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Thanksgiving for Church Building Dedication

Rev. Almon Li

All the brothers and sisters are very happy because the project of "Installation of air conditioning and ceiling" was successfully completed. But what is the spiritual significance of installing air conditioners and ceiling? How can we give thanks to God? In order to answer these questions, we should know the purpose of the church building (the temple). That is a place where God is present with believers. Brothers and sisters, on every Sunday, we come to Sunday service. What we do is not for enjoying good music, talking to other church members, or meeting pastors, but to feel that God is being with us, teaching us and blessing us. Enjoying God's presence is the main reason why we come back to worship.

There are two purposes for God to give us a beautiful church building.

1. We do our best to spread the gospel and to lead friends who do not know Jesus to church;
2. Let believers worship and serve God together in church; and let their lives grow through God's Word.

In this connection, church building is just a hardware which lets unbelievers know God and lets believers grow in Him. God values people, not church building. So we have to pray to God that after dedicating the church building to Him, let God work on us because there are still many things we do not do well. Even the reverend, pastors, deacons, group leaders, we are still not doing well in different ways. We need to be built up by God continually, that is what Paul says, "We were built together". Hope that one day, when other people come to see our church, they are not talking about how beautiful our church is and how comfortable it is because of the air-conditioning, but see our lives which are pleasing God, so that they can see God is being among us. At that time, we can proudly give our thanks to God for we are having not only the hardware, which is the church building, but also the software which is the lives of HACA's brothers and sisters.

Today, how do we build our life to thank God?

1. Live a holy life
Firstly, we should commit ourselves to live a holy life. If there is still uncleanness in our lives, God will not dwell among us. So when Jesus came to the temple, the first thing He did was to "clean the temple".
2. Prayer
God loves His children to pray to him. While Jesus cleansed the temple, He said, "This is a house of prayer for all nations". Hope that brothers and sisters can try the best to attend church prayer meetings.
3. Worship
Hope that on every Sunday, we can worship God with sincerity and reverence.
4. Rooted in God's Word
We not only worship, but also want to understand and learn God's word more deeply. In Psalm 27:4, the poet says, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." 'Ask' has a meaning of 'knowledge'. We come to church not only to enjoy music, worship, prayer, fellowship, but also to know more about God's word. Therefore, we need to ask. Hope that we are all willing to attend the Bible study classes, Equipping Programs, etc., let God's word mold our lives.
5. Love each other
We come to church, hoping that brothers and sisters can greet each other, care about each other, support each other and love each other. Jesus said to His disciples, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." God is love, so if we want to live like Jesus, we must learn and practice how to love each other. We must remember what Paul taught us in Romans 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

6. Spread the Gospel

We should make every effort to spread the gospel so that the temple that we dedicate to God can be filled up with God-fearing people. In this way, God will be glorified.

give thanks to God. Let us dedicate ourselves once again to God and do our very best for the Kingdom of God. May all the glory be to our Heavenly Father. Amen!

English Translation: Eve Kwan

Brothers and sisters, let us take this opportunity of the completion of the church renovation project to



Sharing on Air-conditioning and Ceiling Project

Deacon James Wong

Introduction

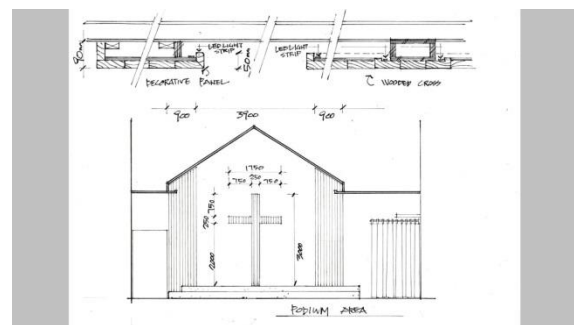
Thank God that the "air-conditioning and ceiling project" could be completed smoothly. Apart from giving thanks to God, I have a special feeling on this project -- it is like a three-person relay race. God led us to start the first leg. He made us see the needs and then supplied the right manpower and money to us. For the second leg, church leaders received consents from the congregation to proceed the project. Through the execution of the committee members, the project achieved the expected goal.

that we have not only finished a job given by the church, but also established our friendship through this ministry. We care for each other, enhance mutual understanding and trust, and strengthen our unity. Moreover, we are satisfied with what we have done and our confidence has been increased. Therefore, we will be more willing to serve in future.

