- Pastor's Sharing Be a Shrewd Disciple
- Mission Trip to Indonesia 2019
- 2018 Mission Convention and Faith Promises for the Great Commission Fund
- Worship Ministry: Worship Pastor and Music Coordinator
- Church Finance in 2018-19
- Prison Fellowship Ministry
- Is Our Church a Church of Prayers?
- Sharing Church Prayer Meeting



#### Follow in the Lord's steps and become His real disciples

# Hills Christian Alliance Church Newsletter

November 2018 No. 31

#### Pastor's Sharing - Be a Shrewd Disciple

Rev. Almon Li

The church theme for this year is "Follow in the Lord's steps and become His real disciples". Regarding real disciples, we may remember that Jesus told his disciples a parable of a dishonest manager in Luke 16:3-8 to remind them to be a wise manager.

Jesus says, "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light." Today, as the people of the light and the disciples of the Lord, we should be more shrewd than the people of this world (people who belong to the world). We should follow the teachings of the Bible every day, so that we will not be a foolish Christian.

Paul also reminds us in Ephesians 5:15 that "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise (foolish) but as wise." However, in today's churches, there are a lot of Christians who are foolish. Who are foolish Christians? They are those who are Christians but do not grow.

According to the characteristics of these foolish Christians, we can divide them into four types.

1. The first type of foolish Christians is believers who only know how to "lift up and entrust" to God, but are unwilling to make an effort and work hard.

The Bible does teach us to entrust our things to God, but it does not mean we do not need to do our part. The meaning of "entrust" is that when we want to do something, we tell God first, and then do it quietly, happily and diligently; trust in God with all our heart that he will do the rest. However, for foolish Christians, "entrust" is always an excuse for them not to make an effort and work hard.

There is an ironic story about a teenager who was facing an examination. He did not work hard to prepare it but prayed to God, "Oh God, I entrust my exam to you." God answered with regret, "I have already given you the opportunity and responsibility for learning. Why do you give it back to me now? Do you want me to study and do the exam for you?"

2. The second type of foolish Christians is those who have a form of godliness, but do not have good testimony.

Some Christians know how to close their eyes to pray, but after opening their eyes, they do not obey the rules of the

world. Everywhere are the Christians who have a messy home, are always late for appointments and do not live orderly.

There was a brother who preached the gospel to the people around him wearing a T-shirt with the words - "God Loves the World", but he was seen jumping the queue. Some Christians often pray for the conversion of their families, but in their life, they are not willing to suffer loss and are so mean to their families. How can such a Christian lead people to the Lord? It is really foolish, isn't it?

3. The third type of Christians is those who only know how to work diligently, but do not know how to lift up and entrust to God.

To be successful, only relying on hard work is not enough. There is a proverb in Chinese that "Man proposes, but God disposes". I think it means people cannot only rely on themselves to be successful, but also, the most important, rely on God.

In Ecclesiastes 9:11, King Solomon says, "The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong." It means that man cannot control his own destiny. Look! A strong man suddenly died; a bullet from the sky hit a pedestrian in the head; a prominent political star was abruptly diagnosed with terminal cancer; a rich man lost everything immediately after a business failure.

People cannot rely on their own, nor the believers of the Lord Jesus. Believers should train themselves in everyday life and learn how to lift up their eyes to the omniscient and omnipotent God, pray for His protection and guidance. So apart from opening our eyes, working hard in studying, working and taking care of family, we must also know how to close our eyes and pray faithfully, to be a Christian who can entrust to God and wait for His guidance, and work with Him.

4. The fourth type of foolish Christian is those who know how to lift up and entrust to God, rely on Him, and make an effort to grow, but after success, they do not give glory to God and even forget His grace.

Brothers and sisters, hope that we will not become foolish believers. Through the teachings of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can be a shrewd and true disciple of the Lord -- learning diligently, entrusting everything to God, having a good testimony, and giving glory to God.

**English Translation: Eve Kwan** 

Our Lord has granted the first step to fulfil his great commission for HCAC English Congregation. This vision will be realised by sending a short-term mission team to Indonesia February 2019. We are so excited and anticipate greater things from our Lord through this endeavour. Since the founder of C&MA stated like this.

