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2016 Church Theme: Renewing the mind, Revitalising the spirit

Sub-theme: Jan-Apr To know Jehovah; May-Aug: Remove old self, build up new self; Sep-Dec: To serve Jehovah

Hills Christian Alliance Church Newsletter

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Pastor's Sharing – 2016 Church Theme

Thank God for guiding, guarding and blessing our church which has grown up steadily over the past 15 years. A time span of 15 years is not short. The older our church grows, the greater crisis we are to face. Just like a believer who has been a Christian for a long time, he is prone to becoming inactive and having no energy. He might have kept himself at the same level and never grown up. According to his age in Christian faith, he should have become a teacher but he is still a worldly infant. To some believers who have served for a certain period of time, their services and attendances become routines; they have no feeling at all. Their Christian life might have become rigid, lacking vitality.

I recall that 15 years ago our church had a lot of children, who have now grown up to youths; the then teenagers have become adults; the then adults become middle-aged or even seniors. There is no doubt that the church as a whole is aging. Therefore, the church theme for this year is "renewing the mind; revitalizing the spirit". In order to make our church more youthful, we must strengthen our children ministry, youth ministry and young couple ministry.

For the church to attract more young people, our ministries, especially the worship, must be renewed continually. Young people easily tend to be impatient to traditional modes; they do not like churches which are conservative and resistant to change. Young people are inclined to criticize church by saying, "It is so as it was before. It is to be the same forever. Never change. Amen, Amen!" We must listen to the young people whilst keeping our principles, not conforming to the world freely. We should not polarise churches into two opposite classes: structured and unstructured. Simply speaking, the matured prefer structured and solemn worships; the youth prefer impromptu and free worships, especially the dynamic ones. The problem is: does a dynamic worship refer to one in which people raise hands and dance? John Stott, a renowned American pastor, once said that a living church should have the following four characteristics:

1. A church which learns God's Word attentively and seek to know Him with a strong desire.

2. A church in which people love one another, willing to serve others, care others' needs, and share with one another.
3. A church which worships God with joy and fear.
4. A church which is willing to testify and make efforts to spread the gospel.

To summarise, all the four characteristics are related to believers' inner life. In other words, whether a church is living depends on the believers' renewed inner life, not the visible pattern or performance of worship.

No matter how dynamic its pattern of worship is, a church has lost its vitality if the believers have become rigid in their spiritual life. In this year our church will focus on the renewed Christian life of believers, apart from changes in ministry patterns. Therefore, the sub-themes of the church for this year are:

1. To know Jehovah;
2. Remove old self, build up new self;
3. To serve Jehovah.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray together that:

1. May God raise up more young leaders, so that our church will be more youthful.
2. May God renew our spiritual life, so that our minds can be transformed and our church be revitalized.

Our church's Planning Day has been scheduled to be held on 13 June at the Church Building. Brothers and sisters please mark your diaries and join us to think about our way ahead and renew our ministries.



Author: Rev Almon Li English Translation: Sherwood Kwok

Testimony and Witness of Calling

All in all, only thing I can testify about my life is that my Lord has been continually gracious to bless me with confirmations about the choices I made to draw near to Him. With His grace, I also give thanks to my Lord for His providence and guidance to make those choices.

I was born in a Christian family with a special devout grandmother who demonstrated to us what a prayerful life should look like. I believe I'm here today because of her ceaseless prayers. Although in my teens and young adult years, I wandered far from the faith because I wanted to find the happiness in this life without God. I did not want anything to do with religion or God because I was a proud and a little talented musician.

I had my successes and was going to the top of my career to be famous by pursuing the happiness in this life. I was enjoying all the pleasures that the world could offer but at the same time I was completely ruining myself spiritually. From one thing to another, the life was all going downhill rapidly ; my career, place, joy and hope for the future, worldly future were all stripped off me. At my lowest point of life, I had to get married because my life was in a mess. I almost gave up all, even my life; I did not care about anything. First a few years of my marriage was a wreck because I thought everything was wrong.

