



路德會聖靈堂



2016 (July - December)

NEWSLETTER

通訊

2016 (7月 - 12月)

Words from the Pastor

By: Rev. Shiu Ming Lau, Senior Pastor

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen

I enjoy reading life stories, especially from those who were going through the valley of death and testified how God strengthened them with His mercy and care. I also like hearing real stories, which remind us that life is so fragile and weak, but by relying on God, we are running toward our bright future. Hope is still in our life.

This is one of the purposes of our newsletter. Whenever you read this newsletter, you will hear the stories of our pastoral staff and members of the church. You will also know the update news about the ministries. There are a lot of changes in the church. God has been blessing His church and guiding us forward to the direction where He wants us to go. You will also read some articles that will edify your knowledge of God and strengthen your faith. If God is touching your life, next time you may share your stories with us and your insight of faith through this newsletter. I am looking forward to reading your sharing in the near future.

I thank God we had a wonderful Church Planning assembly in September. We came up with a theme for 2017, tentatively titled: "Building – Family building, team building, and kingdom building". Let's come together to build the house of God, so that we will accomplish the Great Commission.

God has given us a wonderful and faithful pastoral team. He also raised a lot of lay leaders to work with us. I expect more to join us in the coming days. How about you? If you have any suggestions, visions, or insights about the church, don't hesitate to contact us. We are here to listen and talk to you. Keep us in your prayer and let's rejoice in the grace of God, Amen!

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith..." (Hebrew 12:1-2a)

牧者的話

劉少銘牧師 (主任牧師)

願恩惠, 憐憫, 平安, 從父神, 並主耶穌和聖靈歸予你們, 阿們!

我喜歡閱讀生平故事, 特別是那些行過死蔭幽谷的人, 他們見證上帝如何用祂的憐憫和看顧堅固他們。我也愛讀真人故事, 這些故事提醒我們生命是如斯脆弱和無助, 但依靠上帝, 我們仍能在光明的路上持行。盼望仍顯在我們身上這是雙月刊出版其中一個目的。無論何時, 當你閱讀這雙月刊, 你會聽到關於我們教牧同工和很多教友的故事。你會知道教會事工新近況。教會有很多轉變。上帝一直眷顧保守教會, 也帶領我們朝祂的方向行。同時, 當你讀這雙月刊時, 你會透過一些文章, 學習對神新的認識, 對信仰有所啓發。若果上帝觸摸你的心, 下次在雙月刊中, 你可以與我們分享你的故事, 也可以分享你在信仰的想法和體會。我期望很快閱讀到你的分享。

我感謝上帝, 讓我們在九月份有一個很好的教會計劃委員會會議。我們已定好 2017 年教會主題方向, 這教會主題暫定為「一起建立 - 建立家庭, 建立團隊, 建立國度」讓我們齊心建神家, 使我們實踐祂的大使命。

上帝給我們很好的教牧團隊。祂也向興起了很多平信徒領袖我們同工, 一起服事。我期望更多弟兄姊妹在來年與我們一起事奉。你可以參與嗎? 若你有甚麼建議, 有何異象, 或有關教會的亮光和想法, 不要遲疑, 請與我們聯絡! 我們會靜心聆聽, 和與你們討論。請為教會禱告, 讓我們在主的恩典中一同喜樂, 阿們!

「我們既有這許多的見證人, 如同雲彩圍著我們, 就當放下各樣的重擔, 脫去容易纏累我們的罪, 存心忍耐, 奔那擺在我們前頭的路程, 仰望為我們信心創始成終的耶穌...。」(希伯來書 12:1-2a)

Words from the Pastor

By: Rev. Christopher Ng, Associate Pastor

New Hills, New Hopes

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ and friends,

July marks the 1.5 year milestone of my new life since a car crash in March 2015. Since then, I've been involved in wholistic recovery (body, mind, and soul), while learning how to use a prosthetic leg and engaging still in part time ministry at church. The progress is continuing and I'd like to share the ups and downs, knowns and unknowns along the way.

Mainly, I feel like a paradox (two opposite things that seem impossible but can be true). This is not strange to the life of a Christian, as Martin Luther calls a believer "simultaneous saint and sinner", or to the life of an American-born Chinese person. In this way, my present life as a person with both a natural and a prosthetic leg is not a strange thing, but I am learning at a deeper level.

Physical healing is visible. Vs. Emotional and spiritual healing is invisible.

From the onset of recovery, I knew that the recovery of my body takes top priority and I have much support along the way from professionals and family and friends. The internal recovery of emotional and spiritual health is not as well-defined. It takes a lot more time, effort, and variety of support to address greater risks. I have seen others stall out at certain plateaus because they have reached the limit of their internal drive or their supporters have exhausted their own resources to aid.

Philippians 4:13 has been made popular again in Christian circles nowadays. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." I, however, encourage us to read this verse with a collective focus... how can we do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us? For those who are in recovery and their care-givers, this question must be answered together in soul-searching towards God.

Does it still hurt? Vs. What can help?

In the early days, people kindly ask, "Does it still hurt?" I presume they wonder about my stamina as it looks like I'm putting body weight on a residual limb all day long. People also initiatively offer me a chair. I've discovered two things about being an amputee. First, standing is "healthier", because the hip muscle remains active and makes it easier to walk; however, it can lead to wear & tear on my healthy leg when I tire. Second, sitting is more comfortable, but leads to poor posture and is harder to stand up and walk again. Which should I choose?

Now, I simply reply, "Yes, it still hurts." Wearing a prosthetic leg is tiring and mentally distracting when fluid pressures change all day. This affects the phantom limb pain which occurs in increments through a given day. This is why I am selective about church activities at night. I can tell the difference between phantom limb sensation (a feeling of presence) and phantom limb pain (sensory overload of the nervous system). My phantom limb pain is also affected by mood, energy level, and stress.

Upon hearing this, people usually ask if I'm taking medication or offer remedies to address phantom limb pain. I have been pill-free due to personal decision and professional opinion. Paying attention to my phantom limb pain makes me well aware of when to say "Yes" or "No" - better than numbing myself with medication to do more. I still

wish, but also have given up hope, that my phantom limb pain will “go away.” From conversation with fellow amputees and professionals, there is no definitive answer or remedy.

The Bible reminds us that we are incomplete up to the day we die, yet we are made perfect in resurrection. We are called to hold fast to the hope we have in Jesus and to persevere amidst life’s struggles. This is one tension of Christian life.

Getting “back to normal” makes everyone feel better. Vs. Finding new ways to adapt is much wiser.

I sense joy and relief in people as they give compliments to my walking and functional presence in ministry. I am thankful to participate more in preaching, returning to Mexico mission, and being part of Congregational Retreat and Summer Day Camp In-service training & camp activities. While these are rewarding, there is an added taste of bittersweet for me.

In this past year, I have laid aside the perspective of “getting back to normal.” I have also heard people describe my situation as a “new normal”, but I do not accept that either. With each function that I can regain or challenge that I can adapt to, the next one is present. An amputee needs both to do things differently and to do different things. Applying this principle to our church life and ministries is my present task. I invite you to figure this out with me.

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:24-26 ESV)

Learning how to receive grace, graciously. Vs. Learning how to ask for grace, boldly.

One of the biggest lessons this year is to receive help from others, without negative reaction, but with grace. This is an on-going lesson for others and me. For care-givers, could you give space so a person can do things at their own pace? This is more than just finishing the task; this influences their self-esteem and progress towards self-sufficiency. For the recovering person, could you be humble to accept kind intentions and actions? This tension between care-givers and the recovering person calls for patient understanding and communication before taking action. *Let the recovering person set the pace. Healing is a three-legged race.*

One of my personal challenges, present and future, is to learn how to boldly ask for grace. I have the blessing by God to be fairly functional and potential to be invisible with my physical disability and its emotional & spiritual challenges. Public response and care is different than someone who has more recognizable challenges. I choose not to share some burdens, to challenge myself or to not distract others, but it doesn’t mean they don’t exist. As such, no one is at fault. In Christ, everyone has opportunity to seek understanding and gain empathy.

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV)

I am thankful for your support to make progress; it’s only been 10 months on a prosthetic leg. I hope you can see more of what is involved. Looking ahead, here are several things I will continue to develop, which can also be beneficial as our church seeks to live according to our 2016 theme of “Re:Source – Re:Discover Faith, Re:Kindle Love, Re:Build Hope.”