"Our God has boundless resources. The only limit is in us. Our asking, our thinking, our praying are too small. Our expectations are too limited." (A.B. Simpson)

Participants of short-term missions typically return from the field with a deepened Christian commitment while their efforts complement long-term Alliance ministries and workers. Every year, thousands of Alliance people travel overseas to participate in short-term missions and connect with Alliance long-term missions efforts impacting overseas churches in dynamic ways!

#### Why Indonesia?

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation; almost 87.18% of Indonesians declared themselves Muslim in the 2010 census with 9.87% of the population adhered to Christianity (of which more than 70% were Protestant). Indonesia has more than 780 people group with 62.4 % of the population has not been reached with the Gospel. It is made up of 17,500 islands. It is the 4th most populous nation in the world with roughly 240 million people. This opportunity makes this nation to be the perfect neighbour whom Christians of Australia need to love.

The presence of C&MA among the Protestant has been very strong since the turn of the last century bringing the Gospel with much sacrifice and many lives. In 1928, pioneer missionary Robert A. Jaffray surveyed Indonesia, known then as the East Indies. Even as the Great Depression threatened to curtail his work, Jaffray urged The Alliance to move forward. Hundreds of churches were established, Bible schools sprang up, and C&MA missionaries shared the good news of Jesus with people groups scattered across the world's largest archipelago nation. Since 1929, 3,000 Alliance churches have been established throughout



Indonesia's 1,800 islands. Nearly 375,000 believers worship in the Gospel Tabernacle Church of Indonesia, or GKII, the Alliance national church. Currently, about 3,300 students study at 35 C&MA Bible colleges.

#### Who is Envision?

Envision, a ministry of the C&MA, identifies and develops missional leaders who innovate, establish, and strengthen communities of faith in key urban environments. Envision Trips are short-term experiences for groups, running 7–10 days. Our team will get the opportunity to serve alongside long-term international workers on viable projects in connection to and relationship with the local church. We will get a chance to see God at work in the world, and get a taste of what it looks like to join Him. The Envision Site in Indonesia is located on Java island in the city of Bandung (population: 5 million people).

#### How you can partake in the mission?

Pray! Pray and Pray! Pray to support and pray to encourage the team. Pray for the leadership that they may plan as to fulfil the will of God with the trip. Pray for the team members to keep their faith strong through the preparation and on the trip. Pray for the field missionaries and Envision staff on site that they would prepare the trip in the Spirit. Pray for the people in the city of Bandung that God will do miraculous things there. Pray for the nation of Indonesia that there will be political stability and safety. Pray that God will only grant us the disasters that we can bear. If God prompts you to partake in this mission trip financially, make offering with Mission Trip Indonesia 2019.

#### 2018 Mission Convention and Faith Promises for the Great Commission Fund

Christian & Mission Alliance is a denomination emphasizing evangelism, mission and church planting. The C&MA, Australia requires that each member church should hold the Mission Convention and the Faith Promises once every year. This year Rev. Kam Wong Ng was invited by the Australian Chinese Alliance Churches Committee to preach at our church. Thanks to Katie Chan and her family for hosting Rev. Ng during his stay in Sydney. The programs of the 2018 Mission Week included:

7/9 Friday,	Missionary Sharing Meeting (English)
7:30pm	
8/9 Saturday	Missionary Sharing Meeting
7:30pm	(Cantonese/Mandarin)
9/9 Sunday	Sunday Service (Cantonese)
9:30am	

Every year the National Office would base on the Faith Promises collected to plan the budget for missions and church planting in the following year. All offerings collected by member churches are transferred in full to the National Office. The budgets of and offerings received by HCAC on Faith Promises for the last four years and the current year (up to October 2018) are as follows:

Year	Budget*	Offerings Received*
2014/15	\$5,000	\$6,354
2015/16	\$5,000	\$7,200
2016/17	\$7,000	\$9,847
2017/18	\$7,000	\$11,640
2018/19	\$7,000	(\$5,580 up to
		9/10/2018)

\*Source: HCAC Annual Reports

It can be seen that our congregations' support to the Great Mission Fund has been increasing. We hope that we have the faith to increase the budget of the following year and that we continue to support, by giving offerings and praying, the missionary works of the CMA, Australia as well as HCAC (e.g. Dubbo Short-term Mission Trips, 2019 Indonesia Mission Trip).