Sometime later, my brother's church was looking for a choir director and accidentally I was offered the position which was leading about 100 people in choir worship. Now the Lord had surrounded me with such Godly people to make me see who He was. In one of the worship services, I was awoken spiritually and had a personal encounter with the Lord. It was Psalm 139 which spoke clearly to me that I could not hide from the Lord any more.

Where shall I go from your Spirit or where shall I
flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my
bed in Sheol, you are there!

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the
uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your
right hand shall hold me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the
light about me be night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is
bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

From there on, everything changed. I had a different purpose, the greater purpose in life; it was to preach the good news to those who were still lost. I was truly born again with the baptism of the spirit. When I was found by the Lord, I came to know that the Lord was working in my wife's life as well



because she was an atheist from Buddhist family when she got married. The miracle was that I was not aware of this at all but the Lord had all this planned as how it was in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

I was certain that the Lord was confirming that our path and choices were not mistakes or wrong ones because they were all planned by the Lord from the beginning. Since then I have been called to follow my Lord in whatever I do and am. I have been called to follow the steps of my Lord whether I serve as a pastor or a cleaner. We all have been called to love the Lord and serve the people.

For this very reason we decided to come back to Australia to equip ourselves by studying in Sydney Missionary & Bible College and Morling College to complete my M.Div. We had strong conviction that we were to preach to the lost people as it was clearly shown to us when we were found by the Lord. Initially we were looking into the mission in China with OMF but the Lord did not allow this but led us to our local Chinese Church, where we have been members and serving His people. I believe this was to train us for the future that the Lord may call us to be anywhere in the world to serve His people and to find the lost to come to the Lord.

Ever since then, the Lord's grace has been extended for us to witness my parents-in-law who used to be devout Buddhists to come to know the Christ and serve him with all. Along with them, so many others also have come to Christ and believe in him. I believe these have been a series of confirmations that the Lord has provided us so that we may know the grace of our Lord and our faith maybe stronger to carry on the good work.

This is why I am here to continue the good work... "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Amen.

Author: Pastor Fredrick Song English Translation: Janet Yu

Celebrating HCAC 15th Anniversary

Thank God for establishing and leading the church in the past fifteen years. To commemorate God's grace, the church had held a series of activities in October 2015, namely, Revival Meeting (3 October), Evangelistic Sunday Service (4 October), Thanksgiving Dinner (4 October) and publication of 15th Anniversary Booklet. Appended below are the reports and sharing on individual activities; more information about the Church Camp (24 - 26 January) and photos on the 15th Anniversary activities are also available from the church website.



Revival Meeting (Angelina Tulio)

The Revival Meeting, with the theme "To rekindle passion for God, to be committed to Christ", was held on 3 October 2015. The speaker was Rev. Joseph Thiem, Senior Pastor of Lidcombe Anglican Church, who was and will also be the speaker of our church camps held in 2003, 2013 and next year 2016.

Rev. Thiem mentioned that even for a believer with a Christian life of fifteen years, his spiritual life might not have grown. It is because when a believer only attends to the busy life of work, family and church service but not with the heart to love the Lord, he may feel burnt out, disappointed, helpless and even grieving without joy in his service. It is possible that the believer has indeed never experienced the burning fire of God's love, then how can he rekindle his passion for God! Thank God, the truth was revealed through Rev Thiem in the Revival Meeting. We were called to wake up. It is the beginning of spiritual revival for believers.

The key point is that no matter how we have strived to serve, it will become a burden sooner or later; and consequently burnt out, more seriously, feeling hurt and lack of joy. God knows this. Quoting Revelation 2:4-5, Rev. Thiem told us that even we work hard we would still be condemned by God because we have gradually forsaken the love of God we had at first. Therefore our hard work becomes a burden without the joy of service. These verses remind us to repent, to search the love of God at first again; lest the testimony will be missing. Only God loves us without conditions. We have to return to the beginning of God's loving us that we can experience the real love. When we taste the love of the Lord who sacrificed His life for us, we also want to respond to God's love to us (1 John 3:16). It is only with the love of Christ that our service will bring us joy instead of being burnt out or disappointment.