- Being honest with one’s present limits (refining one’s own expectations)
- Being ok with people who may not understand (accepting others’ expectations)
- Looking for people who can understand (seeking shared vision)
- Being present for those who are suffering (inviting others to God’s healing process)

- Establishing new hopes to live for (progressing to the next level)

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

In His peace,

Pastor Chris

牧者的話

吳向榮牧師（副牧師）

新的山崗，新的希望

在基督裡親愛的弟兄姊妹和朋友，七月份標誌著 2015 年 3 月一場車禍後我的一年半新生活里程碑，從那時起，我參與了全人康復（身，心、靈），同時學習如何使用假肢和從事在教會的部分時間事工。在一切持續進展中，我想與大家分享一路走來的風風雨雨，包括已經知到和未知到的。

大致來說，我感覺自己是一個悖論（兩個相反的東西，似乎不可能，但可以是真的）。這對一個基督徒的生命，或是在美國出生的中國人的生活，並不奇怪，正如馬丁路德稱信徒為“同時是聖人也是罪人”。就這想法，現今我的生活中同時擁有自然的和假肢，並不是一件奇怪的事，然我更有更深層次的學習。

身體的治愈是可見的。相對 - 情感和靈裏的醫治是看不見的。

從康復過程開始時，我就知道我身體的康復是最重要的，我有專業人員、家人、和朋友的大力支持。情感和屬靈的健康這些內在的康復卻沒有明確定義。這需要更多的時間，精力和不同類型的支持來處理更大的危機。我看見其他人在進展到某些程度就不能再進前，因為他們已經到達他們內部推動力的極限，或者是他們的支持者已經精疲力盡，再也無法援助。

最近在基督徒圈子中再次常用腓立比書 4:13「我靠著那加給我力量的、凡事都能作。」然而我鼓勵我們在讀這金句時聚焦於...我們怎樣才能夠在那加給我們力量的基督耶穌裏作所有的事？復健者和他們的護理人員需要在上帝面前一起自我反省。

仍然疼嗎？相對－什麼能幫助？

起初，人們會親切地問：「還痛嗎？」我猜想他們在懷疑我的體力，因為看起來整天我都把全身的重量放在剩下的腿上。他們也會主動把椅子給我，我發現了關於截肢者的兩件事。第一，站立是“更健康”，因為臀部的肌肉保留活躍，使步行容易些；可是，當我疲倦時，會引致我健康的腳發生磨損。第二，坐著是比較舒服，但會引起不良姿勢，而且要起身再次行動時就比較困難。我應該選擇那一樣呢？

現在，我只是回答：「是的，仍然痛。」穿戴義肢時流體壓力整天不住變化，令人疲累和心神不安。這影響了每日以增量形式發生的幻肢痛。為這原故，我對出席教會晚上的活動有所選擇。我可以分辨幻肢感覺(存在的感覺)和幻肢疼痛(神經系統的感覺超載)之間的差異。我的幻肢疼痛也受到情緒、精力、和壓力的影響。

人們聽了，他們通常會問我有沒有服用藥物或者提供一些治療幻肢痛的方法。我沒有服用藥物是因為個人的決定和專業的意見。留意我的幻肢疼痛使我清楚知道何時說「可以」或「不可以」－好過用藥物麻木自己來做多些事情。我仍然希望，但是也已經放棄了幻肢疼痛會“離開”的希望。與其他截肢者和專業人士的交談，沒有確定的答案或補救。

聖經提醒我們一直到我們離世那日都是不完全，然而我們在復活時就完全了。我們被召要緊握我們在耶穌裏的這個盼望並且在人生的掙扎中持守。這是基督徒生活中的一份張力。

“恢復正常”使所有人感覺舒服些。相對－尋找新的方法來適應是更加明智。

當人們讚賞我的行走和恢復聖工的事奉時，我感受到他們的喜樂和寬慰。我很感恩能夠漸漸加增講道、再次參與墨西哥宣教、和參加全教會退修會、以及暑期康樂營在職訓練和日營的活動。雖然這些有獎勵效用，但是對我來說有苦樂參半的感覺。在過去一年，我放下了“恢復正常”的可能性，我也聽見人們形容我的情況為一個“新常态”，這我也不能接受。隨著每一個我能夠恢復的功能或是挑戰，又要面對新的。一位截肢者不單需要用不同的方法做事也要做不同的事。我目前的任務是將這個原則應用在我們的教會生活和事工，我邀請你來和我一起想出解決辦法。

²⁴ 我實實在在的告訴你們、一粒麥子不落在地裡死了、仍舊是一粒·若是死了、就結出許多子粒來。²⁵ 愛惜自己生命的、就失喪生命·在這世上恨惡自己生命的、就要保守生命到永生。²⁶ 若有人服事我、就當跟從我·我在那裡、服事我的人、也要在那裡·若有人服事我、我父必尊重他。(約翰福音 12:24-26)

學習怎樣以和藹態度接受恩助。相對－學習怎樣大膽地請求恩助。

今年最大的學習之一就是在接受別人的幫助時，沒有負面的反應，卻以和藹的態度接受幫助。這是其他人和我需要不斷學習的功課。護理人員，你能否讓人有空間可以按自己的速度做事呢？這不僅僅是完成一個任務；這影響到他們的自尊心和朝著照顧自己的方向逐漸進展。在康復中的人，你可以謙卑下來接受善意的動機和行動嗎？護理人員與在康復中的

人之間的張力需要在行動之前作耐心的理解和溝通。請讓在康復中的人來設定速度，癒合是一個二人三足競賽。

在目前和未來我的個人挑戰之一，就是學習怎樣大膽地請求恩助。我蒙上帝祝福能夠行動相當自如和有可能掩飾我身體的殘疾，以及心靈和屬靈的挑戰。對於有更多明顯挑戰的病人，人們有不同的反應和關懷。有些重擔我選擇不與人分享，原因是我想挑戰自己，或者不願打擾別人，然而這不代表這些重擔不存在。其實，這不是任何人的過錯，在基督裏，每個人都可以尋求理解和獲得同情。

¹我為主被囚的勸你們、既然蒙召、行事為人就當與蒙召的恩相稱、²凡事謙虛、溫柔、忍耐、用愛心互相寬容、³用和平彼此聯絡、竭力保守聖靈所賜合而為一的心。(以弗所書 4:1-3)

多謝你們的支持以致我能夠不斷進步；我戴上假肢只有十個月，我希望你們可以看見更多內裏情形。展望未來，我會在這幾件事上繼續成長，當我們按照我們的 2016 年主題生活時，教會也能得益：「從根出發－重尋信仰，重燃愛火，重拾盼望」。

- 誠實面對自己目前的限度 (提煉自己的期望)
- 坦然面對可能不理解的人(接受他人的期望)
- 尋找能夠理解的人(尋求有相同異象的人)
- 留在那些在苦難中的人身旁 (邀請其他人分享上帝的治療過程)
- 在生活中建立新的盼望 (進展到另一階段)

願上帝出人意外的平安在基督耶穌裡保守你們的心懷意念。

在主的平安裏！

吳向榮牧師

To God Be the Glory! 榮耀歸與上帝!

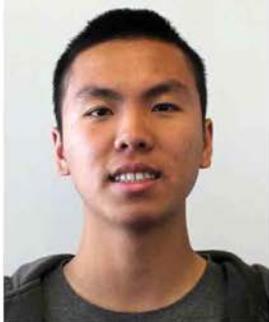
5/15/2016

Pentecost Sunday 聖靈降臨節



Alden Cheang

Baptism
聖洗禮



Kwok Hin Wong

黃國軒
Baptism
聖洗禮



Phillip Tan

Baptism
聖洗禮



Vincent Lee

李文浩
Baptism
聖洗禮



Ken Wing Hay Ma

馬榮禧
Confirmation
堅振禮



路德會聖靈堂

2400 Noriega Street, San Francisco, CA 94122

國語崇拜

2016年4月24日起
逢星期日早上九時半
在副堂舉行

歡迎你來和我們一起敬拜上帝



國語崇拜

賴朱惠芳師母 (Ruth Lai)

路德會聖靈堂是一個注重宣教的教會！ [分享國語事工的點滴]

去年 10 月份，感謝神把我帶到這個大家庭，讓我有了一個屬靈的家，可以在這裏敬拜 神，可以在裏與人以愛相交，也可以在這裏參與宣教的事工。因此，我深深覺得自己在此得到了全面性的栽培，受益良多！

進入聖靈堂之後，第一個吸引我的地方，就是教會的本地宣教非常扎實。從禮拜天到禮拜六，每天的時間表都排得滿滿的，教會的領導人是如何有智慧地使用教會的地方，可以用“地盡其用”來形容。

第二個吸引我的地方，就是教會門前，時常人山人海，非常熱鬧；所有在教會出入的人，都是本地本區的居民；教會與社區連在一起，藉此協助他們解決日常的需要，幫助他們在美國建立他們的基礎。

第三個吸引我的地方，教會為這一羣人開設了不同性質的聚會，如太極班，太極查經班，太極信仰研討講座，福音性旅行，家長團契，青少年團契，親子講座……等等。以上都可以歸納在本地宣教的項目下，作教會增長的具體目標。

第四個吸引我的地方，就是教會的短宣項目，每年有三，四個短宣隊，由教牧同工們領隊，去到國外作短宣體會，以提昇會眾愛 神愛人的精神；這不單單能夠幫助國外的人有機會聽到福音，可以認識耶穌，甚至接受耶穌的救恩成為基督徒；同時也可以加強基督徒的宣教負擔，甚至有人會受感動，獻身成為一個長期的宣教士，在不同的文化中為主的使命盡心竭力呢！

第五個吸引我的地方，就是開始了國語崇拜的事工，雖然劉牧師說：“先試辦八個月，然後再商討以後發展的可能性”。在有限的資源下，神卻帶給我們很好的成果！從四月二十四日開始到九月十八日為止，出席主日崇拜的人數已經超過 40 人，有 10 多人經常參加主日崇拜，出席主日學的人數也有 10 多人，也有 6 至 7 位經常參加。因此，我們有很大的空間，可以繼續發展國語事工。加上教會有很多社區服務性的工作，可以成為我們與他們的接觸點，內中有很多操國語的中國人，需要我們向他們傳福音，帶領他們歸向 神！

過去幾個月的國語事工中，雖然參與服侍的人數有限，但 神仍然為我們帶領了很多人，走入我們的教會！假如，我們能夠聘請一個同工，建立一個團隊，議出一個具體的方針……我深深相信，神一定會幫助我們，建立教會的國語事工！讓日落區不斷增加的國語同胞們，有一個屬靈的家，與我們同心合力地開展 神國的事工。

我相信劉牧師已經有了繼續發展的方針，求 神感動我們眾人有一個合一的心，按著 神給我們的恩賜和感動，看看自己可以在事奉 神和服侍人的事工上，盡上一分心力！用行動帶出一分力量，參與其中，作一個榮神益人的基督精兵！

April 24, 2016
First Mandarin Worship Service
2016年4月24日
第一次國語崇拜



UPDATE ON MY STUDIES AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY – IRVINE.

