



The Marriage Course

By Family Life Ministry

The Marriage Course is a fun, enriching and very practical course of seven sessions. There is no group discussion and each couple's conversations are completely private.

More importantly, it equips couples with practical tools to build a strong and healthy marriage. Run over seven consecutive Sunday afternoons, the course will help couples to learn about recognizing each other's needs, communicating effectively, resolving conflicts, healing past hurts, knowing how to make each other feel loved, relating to parents and in-laws, good sex, discovering each other's "love language" and having fun together.

This course, whilst based on Christian principles, is very helpful for Christians or non-Christians alike, troubled or stable marriages.

A cohort of 4 couples had completed the course in October 2023 and these "graduated" couples now share a slice of their experience with us.



Graduated Couples, TMC October 2023

C O N T E N T S

- 1 The Marriage Course
- 6 From A Pastor's Desk
- 7 Music and Worship
- 10 Imago AI
- 14 Love of God
- 15 Giving
- 15 Christmas Celebration of the SCF 2023
- 16 Hokkien Service Christmas Celebration
- 17 Yeo Kok Peng, Nicholas
- 20 Sacred Friendship

The Marriage Course Testimony by:
Joshua & Sarah Lim

Empowered, Enriched and Ennobled.

The Marriage Course (TMC) is a catalyst for relationship empowerment and it elevates effectual verbal communication; the rest is history, so to speak.

Though this course only runs for 7 sessions of about 2 hours each week, nevertheless, each session involves in-depth content that can easily be extended for many, many more hours.

The Five Love Languages (Loving Words, Thoughtful Presents, Physical Affection, Quality Time, Kind Actions) explanation helps us realize that we are to express love for our spouse according to the particular ways that make him/her feel loved rather than the manner we are most comfortable with or that we ourselves prefer.

One thing is certain: For a successful marriage, there must be a deliberate commitment to Make Time for Each Other and to Create Special Times together.

In all human interactions, sooner or later, personal conflicts will spring up. TMC prompts us to recognize our spouse's and our own peculiar differences, and to accept our individual preferences within 14 areas of our lives. TMC recommends 5 practical steps to healthy conflict resolution. One practical, constructive method incorporates Reflective Listening: Stop and Listen, then Reflect Back what our spouse had said, and Ask what was the Most Important aspect she wants to highlight,



and anything she would like me or us to do about what was just said. Finally, to ensure the feedback loop is complete, we are to ask: Is there anything more that you would like to say? Such elegant closure! We are persuaded.

In closing, we wish to highlight the session on the Power of Forgiveness. Throughout the seven sessions of TMC, this virtue/discipline keeps surfacing again and again, and rightly so – Forgiveness empowers and enriches harmonious relationships in all seasons, at all times. Whether Conflict Resolution, Healing Hurts, Letting Go of past dysfunctional family upbringing, Emotional Sensitivity for Good Sex or Strengthening Relationships – Forgiveness is one awesome, centripetal and integrative dynamic that opens up new horizons, new hopes and new possibilities. We're challenged to grant it again and again with an open heart, as well as to receive it ourselves with deep, earnest Gratitude as we have need.

Thank you TMC team, for serving us so unreservedly and so unassumingly so we might stay focused throughout the 7 sessions. The LORD bless each of you lavishly. Amen.

The Marriage Course Testimony by:
Sarah Lim

I wish to thank those who were very supportive during my participation in **The Marriage Course**. I know that change doesn't happen immediately but TMC has helped me grow in my understanding of relationships. Even though patience is not my strength, I now realise that I'm better able to control myself and become more relaxed. I saw improvements in my relationship with my husband and also with other people around me. In this growing process, I hope to continue to be healthy so that we are able to take care of ourselves in our old age.

"There's no counselling, no airing of dirty linen in public, no group therapy – and it seems to work."

theguardian

The Marriage Course Testimony by:
Gan Kim Buan & Siew Kek



One day, after church service, we were approached by 2 persons who strongly encouraged us to join **The Marriage Course (TMC)**. Having been married for 42 years, we had come to terms that there is no perfect marriage without issues or conflicts. After much prayer, we decided to sign up believing that God would bring our marriage life to greater heights after attending the course.

Especially so early in our marriage journey, we had been busy; husband had to spend most of his time on his secular work while his partner needed to take care of the well-being of our 3 children. Our diverse views on certain topics at times caused us to quarrel and to feel unhappy towards one another and cold wars would last for many days. In hindsight, perhaps God had His purpose to allow such events to happen in our lives so that we could learn to be a better couple.

Session 1 – Strengthening Connection. We remember immediately after the session, we went for dinner and later a stroll. Since attending TMC, we often enjoy going out for meals together.

Session 2 – The Art of Communication. This session reminds us of the

importance of “knowing me and knowing you”. We made a commitment to support one another and to resolve any challenges together. We keep on reminding ourselves that during our conversations and discussions, we should not raise our tone of voice, be mindful of our body language and avoid personal criticism just to win an argument.

