

## Hills Christian Alliance Church Newsletter

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## Rejoice in God, Live for the Lord

May 2020, Issue No. 37

### Pastor's Sharing – Live For the Lord

**Rev Almon Li**  
Senior Pastor

The church theme of this year is "Live for the Lord". When we talk about "Live for the Lord", we naturally think of Paul the apostle because since he received Jesus as his savior, his life had been a life living for the Lord. There is a famous quote of Paul: "Being with the Lord is far better". Even though Paul spent several years in prison and his life and death were uncertain, he was still thirsty for God, and would rather die and be with the Lord. But God reminded him that he still had a mission on earth. Therefore, those who truly live for the Lord should "live for the Lord's mission" as well.

What is "Live for the Lord"? Since the Lord Jesus died for us, our sins have been forgiven and eternal life has been ours. Therefore, we are no longer "self-centred", but learn to be "God-centred". We shall surrender everything of our life to Jesus, and then go wherever He sends us and uses us. Live according to His will, His commands and His teachings. This is to live for the Lord.

What is a mission? It is to love and to serve others, to spread the gospel and to nurture the believers to become Christ's disciples who are willing to live for the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, are you a Christian who lives for the Lord? One of Paul's teachings to the Philippian believers is to encourage them to become believers who "can overcome all kinds of sufferings" and become Christ's disciples who can transcend suffering and "live for the Lord". The purpose of life of these believers who have such transcendence is not just for themselves or for the sake of abundant life, but to be a vessel to bless others and to glorify God in any circumstances.

In Philippians 1:21, Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." This verse states that to live is Christ: Christ is my all, my grace and my help; he is the Lord walking with me; the purpose of living is to glorify Christ and to live like Christ. As Christ has given us eternal life, we can no longer fear death. So Paul says, "to die is gain". It means that upon death, faithful believers will immediately enter the paradise of eternal life, be with our Lord Christ who loves us, and receive praise from the Lord saying that we are good stewards. Therefore, to die is "gain".

Paul taught the believers in Philippian church to learn how to face the two greatest challenges of life: "suffering" and "death", which are unavoidable in life. As the saying goes, "Things do not always work out as you think", and another saying goes, "To be bestowed with great responsibility, one must be tested by trials and tribulations". So if we want to have achievement and build the kingdom of God by using God-given gifts, we must first go through the test of "suffering".

As we can see, there are many victors in the Bible. They all go through the test of suffering. Job 5:7 says, "Man is born to trouble". In some versions, the word "trouble" has been translated as "toil". Life is full of toil and trouble that is inevitable. Some people say, "Suffering is a blessing in disguise". However, suffering itself will not automatically become a blessing. It must be done by the grace intervention of God.

Not everyone who suffers will think it is good for him. In fact, for many people, the more they suffer, the more they complain. They may curse others, hurt others, or even commit suicide. Therefore, suffering may not be a blessing. As Proverbs 17:22 says, "A crushed spirit dries up the bones". However, when suffering comes to us, we are given a good opportunity for self-reflection on life, reflecting on ourselves that we are nothing but dust; we are just creatures that we cannot save ourselves, so that we can better understand the truth of the suffering and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

When we go through suffering, because of the grace intervention of God, it can become a blessing. Just as what the psalmist says, "My suffering was good for me" (Psalm 119:71). Through suffering, in fact, we can open our hearts and change our own selves, so that we can accept the Lord's love and grace. Prof. C. S. Lewis once said, "In the midst of suffering, God shouts to us, awakens the world of foolishness and deafness, and awakens us to reflect on life."

Dear brothers and sisters, what do you value most? A smooth and happy life, or in any circumstances, we can exhibit Christian virtues and godly character in our life?

Paul did not fear death and suffering. How about you? Paul did not concern his own life and death, ups or downs, but hoped that Christ would be exalted in him as always. He only valued the glorious life of being with the Lord.

Rev James Hudson Taylor III (Dai Shaozeng) was also a good example to us. He was a God's servant who lived for the Lord. He was very capable and gifted, but also very humble. He was conferred with the Honorary Citizenship by a county of the Sichuan province, China. When he accepted the award, he said, "I am just a very ordinary person, and I do not have any gift." In fact, Rev Dai was deeply influenced by his great-grandfather, Rev James Hudson Taylor (Dai Desheng). Rev Dai Desheng, who preached in China in his early years and was forced to leave China at the age of 27 due to illness, wrote a letter to his sister and said, "If I had a thousand pounds, China should have it. If I had a thousand lives, China should have them." In order to go to China, Rev Dai Desheng even gave up a relationship with his girlfriend.