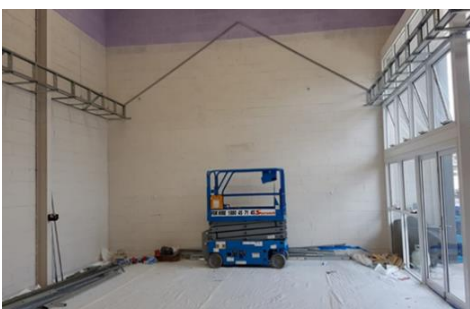
The relay race is still in progress and we have not yet reached the finish line. However, we have learned that "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal" (Philippians 3:13-14)

The third leg, I believe, is the persistent prayers and financial support of the whole congregation in the days to come. Their advices and participations are also important, so that our church building can become a place of spreading the gospel and filling up with believers. Hope that brothers and sisters can make effort together to bring friends to the church to know God. May all the glory be given to the Lord.

English Translation: Eve Kwan



Although the members of this project have been under a lot of pressure, the most important thing is



“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.” (Psalms 62:1-2 ESV)



God sustains. In my years of ministry, I have experienced God’s power, love and fairness; and in every mission, I have experienced the manifestation of His leadership, guidance and grace in its full entirety to our church and in my life. Looking back on my service for the past few years, irrespective of ups or downs, in

sadness or happiness, our God is always there for us like the sun above the clouds.

The past year was said to be the most difficult year for my pastoral service but also the most spiritually challenging and enhancing year on my faith. The difficulty came from the unstable attendance rate of the Mandarin service in the past year. When I saw only a few attending service, the desolation in the house of God, I was saddened, but I believed God still reigns and is still in power. God will not leave this house, God will be accountable to this house till the end. I also know that for those who love God all things work together for good, God tries our lives and faith. At the same time, I understood the importance of our spiritual life and the teachings from the Word of God, so much that I focused on the building of a spiritual life and a ministry in prayer.

During this year, God showed me his endearing care and cultivation of faith in the brothers and sisters who stayed in HCAC. We worked and served in one heart, built the church in one heart. In particular, some brothers and sisters pray for my ministry. Although we were few in numbers, almost all brothers and sisters were willing to serve. From ushers, kitchen helpers, worship team, sound, PowerPoint projection, scripture reading, almost everyone who participates will be rostered 2-3 times per month. How wonderful is this touching scene! I used the Word of God to encourage and affirm them, care and pray for their faith and lives. They really love God and love the church. The pastors of the church encouraged me, helped me and prayed for me. The brothers and sisters from the Cantonese congregation also came to support the Mandarin congregation. This is the warmth and love in the house of God.

Looking back on my service this year, I looked upon and trusted God more, I was no longer affected by circumstance but to serve as God’s shepherd and preacher in faithfulness and serve my brothers and sisters in love. To seek God's will and serve with joy. In any ministry, people change, circumstances change, but the God I serve will never change.

“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2 ESV)

English Translation: Iris Chau

My Testimony

**Jenny Yiu
Student Pastor, Mandarin Congregation**

[Editor’s Note: Jenny has been our Student Pastor since April 2019 and she will serve in the Mandarin Congregation for one year. Through sharing of her testimony in the Newsletter, brothers and sisters may know Jenny more and pray for her ministry and study.]

I was raised in a poor family with 6 children. I am the 4th child of my parents. My father was a staff of the tram company; my mother was a knitter working at home so that she could support our family and look after us. All the children, except the youngest two, had to work after completion of their secondary education. The two young brothers could continue to study at colleges. I myself is a single mother of 3 children. Thank God that my three children have grown up healthily. Now they have their own families as well as jobs they love.

I was converted in 1975 and a member of the Sham Shui Po Baptist Church. In 1992, I migrated to Sydney and joined the Cabramatta Anglican Church and then the Chinese and Australian Baptist Church, Thornleigh. I have been taking up the role of voluntary pastoral chaplain of three nursing homes.



When I was a baby, my parents already dedicated me to God. At the age of 8 years, I wished to be a good servant of God. In 2012, I was called to study (a diploma course) at the Chinese Theological College

Australia. After graduation from the CTCA, I went to Hong Kong to study the CPE Course at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Then since 2017 I have pursued again a full-time degree course at the GETS Theological Seminary. My vision is to be a church pastor. After completion of my practicum in March 2019, I was accepted by Rev. Li and HCAC to be a student pastor at the Mandarin Congregation for one year with effect from April.

Over the past years, I have served at different church ministries, such as bible study, Sunday service chairman, worship leader, choir, caring. This year my focus in the HCAC is caring and outreach ministries.