Barron Fong, Vicar (July 2016)



From Left to Right: Muluneh Taye, Timothy Norton, Barron Fong, Daniel Morin, Clarence DeLude

This picture was taken while having breakfast at a local restaurant one Saturday morning in SoCal with fellow students from the Concordia University – Irvine, Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC) Program.

I've been asked a number of times how things are coming along on my studies. Thus far, I'm doing fine and just completed my intensive 3-week studies at Concordia University – Irvine this past June. I officially completed my first year in the program and will begin my second year during the Fall 2016 semester which begins at the end of August. The CMC Program includes an MA in Theology as well as an MDiv equivalent from Concordia Seminary-St. Louis (CSL). It is a 4-year program with classes in the Fall, Spring and Summer semesters. All CMC classes are at the graduate level that can lead to ordination into the Pastoral Ministry in the LCMS upon certification by CSL. The focus of the CMC Program is to prepare missionary-pastors for serving the growing multi-cultural nature of our communities.

During the summer session, I had the opportunity to spend time with others in the CMC Program. I wanted to provide a brief introduction of these men so that you can get some sense of the ministries that my fellow students are involved in.

Muluneh Taye is one of the leaders of Addis Kidan Church in San Francisco serving in their Ethiopian Ministry. Timothy Norton is a vicar serving the Native American Indians at Navajo Nation, New Mexico. Daniel Morin is a vicar serving in the Hispanic Ministry in Coachella Valley, California. Clarence DeLude is a vicar serving in the Native Hawaiians Ministry on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. I thank God for allowing me to have fellowship and learn from them. We were able to share our struggles and joys in the places that God has placed us.

I ask for your continued prayers as I continue in this program. The studies, along with my vicarage responsibilities, have been quite challenging for me. Thanks for your support and prayers.

我在 Irvine 協同大學進修的近況

鄭仲連實習牧師

這張照片是一個星期六早上我和同學們在當地一間餐廳吃早餐時拍攝，我們都是南加州 Irvine 市協同大學跨文化事工中心（CMC）課程的學生。

有很多人問到我學習的進展情況。到目前為止，一切都很好，六月份我剛剛完結了在 Irvine 市協同大學三個星期的深入研究課程。我正式完成了第一年的課程，在八月尾 2016 年秋季就會開始第二年的學習。CMC 課程包括了神學碩士學位和相等於 St. Louis 協同神學院(CSL)的道學碩士。這是一個在秋、春、和夏天三季上課的四年課程。所有 CMC 課程都是研究生水平，在獲得 CSL 證明書後可以被按立為屬 LCMS 總會的牧師。CMC 課程的重點在於裝備宣教牧師服事在我們社區日益增長的多元文化性質。

就讀夏季課程時，我有機會與其他 CMC 課程的同窗相聚，讓我簡單介紹每一位同學給你們認識，好使你們能夠稍為了解他們參與的事奉。

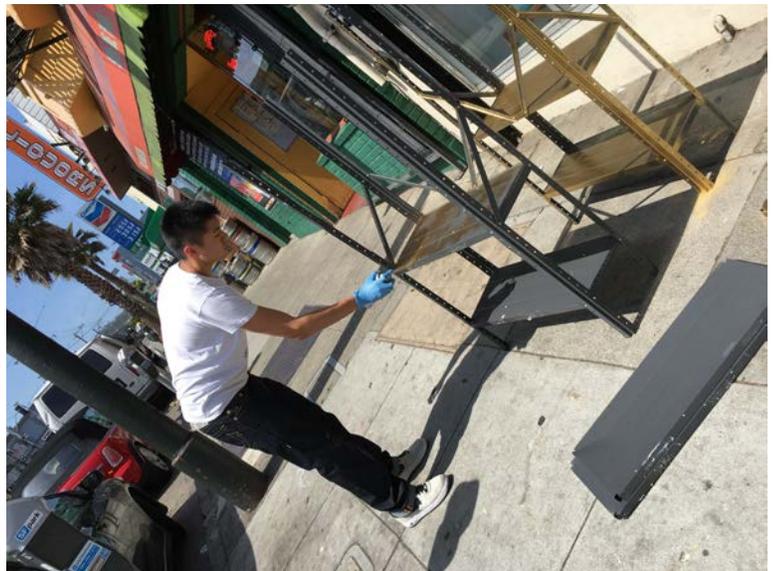
Muluneh Taye 是 Addis Kidan 教會的領袖之一，在三藩市服事黑人事工。Timothy Norton 是實習牧師，在墨西哥 Navajo Nation 服事美洲印第安人。Daniel Morin 是實習牧師在加州 Coachella Valley 做西班牙裔事工。Clarence DeLude 是實習牧師，在夏威夷 Oahu 島服事夏威夷原住民。我感謝主讓我可以與他們交通和向他們學習。我們能夠互相分享在上帝安排我們服事的地方個人面對的掙扎和喜樂。

請你為我繼續這個課程而代禱，學習加上實習牧師的職責，使我遇到很多挑戰。多謝你的支持和禱告。

Frank Xu reaction paper

Hello my name is Frank and i am writing about my experience from volunteering in the Alpha Pregnancy Center. In the beginning, i was not motivated to go. When i went, i was not expecting to get a lot out of the visit. I thought i was only going to see the center but understand how it came it be. Luckily, an amazing staff named Faith gave us an amazing tour. She told us about her patients that come in looking helpless and shameful. Luckily, with the help of their pregnancy center, moms feel more accepted and prepared.

When i went there, i was showed a video on the three trimesters of abortion and pregnancy. I was shocked on how big a baby grows until the mother decides to kill it. It really made me rethink how abortion is and the major effects on it. When i went there, i was spray painting a shelf. Recently, a worker had a baby and was returning so we prepared her room and hopefully made her feel welcomed. This visit turned out to be a life lesson and how it is not easy to be a mother but with the help of God, anything is possible.



**2016
Congregational Retreat
全教會退修會**



By Annisa Huang

The LCHS Congregational Retreat 2016 Children's Program was a track specifically dedicated to the youth, ages 3 to 9. During the 4 days of retreat, the children explored a greater glimpse of who Jesus is through bible lessons, intentional activities, and songs of praise. The children studied Romans 5:6-8 and John 3:22-30 – learning the grace of Jesus Christ dying for us mere sinners, and is it He Who renews. To help illustrate, the children made bracelets in which each different colored beads represented sin, the blood of Jesus, purity, baptism, faith, and heaven. The children participated in different crafts and games catered to better understand the lessons. The four Children Program's leaders had so much joy fostering an intentional and fun environment. The program also hosted a family bonfire, in which the children's family joined them for a night of worship and s'mores making. Throughout the 4 days of retreat, the program leaders and the children practiced and prepared a short performance for the congregation. It was absolutely delightful to witness the excitement and joy through the children! Though it was merely a short retreat, it definitely helped cultivate lasting relationships between the children as well as with the four program leaders!

By Kelton Chow

The Congregational Retreat 2016 was a refreshing experience, especially since we did not have an offsite retreat for several years. Both the Chinese Ministry and English Ministry joining together fostered special fellowship that does not happen frequently. My two main highlights were the interfellowship basketball and the karaoke contest. It is events like these serve as a reminder that we are united in the body of Christ.

Basketball is a “universal language” where you do not need to speak the same language to have a good time. The interfellowship basketball allowed us to play with other church members of all background and ages. The karaoke contest was something I wouldn't expect myself to do. I had the opportunity to sing my lungs out to both Chinese and English songs with Annissa on- and offstage. Through both of these events I was able to get out of my comfort zone and enjoy fellowship with CM and EM church members.