**English Translation: Sherwood Kwok** 

#### **Worship Ministry: Worship Pastor and Music Coordinator**

Prologue: HCAC has adopted the modes of "cell church" and "hymns & praises" since it was established in October 2000. Worship Ministry is therefore one of the church's important ministries. Before July 2018, the ministry had been under either an Advisory Committee member or a deacon. The ministry is so important that Rev. Li hopes that it can be taken up by a pastor who has passion and gift in music, with a view that the church's worship can be renewed and improved. At Rev. Li's recommendation, Pastor Paul and Lina were appointed as Worship Pastor and Music Coordinator respectively by the Deacon Board in February 2018. During the transitional period, Pastor Paul and Lina explored the future directions with the Worship Committee. Reporting directly to the Senior Pastor, they officially took on the ministry from July 2018. The following is a summary on these two new positions, duties and work plans based on an interview with Pastor Paul and Lina.

#### Worship Pastor - Pastor Paul Chan

The purposes of having a worship pastor are: to develop, strengthen and renew the worship ministry; to motivate the worship teams as well as the congregations to renew their lives and to worship God. Under the principle of "3 congregations in 1 church", the Worship Pastor is to serve the Cantonese Congregation initially and then the whole church eventually.

The major duties of the Worship Pastor are to lead the Worship Ministry and oversee the Multi-media Team; to coordinate the musicians and vocalists; to advise on the quality and styles of worship; to review the ministry through the monthly committee meeting and to report the progress to the Senior Pastor. Other duties include: to set the worship team roster; to coordinate team members during the worship; to take part in the weekly rehearsal, if possible; to recruit and train new members; to introduce and upload new hymns; and to renew the copyright license of hymns used.

Pastor Paul said, "The responsibility of the post is heavy. I am willing to accept this appointment because I have the passion on music ministry and I am willing to submit to God and to learn." Having taken up the ministry, the first thing he did is to strengthen his communication and fellowship



with his co-workers and team members. He has designed the flow of worship so that all members know it well before the weekly rehearsal. He has also tried to arrange a fellowship on every 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday. Furthermore, he has added a prayer time in the monthly core group meeting.

Pastor Paul hopes that the whole ministry is God pleasing, that all team members is passionate and faithful to serve, with a renewed life. He also hopes that all members can grow together, obey and improve; that they are willing to learn different styles and rhythms of music; that worship leaders can understand team members' so that both parties can work together; and that all members respect one another and keep good working relationship.

#### Music Coordinator - Angelina Tulio (Lina)

The Music Coordinator's major responsibility is on music – matching of music, expanding musicians' performing styles (e.g. contemporary rhythmic style), writing practising songs of different rhythmic styles and making them into Midi for reference by musicians. These serve to prepare the musicians to cooperate with other new instruments/musicians who may join in the future.

Over the past few months, Lina has spent considerable time to compose sample songs of different rhythmic styles and to communicate with keyboardists on music. She has recorded certain worships for review. Furthermore, she has arranged training sessions by external professional bodies so as to enhance musicians' cooperating skills. On 29 July 2018, the Sydney Melodic was invited to lead the worship in the Sunday Service and to train the worship teams of HCAC.

Why is Lina willing to take up this new position? A sister who came from Hong Kong to visit HCAC reflected that in the past the worship team comprised different instruments and the music was relatively richer. Lina prayed that God would call more passionate musicians to join the Worship Team. She realised that it might be difficult for different instruments to play together harmoniously. She began by equipping herself – to learn how to mix and match different instruments. As she has the passion to serve in music coordination, she therefore accepted Rev. Li's invitation

While awaiting new musicians to join the Worship Team, Lina hopes that serving members would adapt to cooperation in "team work". She herself would act as a keyboardist to practise and communicate with other keyboardists. She also suggests that vocalists should be used to rhythmic listening. She has encouraged other teams to have a second keyboardist so as to produce different music effects.

