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

# Hills Christian Alliance Church Newsletter

February 2018 – Issue 28

## Pastor's Sharing - To live a life worthy of the calling received

Rev. Almon Li

The church theme for this year is the same as last year which is "Follow in the Lord's steps and become His real disciples". It is because we deeply feel that it is very important for believers to keep learning to be like our Lord and live out a real disciple's life of Jesus.

This year, in respect of being the Lord's disciples, we hope brothers and sisters can practice in action. Therefore, we have two subthemes - "Spiritual Disciplines" and "Discipleship".

I remember many years ago I read a book which named "Celebration of Discipline". The author is Dr. Richard J Foster. In the book he introduces many valuable spiritual disciplines.

### Part I. The Inward Disciplines

1. Meditation
2. Prayer
3. Fasting
4. Study

### Part II. The Outward Disciplines

1. Simplicity
2. Solitude
3. Submission
4. Service

### Part III. The Corporate Disciplines

1. Confession
2. Worship
3. Guidance
4. Celebration

I have been practicing the spiritual disciplines by following the suggestions of the book for a long time and I found that these disciplines help my spiritual growth and my relationship with God a lot.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not think these disciplines are only for the reverends, pastors or spiritual believers, or think to do these is beyond our ability. Also, do not think they belong to the believers who can meditate

whole-heartedly, that means those who can spend all their time on praying and meditating. Absolutely not! The will of God is that spiritual disciplines belong to all ordinary people. They are those who have to work, look after their children, wash dishes in their kitchens, and do lawn mowing at their backyards.

We should not think spiritual discipline is boring and hard to do. Its purpose is not to destroy our happiness in the world. In fact, joy is the theme of all the disciplines. The purpose of discipline is to set people free from the deadening slavery life of selfishness and fear. When a man's heart is released from the things which make him depressed, can we say it is a boring and hard job? Singing, dancing or even cheering is the characteristic of discipline in a spiritual life.

You may ask who are qualified to practice these spiritual disciplines. Actually, practicing spiritual disciplines is not difficult. We do not need to have theological accomplishment to do it. Even if you are a new believer, you can practice them. Only if you are thirsty for God, you are qualified, as the psalmist said, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (Psalm 42:1-2)

Brothers and sisters, hoping that we are all thirsty for God and willing to practice the spiritual disciplines, so that our spiritual life will keep on growing and our relationship with God will become deeper and deeper. The church is now planning how to help all of you practice the spiritual disciplines. Hoping you will pray for this program and pray for preparing yourself to participate. Let us practice the spiritual disciplines in action!

English Translation: Eve Kwan



## Mandarin Congregation: "Abundance Fellowship"

Leo Lai

Mandarin Advisory Committee Member

Thank God for leading us to the "Abundance Fellowship", which is to cultivate brothers and sisters to grow in spiritual life. We have gatherings on every second and fourth Saturday at 7pm - 9pm. Every time there is a different topic to share. Sometimes our fellowship is also responsible for church activities such as Missionary Night, Mid-Autumn Festival, Chinese New Year celebration.

Thank God for being with us. We get together to praise Him, share God's grace in our lives and experience God's support and help when we are weak. We are grateful that brothers and sisters, who are very busy, still actively participate in each gathering. We also thank God for providing members for this fellowship. Most participants are young families from China, and the average attendance is about 12. Those who believe in Christ are actively involved in the Sunday service. May God continue to bless this fellowship and use it as a base for evangelism.

Glorify the name of God and may His presence be with us.

### Members' Sharing:

**Terry & Jocelyn** : When we first believed in God, our family was indeed showered by the graces of the Lord. Through prayers and pleadings, some of our worries were resolved with a better outcome, so we were grateful and used these good outcomes as our witnesses for Christ. Through constant participation in Sunday Service and Fellowship, we understand more about the biblical truth and are more objective towards our relationship with God and our Fellowship Family. We came to realise that God does not solely rely on miracles to lead people into Christ, but with love. In the Fellowship, brothers and sisters study God's Word together, share their lives, encourage each other, and unite as one in Christ. More strengthen to our faith is the love and self-sacrifice of some brothers and sisters, their humility and obedience. Especially if we account our recent Fellowship Bible Study on the "Apostles' Creed" and "How to Serve", we had an epiphany that the true abundant Christian life is not the well-adored "Prosperity Gospel", but to bear the Cross and follow Lord Jesus. Therefore, we vow to listen to God's Word, to be the salt and the light of the earth, to preach the gospel to all nations. May all glory be to our Father in Heaven.