Rev Dai Shaozeng was also influenced by his "live-for-the-Lord" parents. During the Second World War, his parents preferred to stay with the Chinese in China. They protected thousands of women from the ravages of Japanese troops

in Kaifeng. Rev Dai Shaozeng was separated from his parents for a long time and was trapped in a concentration camp for three years when he was a teenager. During that period of time, he thanked God for meeting another "live-for-the-Lord" believer who was Eric Liddell, a former Olympic Gold Medalist. In the concentration camp, the senior Eric Liddell treated Rev Dai as his son. At the end, he died there.

After the victory over Japan, the 16-year-old Rev Dai Shaozeng only hoped to leave this miserable country forever. However, in a Christian camp, God called him and His Word moved him, so he committed his life to "live for the Lord". He was even prepared to die in China as he was born in China and grew up in China. In the end, Rev Dai Shaozeng died in Hong Kong, China. We can say that his life was wonderful and abiding in the Lord because he had a "live-for-the-Lord" will and a "live-for-the-Lord's-mission" life.

Dear brothers and sisters, are you willing to live for the Lord?

English translation: Eve Wong

## Family Ministry

**Phoebe Tu**

Family Ministry Director

Family Ministry provides pastoral care to young families and single young female Christians of three congregations. Core members of Family Ministry are made up by representatives from three congregations. They are Phoebe Tu, Jenny Yiu, Jocelyn Zhao, Nicole Chau, Sarah and Jacqueline Tong.

Family Ministry develops and oversees the operation of Kids Church. It also looks after the needs of young families. For the younger generation, we (most of the core members are parents) desire our children to have a deeper relationship with God and a close bonding with others. Of course, we also wish our children to follow God's will on marriage, between a man and a woman. Two fellowships, Water & Light and The Well are set up for these purposes. Moreover, Family Ministry is actively seeking opportunities to reach out for more young families to join HCAC. To achieve this objective, two music ministries, One Talent and The Minor Voice are formed. These music ministries not only intend to increase the awareness of our church via YouTube, but also provide platforms for interaction, cooperation and fellowship among three congregations. Praise God that our young people can serve God with their different talents. One Talent is for 18 and above young people and The Minor Voice is for children from 5 and above.

Due to the social distancing rules, the operation of Kids Church and The Minor Voice have been stopped temporarily. This pandemic situation is also hard for us to care about others when fellowships and casual catching ups are banned. We need to look up to God for wisdom and

guidance. Electronic communications may be the best option.

We also need to be creative in the ways to serve our God. Lately, Family Ministry has launched two projects in response to Covid 19. The first project is to protect yourselves, families and friends by making DIY masks. Some core members of Family Ministry and some sisters sharing the same view, have engaged themselves in making cotton masks for church members and friends. This is surely a form of pastoral care as a small group of ladies have come out of their safety zones for an essential act, to care the health of others.



One Talent Ministry

The second project is to encourage people to remain loyal to God and do not lose our faith and hope. A song was written, scored, translated and compiled by a group of five people. It was presented to the public via YouTube by a team of ten. We are not professional; may God use what

we have for His glory. We are limited but the Lord who we are serving is unlimited.

God looks at our hearts not our abilities. We may not be the servants who have two talents and five talents in the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30). We may just have one talent. May God help us not to be like the servant of one talent in the Parable. That servant did not trigger the master's anger just because of his/her laziness. In fact, the main issue of the servant was his/her relationship with the master. The servant had wrongly accused his/her master to be a mean man – to expect harvest to places where seeds are not sown. The servant did not have a grateful heart. The master in the Parable represents the Lord that we are serving. If Christ has forsaken his life for us first, He has certainly sown his seed of love. We should respond to Him with grateful hearts. We should use our skills and talents for His kingdom.

Let us be reminded not to be like the wicked servant of one talent. Let us always have the grateful hearts and beware of our thoughts and words. We should not doubt the divine nature of our God. He is good and does good (Ps 119:68). He is faithful and cannot disown Himself ( II Tim 2:13). May God have mercy on us and strengthen our hearts, especially in this global crisis. May God also help us to use our limited skills and talents to serve Him according to His desire. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be. "My Father will honour the one who serves me." (John 12:26) We are weak and we may fail God. May God help us as He understands our weaknesses (Heb 4:15). Amen!