**Epilogue:** Pastor Paul and Lina have served in the worship ministry and choir for years. Not only do they have gifts in music, they are also faithful to serve the church they love much. Over the past few months, they have worked hard silently to prepare for the coming improvements. Pray that God will use them and the Worship Team and that the congregations will surrender humbly to worship Him and glorify His name.

**English Translation: Sherwood Kwok** 

#### Church Finance in 2018-19

For this financial year (April 2018 to March 2019), some changes in the church finance have been made and some other new initiatives introduced. The following is a brief summary on what changes have been made and why these changes required. The underlying principles of the major changes made are:

- Unity/oneness: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. " (1 Corinthians 12:26)
- Trust in God's provision: "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

#### Background:

One Church with 3 Congregations: The Mandarin Congregation was previously a semi-independent church plant with its own AGM, budget, weekly offering target, book-keeping system and bank account. It returned to HCAC wef June 2017 as one congregation. Since then, HCAC has become one church with 3 congregations (Cantonese, English and Mandarin).

#### Changes made and reasons:

#### 1. One Church, One System:

The Mandarin Congregation should be treated in the same way as the Cantonese and English Congregations as far as church finance is concerned. As agreed by the Deacon Board in July 2018, the Mandarin accounting system has been integrated into the church finance system under the General Fund.

#### 2. One Church, One Budget:

Two GF budgets approved by 2018 AGM (one each for HCAC and Mandarin) have been combined into one consolidated budget, in which:

 All remuneration-related and administrative expenses and external contributions (accounting for 93% of total expenditure) have been

#### **Sherwood Kwok, Treasurer**

centralised, not apportioned to individual congregations.

 All expenditure items related to ministries of individual congregations (e.g. worship teams, Kids Church) remain separately budgeted (accounting

for 7% of total expenditure) for the three congregations.

• Only one combined weekly offering target for the whole church (\$4,800), no separate targets for Cantonese/English (\$4800) and Mandarin (\$800) respectively as before.

### 3. Ratoinalisation of Building Fund Account

As the mortgage loan for the church property had been fully paid out by June 2018, opportunity was taken to rationalise the Building Fund account as follows in order to have a true and clear financial position of both the BF and GF accounts.

- Expenditure items: the two remaining overhead expenses incurred for the Church Building (i.e. maintenance, content insurance) transferred from BF to GF with retrospective effect from April 2018.
- Income items: all special or one-off offerings not related to or explicitly earmarked for the project transferred from BF to GF with retrospective effect from April 2018.

#### Other initiatives and reasons:

### 4. Wider participation by the congregations in church finance:

A Finance Committee has been set up, comprising representatives from 3 congregations: Yan Young, Anna Kwok, Jeanie Wong (Cantonese), Annie Lin (Mandarin), Matthew Wong English), Ruth Yu (Church Administrator).

Reducing pastors' involvement in administrative duties:

This term the Remuneration Committee was reformed comprising deacons only so that pastor can devote themselves to pastoring and the ministry.

#### 6. Praying for the church's needs:

A prayer item on the air-conditioning project has been included in the "Prayer Requests" in the bulletins.

#### 7. Communication:

More information regarding church finance will be provided mainly through the bulletins and the Newsletter.

#### 8. Legal/constitutional compliance:

Procedural guidelines have been drawn up. Abnormalities identified were rectified as far as possible for better compliance.

### 9. Better utilisation and monitoring of the approved budget:

Based on the past 6 months' actual figures, mid-year forecast and review on the approved budgets were conducted in October 2018 so as to better utilised the approved budgets and cope with the church's needs.