**Nancy Xie** : I have joined the Abundance Fellowship for more than three years. As a Fellowship, not only do we strive for a closer relationship with God, but also to build a rapport between our fellow members. We share, we pray, we care and we serve each other, and unwittingly

become a big family in God's love. The form of fellowship gathering is diverse and lively, with the main contents comprising of worship, bible study, sharing and prayer requests. Over the years, we have also tried to have dinners, gourmet cooking lessons, parenting talks, gospel video viewings and lectures on distinguishing cults etc.

In a fellowship filled with God's blessings, we have welcomed many newcomers and non-believers. Thank God for leading new brothers and sisters into Christianity and to be baptised every year. We have great testimonies on one believing and motivating their whole household into Christ; sharing of the blessings of the Lord; the experience of setbacks, questioning of faith then obediently surrendered back into Christ and moved by His promises. We share each other's appreciation, joy, frustration and predicament. Through prayers and gratitude, we experience God's mightiness and great love. Please make our lives more abundant, Lord.



**Winnie Cheng** : After immigrating to Australia three years ago, I was introduced to HCAC by a friend. I took part in the Abundance Fellowship. In our fellowship, we sing hymns together, the melodious music allows us to sink into the harmonious and loving atmosphere. We study the Bible together, under the leadership and guidance of our Pastor, we get to know the Bible and our Father in Heaven.

The most touching part of the fellowship is our sharing and prayer session. Out in the world, everyone is a separate individual; however, as a fellowship, we are a small family, all members care for each other, we share about the happiness in our works and lives, and pray upon each other's sorrows and fears. We are one in God and the children of Christ. A stream of warmth flows through my heart whenever I know I am being cared for and attended to. As a fellowship, the relationship between members and God is getting closer and closer. Everyone has been greatly benefited and filled with thankfulness.

Children can also get together during fellowship meeting, and learn how to get along and grow up together. My daughter is very active and delighted to participate in every fellowship meeting, she must really like the atmosphere there.

English Translation (Members' Sharing): Iris Chau

Before April 2017, the HCAC Library had been operated in the form of a mobile cart which was opened for a short while after scheduled Sunday Services and manned by librarians who were on roster. In 2016, the Education Department decided to improve the Library services as follows:

- Venue: a room in the Church Building to be designated as the Library;
- Facilities: to have fixed book shelves; to provide table, chairs and artificial plants;
- Opening hours: to extend the opening hours;
- Collection: to increase library collection.

The library service had been suspended since April 2017 so as to facilitate the Library Team to arrange removal of collections to the new venue, stocktaking, re-cataloguing, purchasing and installing of new furniture items, revising Library Regulations and Loan Register, and re-shelving of books. Thank God that, with the Library Team's effort and the help and support by many brothers and sisters (Note 1), the new Library was re-opened on 29 October 2017. On that day, an opening ceremony officiated by Rev. Li was held with an attendance of some 30 persons.

The ceremony was started with a hymn "Praise Lord, Hallelujah" as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. Rev. Li shared how



he started reading and what he got from reading. He said that he loved reading when he was young and he had started reading Christianity books after his conversion. According to Rev. Li, through reading he can be more concentrated and wiser; he can also communicate with authors in thinking. Growing in spiritual life and biblical knowledge are the added benefits of reading Christianity books. Therefore, he encouraged members to nurture and discipline the habit of reading.

Apart from transferring all existing items from the mobile cart to the fixed shelves, the Library Team has arranged to add some books (including those donated by a sister recently) to the library collection and set up the new Reference Section (not for loan, for use in the Church only). At present, there are over 810 items in the library collection (including 430 books and 380 discs).