By Rebecca Lim

The retreat was a really fun way to relax and get away from the stresses of everyday life. There was no cell reception, so it was great to unplug from work and really focus on spending time with friends, family and God. I am so thankful for the Children's program helpers. My kids were excited to go to the program and it really helped take the stress away from worrying about the kids so I could focus on our sessions. The worship team was so awesome and I definitely felt God's presence through the music and worship. I got a lot out of Chris Vecera's messages. He spoke about various parables and I was surprised that I learned so much even from hearing old bible stories because he pointed out different perspectives that I didn't see before. The highlight was definitely the Karaoke contest! The performances were so amazing and it was great seeing the whole church united as one in having so much fun. On the last day, my kids (Avery & Benji!) said this was the best trip and they wanted to stay longer! I had no expectations going into the retreat, but it turned out to be a great experience and a wonderful memory that my family will always have. I look forward to doing this again!

黃錫強長老 -

2016 退修會

每三年一次的退修會，在 Give Thanks 的歌聲下完滿的結束，感謝大會籌備的每一位工作人員的努力，人數是歷年最多的一次，超過三百多人參加，藉著這四天三夜的時間，講員皆能帶出今次大會的主題（從根出發），感謝陳道明牧師所分享的訊息，更清楚明白將（1）信仰的動力（2）教會的動力（3）祈禱的動力（4）社區的動力皆很詳盡的解釋出來，如何為主作鹽作光，任何的動力，皆來自主，更要遵守和順服祂的命令，但一切的能力必須由禱告開始。

陳牧師更清楚說明少求少得，多求多得，和不求不得的道理，使會眾們更明白祈禱的重要性。

在這營會裏我們為劉牧師舉行一個簡單但隆重的感恩慶祝會，感謝劉牧師夫婦在這十年努力的帶領我們的教會，藉著大家的分享和感謝，見證主對聖靈堂的看顧，真是感恩不盡。

在這十年裏感謝牧師開始了短宣的事工，短宣隊遍及中國，香港，澳門，泰國，以色列和墨西哥，更開辦太極班，查經班和國語崇拜和許多的親子講座，藉著這些事工，引領了許多人歸主，在此為劉牧師夫婦在我們教會的努力事奉，獻上感謝，願主祝福我們的教會在社區繼續作鹽作光，引領更多的人認識主耶穌。阿們！

Ann 和 Denny Cai 的見證

感謝上帝聽到我們的禱告，讓我們一家人可以參加今年教會舉辦的退修會。這次的退修會好似專為我們而設，句句說話講到我們心坎上。我們學到了婚姻的真諦，明白到幸福的婚姻，是家庭的動力，它讓我們夫妻之間的關係有一個很大的突破，是我們婚姻的一個轉折點。

我們結婚了二十多年，神賜給我們三個很聽教的孩子，夫妻之間的關係也算不錯。但在一年多前，家裏發生了一件事，使我們時刻都會爭吵，關係瀕臨破裂。嘗試過和多位的教會弟兄姊妹傾談，情況緩和些，但心結仍未徹底解開。

我們之間的爭執主要是圍繞 Denny 的姐姐，她是和我們一起居住。正所謂「相見好，同住難」，我們很多時候會發生磨擦，結果矛盾越積越多，爭吵不斷。

我（Anna）自己在那時的心情就是時刻提心吊膽，每天好像行在一個佈滿地雷的戰場，一不小心，就會引起爆炸。每次爭吵的時候，Denny 總是站在他姐姐那邊維護她，不將自己的妻兒放在第一位，完全不理解我的感受。夫妻不停的爭吵，我們的婚姻受到重大打擊。

我（Denny）的姐姐在我們經濟有困難的時候曾經幫過我們，正所謂知恩圖報，現在她即使有不對的地方，我維護她也是應該的。況且我覺得自己是一個很不錯的丈夫和父親，每天勤力工作，家裏的事我也會幫忙。但在今次的營會，上帝藉著大會講員，使到我的矛塞頓開。我們更加多謝講員 James 和 Cady，和我們相談了三個小時。在談話中，我醒覺到自己以往有很多做錯的地方，虧欠了我的太太，也學會了說「對唔住，原諒我，我愛你。」

在大會信息中，陳牧師引用了一段經文，就是作妻子的，要順服你的丈夫。我（Anna）聽到後覺得很慚愧，因為在家中很多的決定都是由我自己作的，如果雙方意見不同時，我們都各執己見，我沒有想到要順服丈夫。在和 James 和 Cady 的談話中，隨著他們的帶領，我們彼此握著對方的手，向對方認錯，求對方的饒恕。這是我第一次看見 Denny 真情流露，流著淚向我道歉。我被他的真誠所感動，也求他寬恕我的過錯。我們彼此流淚擁抱對方，神的愛充滿我們，一年多的心結終於被解開，陽光衝破了黑暗，我們的關係也有一個新的開始。

通過這次營會中，我們切切實實學習了禱告的重要和力量。我們彼此都同意，以後凡遇到什麼事情，我們會一起祈禱，將事情交給上帝，深信祂必定會幫助我們。

My Hope is in Christ by Helen H. Lee

The beauty of our stories lies in the fact that they do not come in neat, little packages. Our stories are messy, at times confusing, even disheartening. But our stories are always built on a foundation of eternal hope, no matter where in the story you look. And when we find ourselves in the thick of it, we can proclaim, with confidence, that He who is steadfast in love and never-changing has always been — and will always be — our Source of Great Hope.

In December 2014, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Myasthenia Gravis (MG). It means *grave muscle weakness*. Medically speaking, there is no cure. I first started noticing that something was wrong when I had double vision, dry eyes from not being able to shut my eyelids, pitch changes in hearing, slurred speech, and trouble swallowing. I remember trying to sing in my car and not being able to move my tongue or pick up the pitch.

I was scared. So, naturally, I avoided going to the doctor for two months.

When I finally made a doctor's appointment because I could no longer function in a somewhat "normal" way, I was sent immediately to a neurologist who diagnosed me with MG right away.

In short, our brain sends signals to our muscles to get them to move. But my immune system is attacking the sites at which my muscles should be receiving these signals, and so my muscles do not get the cue to move. Resting helps, but, like a malfunctioning battery that drains itself out way too quickly, my muscles tire out again after a short time.

So many questions ran through my mind: Will I get better? Will I get worse? What if I can't sing for the rest of my life? What if I can't teach for the rest of my life? What will my friends think or say? Is this a cruel joke that God is playing on me?...

I spent many mornings in tears, choking on my own spit from my inability to swallow and feeling completely helpless and hopeless. I pleaded with God over and over. A miracle would have been so nice.

It has been a year and eight months since I was first diagnosed. I have had three flare ups (where my symptoms suddenly worsened and I took weeks to get better). In January of this year, when I caught a cold and was subsequently put out of commission for a whole month, I wrote to a mentor, telling her that "my spirit is crushed".

In my hopelessness, God did not forsake me.

In the midst of my bargaining, complaining, and pleading, God continued to remind me of the hope that I have in Him. My circumstances are beyond my comprehension and control, but God is so much bigger than my circumstances. People always say, "Have faith in God!" "Trust in the Lord!" and "He has a plan!" But it wasn't until my entire world was being shaken up that these statements became a genuine proclamation for me.

If I were to never be able to sing again, would I still worship God with all my might? If I were to never stand in front of a classroom to teach, would I still share His goodness with young people? If I were to get better, would I still remember God's mercy? If I were to get worse, would I still remember His promises?

I have not stopped praying for that miracle. There is no doubt in my mind that God is able to deliver me from MG. But my hope is not based on whether I experience this miracle. My hope is built upon Jesus Christ and His righteousness. I know that He will restore me to perfection and I look forward to the day, whether it be tomorrow or when I am called home, when all my muscles are functioning at 100% again.

My story is still unfolding. There will be plenty of highs and lows, and at times, I know I will get confused or even feel disheartened. But, even so, my story is grounded in Christ. And He always makes things perfect in His time.

2016 SDC





By DCE Allan Tong

God has blessed the entire staff of BIG Summer Day Camp and Young Leaders Camp with a week of training and reflection at Lakewood, CA. Our retreat theme centers around the theme of our Bible curriculum, namely Cave Quest. Mickey, Brendan, DCE Allan, and DCE Ashley got an opportunity to share four messages: C- Communication, A-Advent, V- Perseverance, and E- Empathy. Pastor Chris led a group of young facility staff in preparing meals for four days. We thank God for a week of renewal and training. Please keep our servant leaders in your prayers as we embark on a quest of God's faithfulness, love, and joy.

God's Grace Along My Immigration Journey By Ruth Lai

It was April 1st, 1987 when Pastor (Lai) took with him the four of us, mother and daughters, immigrated from Hong Kong to America to be the senior pastor of Ling Liang Worldwide Evangelistic Mission, New York. I can still recall the first time I set foot on the ground above the metro station on East Broadway Street, New York. Raising my head to look straight across the street, Ling Liang Worldwide Evangelistic Mission's building appeared right in front of my eyes! Engraved on the building's wall were huge characters: 'Jesus is the way, the truth and the life'. This was a landmark in Chinatown!

