our church members do not fully understand the importance and necessity of our annual meeting. Moreover, the level of engagement and enthusiasm at our annual meeting has not been high. Such a tepid response leads to great stress and anxiety among our deacons. If we do not have enough church members attending and voting at our annual meeting, there will be delays and other effects on many matters such as church expansion, financial report and budget, election of deacons, hiring of pastoral staff, ordination of pastors, re-election, and ministries. Although each year we are able to meet the quorum of our annual meeting, with over 1,300 church members, it means less than 400 church members are present. This number explains the existence of many problems. Here are the attendance data of each congregation at the 2017 BCEC Annual Meeting.

Table of Attendance at the 2017 Annual Meeting

CONGREGATION	ATTENDANCE	# OF MEMBERS	%
Chinatown English	103	323	32
Chinatown Cant. 2nd	113	321	35
Chinatown Cant. 3rd	60	178	34
Chinatown Mandarin	32	145	22
Newton Cantonese	29	153	19
Newton English	27	135	20
Newton Mandarin	11	56	20
Other		71	
TOTAL	375	1382	27

I believe that there are many objective reasons for the low attendance such as inconvenience of our location, long duration of the meeting, blandness of the meeting content, lengthiness of translation, our personal busyness, illness, etc. However, the most direct reason is subjective in nature, which is our lack of understanding and sense of belonging by our members, so that they do not fulfill their duties of responsibilities. To change such a long-existing struggle, our church deacons have decided to form a “congregation

engagement task force” to survey and study the problem, propose solutions, and lead promotion efforts.

As church members, we should also first change our attitude as a response, learn the lesson of obedience, respect the authority of the church constitution, and value our voting rights and responsibilities.

Secondly, we need to change our action in response. We attend our annual meeting once a year only. In terms of time, energy, strength, and transportation, these should not be the biggest obstacles, nor should they be acceptable excuses. We often blame our weaknesses and use our busyness as reasons of our absence at our annual meeting and other church activities. We should also exercise and strengthen our faith in service and participation. James 2:26 (NIV) states that “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” Although it is by the grace of God, not works, that we have been saved, “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10 – NIV) As Christians and church members, when we serve and participate, we are serving God and building His home. Moreover, our actions will encourage more brothers and sisters to care about and serve our spiritual family.

Finally, we need to reflect in response. The absence of enthusiastic engagement at our annual meeting and the lack of our sense of responsibility and mission actually reflect the overall spiritual atmosphere of our church and the spiritual condition of our members. Our church needs improvement in pastoring, edification, discipleship, staff training, and emphasis on spiritual development of our members. We also need to be brave in facing challenges, innovation, and change, so that we do not fall into a routine and simply go strictly by the book without moving forward. Our church members need to build a close relationship with God and establish a sense of belonging and responsibility to our church. As a church deacon, I hope to use this publication as a platform to encourage our brothers and sisters to attend this year’s annual meeting to learn more about what is currently happening, new developments, our needs, and prayer requests, so that we may fulfill all righteousness, exercise our duty, and do our part in building God’s family and Christ’s body.



Outreach to our community at August Moon Festival in Chinatown (8/12)



Base Camp 2018 (8/17-8/20)



Project Destiny 2018 (7/2-8/5) and Project Destiny 25th Reunion (8/10-8/12)



Boston short-term missions (8/13-8/19)



Chinatown English: Handball tournament (7/8-7/29)

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 13 PDAS (PROJECT DESTINY AUTUMN TO SPRING) BEGINS
- 14 AWANA STARTS
- 16 BAPTISM
- 21-23 YOUNG ADULT RETREAT
ENGLISH

OCTOBER

- 7 PDAS FAMILY NIGHT
- 13 THE MARRIAGE THING
ENGLISH
- 28 ANNUAL MEETING

NOVEMBER

- 4 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS
ONE HOUR BACK
- 9-11 MISSIONS CONFERENCE
- 21 THE TABLE
ENGLISH
- 22 THANKSGIVING DAY
OFFICE CLOSED
- 24 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NO CEC CLASSES
- 25 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY
- 25 CHILD DEDICATION
CHINESE

DECEMBER

- 1 ADVENT CONCERT
- 2 CHINESE SUNDAY SCHOOL
WINTER SESSION BEGINS
- 8 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS
FALL SEMESTER ENDS
- 16 BAPTISM
- 16 CHINATOWN CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 21-JAN 2 PDAS BREAK
- 23-JAN 4 YOUTH MINISTRY BREAK
- 23 CHRISTMAS SUNDAY
- 24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
- 25 CHRISTMAS
OFFICE CLOSED

JANUARY

- 1 NEW YEAR CHURCHWIDE PRAYER MEETING
- 9 THE TABLE
ENGLISH



Chinatown Vacation Bible School (8/13-8/17): 1) Group photo 2) Children playing fun and energetic games 3) Bible stories time 4) Learning about corals during adventure hour 5) Children admiring God's awesome creation during our field trip to the New England Aquarium



Elim Fellowship: Labor Day weekend picnic (9/1)

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@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

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Joint Chinese Retreat (6/23-6/24)