The new library is being operated in self-service mode, with simplified borrowing, renewal and returning procedures. The opening hours of the Library have been extended so that users may use library services when the Church Building is opened (Note 2). As the new library is not manned during its opening hours, users may contact the Library Team by phone (Note 3) for assistance if needed. Users are advised to read the revised Library Regulations which has been displayed prominently in the Library's Notice Board. The following two regulations concerning revised loan period and overdue penalty are highlighted for attention:

- The loan period is one month per item.
- The overdue penalty is \$2 per item per week (or part of a week).

At present, the English and Mandarin Congregations have their own small libraries or collections. It has been suggested to integrate these two libraries into the HCAC Library so that the latter can serve all three congregations under the uniformed management of single ministry.

The HCAC Library welcome donations of library materials by members of HCAC or external bodies. Interested parties may contact our Library Team direct.

*Note 1: Thanks to the Deacon Board and some church members for financing the new furniture items in the new Library; and to those church members who helped in one way or another e.g. delivery, purchasing & installing etc.*

*Note 2: The new opening hours are: 10am-2pm every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; 11:30am-1pm from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays.*

*Note 3: Please refer to the Sunday Service Bulletin.*

English Translation: Sherwood Kwok

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## Joy of Music, Joy of Dance – – Shirley Liu

There is a modern sport called "Triathlon", triathletes must know how to cycle, swim and run in short-range marathons. Shirley Liu of the Cantonese Congregation is said to be a "tri-performer" -- conversant in Chinese Dancing, Cantonese Operatic and Chinese Music.

You might not know her by her Chinese name, because, here in HCAC, we usually refer her as Shirley. Shirley is a

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## Sherwood Kwok

member of Zechariah Group, and is currently the Chinese Dance instructor of the Women's Outreach Ministry.

Shirley came from Guangzhou, China. During primary school, she was being chosen into an Elite Youth Program for her dancing, specialising in Cultural and Classical Dancing. Shirley was brought up by her

grandmother, who loves Cantonese Opera which, in a time of scarce supplies, was their best entertainment. Always accompanying her grandmother to watch Cantonese Opera, Shirley was acquainted with Cantonese Opera and became immersed in this art. After graduating from university, Shirley took part in a Cantonese Opera competition organised by her working unit and won the third place. Shirley subsequently started learning GuZheng (Chinese Zither) so that she can play along while singing Cantonese Operatic.



After migrating to Australia in 1999, she was first introduced to HCAC through her boss, Susanna; and through her daughter's participation in the Kid's Church program organised by CABC, Shirley was invited by some parents to attend their cell group. Although Shirley grew up in an atheist country, deep down, she believed there is a God, a God who is yet to be known. During Shirley's time in CABC, she came across two testimonials from the monthly Chinese Christian Mission magazine. The first passage was about the joy of believing in Christ. She was deeply moved because, at that time, she was longing for a joyful heart. The other passage was on confidence, the leap of faith. Shirley later had her conviction in a CABC evangelistic event.

One time, the "Blessed Dip Gospel Choir" was performing a Cantonese Gospel Opera at CABC. Out of curiosity, Shirley especially took a leave of absence to attend the show. After the conference, she volunteered to join this ministry. Up until October 2017, Shirley was performing in Cantonese Opera, Chinese Music and Chinese Dance; and was appointed as an instructor in the Choir.

In 2008, Shirley returned to HCAC with her family and joined a cell group. Due to Shirley's commitment to work, she was forced to let go of her interests. Until 5 years ago, when her daughter started to take Chinese Dance classes, Shirley was being asked to become the teaching assistant for her daughter's class. In the same year, Mrs. Marianna Li invited Shirley to serve as the volunteer Chinese Dance teacher in HCAC's Women Outreach Ministry. For the past 4 years, Shirley has been conducting Chinese Dancing classes at our church every Wednesday morning. In addition to teaching Chinese Dance with traditional Chinese music, Shirley also choreographed Chinese dances using Christian hymns. Shirley loves Chinese Dance, she joyfully serves in this ministry and is surrounded by devoted students. The Chinese Dancing team has been performing in nursing homes, elderly fellowships and evangelical events over the past 2 years.