In the first year, we had the joy of getting to know the city we lived in by traveling around New York City on public transportation. In the beginning of the second year, we bought a townhouse under impossible circumstances. From then on, we became incredibly busy serving the Lord without hindrance for the next eight years. Our family lives started to gain better qualities, but out of the blue, during an annual physical exam Pastor was diagnosed with lung cancer. In the next three years, the entire family united in a hard battle against lung cancer! In those 'borrowed days', it was very difficult but we were very joyful. We saw miracles and experienced peace which passes all understanding. We learned to sing in dark hours and we knew that God is the Lord in charge of life. In the time designated by God, Pastor rested in our Lord's peace. In August 1998, I began my journey as a single parent. With our merciful Lord Jesus who gave me strength, I shouldered the heavy responsibility of raising my three daughters.

All three of my daughters left for college in 2004. In response to a promise I made to God when I was young and with God's permission, I came to California to further my education. I earnestly desired to return to full time service. If not, then it was my wish that I can lead a peaceful life! Two years passed quickly and God opened up a local mission opportunity for me. I became a local missionary to assist a local church in establishing its Mandarin Ministry. Three years later, a Mandarin church was established and the church called a pastor. Thus I was able to leave having completed my mission! Since then, where ever I lived I'd serve in the local church with the brothers and sisters there using my gifts from God and according to their needs!!

In 2010, my 2nd daughter Joyce and her husband moved to San Jose, CA. The following year they gave me a cute and energetic grand-daughter. I'd drive to visit her every Wednesday. In 2011, my eldest daughter Grace entered medical school in San Diego. Now she is a Neurosurgery intern at the Northwest Chicago Hospital in Chicago. In 2012, because of changes in her job, my 3rd daughter Winnie moved to Los Angeles from New York and was married in the middle of November last year.

Thanks to God for leading the four of us, mother and daughters, steadily on the right directions in this life's journey! 'As it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him."' (1 Corinthians 2:9 ESV) God is a Father of the fatherless and protector of widows. (Psalm 68:5; Jeremiah 49:11)

God is there to help at any time for the Christians! Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.



Ruth and her family

移民路上述主恩

一九八七年四月一日，牧師帶著我們母女四人，從香港移民美國，在紐約靈糧堂擔任主任牧師。還記得第一次踏上紐約東百老匯街地鐵站的地面，抬頭向著對面街頭直望，紐約靈糧堂的大樓就出現在我的眼前！“耶穌是道路 . 真理 . 生命”的大字刻在大樓的牆壁上，成爲唐人街中，人人知曉的地標！



賴朱惠芳師母

起初一年，我們用享受的心情認識所居住的城市，藉著公共汽車，在紐約市內穿梭。第二年開始，在不可能的情況下，我們用貸款方式購買了一棟相連的房子，從此就忙得不得了！大約八年左右，我們可以無後之憂地事奉 神！家庭生活也開始可以講求質素。誰知！牧師在年度體檢中獲悉患上肺癌，一家人上下一心，在三年內與肺癌打了一場硬仗！在那段“補回的日子”中：我們過得很艱辛但我們活得很喜樂、我們看見了神蹟奇事、我們也經歷了出人意外的平安、我們更學會在夜間歌唱。我們知道上帝是掌管生命的主、牧師在 神特準的時候，安息主懷了。一九九八年八月，我靠著那加我力量的恩主耶穌，走上了單親路，肩負起教養三個女兒的重任。

二零零四年，三個女兒都離家上了大學；我爲了回應年青時向 神許下的諾言，在 神的許可下，我來了加州進修。深深希望可以返回全時間的事奉崗位；不然也可以了我的心願，平安渡日！二年的時間過得很快！ 神爲我開了一個本地宣教的崗位，成爲本地宣教士，協助一間本地教會建立國語事工；三年後，國語教會成立了，他們聘請了傳道人，我也功成身退！自此之後，我隨著家居搬遷，在不同的教會中，我運用 神給我的恩賜，按著教會的需要，與弟兄姊妹一起配搭事奉！直到如今！！

二零一零年，老二爾樂，隨夫婿移居加州聖荷西市；在二年內，更爲我生了二個活潑可愛的孫女。每逢禮拜三，我都會開車到她家中探望。二零一一年，老大爾恩，進入聖地牙哥醫學院就讀，現在去了芝加哥西北醫院當腦神經手術科的實習醫生。二零一二年，老三爾穎，因著工作變動，從紐約移居洛杉磯；去年十一月中嫁作人婦。

感謝神帥領了我們母女四人，平穩地走上了正確的人生路！因爲， 神爲那愛祂之人所預備的，是眼睛未曾看見，耳朵未曾聽見，人心也未曾想到的（林前 2:9）。神也是孤兒的父親，寡婦的倚靠者（詩 68:5; 耶 49:11）。

神更是基督徒的隨時隨地的幫助！因此，我一生一世必有恩惠，慈愛隨著我，我要住在耶和華的殿中，直到永遠。

A letter to my 16 year old self by Johnson Wong

In 2005, you did not just join a basketball league. You joined a fraternity of brothers and sisters in Christ. Brothers and sisters that have become some of your closest friends and will last a lifetime.

CCU was a ministry that brought newcomers like you to get to know more about Christ through basketball and brotherhood. Over the seasons, it has been more than that to me. It was an opportunity to rekindle old friendships, make new ones, and solidify them.

Basketball is a huge part of your life right now, but know that it is not everything. It provides you with the confidence, the tenacity, the attitude, and the perseverance to get through life's obstacles. You probably have heard that "ball is life," and to me that's not completely true. However, I believe that it is intertwined so you will hear similar themes in this letter which I want you to apply and reflect upon.

Til this day, there's no place I rather be on a Sunday afternoon after church than practicing and playing basketball with my friends. You will miss it so cherish each moment whenever you feel tired and sore the next day because that just means that you worked hard and will reap what you sow one day. After all, God is faithful. And because of that, you should give it no less than 100.

Don't give up, no matter how hard it gets. Turn to your mentors, friends, and most importantly, God, whenever you feel a burden and the end is nowhere in sight.

It's easy to lose sight of why we play once we set foot on the hardwood. And it's easy to make mistakes and let a cuss word slip. But it's how you recover and learn from it so you can leave those inequities on the hardwood and not carry it out into the real world.

Also, make sure you thank the fans that have shown support throughout the years. It's a long drive but they still make it out to watch you play after a long hard day's work. And I'm not talking about just basketball. Be forever grateful that you have people cheering you on and do the same for others.

Once you've made it to the top, use that platform to leave a legacy and imprint your values on future generations so they can become like you or learn from your mistakes so that they don't make them again. Consequently, you should strive to be the best human being you can be and to lead by example. The world is watching and you don't know who, what, or when someone will remember that time when a person offered a helping hand to a struggling mother trying to make ends meet and keep her family together. So stay humble.

There's more to life than winning a championship. Yes, winning is fun, but you have to understand there is a time and season for everything. In God's time, He will test you and you have to be willing and ready to go when called upon and willing to walk away from it all.

Do it for God, not the fans.

Do it for the story, not the glory.

Johnson, #1

峰迴路轉移民路



Andrew Lam 林文福

我在緬甸出生，在佛教盛行的環境中長大。小時候當過小和尚；21歲那年，從返緬甸再做一個月的僧人，是一個皈依三寶(佛寶+法寶+僧寶)虔誠大乘佛法的教徒。一心渴想能夠可以"立地成佛"；竭力追求可以看透生死，從生死中解脫出來，超越生死對人的局限，達到三身五慧，清淨圓滿的“涅槃”境界。但神的帶領很奇妙，祂藉著母親的安排，在1982年與一個基督徒女孩結為夫婦，我們彼此都尊重對方的信仰，共同建立了一個有兒有女的4人家庭，和樂共處！

誰知道，她在1989年被醫生診斷患上了肌肉痠縮症(Sarcoidosis' Muscle Weakness)；從此，她活在病痛之中長達23年。在此期間，她忍受著身體的限制，理志的磨難，苦不堪言。又幸，她是一個虔誠的基督徒，心靈裏有主的同在；並且，主不斷加給她足夠的力量和勇氣，永不言敗地與疾病共存，在2012年，讓她可以看見小兒子大學畢業，了了她的心願，才安息主懷！不到一個月，當我橫過馬路的時候，有一個魯莽的架馳者將我撞倒，我被拋了十尺之遠，我即時叫了一聲：“My God!”滿以為會死在這場車禍之中！但是My God真的聽了我的呼求，祂沒有收取我的靈魂，經過調養，我的身體也漸漸康復！

為了散散心，我參加了三藩市旅行社的一日遊，遇到一位來自聖靈堂的教友，他極力邀請我參加教會的太極班，我也很想作一些健身的運動，于是就成為太極班的一份子。二年的時間過得很快，在黃師傅和各人的愛心引領下，我不單單拿到太極班的証書，也明白了聖經的真理，決志信了耶穌，在2013年的聖誕節，接受水禮，成為主耶穌基督的門徒。