Time flies like water flows quickly. Looking at the mirror, I casually found a few strands of gray hairs. Am I really old? Knowing that our church has also passed 15 years, has it been grown up spiritually? Or is it still worldly?

In order that we will remember and hold our original belief firmly -- love The Lord and spread the gospel -- God has particularly sent Rev. Ken Graham, President of CMA Australia, to bring a message to us at the Combined Sunday Service. The title of his sermon was "The Heartbeat of the Mission", meaning that we should have a burning heart to spread the gospel.

The gathering began with a worship led by the youth, followed by the sermon which was very touching. Two young persons were willing to believe in Jesus and a sister reconfirmed her faith in Jesus.

Lastly, I sincerely share the following scripture to encourage everyone: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me -- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." (Acts 20:24)

Evangelistic Sunday Service (Cal Chan)



15th Anniversary Booklet (Sherwood Kwok)



It was the unanimous decision of the Deacon Board of current term to publish the 15th Anniversary Booklet in order to witness again the great love and works of our Heavenly Father throughout the past years, as the 10th Anniversary Booklet did. Therefore, the theme of this Booklet is "Count our Lord's Blessings, Love Him over Everything".

Thanks to all pastors and leaders for their sharing in the Booklet on God's blessings in the development of the Cantonese, English and Mandarin Congregations and all ministries; to the CMA and 3C Centre for their congratulation messages. We are grateful to the Church Administration for their support in providing relevant information as well as photos on church activities. All these make the Booklet more valuable as a historical record.

We were entrusted with the task of organising the publication of the Booklet. This Booklet could have not been published as scheduled without God's grace and church members' participation. Brothers and sisters from our three congregation participated in this ministry in various ways such as editing, translation, proof-reading, design, distribution etc.

The Booklet was first distributed to all guests and participants in the Thanksgiving Dinner held on 4 October and then on the following two Sundays. The Booklet had been posted to certain persons (e.g. ex-pastors, ex-deacons) and organisations (e.g. CMA Australia) as compliments. It is also accessible from the church's webpage. Any member who has not yet obtained a copy of the Booklet, please contact Ruth, Church Administrator.

Praise God we had a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving Dinner held on Oct. 4 at Parramatta League Club. With a total of 23 tables of Chinese banquet, all brothers and sisters enjoyed the fellowship, laughter and fun from the programs.

The function started at 6 pm and the very first program was a Chinese dance "PRAISE THE LORD" performed by our church's Chinese dance class, followed by a cake cutting and toasting ceremony. The whole congregation sang the Birthday song to celebrate the 15th anniversary of HCAC.

After the worship, a video featuring the developments and growth of our Church over the past 15 years was presented. Rev. Ken Graham, CMA Chairman, who came all the way from Canberra to join us, delivered a speech which was very encouraging. We learned that GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME.

During our dining time, brothers and sisters, while enjoying the food and birthday cake, moved around the venue to take pictures and cheer with one another to celebrate this special happy moment. After dinner, another highlight of the evening was the singing presentation by each of the Cantonese, Mandarin and English Congregations.

We closed our evening by singing "GIVE THANKS" all together and everyone took home with a souvenir mug, which was designed specially by Jonathan Li. Each family was also given a copy of the HCAC 15th Anniversary Booklet.

Last but not the least, let's give a big hand to our Organizing Committee: Rev. Li and Mrs. Li, Cal & Anita, Paul & Lina, Hong & Ling, James & Simmy, Leo & Nicky, Carter & Elaine, and Wendy. We look forward to having our 20th Anniversary Celebrations in five years' time.