Shirley has been in HCAC for almost a decade, and in her eyes, HCAC has always been a church full of love and acceptance. In response to God's love, Shirley hopes she will be able to use her gift in Chinese dancing and music to serve more. In October, Shirley resigned from her post in "Blessed Dip Gospel Choir" and eagerly agreed to serve in HCAC's newly envisioned Cantonese Gospel Opera Ministry. Shirley is anticipating a gathering of Cantonese Operatic enthusiasts, believers and non-believers, to learn the music and seek the Lord.

May God continue to use Shirley, to utilise her gifts in serving the church, to become a useful conduit for Christ and a witness of God's grace.

English Translation: Iris Chau

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## How I believe in Jesus

When I was young, I lived in a place next to a Christian school. At that time, I went to that school to attend Sunday service with my family every week. It was because after the service, the school would give us some foods. This was the first time for me to know about Christianity, and then I listened to God's words for a few years.

After that, I went to another "church" which was a primitive hut. A pastor preached there and taught children how to sing hymns and how to read and write. There was Holy Communion on every Sunday. As there were not so many believers, everyone who attended the service could join the Holy Communion. What to eat was biscuit which could fill up the stomach and to drink "Ribena". It was very pragmatic.

As my family tradition, there were some ancestral and spirit tablets at my home. When my siblings grew up,

they removed these objects one by one. Maybe it was because we all did not believe in them. I have 9 siblings and we have very good relationship. Although we have different points of view about religions, we can understand and accept each other. After everyone grew up, my younger brother believed in Jesus. My mother had no objection and I was indifferent to this, but I thought, "How come he believes in this!"



Mike Ng

Probably because my younger brother has believed in Jesus, I have an opportunity to meet Christ again after so many years. I had a good friend in primary school. He was very caring and considerate. After getting a job, I moved out from my family. He still visited them from time to time. The last time I saw him, he was studying at

a Bible Seminary. At that time, I did not know the difference between believing Jesus in Christianity and in Catholicism. I wondered why he wanted to be a priest. I thought it would be better for earning a living if he were a Buddhist monk. As time passed by, he was faded out of my life.....

One day, my younger brother who believes in Jesus told me that he found an article in a Christian website which was written by my friend. Therefore, I tried to find him. But it was not that easy. Eventually, I contacted him and it was 14 years ago. I knew that this was God's will. He gave me an opportunity to come closer to Him. My friend has become a pastor. At that time, I worked as a manager in a company. We often dined together with some other friends. When I encountered some difficulties, he would pray for me. I thought it was not a big deal, but when I often listened to his prayers, I started to feel annoyed. However, during this period, what he did for me had unconsciously changed some important concepts in my mind. That meant I had taken an important step forward in the relationship with God. From then on, I was not so resistant to Christianity. As my friends did not feel easy about having meals and chat with a pastor, I left Christ again. Until the end of 2014, I decided to go to Australia.

God used 1000 days to make me know Him. After migrating to Australia, I was busy at renovating my home. One day, Daniel Li and Patraine Li, who were the leaders of the Hosea Group, came to my home. They invited me to experience the church fellowship in Australia and treated me to a buffet. I really wanted to have a chance to give them a treat back.

My wife has gone to church for a few years. One day, I asked her to go with me and this was the fourth time in my life that I met Jesus. In Australia, I have no business dinners and frustration as in Hong Kong. Therefore, I can know Jesus earnestly whom I always passed by in my life.

Thank God that I come to know the truth of the Bible gradually. I do not care those who had used me and cheated me before and I hate them no more. I am grateful that over the past many years, God gave me opportunities to know Him and to come closer to Him. He never forsakes me. From now on, I will love my Lord and all the people around me. I will start a new life! Thank you Lord!

English Translation: Eve Kwan

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## “Build Yourselves Up In Your Faith” – An Exegetical Approach to Quiet Time

“Build yourselves up in your most holy faith” (Jude 20)

The busier we are, the more we need bible study and quiet time to let God's Word nourish our spiritual life and give us directions.