As each ministry has its own difficulties, I have to rely on God's grace, pray more, obey and trust in Him. I have to be humble to learn in each new environment at different churches. Please pray for my ministry at the HCAC.

I am willing to offer my life for use by God, my most respectful father in heaven. "Here am I. Send me!"

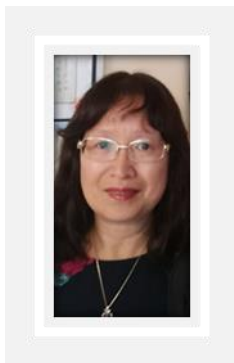
Hallelujah! May all glory and praise be to our God and Heavenly Father! Amen!

English Translation: Sherwood Kwok

My Prayer Life

Annie Lin

Thank God for giving me this opportunity to share and learn to pray with everyone. We all know prayer is a right as God's children and is essential to a Christian's life. Through prayer, we communicate with Abba Father, we praise him, thank him, share our joy and happiness, sufferings and worries, pour our hearts in front of him, ask for His help, His compassion, and listen to the Word of God. Abba Father truly loves us and likes to communicate with us. This is our blessing and the grace from God.



Thank God for establishing and constantly renewing my prayer life. At different stages of my life, God sent His servants to help me, and through the Bible, sermon messages, books on prayer and spirituality and prayer experiences of brothers and sisters, to renew my prayer life, my life and my relationship with God. From only saying God bless to sharing my everything with God, from confessing my sins vaguely with God to losing my sense of peace whenever unclean thoughts shy of the Holy Spirit cross my mind, from treating prayer as a prescribed ritual of a Christian to actually enjoying the communication with God, all these transformation is done with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The most enjoyable time of my day is not from going on a trip or an exquisite seafood dinner, but to pray and communicate with the Father. The more you pray, the more you understand the holiness, the grace and the compassion of God and the more you see the sin and ugliness within ourselves and the peace from God's pardon.

One Easter, my heart yearned to contemplate the love of Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, so for 40 days before Easter, I went vegetarian and prayed for God's help to understand how deep is His love. This constant prayer and work of the Holy Spirit, to a point, whether in the

morning or in my dreams, I could see the gravity and multitude of my sin, the true light of God piercing through into the depths of my life. When I came before God to confess my sins and ask for God's forgiveness, the love of Jesus Christ Our Lord was suddenly unravelled before me, His love for unworthy sinners like me, where he died for me on the cross, redeemed me with his life and blessed me with an eternal life as a child of God.

My life was renewed by God and God's love motivates my love to God, my humbleness and obedience to God's words and treat people with God's mercy and grace.

Prayer became a part of my life, because God is in me, I can communicate with the Father anytime and anywhere, thank Him and praise Him. When I am working, I tell my Father my feelings and my struggles and that I needed His help. I even tell Him about my weaknesses, for which I thank Him for always being with me, looking over me, so I am never alone. The Holy Spirit will also remind me, rebuke me and lead me. I know I am a weak and incompetent person, so before I start my day, I always pray for God's help and sympathy, His strength and wisdom, for the Lord's power is made perfect in my weakness and made victorious in my life. Every day I commemorate the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, I thank His love and the grace from redemption, and I praise for the greatness of the Father and the presence of the Holy Spirit. I also pray for the needs of our brothers and sisters, our church and our country. Prayer brings out the sweetness and happiness of communicating with my Abba Father.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."
(James 4:8) ESV

English Translation: Iris Chau

Visits to HCAC by President and Vice-President of C&MA of Australia

On 16 June, Rev. Patrick Suen, Vice-President of C&MA of Australia and Director of ACACC, came to HCAC to preach at the Cantonese Sunday Service. After the service, he was invited to attend a discussion session with our pastors, deacons and members of the By-Laws Drafting Group before having lunch together. The following is a summary of the discussion:

I. Elders

1. Board of Elders should comprise the Senior Pastor/Pastors (but not Assistant Pastors) and elected Elders. There should be at least one elder in the Board. The numbers of pastors and elders should preferably be the same.
2. Churches can invite the President to conduct a briefing to their congregations on the setting up of elders. The C&MA will organise a training course for church leaders.
3. Churches are encouraged to set up elders so as to assist in pastoring and teaching. Elders must be male, preferably with theological training.

II. Multiple Congregation Church

1. The need of congregational representation within the governance structure (Boards of Elders/Deacons) should be considered.
2. Under the Boards of Elders/Deacons, each congregation can establish a ministry committee, which should comprise the pastors and elected elders/deacons of that congregation.
3. Boards of Elders/Deacons are still required to govern the whole church.