原本，我每天都用佛教的方式來超渡我的愛妻，但不知為何？！每日誦經的時候，內心有一種很恐懼的感覺，沒法得到真正的安寧！自從我踏入教會後，內心有了平靜，在劉牧師師母的愛護下，我不但明白了主耶穌的救恩，也得著了聖靈，祂賜給我一顆寧靜安穩的心，還有說不出的喜樂和能力，湧溢在我心靈深處，與以往信仰中的體驗，完全不一樣！從前的我，是一個內向又害羞的人，與人交往都會保持一定的距離，在需要的地方，我會盡心竭力地付出我的心力，但彼此的關係很疏離！還有，以往我苦苦地靠自己的能力，所追求的真理，因著有了主賜給我的新生命，我輕易而舉地，到達可以全然忘我無執的境地！因此，我深深知道，我真正找到了那位創天造地的主，我不單可以敬拜祂，也可以與祂用心說話，可以知道過一個天天為主而活的生活，在每一天中，我的生命都在成長，最後，可以擁有與主一樣的生命，可以承受永生，與我的神我的主，永永遠遠同在一起！因此，我願意向主立定志向，用馬利亞的禱文，作為我人生的目標：“我心尊主為大，我靈以神我的救主為樂”，一生樂於奉行祂的旨

意，盡心·盡性，盡力，盡意愛主我的神；同時，在生活中，學習愛人如同愛自己的功課，忠心樂意事奉祂！

回望自己的大半生，爲了逃避緬甸排華的風潮，母親帶著自己的孩子們(父親於1969年已經離世)，從緬甸去到澳門。爲了前途和發展，我從澳門到加拿大讀書進修。然後來到美國，成家立業。轉瞬間，移民路走了45個年頭，遷移了四個國家，住在美國也超過34年了，內中充滿了艱辛但也努力地扎下了根基。大女兒已經嫁作人婦，小兒子也獨立自主了，我也找到心靈的歸宿，可以說：人生無怨無悔！感謝讚美主！！

The Life's Journey of an Immigrant by Andrew Lam

I was born and raised in Burma, a country which majority of its population believes in Buddhism. When I was a child, I served as a monk for a short time. At the age of 21, I returned to Burma to be a monk for another month. I was a devoted disciple of the Mahayana Buddhism, working very hard to become a Buddha. My goal was to be liberated from the troubles in life, and not to be afraid of death. Through practicing Buddhism, I hope to break the stronghold placed on people by life and death, and to reach the final deathless state (Parinirvana) where my mind would be pure and perfect. But God has a different plan. In 1982, through my mother's arrangement, I married my wife who was a Christian. Soon after, our daughter and son were born. Even though my wife and I believed in different Gods, but we respected each others faith, and we lived quite happily together.

In 1989, our lives took a sudden turn. My wife was diagnosed with an illness called Sarcoidosis' Muscle Weakness. From then on, she constantly lived in pain for 23 years. Even though she suffered a great deal both physically and emotionally, but her faith remained strong. She trusted that God was with her and would give her strength to endure the pain. Her health continued to deteriorate. In 2012, she was able to attend our son's college graduation, which fulfilled her last wish. She returned to her Heavenly Father in the same year. Within a month, I faced the kiss of death myself. I was hit by a car as I was walking across a street. The impact threw me 10 feet up in the air and I thought I was going to die. I immediately cried out, "My God!" God listened to my cry and miraculously my life was saved. After a few months, I fully recovered from my injuries.

In a SF Bay Area one day tour, I met a member of this church. He invited me to the Tai Chi class. I accepted the invitation as I thought that it was a good opportunity to get some exercise. After I joined the class, I found that Carmen and other members of the church were very helpful and friendly. In 2 years' time, not only I received the Tai Chi completion certificate, I also learned about the truth in the bible. In the Christmas of 2013, I was baptized and became a disciple of Jesus.

Before I became a Christian, I spent a lot of time chanting, hoping that it would assist my wife's reincarnation. Still I did not have peace in my heart and felt frightened. But after I came to this church, Pastor and Mrs. Lau shared the gospel with me and I learned about salvation in Jesus Christ. After I received Jesus as my personal Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells in my heart and gives me real peace, joy and strength. This is totally different from what I experienced before. Moreover, before I was quite shy and always kept a distance with other people. When people need help, I

would do my best to help them. But still I would not want to develop a close relationship. Also in the past, I relied on my own effort to search for the truth. No matter how hard I tried, it all ended up in vain. After I accepted Christ, Creator God gave me a new life and the Holy Spirit leads and guides me into the truth. My desire is to worship the one and only Almighty God just as Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." May God help me to follow his will with a single focus and to grow in Christ everyday; to love him with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind. At the same time, learn to love others as myself. Finally, I know when my journey here on earth ends; I will be with my Heavenly Father forever.

As I look back, my life has been full of twists and turns. Because of the anti-Chinese policy in Burma in late 1960's, my mother took all her children and fled to Macau. In order to give me a better future, my mom sent me to Canada for further education. After graduated from college, I moved to US and started a family here. In a blink of an eye, 45 years has past in my immigration journey. During this time, I have lived in 4 countries, including 34 years in United States. My daughter is married and has her own family, and my son is also grown up and independent. My heart is at peace and there is no regret in my life. Although my journey as an immigrant is full of challenges and difficulties, yet I thank God for his wonderful grace!



Love In Action Society

行愛婦女部

We are pleased to announce Sue Lin as elected President for Love In Action Society-LWML from 2016 to 2018. Installation by Pastor Lau was held during LIA's General Meeting on Sunday, 8/28/2016

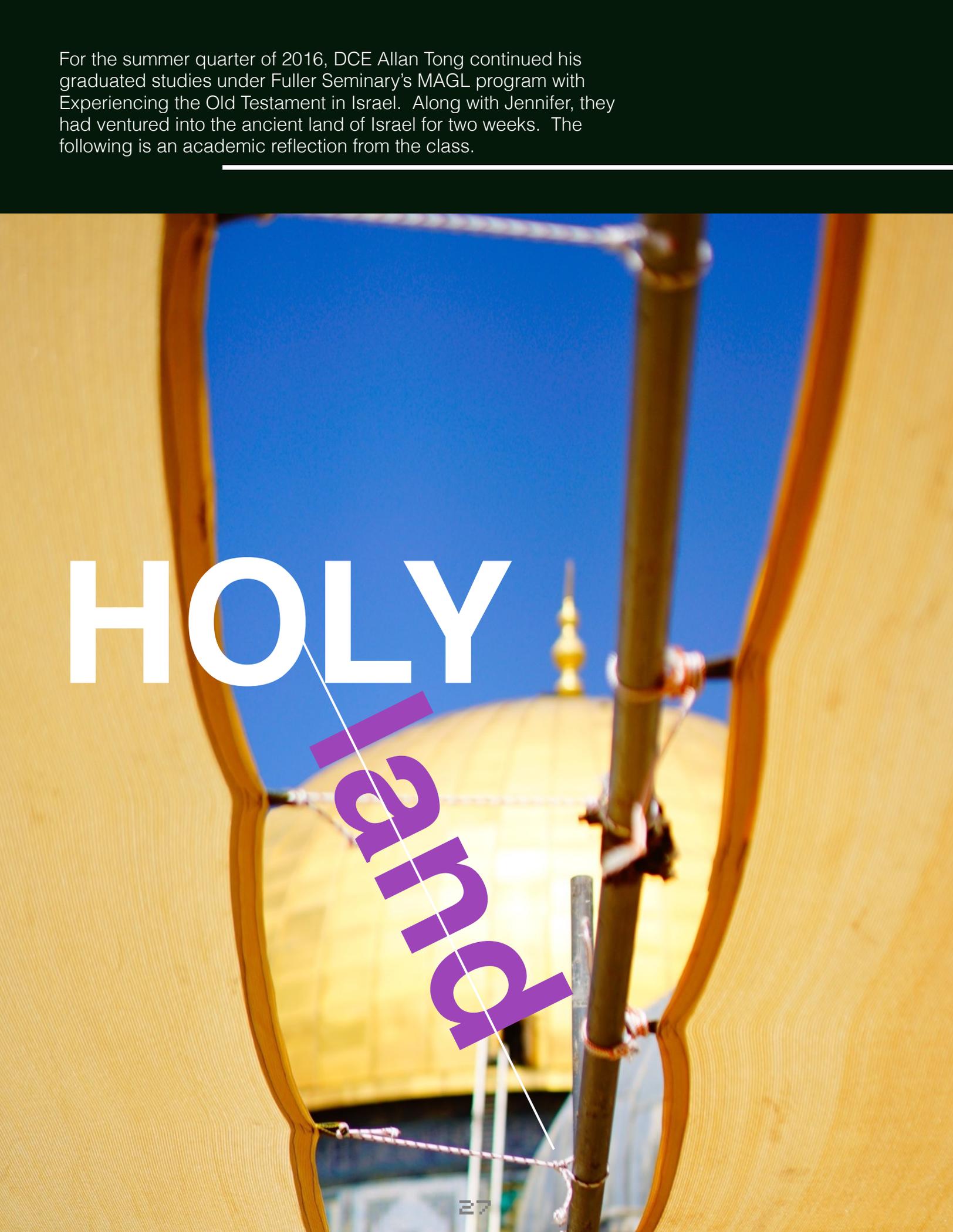
行愛婦女部在 6 月 26 日已選出 Sue Lin 為 2016-2018 年度新任主席。授職禮已於 8 月 28 日（星期日）行愛婦女部常會中由劉牧師主持。



2016 Christmas Day 聖誕節 Baptism & Confirmations 聖洗禮和堅振禮



For the summer quarter of 2016, DCE Allan Tong continued his graduated studies under Fuller Seminary's MAGL program with Experiencing the Old Testament in Israel. Along with Jennifer, they had ventured into the ancient land of Israel for two weeks. The following is an academic reflection from the class.