Thanksgiving Dinner (Wendy Wong)



English Translation: Janet Yu, Sherwood Kwok

Major Events in Brief



English Pastor

Having served in the HCAC for more than six years, Pastor Tony and Margie officially retired with effect from November 2015. The English Congregation organised a special farewell gathering for them on 25 October while the Deacon Board hosted a farewell dinner on 1 November. Mr. Fredrick Song, who is a Korean, succeeded the English Pastorship. His Induction Service was officiated by Rev. Li during the combined Sunday Service on 1 November 2015. As part of the ceremony, Tony handed a "baton", which symbolises the duties and responsibilities of the English Pastor, to Frederick. Tony and Margie also prayed for Fredrick and his wife respectively. May God bless Tony and Margie after their retirement; may God also bless Fredrick and use him greatly.



27th Baptism

The 27th Baptism Service was held on 7 November 2015 at Epping Gospel Chapel. A total of 18 brothers and sisters, as named below, were baptised: Leona Leung, Linda Lin, Nick Wang, Tom Li (Cantonese Congregation), Ken Zhu, Adele Chen, Alina Chen (Mandarin Congregation), Oliver Kucharzewski, Gabriel Cheung, Edmond Gao, Mark Lam, Christobel Hui, Annabel Hui, Katrina Siu, ITeng Tong, Shelyne Lee, Charmaine Lee, Zeke Yu (English Congregation).

Share Light Ministry – We all have a role in evangelism

Share Light Ministry is our church's outreaching centre established two years ago. We thank all the committee members and volunteers for their efforts and contributions in the past years.

In September 2015, the Ministry made a breakthrough in program time, i.e. we shifted the day time activities to the evening in order to attract those working people. The pilot program was the free-of-charge community-based talk "Strategies for Health", which covered various aspects from personal appearance to spiritual health. The program was held in three evenings, with two speakers each. Apart from the traditional promotional methods, this time we had arranged several volunteers to distribute leaflets at certain Chinese hot spots. We have found that the most effective means is "personal invitation". It would be most useful if you can personally promote our activities to your friends.

The second breakthrough was the evangelistic gathering "Sharing on Life Journeys" held on 22 November 2015. Everyone has his own life journey and choices; but it is

common for all people that the journeys will come to an end. Our guests shared how they chose a "joyful stop" to get off. Thanks for the kindness and time of the guests, namely, (moderator) Mr. Cecil Lo from Media Evangelism Australia, (speakers) Dr. Yiu Nam Chan, Mr. William Shiu, Pastor Alfred Yau.



We all have a role in evangelism. Though not too many brothers and sisters are leaders or eloquent in speaking, God will use believers who have different talents. As long as we are willing and courageous, with a praying heart, to invite our friends or participate in various tasks such

as venue setting, packing up by so doing, we can offer concrete support to evangelism and will result in wonderful outcome.

The Ministry would take a break in the coming six months, after which we hope that more brothers and sisters are willing to join the committee to plan the future directions and development.

Author: Ruth Yu English Translation: Sherwood Kwok

How many decades in a life?

2015 is the year to commemorate the church's 15th anniversary. It is also worth our family's memory because this is the 10th anniversary of our second migration to Australia.

Similar to the other Hong Kong migrant families, we first moved to Australia because of the 1997 issue; but then returned to Hong Kong. When our son entered secondary school, his education prospect was considered. Together with other factors like my husband's work pressure, we then decided to move back to Sydney again.

My husband and I were already over forty years at that time. By all means we were stable in all aspects in Hong Kong. The decision to re-migrate was indeed to leave our comfort zone and inevitably we felt uneasy.

God encouraged me with His words "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

Arriving Sydney we had to seek accommodation, job, school, church... Of course there were moments of trouble and anxiety but God led us step by step.

To become settled in a new place, work and stable income are very important. My husband, Ronald, was a mathematics teacher. At first he did not even think of keeping on the same

career; because an overseas teacher was required to sit a very difficult English test. He was not confident. Therefore he planned to change career to the field of IT. However, no matter how many job applications were sent, there was no response. Later it was discovered that his degree was achieved in Canada, which is an English speaking country. Therefore he could be exempted from the English test. How miraculous was God's provision!