## 2020 C&MA Council Meeting

**Pastor Don Huang**  
Voluntary Mandarin Associate

# Together

## Alliance Gathering - Canberra 2020

51<sup>st</sup> Annual General Council  
Wed 5<sup>th</sup> – Sat 8<sup>th</sup> February

On 5 February 2020, the ACT welcomed the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual General Council of the Christian & Missionary Alliance of Australia. The venue of the Council meeting was on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Library, which is situated in the beautiful campus of the University of Canberra. Almost 100 C&MA pastors and workers from all parts of the world gathered in Canberra to attend this 4-day annual conference.

Two guest speakers, Rev. Dr. John Dickson from Australia and Rev Dr Jura Yanagihara (President of the Alliance World Fellowship) from Brazil, were invited to share their inspiring messages. During this 4-day event, Rev. John and Rev. Jura spoke on "Strategies in Evangelism" and "Development of the World Alliance Ministry" respectively. In the first morning session, all attending pastors of Chinese Alliance churches attended the AGM of the Australia Chinese Alliance Churches Committee, at which the Chairman, Treasurer and other officer bearers were elected. In the afternoon session, all participants gathered together to

pray in unity for all local Alliance church and Alliance missionaries. During the conference, pastors and workers did share sincerely and feel that all are one family in Christ, having a close and supporting relationship.



At the AGM of the C&MA of Australia, the reports of the President, Secretary, Treasurer and other officer bearers were unanimously passed. The missionaries from abroad also shared about their ministries. Thank God that He has done wondrous works in all parts of the world through the C&MA missionaries called by Him. May God bless His churches so that more believers are willing to offer themselves to spread the gospel and to glorify His name.

*"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15) (NIV)*

English translation: Sherwood Kwok

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## Believers' Equipping Program – A Summary for 2012 to 2019

For years the HCAC has not stopped organising bible/believers' equipping courses because it is Rev. Almon Li's belief that the only way for believers to grow and be matured is to take root in God's word. A pastor, whose church is a large one with matured congregation, once said that : "When the church studies God word, the church will grow and have a solid foundation of faith." Therefore, Rev. Li said, "As a pastor, I will continually hold bible courses and encourage brothers and sisters to study God's word together." (Note 1)

During the period from 2012 to 2019, the Cantonese Congregation organised 26 courses under the Program, of which 14 were on the bible (13 books), 6 biblical topics and 6 ministry/spiritual growth. More than 70 brothers and sisters did join at least one course, making up of more than 253 enrollments. A total of 8 instructors served during the period. On average, there were 3.25 courses per year, 10 attendees per course (approx. 10% of the Cantonese Congregation). During the 8-year period, 2 church members completed 7 bible courses and were awarded the Believers' Equipping Program Certificate; 5 church members satisfactorily completed the Evangelism Explosion III Leaders' Training (Stage 1). (Note 2)

In 2020, three courses will be organised: "2 Corinthians" by Rev. Almon Li in February, "1&2 Timothy" by Daniel Chan in March and "Intertestamental Period" by Eve Wong. [Remark: Courses already started in February and March have been suspended until further notice due to the pandemic.]

During the last three years (2017-2019), a total of 10 courses were held and only 13 brothers and sisters could be regarded as frequent attendees (attended 4 courses or above). As Rev. Li said, "At present only a small number of church members joined bible courses. I hope that in the years to come more and more brothers and sisters will be thirsty to God's word and accord it top priority in their daily lives and ministries." (Note 1)

Note 1: Pastor's Sharing – Going Forward Together (1/10/2017)

Note 2: Thanks to the Education Department for providing some data in this article.

## Sharing on Parent-Child Relationship

Nancy Xie

Here I am bearing witness to God's actions, sharing how I was made aware of my shortcomings through the thorn in my eye and how I was being transformed by God. My son is my thorn. He is where my predicaments in recent years come from. We love each other but we also cause hurt to one another. Our parent-child relationship was abysmal.

I have always been strict in my children's education. I feel, as parents, we have the responsibility to discipline our children. When your children are young, you have control over them; but as they grow up, especially during adolescence, your authority is constantly being challenged and you can no longer control your children. In addition to the many bad habits from a teenager, everything that he does displeases me and causes me to tell him off. Between a mom trying to discipline her child and a son being disciplined by his mother, any minor difference, however inconsequential, would prompt a dispute.