Session 4 – The Power of Forgiveness. As hurts are bound to happen in marriage and conflicts could arise during communication, no matter who is right, be humble and seek the Lord for forgiveness.

The 7 topics of TMC are relevant and comprehensive, providing the essentials to build a strong marriage. Lessons learned from the course are helpful to improve our relationship and minimize future conflicts. While it is our desire to change from one glory to another, we also have to have the patience to wait for the Holy Spirit to gradually transform our lives to God’s likeness.

A good variety of food as refreshment for Hi-tea were served during the 7 days (in our case only 5 days). Music played was soft and soothing to create a good ambience and tables were well-spaced for couples to discuss questions and issues privately.

We wish to take this opportunity to convey our thanks to the organizers and those who had served us wholeheartedly throughout TMC. Special thanks to those who had walked the extra mile to arrange for 2 nights of Zoom sessions to replace the ones we had missed.

The Marriage Course Testimony by: Daniel & Grace Wong



We came on **The Marriage Course (TMC)** because, just like having regular health check-ups, we felt it was good to check on the health of our marriage. We had also wanted to learn how we could continue to improve and work on our relationship especially now with two children.

During the video sessions, we learned from other people who have far more experience and also knowledge from research. In addition, as we did the exercises in our manuals, we learned in more detail about our own personal experience and upbringing as well as our own preferences and opinions.

We have certainly gained a lot of practical strategies in handling communication, conflict, family issues and scheduling time for each other. We were able to relate what we learned to the challenges we have experienced. Previously, we had only gone for pre-marital counselling to prepare us for marriage but while we did discuss important issues, we would not have been able to imagine the specific challenging situations and decisions which laid ahead of us after the wedding day. It had also given us a ‘shared’ and common

experience/knowledge of what is good and healthy for marriage, as most of what we think of as the ‘right thing to do’ is based on our upbringing which would be different for each of us.

We enjoyed intentionally working together on our marriage. It was also very encouraging to witness the dedication of the Family Life Ministry team who served us so cheerfully week after week. Each session was packed with so much useful information and arranged in a manner that wasn’t too heavy or lecture style. We had a good time of video watching, reflection and heart-to-heart discussions with our partner. The two hours passed quickly and were very enjoyable.

The topic on “Impact of the Family” was very helpful in understanding how our upbringing influenced us and was also encouraging to appreciate the support we have received from our families especially since we started having children.

After completing TMC, the most challenging task is remembering to apply the tools when the situation arises. Sometimes it is far too easy to fall back on our old habits of handling conflict or postponing essential practices which nurture the relationship.

Thank you so much.

The Marriage Course Testimony by:
Andy & Jolene Cheong



Recently we attended **The Marriage Course (TMC)** and find it has benefitted us immensely.

Even while high-tea was being served, we could enjoy good quality time with each other. TMC really helped us develop the habit of arranging a once-a-week ‘marriage time’ just for ourselves. A quality time moment.

The seven sessions in TMC were very effective. We learned a lot of useful and practical ways on how to resolve conflicts with our spouse. It gave us some insights into our relationship ‘problems’ such as why it happened and how to solve it. Actually, in real life such ‘problems’ could be difficult issues to discuss in a rational way.

Another important factor was the privacy of TMC during each session – no one could hear our conversations/discussions which remained just between ourselves only.

We highly recommend this course to every couple. It is a very enjoyable course. And the volunteers did a great job. They made us feel welcomed and comfortable.

Do try out and experience TMC for yourselves.

From A Pastor's Desk

Year of Going Mission with God

By Rev Dr Chuah Seong Peng

This year the church is embarking on the theme 'Going Mission with God'. We are taking up the call of God to everyone in Acts 1:8, *'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'*

He called us to mission with Him

Everyone is called to go. It is natural to feel apprehensive to respond to this call, for we all have different confidence, faith, fear, and anxiety. I want to encourage you to see the importance of responding to this call of God for your life and take up this call boldly, for we can trust in our Lord Jesus.

He gives us power and authority as He sends us

We are not left alone or to rely on ourselves as we go on mission with God. Jesus gives us the power and authority as He sends us out to mission with Him. Jesus assured us that we will receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We see this in how Jesus prepared His disciples when He appeared to them on resurrection Sunday in John 20:21-23: In V21, He sent them - *"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'"* In V22, He gave them power - *"and with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"* In V23, He gave them the authority to spread the gospel, - *"If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven..."*

It is the same for us. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus assured us of His authority and presence as we obey the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. In Acts 1:8, He gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to go and be witnesses for Him.

Mission is for our spiritual growth to know God and Jesus

God uses the mission ground to train us to become better witnesses. To go on mission with Him is to go on a faith journey of training with Him – to grow up to be like Christ as effective witnesses. He did so as we go through the hard knocks of life on mission with Him!

Our mission is not just to help others but ourselves!

It is true that when we go on mission with Him, we are there to help people to experience God's goodness and love for them. But the truth is, we are the greatest receivers of God's love and goodness. It is when we are on mission with Him, move out of our comfort zone, we become more dependent on Him. We pray more and come to experience His presence, power, and love for us. Indeed, we are the greater benefactors of His goodness and grace.