This year our church is celebrating its 18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Thank God for His provision in the past years. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain." (Pslam 127:1) Hope that all we have done and planned are Godpleasing and matching the needs of our church. "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." (1 Cor 4:2)

**English Translation: Sherwood Kwok** 

### **Prison Fellowship Ministry**

Leona Leung

[Introduction: Prison Fellowship Australia was established in 1981 as the third chartered member of Prison Fellowship International. Prison Fellowship International was founded by an American, Charles Colson, former chief counsel to President Nixon. In 1974, as a result of the Watergate inquiry, Colson pled guilty to obstruction of justice and served seven months in prison. He founded Prison Fellowship in the U.S. in 1976 afterwards. Across Australia there are over 1000 volunteers serving prisoners and their families in different ways. Visiting prisoners is one of them. Through the visits, the volunteers build up relationship with the prisoners and show their caring, try to bring a message of hope and change for them. This is not an easy task, and sometimes may take a long time before changes in the prisoners' life can be seen. This "life changing ministry" needs more Christians to participate.]

Praise the Lord who chose Mike and me to serve Him in the Prison Fellowship Ministry!

I had a vision many years ago that I would follow our pastor to spread the gospel three years later. But I also thought that this was just a joke as I still needed to work hard to earn a living and pay the mortgage. How could I find the

time to do this!

God's will is beyond our imagination! Our church invited Pastor Fung to come and share about the ministry of visiting prisoners. Mike and I enrolled without second thought. Pastor Fung gave us

an hour of training, and then two weeks later we found ourselves following him for our first visit to prisoners.

I was pondering things happened so fast that I was not well prepared yet. Mike only converted to Jesus five months ago, and only two years for myself. We were just at our learning stage in the faith and we even had not taken the Evangelism Explosion III training! God quickly saw me

through, and He did not rebuke me for my little faith. God let me know that He does not need a professor, but only a primary teacher; the prisoners does not need complicated



theology, but caring that they can feel and a living testimony for God's love.

The night before the visit, we prayed, and slept well until next early morning. We prayed again before departure at 5:30am. We arrived at our first destination in Cessnock after a two-hour drive. It was our first time visiting a prison, but we did not feel any unease. Our second visit was to a privately operated prison in Parklea where the guards and rules were quite different. When we chatted with the Chinese prisoners, God led us how to use suitable topics to share our day to day matters, how we went through difficult situations with God's guidance, and the joy and peace we have from God. When we saw them being

touched by what we shared, we know that God is with us all along.

Besides visitation, we also write letters to our friends in prison to encourage them and let them know we care about and support them. We use our church address for correspondences. Sometimes we mail Chinese Christian Mission Bulletins to them as their

spiritual food.

These visits help me build up faith and trust in our one and only God, and let me have many reflections. I now have deeper understanding about my relationship with others, with myself and with God. This also matches the theme of our church camp this year -- "You, Me, God".

- Relationship with Others: How to see people who did wrong and are in prison? They are unforgivable; they did bad things and disturbed law and order, so you do not like ......
- Relationship with Myself: What strengths and weaknesses do I have? What gifts and talents do I have?
   Do I think I am a worthy person ......
- Relationship with God: What is God's position in my life?
  The bible says those who loves God shall act according to God's will, do I follow willingly ......

God loves us first so that we know how to love others and care about people whom we don't know. God forgives our sins and lets us reborn in Him. Those who are in prison should also be given the chances.

Thanks to brothers and sisters in church who prayed for and supported us earnestly. In this ministry I have learnt how to rely on God with faith. Reliance without faith is not sufficient. I only need to hold tight to God's hands, and I will not be afraid and lose directions. He will then guide me through.

I have become an official member of Prison Fellowship Australia recently. I will take two trainings given by Corrective Services NSW and then I will be allowed to enter prisons freely to visit the prisoners.

According to Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5:13-16 about salt and light, the two big responsibilities of Christians to the world are: being the light of the world, we must drive away spiritual darkness; being the salt in the world, we must prevent from spiritual corruption.

Pray that God will continue to mold me into His instrument, His vessel, and His servant.

**English Translation: Eve Kwan** 

#### Is Our Church a Church of Prayers? (Note)

[Editor's Note: In the last issue, Connie and Johnny shared the importance and method of prayers. In the past six months, Prayer Meetings have gradually changed its format to Worship Prayers (please refer to the sharing of Cecy Chan in this Issue). Although the number of participants has increased slightly, it is still predominated by pastors, deacons and ministry leaders and a few believers. This article is an excerpt of the study materials on the Book of Acts (4: 23 – 35) from CCINT (Note), iterating how the early churches emphasize on prayers.]