At that time, I was emotionally drained, I complained to God for giving me a son who does not submit to discipline. I prayed to God for wisdom and assistance in disciplining my son. It never occurred to me that I could be in the wrong. Until I was reminded through a sermon, that our thorn in the flesh is something given to us by God to keep us from becoming conceited, becoming proud and arrogant, which our self-righteousness will gradually entice us to forget God and steer us away from God. God uses our thorn to

help us recognise our weaknesses, to turn to God, submit to His sovereignty and accept a transformation from Him. Your thorn may come in different forms – an annoying person or situation, illness, frustration or suffering. God's power is made perfect in weakness. Our faith is strengthened through His sufficient grace and our obedience. He cuts off every flaw in me and prunes me so that I will become pleasing to Him.



Isn't my son a thorn? He causes grief, pain and helplessness. So, what does God want from me? I reflected upon the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

I have a quick temper, easily agitated, I was not doing well in gentleness, peace, kindness or forbearance. Because of the way my messages were conveyed, even when it came from good intent or a positive view, I was causing much stress to the people around me and often resulted in strong resistances or arguments. This kind of communication, especially with my teenage son during his rebellion and egoistic adolescent phase, is a dead end. I instantly regret every time I get angry, as such, I started to manage my

temper, emotion and words. God also made me realise my shortcoming in love. Love is one of God's greatest characteristics. He loves us. His love attracts us, blesses us and builds us up. He also gave us the greatest commandment – Love your neighbour as yourself.

**Love is Acceptance – Accept his nature, strengths and weaknesses:** If my son is green pigeon grass and I want to grow him into a beautiful sunflower or use the standards for a sunflower to demand of him. Is it possible or asking for trouble? Many times, I hold too high of an expectation which only lead to conflict. In fact, green pigeon grass has many strengths and contributions and my mission should have been to accept him and create a suitable environment for him to flourish and play his role; and if God wishes to transform this green pigeon grass into a sunflower, in His plan, power and wonders, nothing is impossible.

**Love is Tolerance – Tolerate his imperfections and differences:** Although I gave birth to my son, his personality, habits, traits and ways of doing things are very different from mine. We often argue on trivial everyday matters, in fact, there really is no right or wrong, we had just been tackling these tasks differently. Though I may not like how my son handle the issue, I should treat him with acceptance and respect.

**Love is Forgiveness – Allow and forgive mistakes:** His many inadequacies, added with the oddities during adolescence, often irritates me, but I learn to calm down and forgive. I used to be very vengeful. If my son was being disobedient, I would resort to various sanctions – financially, electronics and mentally, but these sanctions causes him to act out even more.

**Love is Patience – Wait patiently for him to grow and God's plan:** Just like patiently waiting for flowers to bloom or to harvest a crop, any unrealistic timeline or plant boosters, may be counterproductive.

When facing my shortcomings and weaknesses, I began to see the lesson God has prepared for me. I came before God and asked for God's help. I started to have a change in attitude, instead of seeing my son as an enemy, I now see him as a blessing from God, an angel for me to become a better person. I used to praise my daughter for being clever and sensible, for being an angel from God to help and take care of me. Now, with a grateful heart, I will also say to my son, "Son, you are also an angel sent from God, to become my help and to mould me into a person pleasing to God. Thank God. Let us support each other in becoming Godly people."

I try to avoid head-on conflict with him. In times when my son is about to get infuriated, I would leave the scene. If I were mad, I would calm myself down and not to be influenced by him. If I really cannot hold my temper, I would apologise to him afterwards and tell him it is God's will for us to confess and repent, no matter who is right or wrong, losing our temper and getting out of control emotionally is a sin. I would also request an apology from him. If he is unwilling, I will ask him to confess his sins before God and ask for God's forgiveness.

I also do not force my thoughts onto him anymore. I would try to make my case in front of him and tell him – This is my opinion and experience as your mother, you can refer to it, and if you insist on your own ideal, I will respect and accept your decision, but I hope you will bring it before God, ascertain God's will, make a wise choice and ask for God's help.

This is not an easy task, often overwhelming and sometimes aggrieved, but if this is what God wants me to do, He will definitely help me. I have faith in Him. Slowly I became more and more still and slow to anger, disputes between my son and I became less and less, and I started to see his behaviour more objectively. We began to have smoother conversations and he became more willing to listen to my suggestions. We were able to cooperate as parent and child and the tension between us has greatly eased. Thank God. This process is truly transcendent. I experienced how the change in me brought about the change in my son, how our relationship has progressed and how God is leading our every step.