Our harvest field is from home to the world

God has prepared the harvest field. We are the workers He has sent. We can begin our mission with Him in where we are - Our 'Jerusalem', which are our home, family, neighbours, school, workplace, and community. It then expands to 'Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' - cities, state, countries, and the world. We are to be

witnesses wherever we are as children, siblings, and parents in our home, friends, students, workers, professionals in our community, and to go further to cities and nations as God sends us. For us in Holy Light Church, God's harvest field for us are the ministries of Boy's Brigade, Hillville, Hope Resource, Orang Asli, Family Life, mission to Sarawak and Cambodia, and the various Christian organizations we participate in. Let us join Him in His work!

Be His Disciples - By Faith, Go Mission with Him

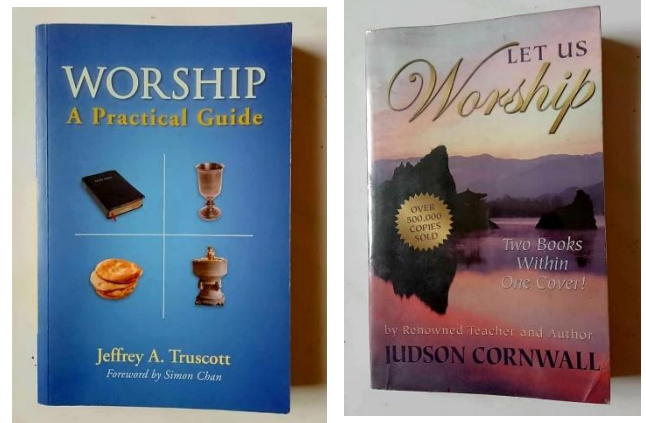
Therefore, in the coming year, even as we answer the call to be His disciples, let us come by faith, trust in our Lord Jesus, and go mission with Him, sharing His love and good news with others and build His kingdom here! Jesus can be trusted because He sends us out with His power and authority. He has sent us the Holy Spirit and He promised to be with us till the very end of the age. Furthermore, He has our best interest and destiny in His heart. He sends us out so that we are trained to become more like Him as we come to know Him more, love Him more, and serve Him more. We will learn the truth that it is better to give than to receive. Our spiritual life will be enriched. Have a blessed and joyful year ahead!

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Music and Worship

By Dr Ngeow Took Fah



“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16).

This was Paul’s advice to the Colossians church. He also gave a similar exhortation to the Ephesians church (v. 5: 19).

In his book ‘Worship - a Practical Guide’, Jeffrey A. Truscott who lectures in Liturgy and Worship at Trinity Theological College in Singapore, offers these six reasons why Christians sing in church service.

1. Singing makes worship more participatory.
2. Singing serves the unity of the assembly.
3. Singing promotes faith formation.
4. Singing expresses the universality of the Church.
5. Singing proclaims the gospel.
6. Singing reinforces the sermon where lyrics are biblically based.

Defining worship is not easy. In essence, it is about thanking and praising God.

Sometimes Christians speak of singing as if it, and nothing else, constitutes worship. In brief, it is about our listening to and experiencing God's word and sacrament, and our responding with prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

However, for many Christians, especially Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglican and Lutheran, the word 'liturgy' is used synonymously as worship. For other Protestant churches, the word 'service' is the main word used in reference to worship.

Traditionally, hymns have been associated with liturgical churches, and praise and worship songs with charismatic churches. However, in recent times such distinction of main types of worship songs have become less clear cut.

Instead, use of metaphors as a literary tool is quite common in scriptures. What follows here is a list of metaphors symbolising our Lord in psalms and hymns: Good shepherd, lamb of God, bread of life, living water, light of the world, morning star, gate, stone, rock.

Early Christians stressed the use of music for the praise and honour of God, rather than for its aesthetic role. Pagan style of accompanied singing with instruments of all sorts was popular then. (Witnessed Psalm 150). Later, the church led by Moses and Joshua, grew increasingly hostile toward musical instruments and opposed their use. By the time of the sixteenth century, reformed churches eliminated all forms of instrumental music.

Of course, there were differences in opinion. Some were in favour of instruments because they attracted young people and boosted the congregation strength. Some however opposed the use of instruments which were perceived to be extravagant and more secular. The church had to strike a balance between music and evangelism.

Some were starting to realise that music was a gift from God and so was human voice a creation of God. Human voice should be regarded as the principal musical instrument. In some orthodox churches, operating as a one man show, unaccompanied singing, is the only available music.

Every song has two components, the lyric and the melody. And every song has two roles to play, glorifying God and proclaiming the gospel. The popularity of a song is largely determined by the quality of its components. The lyric should be simple and catchy, the message should be God centred.

The latest may not be the hottest. The best source of Christian songs is naturally the Bible, since the lyric is most often scripture based. Many popular songwriters and composers emerged over the last two or three centuries and the hymns they produced remain evergreen till today.