III. Membership

Church may decide the categories of membership and only those active members will be counted for the quorum of a general meeting.

On the 23rd of the same month, Rev. Ken Graham, President of C&MA of Australia, met the Cantonese Congregation and briefed them of the latest development of the C&MA ministries, after his preaching at the English Congregation. Afterward, Rev. Graham was invited to attend a discussion session with our pastors and deacons before having lunch together. The following is a summary of the discussion:

1. The spouses of pastoral workers should preferably avoid being involved in the governance structure.
2. Church should elect elders based on biblical requirements.
3. Church should start training the youth as church leaders.
4. Church should encourage and sponsor their pastors (and spouses) to attend the annual pastors' retreat.

Thanks to Rev. Ken Graham and Rev. Patrick Suen to spare their precious time to come to our church for preaching and attending the discussion sessions. All the pastors and church leaders joining the discussion sessions should have been inspired a lot from these two speakers. Also through the lunches together, the mutual understanding and friendship with Rev. Graham and Rev. Suen should have been enhanced.



Background:

The sample Constitution for Local Church, provided in the C&MA of Australia Manual (Clause 18, Section One II), stipulates that “Local By-Laws not in conflict with the provisions of the Constitution may be adopted by the Annual Meeting of the church.” HCAC has fully adopted this sample as its own constitution since 2013. Now the HCAC is moving further to set up its own By-Laws. As proposed by the Pastoral Team, it was agreed by the Deacon Board Meeting held in January 2019 that a By-Laws Drafting Group should be set up to draft the church’s By-Laws before the end of 2019.

Constitution vs By-Laws

While the constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles which govern its operation, the by-laws establish specific rules of guidance by which the organisation is to function. By-laws set forth in detail the procedures the organisation must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definition to the articles of the constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change.

Organizations have by-laws because they want to maintain consistency in the running of the business. They use by-laws to communicate organizational rules so internal disputes and conflict can be avoided. Organizations also use by-laws to educate incoming directors and officers who refer to by-laws so meetings and elections of the organisation run smoothly.

By-laws are allowed or provided by some higher authority, such as its constitution. “By-Laws” is the internal rule book that every incorporated organisation must have and work by, and forms a part of the constitution of an organisation. According to the Australian Law, by-laws of a society are created as a contract among members, and must be formally adopted and/or amended.

The purpose of church by-laws?

Church “By-laws” is one of the most important documents for churches. Church by-laws are a set of standards that define the internal government of a local church body. They explain what a church believes and how it operates.

One of the primary reasons for by-laws is to manage church members. By-laws can spell out, for example,

church membership requirements, staff hiring practices. Job descriptions and requirements for such positions as pastors, elders and deacon are also laid out in the by-laws.

By-laws are also useful for maintaining continuity and order for church operations. Who creates and approves the budget? What issues should be taken to a congregational vote, and which can be decided by the elders? Without written steps to determine such things, discussions can get heated—possibly even to the point of a church split.

Perhaps the most important reason for a church to have constitution/by-laws is to clearly spell out the church’s stance when secular issues conflict with church theology. Churches have certain amount of autonomy when it comes to who can hold which staff and volunteer positions, and what actions or beliefs can lead to termination. The constitution/by-laws must be readily available to all members and immediately available to pastors.

In a perfect world, church constitution/by-laws would not be necessary. We would all work together in unity and peace with no selfish ambition or vanity. But in unity, there must be order (1 Corinthians 14:40). By-laws give us structure to handle the specifics so we can minister in the freedom of Christ.

The Way Forward

The By-laws Draft Group, comprising Deacon Sherwood Kwok, Deacon Leo Lai, Ivan Kwan and Ruth Yu (Church Administrator), has been working hard to draft our church’s own by-laws which must be based on our church’s own Constitution. The Group has also made reference to the By-laws of certain Chinese Christian Alliance churches in Australia. Once the first draft is ready, a consultation session will be held for church members to express their views. Based on the outcome of the consultation session, the first draft may be revised before submission to the Deacon Board for endorsement. The endorsed version will then be submitted to an extraordinary general meeting (to be held in early 2020 tentatively) for formal approval. Please pray for the drafting of our church’s by-laws because it is not an easy task.

Publisher: Hills Christian Alliance Church
 Editor: Sherwood Kwok
 Proof-reading: Sherwood Kwok, Anna Kwok

Advisor: Rev. Almon LI
 Translators: Eve & Ivan Kwan, Iris Chau, Sherwood Kwok
 Design/Printing: Ruth Yu