HOLY Israel

1 “Like a pilgrim who was actually there...”

Under the direction and scholarship of Dr. Hayes and Dr. Thompson from Fuller Seminary, all the archaeological sites visited and encountered in Middle Eastern Israel related to all the biblical events have forever changed the way I read, understand, and articulate the bible. Incorporated with the combination of biblical history, geography, guest lectures, and group discussions, I felt exactly the same way Patterson had intended for all who have visited the sacred sites – namely to experience, like a pilgrim who was actually there at the same time or if not, very close to the actual biblical event that took place thousand years ago (Patterson 2004).

Isolated on the northwest shore of the edge of the Dead Sea, we left Jerusalem and drove south through the dry and arid Judean desert. There we arrived at the archaeological site of Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered at the site known as Khirbet Qumran. In these caves were the findings of thousands and thousands of manuscripts and commentaries of ancient Hebrew Scriptures. Some were fragmented; many were stored completely in jars. Not only are they extremely important contributions to both Judaism and Christianity, they also “provide insights into the textual history of the Hebrew Bible and how the texts evolved over time” (Cline 2009, 94). Qumran was a settlement for a small celibate male community known as Essenes which dated around 100 BC, disbanded during the reign of King Herod the Great from 40 – 37 BC, and regrouped until they were destroyed by the Roman Army during the First Jewish War around 68 AD (Bible Study 2016). Subsequent to the remarkable excavations and discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the ancient Scripture, what intrigued me most were the insights we gained from the help of archaeology and Dr. Hayes’ commentaries in regards to the way the Essenes at Qumran believed, lived, and practiced their faith. This information provided new parallels to major New Testament themes such as “light” and “darkness;” and holiness (Cline 2009, 96). Studying the ascetic lifestyles of the Essenes helped us draw close parallels between them and possibly the disciplined lifestyle of John the Baptist, who was preparing the way for the Lord in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3).



2

Qumran, Where the Dead Sea Scrolls Were Found

Compared to the other sites we've visited, the amount of time we stayed at Qumran wasn't very long. However, after a quick glance at the aqueduct, dining room, and the council chamber, what impacted me and inspired me most was the acknowledgement of the ascetic lifestyle and devotion that the Essenes portrayed as first century Jewish historian, politician, and soldier, Flavius Josephus, listed them to be one of the main religious groups within first-century Judaism (Biblical Archaeology 2016).

For a moment, it dawned on me as I was looking at the "writing benches" of the building where the scrolls were copied, that the "writing rooms" that remained from the ruined site of the Essenes was the actual "scriptorium," the very place that helped preserve and broaden the basic understanding of how Jesus and His followers lived, their disciplined lifestyle,

and their commitment to holiness as they pronounced the arrival of God's Kingdom.

It helped me reflect on my own ministry, especially when I'm often seeking the easier way out within ministry, which lacks a broader perspective and longevity. In retrospect, the lifestyle of my ministry as a leader has very much been meeting immediate needs and calming troubled waters around me. Unlike the Essenes in many ways, I never put much thought about the eternal impact that my own lifestyle and devotion can have in my ministry. The Essenes never thought what they had quietly and faithfully copied each day for many centuries can speak volumes to the entire world of Judaism and Christianity. They simply clustered themselves and lived a life that was called by God to be consecrated and set apart into a community of faith that was different than the one in Jerusalem.

3

Jordan River, God's Plan of Redemption & Salvation

Traveling to River Jordan was not as accessible as I thought. Due to political reasons, much of the river is heavily patrolled. Crossing points separated the lands territorially. As our tour bus pulled in, the sight of the river and the Jordan valley appeared insignificant and nothing close to enormous. Much of the lectures shed great understanding of the importance of water for survival in the Galilean area throughout history. Yet the significance behind the river is its symbolism of God's redemptive and renewal plan for His people; and the river's biblical meaning that occurred in the Old and New Testament resonated most with me.

The size of the river was tiny. The water was polluted. I can understand why Naaman would have made such a condescending remark when he was directed to the Jordan River, "Are not even the Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel?" (2 Kings 5:12). The difficult process of accessing the Jordan River today has definitely changed compared to the times of the Israelites. While the river today has been territorially separated as international borders, the Jordan itself served as a place where God used to demonstrate His plan to call all God's people to consecrate themselves, to be renewed, and to be baptized. The Jordan River had served as a place of ministry both in the Old and New Testament. Joshua led the Israelites with the Ark of the Covenant across the river Jordan. It was at this riverbed where they selected twelve stones to commemorate God's

faithfulness in helping them escape Egypt and leading them into the Promise Land (Joshua 3-4). They remembered their consecration to the Lord as they entered Jericho.

It was at this Jordan River that the arrogant Naaman humbly obeyed the words of Elisha, washed himself seven times, and was miraculously healed from leprosy (2 Kings 5:14-15). Although Naaman was a Gentile who was working in the army of Israel's enemy, this is a perfect example to show God's redemptive plan extended to those who are outside of Israel. Luke, who was also a Gentile, recorded Jesus' words to include His salvation to all people (Luke 4:24-30).

Not only did River Jordan demonstrate God's ministry for saving all people, but this is also the place which marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry through his baptism. Although Jesus didn't need to be baptized, Jesus humbly accepted John the Baptist's ministry and identified with God's people in consecrating themselves and be renewed by God.

Jordan

4

Jordan River, Conflict Reminder

The River Jordan is a very significant place especially within the context of today's Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Despite its violent conflict and complexity between the people, "none has been as pressing and tangible as the problem of sharing the land" (Bunton 2013, xii). This reminded me of God's messianic mission towards His people. Similar to Joshua taking up Moses' call to enter the Promise Land and Jesus taking up from John the Baptist's ministry, God will ultimately renew and restore us to Him no matter how big the conflict or the challenge.

**God will
ultimately
renew and
restore us
to Him**



5

“Visiting the Mount of Olives has been a very moving experience personally”

Visiting the Mount of Olives has been a very moving experience personally. There was an inevitable mixture of feeling of great sorrow and anticipated joy. Depending on where I stand either looking at the Temple Mount from the crest of Mount of Olive, or looking at the hills of Mount of Olive from Gethsemane; my heart sank considerably thinking of Palm Sunday when Jesus stood on the same mountain as he began to embark on a journey of suffering, or Jesus' Ascension when Jesus was the source of hope. In spite of having one of the best surrounding views of the entire Jerusalem while standing on the tallest hills, there are indeed stark contrasting meanings between the Temple physically and spiritually.

I learned from the lectures that the Mount of Olives was the place where travelers or pilgrims who journey themselves to Jerusalem, especially during Passover season, were most anticipated and excited to be standing on; because it is from this place that they would see the Temple for the very first time. These hills that seemingly form an imaginable protective wall between Jerusalem and the Judean Desert reminded me of what the Psalmist said about the Mount of Olives, “as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people” (Psalm 125:2). However what people saw or perceive from the Mount of Olives is considerably different from what Jesus saw and perceived. As Jesus started His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday deliberately on a donkey from the Mount of Olives, Jesus Himself was fulfilling the Messianic prophecy of the long awaited Anointed One. People wanted an aristocrat who would come to overthrow the reign of the Roman Empire with military forces, but Jesus came in peace as an incarnated Savior King, humble and meek. As I stand and gaze from the crest of the Mount of Olives, I too began to weep. I too saw a beautiful golden doom at the traditional site of the Temple Mount, except that it's no longer embodied by our Triune God. *Luke 19:41* came to my thoughts, “As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.” With the little amount of time our Lord Savior was with us, no one recognized Him to be the incarnated Son of God. The people knew every prophecy recorded and told. They understood Ezekiel's vision of the Lord's glory departing from the Temple, going up from the city, and stopping above the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:23).



6

Mount of Olives... My Heart Sank

How could the people not recognize Jesus Himself entering back from the Mount of Olives into the city? The most interesting thing to me was how people during Jesus' time did not recognize all that in light of Jesus' deliberate act of fulfilling one claim after another. I couldn't help but wonder if that's why Jesus wept, because they were so blind to miss Jesus Himself embodying God, dwelling amongst us, and willingly suffered and paid the penalty of our sins. Instead, they chose to look at the beautiful Temple built and crafted by human hands instead of the Creator Himself.

I learned from different lectures that on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, it has been a common practice for Jewish people to be buried in the belief that they would be the first to be risen from dead on the day of judgment. These beliefs were mainly contributed by powerful visions and prophecies foretold by different

prophets in the Old Testament such as Joel and Zechariah. "The Lord will go out and fight those nations; on that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west" (Zechariah 14:4). Sadly people didn't recognize the meaning behind what they thought to be biblically true in regards to God Himself coming to save the Daughter of Zion. Their religious practice was aspired by many prophetic visions mixed with much longing for independence from the Romans. They wanted a god that would fight for them. They wanted the king of Zion who would liberate them from years of slavery. Jesus' portrayal of a Kingdom of peace and love didn't fit to their kind of Israel kingdom. The entire time I was looking at the Temple from what could have been traditionally where Jesus stood, and I agonized the irony of what was supposed to be "triumphant." Instead, Jesus wept.