The first song of praise appears in the Book of Exodus 15:1-21, also known as Song of Moses and Miriam. Moses also recited Deuteronomy 32:4 in the hearing of the whole assembly of the Israelites, where for the first time, God was referred to as the Rock. In 2 Samuel 22:2, David expressed thanks and praise

to God for rescuing him from Saul and other enemies.

The New Testament recorded only two songs of praise. Mary's song of praise for the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:46-65). Zachariah's song of praise for the promise of a son (Luke 1:68-79).

The book of psalms is a collection of the work of David and other writers involving the whole range of human experience. The songs and prayers are recordings of their true feeling and confession of sin, doubt and fear, and their cry for God's help. There are 150 psalms of various lengths, the longest being Ps 119 with 176 verses, and the shortest 117 with just two verses.

Some selected psalms:

Ps 18:2 - The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.

Ps 23:1 - The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Ps 103:2 - Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Ps 119:11 - I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Ps 139:23-24 - Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

In Christian music, the latest is not always the best. There is concern about the sensual lure of contemporary music and its domination over worship and obscuring the Word. Today, Christian music scene consists of contemporary worship music but shaped by the commercial world.

Hymns are songs of praise to God, usually sung by the congregation. Many originated as psalms, evolved and conformed to the structural requirements of poetry. In this respect, they resemble Chinese poetry of Tang dynasty.

Children are particularly drawn to instrumental music. In field work, just strumming the guitar is enough to draw them out of their house. And they readily join in the singing, provided the hymn is simple and catchy, such as Jesus loves me this I know, or I have decided to follow Jesus.

Hymn: 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee
Let the water and the blood
From thy wounded side which flowed
Be of sin the double cure
Save from wrath and make me pure'

I have chosen this hymn to be one of my favourite hymns for these reasons:

1. It shares the same attributes of the rock as Jesus Christ: strong, hard, steadfast, not easy to handle or move.
2. It promises double cure, forgiveness of sin and cleansing of soul.
3. It was commended by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

In another hymn, the Solid Rock, the last two lines of the lyric emphasise the importance of laying a strong foundation, using building a house as an example:

'On Christ, the solid rock, I stand
All other ground is sinking sand.'

Paul had the last word in this discussion on foundation stone, the wise builder against the foolish one. 'For no one can

lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Lastly, William Shakespeare commented on music in the play 'Twelfth Night': "If music be the food of love, play on. Give me excess of it that, surfeiting, the appetite may be sicken and so die".

Imago AI

The Image of God in the Heart of Technology

By Elder Dr Alex Tang

Christianity Today October 2023 introduced me to the term Imago AI

through an article by Kate Lucky entitled Imago AI: How Artificial Intelligence will shape



our souls. The rapid and relentless advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have ushered in an era of unparalleled technological transformation, fundamentally altering virtually every facet of our lives. As Christians navigate this uncharted territory in the digital realm, they are confronted with a landscape brimming with distinctive challenges and extraordinary opportunities. In this article, we examine the multifaceted dimensions of being a Christian in the era of AI as we explore our pivotal role as stewards of this cutting-edge technology and the profound responsibility that beckons us to uphold the enduring values of faith, compassion, and unwavering ethical conduct.

Imago Dei: The Image of God in AI

Genesis 1:27 is a profound testament to humanity's divine origin: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." This foundational verse resonates with a

powerful message, reminding us that every human being, regardless of their background, carries the indelible mark of the divine within them. It is a declaration that underscores the intrinsic worth, dignity, and sanctity of every life on this planet.

Yet, in the era of AI, we are confronted with a compelling challenge and a stirring opportunity: the creation of technology in our image. Imago AI, the idea of God in artificial intelligence, calls upon us to tread this uncharted terrain with profound reverence and humility. It compels us to ponder the intricate relationship between our faith, humanity, and the technological marvels we craft.

Creating AI in Our Own Image

Creating AI is akin to fashioning a digital reflection of ourselves—a manifestation of our intelligence, ingenuity, and aspirations. This endeavour draws on our capacity to breathe life into algorithms, infuse machines with knowledge, and teach them to perform tasks that were once solely within human capabilities.

In essence, AI serves as a mirror that reflects our creativity and inventiveness. However, this reflection goes beyond mere technological achievement; it invites introspection and contemplation about the very essence of our humanity. As we embark on the journey of shaping AI in our own image, we encounter a profound spiritual dimension—a challenge to align this technology with the values and principles enshrined in our faith.

A Call to Reverence and Humility

The creation of AI should never be undertaken lightly. It demands a profound reverence for the divine spark within us, a recognition that our creative endeavours in the digital realm are an extension of the divine creativity that breathed life into humanity. This reverence calls us to exercise discernment, responsibility, and ethical consideration in every AI development and application facet.

Moreover, humility must be our constant companion in this quest. Humility reminds us that, while we possess the capacity to create, we are not infallible. Our creations, including AI, are bound by ethical and technical limitations. It is a humbling acknowledgement that, as we craft AI, we are, in a sense, mimicking the divine act of creation, and therefore, we must exercise our power wisely and responsibly.