Today churches are faced with one real problem - The prayer life of a church. Churches have all sorts of problems, which may include lack of staff, lack of suitable leaders, financial problems, problems caused by lack of love and unity etc., but all these are secondary. The real problem is the prayer life of a church. If this problem is solved, all other problems will be solved immediately.

Prayer is the life of a church, the life of all believers and the life of a church's service and other Christian activities. Acts 4:23-25 demonstrates seven hallmarks of a church of prayers:

## 1. Church of Prayers – Acknowledging the importance of prayer, prays voluntarily and eagerly.

Peter and John were imprisoned, but as soon as they were released, they went to see the believers in Jerusalem and reported what had happened to them (v. 23). After the Christians heard their account, they prayed (v. 24). They admit that prayer is the foundation to all things. Do we realise that prayer comes before all else? Do we have that voluntary and eager desire to pray?

#### 2. Church of Prayers -- Puts hope on the Lord

These churches shift their focus from mere human and current adversities and turn to the Lord who can solve all

difficulties and control everything (v. 24). No matter what difficulties we face, God should be our center – not meetings, people or money. All these are only secondary. The church that prays always concentrates on God.

#### 3. Church of Prayers -- Obeys the Great Commission

In verse 29 they prayed, "Lord, help us to continue to preach the gospel!" In a Church of Prayers, the greatest desire for the congregation is to let the degenerated world know Christ. Is this the hallmark of our church? Have we kept up with our preaching instead of only organising activities?

#### 4. Church of Prayers -- Have Faith to Ask for Miracles

If a church understands the importance of prayer and truly prays, God will intervene with His supernatural actions, with His "signs and wonders" (v. 30). They pray for God to perform miracles. If a church really prays for miracles to happen - spiritually, it is the salvation of the soul; physically, our God often likes to heal the body and mind of His children.

## 5. A Church that is Praying -- The Manifestation of the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit

Prayer is the secret to the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit had also come after Pentecost, and it can happen again and again! Through the spectrum of history and time, that Pentecost could not happen again - but from experience, it could reoccur (v. 31)!

#### 6. Church of Prayers -- Power of Spreading the Gospel

What happened after the disciples prayed (see v.31-33)? These kinds of encounters always happen in a Church of Prayers; people are being defeated by the power of the Word, and many are saved; but whenever a major event comes into realisation through the preaching of the Gospel, it is always, and only an answer to the prayer of the people

of God. Faith and confirmation follow the preaching supported by a Church of Prayers.

### 7. Being in a Church of Prayers -- The Many Graces in the Lives of God's People.

The key word in verse 33 is "Great Grace". From vv.32 to 35, we can see four aspects of grace - the grace of unity; the grace of putting the world behind us; the grace of fellowship (v. 32); and the grace of generosity (vv. 34-35).

These are the hallmarks of a Church of Prayers, but the church is made up of both men and women. Therefore,



a Church of Prayers is a group of Christians who not only pray individually but collectively as a church. Will you do your part and let God help you to make your church into a Church of Prayers?

Note: The original of this article is the Lesson 3 (Acts Chapter 4-7) of a series of bible study course at the website of Christian Communications International

**English Translation: Iris Chau** 

### **Sharing – Church Prayer Meeting**

**Cecy Chan** 

A few months ago, the format of the prayer meeting was to sing two to three hymns together, and then, to pray on a long list of prayers points, which each person was assigned to a few. Being slow to warming up, I was yet to fully immerse my soul and mind in God before I had to start praying. The prayer was a bit in vain. However, the prayer meetings these few months were interlaced with hymns. This "worshipping and praying" format made our prayer meetings more lively. The use of hymns refocuses our attention to God and made it clear that the audience of our

prayers is God himself. In a circle, brothers and sisters, who speak Cantonese and Mandarin, use hymns to praise and worship, use words to pray for the whole church, to plead for the mercy, guidance and grace of God. Our Lord is the master of prayer meetings. He merits if we let him be the King of our hearts, not through eloquently put words. Let us seek God's will as one, a prayer from a united church is far more powerful than praying in lonesome.

**English Translation: Iris Chau** 

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