Our son, Kelvin, is an autistic. We expected the large land of Australia and the open and accepting community would be more helpful to him. Nevertheless, could he adapt to a strange environment? We had no idea but to rely on God's grace. It was already a challenge just to fly nine hours from Hong Kong to Sydney. Normally he could not sit still. How could he spend the long nine hours in the tiny plane seat? Of course we had tried to explain to him before. But due to his limited verbal and comprehensive ability, how much could he understand? It was also unknown how his mood would react. All matters are unknown. But relying on God's grace and mercy, Kelvin had been calm throughout the whole trip, better than what we expected.

Kelvin is already 22 now. He is receiving the service at the government's special day care centre four days a week. Sometimes we feel quite exhausted to take care of him. On the other hand, I feel we can have at least 70% normal family life; such as riding on public transport, dining out, shopping in supermarket, holiday in Hong Kong, and also the weekly Sunday service. (Of course we have to thank the acceptance of Rev. Li, brothers and sisters.) Compared with other families having handicapped members, we are already much more fortunate.

Our elder son, Jonathon, was 13 when he arrived in Australia. He was then at the stage of puberty and his character tended to be introvert and shy. He had experienced quite a long period of adaptation while feeling lost, lack of confidence, depressed and so on. Yet God's grace was abundant. Now he

has already graduated from university and becomes more positive and optimistic. As his parents we do not have any specific prescriptions but only claim this is the work of Holy Spirit to change him, to shape him, and to revive his mind.

"How many decades in a life?" This statement, apart from being a script in a TV drama, should also be our own reflection. The bible teaches us to count our days so as to receive a wise heart. In the past ten years our family has experienced much God's grace. Deeply feeling my own unworthiness, I pledge we are not only being blessed but become others' blessing; so as not to fall short of God's grace to our family.

Author: Sylvia Li English Translation: Janet Yu

Dubbo Missionary Sharing

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Luke 10:2)



Recalling the missionary trip to Dubbo jointly held by the church and CCMA (Chinese Christian Mission Australia) from 12 to 15 June 2015, it provided me an alternative experience and impression on missionary work. I could even feel more deeply the impotence and insignificance of man. God's wonderful work and kindness are like what is said in Psalm 8:4 *"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, the son of man that you care for them?"*

Apparently all missionary work concerns reaching out to those countries with comparatively less Christians. By means of living contact, service and gospel sharing, more people can receive the salvation. However, the missionary trip this time was in local Australia. The purpose was to let brothers and sisters in local Chinese churches reach and share the gospel with those Chinese living far away from metro area and never heard of it; so as to reap them. Dubbo is one of the 'not yet lands'. This was the first time that Anita and I followed Tim of CCMA here. We did not know what we could do. We could only do whatever we could according to our gifts. Tim had visited the Chinese restaurant owners in this place several times before. Therefore he led us to different restaurants to introduce us to them.

Most Chinese were operating small business or service industries. All of them were hard working to establish their families and to raise the next generation. This was very normal and common situation. Whilst meeting different families, we could hear their stories. In their living they had difficulties, worries and helplessness. They could not fulfil themselves spiritually and there were also family problems.

Even there were Chinese Christians, they had no Chinese church or fellowship to attend. Yet how can they live a Christian life if they have not heard the word? We could strongly feel what 'the lost sheep' was like.

Thank God. His people are around anywhere. One of the families testified that they did not have car, but for going to church every Sunday they had booked a taxi to serve them a return trip weekly. In fact, they could only attend English service, no interpretation. Though they could not understand, they used their heart and spirit to faithfully feel the joy of worship. Their pure heart brought me much reflection. Today I can choose different Chinese churches in Sydney; but do I fill with gratefulness and passion in my heart? All these do not come naturally... I thought I could bring them some advantages; but in fact their life brought me blessing.

Within these few days though I could not do much I really felt the joy of working with the Lord. He led us reach different people, allowed us to see His miraculous acts. Empty we went but in full we returned. All those we met had sincerely received us. The love they gave was more than what we had offered. Back home I still felt owing. I hope I can be there again in the near future to share with them the gospel that God entrusted to me. I also hope more brothers and sisters can come along so as to please and glorify our God!



"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Author: Connie Or English Translation: Janet Yu