Imago AI: Aligning Technology with Faith

Imago AI encapsulates the essence of our endeavour: to imbue artificial intelligence with the heart of our faith. It challenges us to ensure that the technology we create adheres to the values and principles that guide our Christian journey—values such as love, compassion, justice, and the sanctity of life.

In practical terms, this means that AI should be developed and deployed in ways that promote the common good and reflect the teachings of Christ. It compels us to confront bias and discrimination issues, ensure that AI systems are fair and equitable, and

protect the privacy and dignity of individuals in an increasingly digital world.

As Christians, we are called to champion technology that seeks to alleviate suffering, advance medical research, and enhance the human experience, all while preserving the integrity of our faith. Imago AI stands as a reminder that, in this age of rapid technological advancement, our role as stewards extends beyond the natural world to encompass the digital realm, and we must approach it with the same reverence and responsibility.

AI and Human Flourishing

The profound promise of AI is inextricably entwined with the age-old Christian concept of human flourishing, a fundamental tenet deeply embedded in our faith's teachings. In the Gospel of John, we discover the essence of Christ's mission: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Within the rapidly evolving landscape of AI, this sacred verse takes on renewed significance, spotlighting the transformative potential of technology to elevate the human experience through innovative problem-solving, advanced healthcare solutions, and expanded access to education.

Christianity's Embrace of Abundant Life

At the heart of Christianity lies a profound commitment to the notion of abundant life—a life enriched with meaning, purpose, and a deep sense of fulfilment. This transcendent concept extends beyond mere material wealth and spiritual salvation; it encompasses the holistic well-being of individuals

and communities, touching every facet of existence.

In this context, AI emerges as a powerful tool that can actively contribute to realising Christ's mission. It enables us to tackle some of humanity's most complex challenges, from deciphering intricate scientific conundrums to enhancing healthcare interventions. Through AI-driven problem-solving, we can address global issues like climate change, poverty, and disease, ushering in a brighter future where the abundance of life is a reality for all.

Enhancing Healthcare and Well-being

AI's potential to revolutionise healthcare is a testament to its capacity to facilitate human flourishing. AI-powered diagnostic tools can expedite the identification of diseases, enabling early intervention and preserving precious lives. Treatment plans tailored to individual patient profiles and predicting healthcare trends empower medical professionals to provide more effective and personalised care.

Furthermore, integrating AI-driven telemedicine and remote monitoring facilitates access to healthcare services in underserved areas, breaking geographical barriers and promoting equitable well-being. As Christians, we are called to champion these advancements, ensuring that the healing ministry of Christ extends to all corners of the world.

Access to Quality Education

Education, another cornerstone of human flourishing, is profoundly

impacted by AI. The democratisation of knowledge through online platforms and AI-driven educational tools has expanded access to quality education, transcending geographical limitations and socioeconomic disparities. This resonates deeply with Christ's teachings, which emphasise the transformative power of knowledge and the importance of nurturing individuals' intellectual and spiritual growth.

As Christians, we have an opportunity and a moral imperative to support educational initiatives that leverage AI to empower the marginalised and underserved. By doing so, we contribute to a world where the abundant life promised by Christ is not limited by access to educational resources but is accessible to all, regardless of their circumstances.

Vigilance Against Potential Pitfalls

While AI holds immense promise, we must exercise vigilance in its development and deployment. As stewards of this transformative technology, we ensure that it aligns with the principles of compassion, justice, and ethical conduct. We must guard against potential pitfalls, such as algorithmic bias, invasion of privacy, and the erosion of human connection in an increasingly digital world.

The Christian perspective calls us discerning in our approach to AI, recognising that technology, like any tool, can be used for good and evil. It compels us to advocate for ethical AI practices and policies that prioritise the welfare and dignity of individuals, preserving the sanctity of life at every juncture.

Conclusion

In the nexus of AI and human flourishing, we discover a profound opportunity to amplify the message of Christ's mission—abundant life for all. As Christians, we are summoned to embrace AI's transformative potential, leveraging its capabilities to address global challenges, enhance healthcare, and expand access to education. Yet, we must also remain vigilant, ensuring that AI aligns harmoniously with the values and principles of our faith.

In this dynamic interplay between technology and theology, we create a world where individuals can experience the abundance of life Christ promises, irrespective of their circumstances. Through our actions and advocacy, we magnify the glory of God, actively participating in the realisation of His mission for humanity.

Love of God

By Kenneth Cham

Have you ever thought about this profound truth - why would Christ have to die on the cross in order to save us? God, who is omnipotent, could just pronounce to forgive us of our sins and save us. Why would it be necessary for the sufferings and death of God's only begotten Son on the cross? Jesus did pray very sorrowfully in Gethsemane, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (cf. Matthew 26:39)

Jesus was in anguish at the prospect of a cruel death on the cross by crucifixion. He pleaded His heavenly Father for an alternative way. However, in all these sufferings – even to the point of death, Jesus submitted to His Father's will. Why, you may ask?