Although the relationship between my son and I has improved, he is still a son full of shortcomings and pride and I am starting to realise my limitations as a parent. However, I know from the bottom of my heart, I need to bring him to God, into God's authority, so God can use His mysterious ways to guide and lead him, to build and make him, just as God has done in my life. First of all, they will have to **Fear God**, recognising God as the creator, the master of our lives and sovereignty above all things. In His presence and blessing, everything is possible, even sufferings can become blessings and without Him we can do nothing. I often tell them, "Do your best and God will do the rest". Our mission is to follow God's will and do what God pleases.

In fact, faith is very abstract and not tangible, if you only talk the talk, it is really hard for people to see the Christ in you. So, how do I draw my children closer to God? I am the Christian closest to them, everything that I say and do should automatically have God's mark. Would they even be interested in the God looking over me, if they could not see God through me, my fellowship with God or the joy in me? All that I can do is to lead and teach by example. Of course, I am not perfect, I have also been struggling with sin, but I do want them to see how I fear God, my faith, submission and obedience to God. I want to bring them before God and let God have sovereignty over them. With God's leadership and guidance, I can retreat to second base and ask God to help us through.

Above is a bit of my experience and sharing. I hope on the road of being a parent, we can work together and encourage each other. May all glory be to God.

English translation: Iris Chau

## Senior Pastor's Pastoral Letter (Excerpt)

*In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Government has progressively introduced social distancing rules, including suspension of public gatherings (such as religious meetings) and non-essential travels. In order to comply with the government rules, our church has stopped all on-site services, gatherings, visitations and activities until further notice. Rev. Almon Li issued two pastoral letters on 20 and 26 March 2020 respectively, informing brothers and sisters of the church's latest measures and encouraging them to trust in God and care for those in need amid the pandemic. Appended below is an excerpt of Rev. Li's 2<sup>nd</sup> pastoral letter:*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank God that we can still worship together under the threat of the coronavirus. Many thanks to deacons and co-workers of our three congregations who are responsible for live streaming so that we could be blessed by worshipping God together on last Sunday.

In view of the outbreak of coronavirus and in order to follow the government rules, our church is announcing the following measures:

1. From 29 March (Sunday) onward, Cantonese (09:30), Mandarin (12:00) and English (09:30) will live stream Sunday services. During live streaming, only those on duty are allowed to be present on site.
2. Congregations can search "Hills Christian Alliance Church" or "The Pathway-HCAC English" on Facebook for live streamed services.
3. Congregations may continue to be blessed by making offerings while worshipping at home through live streamed services. Offerings can be made by E-transfer or sending cheques (payable to HCAC) to our church.

Although we are worshipping on line, we should remain fearful when worshipping God.

### A. Preparation

- Set up the equipment (e.g. mobile phone, PC) at least 15 minutes before the service starts.
- Keep quiet and prepare your heart for the services.
- Remind your family members to avoid disturbing you or invite them to join the worship.

### B. Participation

- Behave yourself as if you are worshipping in the church.
- Follow the progression of the service: singing, praying, bible reading, sermon, benediction.
- If we worship God with fear, He is present with us and we are practicing communion of saints.

Despite that our face-to-face gatherings have to be suspended, our love and care in Christ will never fail. We will continue to provide pastoral care. Please try your best to keep in touch with people surrounding you. At this moment, all of us need particularly the care from our church community. If you require any help, prayer or just a chat, please contact our pastoral staff.

Let us pray together:

1. Pray that God gets close to those who have been infected, scared or isolated;
2. Pray that God heals the infected;
3. Pray that God blesses the affected families with peace;
4. Pray that God gives wisdom to government officials so that they know how to handle the pandemic;
5. Pray that God lifts up His mighty right hand to stop the virus being spread out.

I hope that our normal services can be resumed as soon as possible. I cherish very much the days that we worshipped together. May God have mercy on us that we can gather together again very soon. I also hope that brothers and sisters can take a step further -- to keep our fellowship and unity in Christ – although we cannot have face-to-face contacts.

Finally, I hope that you remain faithful to God amid the pandemic, knowing that "the Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever." (Psalm 29:10)

Servant of God,

Rev. Almon Li

English translation: Sherwood Kwok



Cantonese on-line service



Mandarin on-line service



English on-line service