Since January 2014, Alliance Bible Seminary has been launching a free app called “Build yourselves up in your faith” which is Chinese devotional material in an exegetical approach. Up to now, there are over 100,000 downloads. This app provides an article for daily devotions every day so that believers can spend time with God by this spiritual bread. The app includes the following features:

- Audio Reading: It provides Cantonese and Putonghua recording for each article.
- Search by Topics: Articles can be searched by topics which helps individual and group bible study.
- Article Archive: All the past articles can be accessed instantly on demand.
- Daily Devotion Reminder: Online alarm clock can be set to remind you of devotional time every day.

Every year, all the devotional articles are written by the biblical scholars of the seminary. With different

perspectives on the original languages of the bible, historical background, geography or archaeology, some fallacies and difficult bible verses can be explained or interpreted. At the same time, better understanding and overall impression of the whole book can be achieved. During the devotional time, believers can understand the original meaning of the bible verses first and then meditate on questions provided and have self-reflection on the relationship with God.

Brothers and sisters of Hills Christian Alliance Church are encouraged to use this “Build yourselves up in your faith” app (or any other devotional apps) as the daily devotional material to build up life in God's Word. Hoping that this app can encourage and remind believers to spend time with God every day, a spiritual life with a strong and deep foundation can be built.

**Source:** “Build yourselves up in your faith” ministry page of the website of Hong Kong Alliance Bible Seminary.

### HCAC Users' Sharing

**Connie:** For Christians, God's Word is as important as air. It is not easy for us to live in the moment but not to be of the world. Thank God that He gave all His followers the most precious and powerful words – God's Word. Therefore, daily bread is the main source for Christian to maintain a healthy spiritual life. Usually, I like to have quiet time in the morning so that I can have strength to

face the challenges of the day. Before I sleep, I read the Bible and give thanks to God with a prayer to end my day. Recently, I have started to use the “Build yourselves up in your faith” app as my devotional material. The app would remind me to have quiet time with God every morning. What I like the most is that the sharing articles of different books of the bible are written by different scholars so that I can learn from different perspectives. The questions provided by them also guide me to reflect on myself and gain better insights into God’s Word. In order to live out my faith, I would try my best to apply what I have learnt in my daily life.

**Lina:** A few years ago, my sister-in-law introduced me to use the “Build yourselves up in your faith” app as my devotional material to spend time with God every day. There is audio reading supporting Cantonese and Mandarin. Also, through different perspectives on the original languages of the bible, historical background, geography, etc. with colloquial expressions of the difficult bible verses, I can understand the original meaning first, and then by the reflection questions, I can have self-reflection on the relationship with God. I think

this app is useful so I have recommended my friends to use it as well.

**Ruth:** In 1980’s, some of the Christians might use the “Streams in the Desert” as their devotional material. In 1990’s, “My Daily Walk with the Lord” was used. In the recent years, online website and mobile apps are used to read devotional articles. They have only one purpose which is to build up a closer relationship with God and a stronger spiritual life. I have tried to use the “Build yourselves up in your faith” app as my devotional material. Through the detailed analysis of the biblical figures and issues, not only can I clearly understand the contents of the books that I read, but also see God’s abundant promises. God’s mercy, patience, wrath and discipline to Israelites in the past show that God is love. His love for us will never change. Whatever the devotional materials you used before, I encourage you to try this “Build yourselves up in your faith” app to build up a deeper and stronger spiritual life.

English Translation: Eve Kwan

## Knowing HCAC (8) : Outreach and Sports Ministries

Sherwood Kwok

While the literal meaning of the word “outreach” is “to reach out”, its real meaning should be “to bring people to God and let them know Him, through reaching out and caring”. This should also be the objective of the Outreach Ministry. The coverage of “reaching out” is so wide that it covers not only local but also overseas gospel/caring ministries. In this and the next Issues, we shall give a brief introduction to HCAC’s Outreach & Sports ministries, and Evangelistic & Missionary ministries respectively.