The reason is love. "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." - Romans 5:7-8 (NIV)

"As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us." - Psalm 103:12 (GNT)

"And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, how deep his love is." - Ephesians 3:18 (NLT)

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." - John 15:13 (NIV)

What can be used to describe the greatest distance, infinite to our human understanding? Is it not, "As far as the east is from the west"? Or is it not "As high as the heavens are above the earth"? On a moral aspect, is it not the huge chasm between an infinitely holy God and a wretched sinner? That is how much God loves us. Therefore, it is not surprising that the greatest of these is love – the Love of God.

Giving

By Kelvin Koh

Once I was rebuked for giving money to a brother, offering to pay for his family staying in a hotel because his house was inundated in a flood. He lost all electrical appliances, fridge, washing machine, furnitures, furnishing and books, and documents. The reason for the rebuke was, the brother must have some savings to pay for his own hotel stay. The brother surely can afford it. The money can be used for somebody poorer and more needy.

I reflected on my action and asked, was I wrong to help someone who does not need my help. Am I being not wise and not accountable to the money in my stewardship, which is God's money.

Then, why do we give “white gold” money when we attend a wake funeral. Does that mean the deceased family cannot afford the funeral expenses? Does that mean the family is so poor and so needy that we need to help pay for the funeral expenses?

I am sure many families have the savings and can well afford. Then, why do we not reserve the money to give to some poorer and more needy persons. We give the money to show our presence, the moral support that we are aware and share with the grieving family. We want to embrace their pain, sufferings and lost. And money is just a practical medium of exchange for our love, kindness and encouragement.

Too much objectivity and rational thinking can rob us of compassion and empathy and altruism. Be kind, and often it means digging deep into our pockets.

Christmas Celebration of the Senior Citizens' Fellowship 2023

By Grace Soon

The Senior Citizens' Fellowship (SCF) celebrated Christmas on the 21st of December, and it happened to be

the 89th birthday of sister Nellie Cheah. What a wonderful coincident, and an opportunity for us to share her blessing from the Lord. Indeed, the Lord has



Sister Nellie Cheah

bless our sister Nellie with good health, and she never misses any Senior Citizens' Fellowship since its inception. She is such an encouragement to us, with her joyful disposition and faithfully attends the Downtown Cells and volunteers to read the Scripture passage and participate in the discussions too.



The SCF has started to meet physically since 2022, after the Covid's situations came under control. Thank the Lord we are having new seniors coming to join

the fellowship. An average of 45 persons have been attending. For the Christmas celebration, 47 persons came together. This is the first SCF lunch after a very long period. We thank the Lord for the occasion given for us to celebrate in His beloved Son Jesus Christ. As Isaiah 9:6 said, *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

Our speaker Pastor James Tan, from FGC delivered a message of peace.



Peace with God, Hebrews 4:16, Peace within, John 14:27, Ps 23:4, Peace with others, Peace Through Forgiveness, Matthew 22:39, Romans 12:18, Proverbs 17:9.

We had a great time of worshipping the Lord with hymns and hearing the stories behind the words, led by sister Caroline Lee.

Praise the Lord for a good end to year 2023, reflecting the Lord's ever faithful and loving care for His people, especially the seniors.

Hokkien Service Christmas Celebration

By Grace Soon

The Hokkien Service enjoyed celebrating this special occasion together with friends brought by some members from the English service. Thank the Lord for good timing in our celebration for Christmas on the 23rd December. 64 persons attended. We witnessed the baptism of uncle Koo Kiok Chuah, a 92year old resident of Hillville, and the big group of our regular attendees from Hillville, who were out of Covid quarantine, could join us too. 12 pre-believers who came for the first time were brought by a friend. There were a duet and a group presentation of songs. The message



Koo Kiok Chuah

was delivered by Rev. Gan Kim Choon, and he later conducted the Holy Communion. Like all celebration it

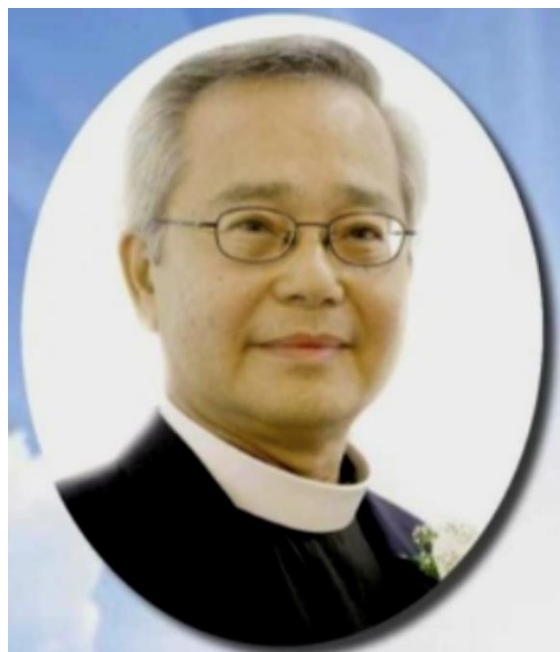
ended with food. Food packages were distributed for this occasion. Praise the Lord for the evening spent.