7

The entire time I was looking at the Temple from what could have been traditionally where Jesus stood, and I agonized the irony of what was supposed to be “triumphant.” Instead, Jesus wept.



8

Garden of Gethsemane, “Calm Before the Storm”

Mount of Olives is also known to be a place of judgment, the place where Jesus took four of his disciples to and spoke about the destruction of the temple and revealed mysteriously about the future (Luke 21:5-6). Some have known this biblical gospel account as the “Apocalyptic Discourse.” At this account, Jesus unveiled the destiny of the city and called His disciples to reflect on what considered being the end of the Jewish world, the Kingdom of Heaven, or the bigger picture of God’s purpose for the world. Instead of adorning to what appears to be “beautiful,” namely the Temple, Jesus revealed its destruction and admonished His disciples to God’s kingdom. Overlooking one of the most powerful and controversial places ever existed in the Jewish world, I was reminded of God’s purpose in my life in ministry. Just like how Jesus showed His disciples their sole allegiance and focus ought to be Christ Himself and not the “opposite” side, I am also reminded by Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse to remember that the center of our ministries can’t be the “Temple.” It must be Jesus Himself. My ministry focus can’t be driven by my own personal aspirations nor individual needs. It must be Jesus’ way of being who He is, what He has done, and what He is going to do for the Kingdom of God. I prayed contemplatively as I stood on the Mount of Olives, in His mercy, to never become blind to the point that I would fail to recognize what was hidden from people’s eyes back then. As my feelings began to subdue from

the Mount of Olives, we were brought to the place of Jesus’ final hour of peace and quiet, namely Gethsemane. As it was described in one of the descriptions, Gethsemane is also called the “calm before the storm.”

We arrived at the Church of All Nations, a church built next to the traditional place of the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus spent anguishly in prayer to actively walk the path to the cross, while His disciples all fell into a deep sleep. The word *gethsemane* derives from two Hebrew words, which mean “oil press.” We had a short demonstration of how olives were made into oil later on from our tour, where heavy stones were pressed and lowered onto crushed olives. Oil was then collected as olives were being squeezed out of the pulp from the stone basin pushed on a long beam by a donkey, as we were told. Today, the garden at Gethsemane is filled with olive trees.

Gethsemane



9

Most Meaningful and Contemplative...

I can't help but remember the suffering "cup" Jesus had to endure, and how the weight of sin of all humanity was pressing onto him like a weight of a heavy slab pressed down onto the olives. His sweat was "like drops of blood falling from the ground" (Luke 22:44). Peter Walker made a very interesting point about the nature of Jesus' mission from the location of where Gethsemane was.

"If he had wished to fight, he could have entered the city to the west; if his preference was for flight and quietism, he could have gone over to the Mount of Olives to the east. But instead he stayed resolutely in the middle ground, the most extreme and painful place of all, seemingly passive and at the mercy of others, but according to the Gospels, actually the one who was truly in control" (Walker 2006, 124).

To me, the visit to Gethsemane was most meaningful and contemplative for me the entire trip. Most of the places we have visited were packed and busy. We had to line and up and hurry through many places without much thought. It was fitting to end the day with a walk in the garden and then respond to our Lord Jesus after visiting the Church of All Nations. As I think about how Jesus also spent his last moments here at Gethsemane before Judas' betrayal and His arrest, this was the place where He would seek tranquility and calmness, away from the Temple and its busyness. This spoke volumes to me as a church leader, whose life can be easily preoccupied by busyness and being in control. Instead, Jesus reminded me the importance of seeking solitude.

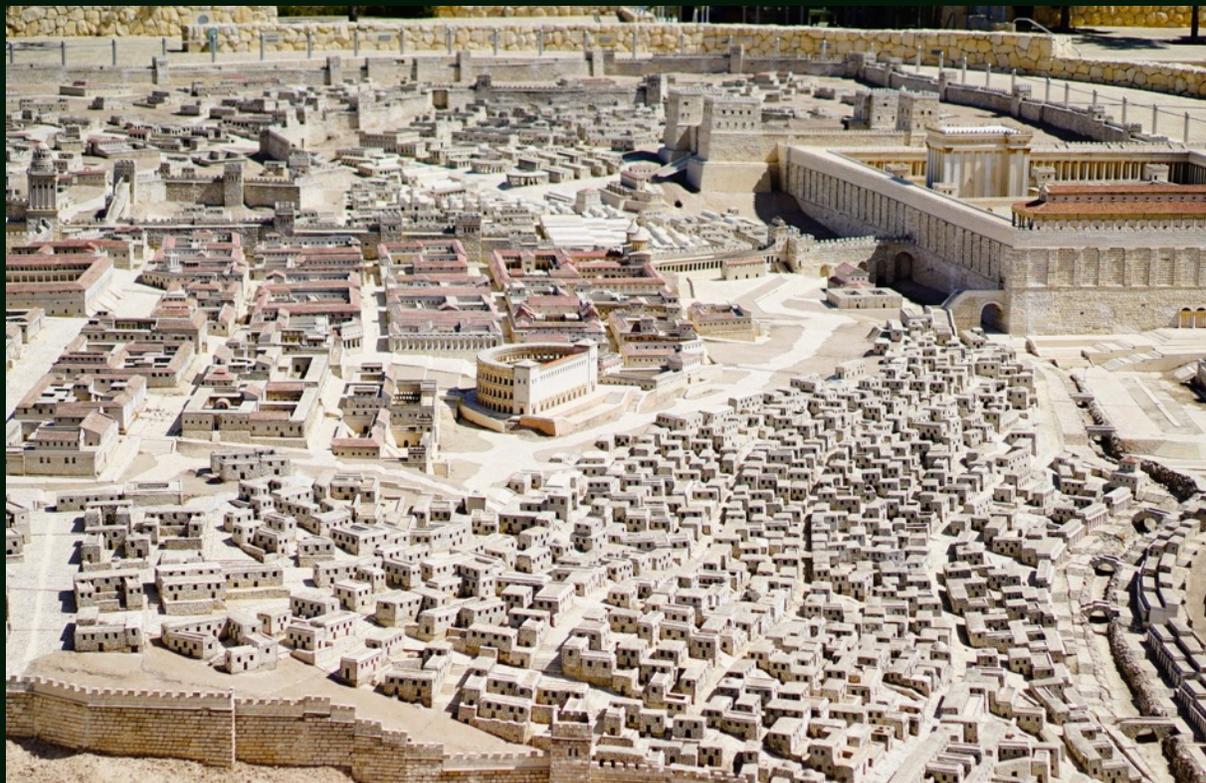
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The opportunity of traveling to many different sites in Israel was much more than mere experiential bible learning of historical facts at different biblical times. It was embarking on a quest and a mission that have sailed its course in history by the One who held, still holds, and will continue to faithfully lead, steer, and navigate humanity to ultimately return back to His redemptive plan.

The experience was like witnessing God's sovereignty being unfolds throughout different times in history, and then watching God graciously pours Himself to humanity in spite of our shortcoming. Attested by time, and survived from the rise and falls of numerous kingdoms and civilizations, God's faithfulness remains unchanged. The experience was personally life changing. From learning and understanding history, culture, and lifestyles of each site we

had visited, my faith was being affirmed considerably. God has used each and every location, their archaeological remains, and architecture to speak truth and confidence to my feeble faith. I still remember how we were being advised by Dr. Thompson to use and apply our imagination and creativity as we examine carefully before these remnant of the past at the orientation meeting that was held at Tantur Ecumenical Institute on the very first afternoon. Only until couple days later, I realized the lessons and the most meaningful experiences weren't "seen," but aspired by our God-given ability to think and imagine; then combined them with the understanding of historical, cultural, and its biblical background.

**It's like
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11

“I came expecting to ‘see.’ I left Israel being fueled with the desire to seek more.”

I came expecting to “see.” I left Israel being fueled with the desire to seek more. I stopped expecting to be impressed by what appears to be significant or least on the surface. Like the drastic contrast between Herod's grand superb palaces and Jesus' humble manger. Although Bethlehem may outwardly appear to live in the shadow of King Herod's massive Herodion, by faith we know it is Christ Himself who truly came and lived as the real king. As God continues to transform me throughout the whole trip, I began to understand how significant the role of faith actually took for the people who lived in the back and then. The real legacy weren't all about how magnificent they looked from the outside at the time, how much power they held, or how much they

had accomplished. Instead it is about how lives are being changed and transformed by them after, even when nothing was left.

Compare to Masada, Herodion, or the Temple Mount, Jesus' didn't even leave any building or palace behind. However the kind of legacy Jesus' kingdom has left behind made King Herod's power and strength pale by far. "Jesus humble life changed the world forever, and he brought the best kind of freedom to the world: freedom from sin" (That the World May Know 2016). Ray Vander Laan, one of my favorite authors in teaching faith lessons from Holy Land from Focus of the family continued, "Today, nearly every person has heard of the tiny baby born in Bethlehem."

Jordan