The congregations and departments of HCAC currently running outreach and sports-related ministries include:

Congregation	Department	Ministry/Program	Responsible Person
Cantonese	Evangelism	Share Light Ministry	Executive Committee
		Table Tennis Ministry	Deacon James Wong, Tommy Mak, Eric Li
	Women’s Ministry	Chinese Dancing Class	Mrs. Marianna Li
English		Soccer Ministry	Deacon Kenneth Chiu
Mandarin		Abundance Fellowship (please refer to another article in this Issue)	Leo Lai
HCAC	Cell Ministry	Cell gatherings/activities	Zone/Cell leaders

### Share Light Ministry

Currently, the Share Light Ministry is an outreach ministry under the Evangelism Department of HCAC Deacon Board. It was established in October 2013 with the purpose of preaching the good news of Jesus Christ to the Chinese community through different activities, courses, classes and community services. The Ministry is managed by an Executive Committee, of which the membership includes : Cal Chan (Chairman), Deacon Anita Chan (Evangelism Department), Joanne Cheung (Secretary), Jeanie Wong (Treasurer), Cecy Chan, Leona Leung, Mike Ng and Winnie Chan.

Over the past few years, the Ministry has organised a number of courses delivered by specialist speakers. During each class, Rev. Li would give a 10-minute gospel message.

In September 2015, the Ministry made a breakthrough in program time, i.e. shifting from day time to evening, in order to attract those working people. The second breakthrough was the evangelistic meeting “Sharing on Life Journeys” held on 22 November 2015. In the first half of 2016, the Ministry took a break for six months during which all activities except the Table Tennis

Ministry were suspended. The Ministry resumed its operations as from July 2016 with a few new committee members. In early this year, the Ministry organised a musical evangelistic meeting entitled "High Scores, Low Ambition" at the Pennant Hills Community Centre.

### **Table Tennis Ministry**

This ministry is a regular outreach program of the Share Light Ministry. It was established in March 2014 with the aims to spread gospel through messages and to enhance physical fitness and friendship through sports. The ministry meets at the Church Building at 7:45pm on every Thursday. Deacon James Wong, Tommy Mak and Eric Li are the liaison persons of this ministry.



### **Chinese Dancing Class**

This is an outreach program under the Women's Ministry aiming at attracting non-believers through dancing activities. Mrs. Marianna and Shirley Liu are the responsible person and dancing instructor of this class respectively. The class meets in the morning on every Wednesday. During the tea break in each meeting, Rev. Li would share a simple message with the attendees.

### **Soccer Ministry**

The HCAC Soccer Team, currently the only sports team under the English Congregation's outreach ministry, was established in 2010 aiming at using sports as means to outreach to the sport-loving non-Christians and strengthening bonding



through our fellowship and common interests. The manager and captain of the Team are Deacon Kenneth Chiu and Timothy Kwok respectively while team members include our church's young men as well as players from outside such as friends and classmates, of whom some are non-believers.

Every year the HCAC Soccer Team participates in the outdoor Premier League (from April to August) organised by In Christ Sports Ministry. The performance of the Team has improved over the past few years and they won the Championship in 2017 season for the first time. The young men and women of the English Congregation also play soccer games with the adults of the Cantonese Congregation around once a quarter. Friends and relatives of members who are non-believers are welcome to join these games.

### **Cell Group Gatherings/Activities**

The components of a cell group gathering are Welcome, Worship, Word and Work. The 4<sup>th</sup> W covers serving people (believers and non-believers) and caring the community. Over the past two years, certain cell groups have started to hold caring activities for our church's seniors and the communities.

There are different outreach ministries and programs in our church, but all with a common objective: to bring people to God and let them know Him. Brothers and sisters of HCAC can get in touch and build up relationship with non-believers through various outreach ministries, activities, programs, classes and sports. Thank God that we can take part in these ministries. Knowing God is a grace of God; taking part in His gospel ministries is a greater grace.

*Reference: HCAC 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet, various AGM Reports and data from individual ministry leaders.*