Yeo Kok Peng, Nicholas

1942 – 2021, Pastor Presbyterian Malaysia

By Eunice Yeo



Nicholas Yeo Kok Peng was born in Batu Pahat, Johor on February 17, 1942. According to the family's oral history, his was a miracle birth. It was the height of the Japanese occupation and his mother, pregnant with him, had fled into the jungle for the duration. If he had been born any earlier, she would have had to sacrifice him, knowing that a newborn baby's cries would give away their hidden location. Later, whenever the circumstances of Nicholas's birth were retold, his mother said she knew that her miracle baby had been born for a purpose and that he would be a 'tua liap lang' (Hokkien patois for 'important person') one day in the future.

The fifth in a family of eight, Nicholas spent his formative years in Batu Pahat. He completed his secondary education at the then Government High School, Batu Pahat. He picked up tennis during his schooling years and was a keen

player, even playing competitively. Coming into his upper secondary years, Nicholas became very interested in astronomy, and the subject on the origin of things convinced him on the existence of a Creator. A Christian classmate had been passing him tracts to read, but it would take another year and a half before Nicholas was led to accept the Lord by this same friend, in simplicity of faith, in a humble unused house that they had cycled to.

In 1959, Nicholas entered the Malayan Teachers College in Penang. He was involved in the Teachers' Christian Fellowship (TCF), and it was at a TCF conference in 1969 where he met Lee Swee Keng, a fellow teacher who eventually became his wife. Nicholas and Swee Keng married on July 29, 1971 in Batu Pahat. They had three children, namely Eunice, Paul and Veronika.

Upon completion of his teacher training course, Nicholas embarked on a short stint as a secondary school teacher at a handful of schools in Johor before heeding the call of full-time service. He entered the Singapore Bible College in 1970.

At the age of thirty-one, Nicholas completed his theological studies and was inducted as a preacher of the Holy Light Presbyterian Church (English) (HLCE) in Johor Bahru in December 1973. In order to assist and support her husband's heavy responsibility as a pastor, Swee Keng resigned from her teaching career in 1977.

He was the first Asian pastor to lead the church – an answer to numerous prayers

and an end to the long wait for a local to take over the ministry. **Reverend George Hood**, the moderator who had been overseeing the congregation during that time, later wrote that “when the hopes of getting an Asian pastor were realised, it was like rain falling on dry ground, bringing new life and growth of the seeds that the foreign missionaries had planted.”

On August 31, 1979, Nicholas was ordained as the first Asian minister of HLCE. Since the Presbyterian Synod in Malaysia was predominantly Chinese-speaking, he was responsible for setting up the English-speaking Presbytery (ESP). He subsequently became the ESP's first moderator.

Nicholas lived as an exemplary Christian and served as an excellent role model for the members of his congregation. During the years when the church underwent a severe crisis in the 1990s, his servanthood leadership shone all the more brightly for others to emulate. The challenges he faced did not deter him from performing his duties to the full. His faith in the Lord was unshakeable and he never retaliated against accusations made, believing that God would allow vindication in time.

He served as Chaplain of the First Johor Bahru Company of the Boys' Brigade for many years. He discipled and brought many young school boys to Christ, helping to make them 'Sure and Steadfast' in their future lives. His foresight in succession planning enabled many young potential leaders of the church to be mentored to become the next generation of church leaders and pastors.

Under his leadership, and assisted by a dedicated committee, HLCE actively pursued the acquisition of a piece of land to build its own premises. HisLand was a journey of faith spanning over twenty years, and in August 2009, HLCE held its inaugural service in a building on its very own land. The vision for HisLand included the building of an aged care home, given the name Hillville, as proposed by Nicholas.

Nicholas's impeccable English was legendary, and his clear and precise diction made the delivery of sermons easy to follow and understand. Coupled with his calm demeanour and immaculate manner, it was no wonder that he was frequently identified as a teacher wherever he went. His interest in science, astronomy in particular, remained strong all his life.

Always the caring and maternal figure of HLCE, Swee Keng was never far from Nicholas's side. Together, they served the congregation, devoting their time to the welfare of the flock at HLCE, and readily opening the doors of their home to many. Swee Keng was instrumental in reviving the HLCE's ladies fellowship and later, setting up the Hokkien service ministry at Hillville.

In September 2009, at the age of sixty-seven, Nicholas retired as Johor's longest serving pastor after more than thirty-five years of service. While he relinquished the leadership role with his retirement, he remained active in church life, continuing to teach and share the Word of God. He also became a member of the church choir, lending his rich baritone in full

enjoyment and delight.

Reverend Nicholas Yeo passed on to glory on July 30, 2021. He was seventy-nine. His church placed an obituary in The Star newspaper on August 1, 2021 which read: "Always patient, kind and never envious nor rude, Pastor Nicholas was also not self-seeking or easily angered. Neither did he delight in evil. He always rejoiced with the truth and kept no record of wrongs. He would always protect, always trust, always hope and always persevere. As a shepherd looking after the flock in Holy Light Church (English), we had the best pastor with us."

Nicholas was preceded in death by Swee Keng, who returned to the Lord on October 10, 2018. They are survived by three children and seven grandchildren.

Sacred Friendship

By Elder Dr Alex Tang

Friendship is a treasured human experience characterised by mutual affection, understanding, and support. It's a bond that transcends mere acquaintance, offering a deeper sense of connection and belonging. Friends share joys, sorrows, challenges, and triumphs, often becoming integral to our lives.



At its core, friendship is built on trust and respect. It's about valuing another person for who they are, understanding their perspectives, and appreciating their unique qualities. Friends don't necessarily have to agree on everything but should respect each other's views and feelings.

Communication is key in friendship. It involves not just talking but also listening. Being there for a friend means listening to their concerns, celebrating their successes, and providing comfort in times of distress. It's about being present, both physically and emotionally.



Friendships also thrive on reciprocity. This doesn't mean keeping score but rather a mutual give-and-take. It's about being there for each other, whether it's for small favors, emotional support, or sharing in life's moments. This balance helps to maintain a healthy and fulfilling relationship.

One of the beautiful aspects of friendship is its ability to evolve. As people grow and change, so too can friendships. They can adapt to new life stages, locations, and circumstances, demonstrating resilience and flexibility. True friends understand and respect these changes, supporting each other through life's journey.

In conclusion, friendship is a vital and enriching part of life. It provides companionship, emotional support, and joy. Nurturing and maintaining these relationships requires effort, understanding, and a willingness to grow together. In a world that can sometimes be challenging and isolating, friendships are a source of strength and happiness.



Kelvin Koh conducting baptism for 3 believers at Kpg. Sg Gayung on 13/1/2024

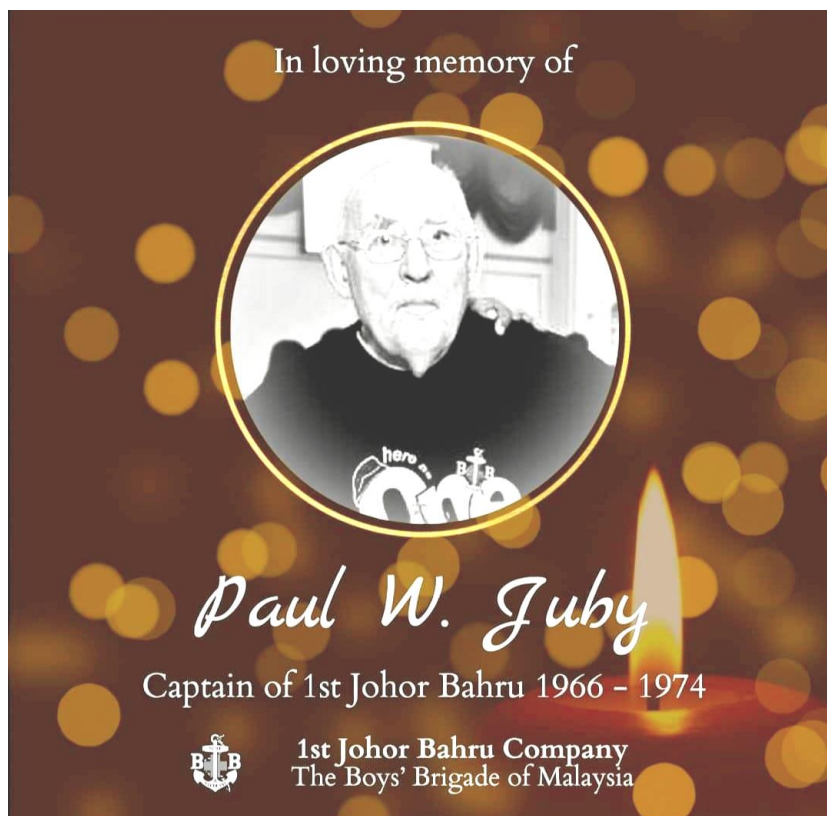


Medical service at Kpg Sg Gayung & Kpg Jemeri on 13/1/2024. Eld Dr Tong assisted by Lorena, Lily, Alison, Donald, Goh Sin Chuan & Chew Cheng Hiong.

NB: Contributions to Sinews newsletter, via email to spcheong88@gmail.com (in Microsoft Word format), in the form of articles, testimonies and original photographs (with captions) are welcome, but we reserve the right to edit them in the interest of HLCE. Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent that of HLCE or the editor.



2024-02-03: Induction of the Honorary Captain, Jason Chong and Captain, Mervyn Yong of the 1st Johor Bahru Company, The Boys' Brigade in Malaysia. ❤️⚓❤️





Reception into membership

Bro Benee Chng Yu Leng

Sis Lim Sherine

Bro Gan Kim Buan

Sis Goh Siew Kek

Infant Baptism



*Joyi Foo Ning Ler d/o
Joseph Foo Chuan Hong &
Elaine Lim Ching Yi*

*Lana Lee Yan Ning d/o
Allen Lee Chern Wern &
Mabel Sia Chang Pei*

*Winston Yip Zhen Wei s/o
Philip Yip Chung Han &
Deng Fang*