

Bethesda Newsletter



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Times of Rejoicing

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Finally, the long wait is over. Those worshipping at AMK will return to their “old home” after an 18-month sojourn at St Andrew’s Village. While we are eternally grateful to the Lord and the people at SAV for letting us use the premises as our temporary home, there is nothing like returning to a familiar neighbourhood. We can look forward to crossing the road to the hawkers centre, or McDonald’s, waking up early on Sunday morning to attend morning worship, and a reunion of sorts with those who have been worshipping at other premises during this time. But homecoming will not be without its challenges, and waking up early is only one of them.

Those who chose to worship at Depot Walk must also be deeply appreciative to the saints at Depot Walk, for welcoming them during the A&A works. Saying goodbye to those they have met and fellowshiped with every Sunday for the last 18 months may be bittersweet. Whatever our feelings, the completion of the A&A works at AMK is good news to all. And Susan Chan’s poem best expresses our joy in poetic beauty.

Felix Lim continues with his

bi-monthly updates, and prepares us as we re-settle in AMK.

We have another piece of good news to share with everyone. Peter Chow will be joining the newsletter committee with immediate effect. We have been praying for a long time and are really glad that the Lord has answered our prayers. Peter will give us added editing power and help cushion the departure of two key members by next year. Incidentally, together with Chiew Gee, they are the first husband-and-wife team in the committee.

Next on the list, we need one or two members from Depot Walk to join us in this quiet but important ministry.

A final item for rejoicing: the successful AGR 2015. There were many firsts in this AGR. The first time the choir sang in near-pitch darkness. The first time the choir sang not wearing their traditional white gowns. The first time a father-and-son team were so actively involved (Khoo Oon Soo and his son Asher) in the same gospel rally. Remember to pray for those who were counselled, those who attended the children’s programme and those who simply turned up and listened

to the gospel presented in words and music, that the seed sown will bear fruit in His time.

For the first time in the 150-year history of our assembly, a musical instrument has been introduced during the worship meeting. It surely must have disappointed die-hard believers of acapella singing, yet it was not a divisive issue. In this connection, the newsletter committee is extremely glad that Andrew Kwan, the current chair of the Council of Elders, has agreed to pen a piece explaining the rationale for this change.

Finally, to round off this issue, the BMET to Indonesia team has given us their reports on Indonesia missionaries. We also have a report on the recent YA Retreat and our regular *Getting to Know* column, featuring three sisters in the floral arrangement ministry.

Finally, on behalf of the committee, I wish to thank all our writers and photographers who contributed the photos, and Lydia Wong, who did the layout for this issue.

HOME-COMING

SUSAN CHAN

At first it seemed nigh impossible,
But see what God has done –
He helped us overcome every obstacle,
Now the time to return has come!

We thank God for the lease of another thirty years –
May we wisely use the time as His coming nears.
We thank God for more space and a brand new start –
Let us all praise and serve Him with undivided hearts!

May this be a place to bring friends to
and for our children to grow,
And may we be humble channels of God’s love to flow.
Let the Good News be spread to the surrounding area,
That more will come to know our wonderful Saviour!



Getting to Know the Floral Arrangement Ministry

Brief introduction of yourself

ES: I am Eva, mother of two lovely boys, Shaun and Joshua. I have had the privilege of serving in the floral arrangement ministry for five years, and I am still very much enjoying this Lord's work once a month.

DG: I am Dorcas Goh, a stay-at-home mom for the last 24 years since expecting my first child, and have been involved in the floral arrangement ministry for about six years.

AT: I am Amy Tan, a 56 year old housewife, and I have been serving in the floral arrangement ministry for more than 10 years.

2. Brief introduction to the floral arrangement ministry

DG: The floral arrangement ministry is an expression of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Lord for His great love showered on each of us.

AT: Each Sunday, different ladies take turns to prepare a flower arrangement for the church hall.

It is up to the individual to decide how often you want to do it. I do it about three to four times a year.

3. What led you to serve God in the floral arrangement ministry?

ES: I cannot remember how I got into this ministry! I love flower arrangements so here I am.

DG: It started out as a hobby which was followed by numerous requests to help with church wedding floral arrangements. With my husband's support, I started serving in this ministry.

1 Peter 4:10 gave me great encouragement and impetus to step forward and serve: *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."*

AT: I was asked to help and since I enjoy flower arrangement and am available to do it, I agreed.



One of Dorcas' flower arrangements

4. What has been the most rewarding aspect of serving in the floral arrangement ministry?

ES: My most rewarding aspect would be members' appreciation of our flower arrangements. I always remember our late sister, Margaret Gwee, who never failed to give me a word of appreciation to encourage me in this ministry.

DG: The most rewarding aspect of my service in the floral arrangement ministry was receiving affirmations from fellow saints on how the flower arrangements had brought them blessings, encouragement and inspiration.

It is through Christ that we receive every blessing. Every

flower, with its delicate hue and fragrance, is given for our enjoyment by God.

AT: Helping the bridal couples to decorate the church hall and their appreciation for the work done.

5. What are some of the challenges or difficulties you have encountered in the floral arrangement ministry?

ES: I once forgot to arrange the flowers when it was my turn! That was the most embarrassing situation I encountered.

DG: One of the challenges I encounter in the floral arrangement ministry is the difficulty of choosing from a great variety of flowers in the nursery.

AT: The challenge is to decide the combination of flowers and the arrangement.

6. Are there any interesting incidents related to your time in the floral arrangement ministry?

ES: Yes, on one occasion I accidentally tripped over the floral stand and the whole arrangement fell off. I had to salvage the arrangement on the spot.

AT: At one wedding, many of the flowers withered and I had to make do with the limited number of flowers left.

7. What would you say to someone who may be interested in joining the floral arrangement ministry?

ES: Please join us! We welcome you with open arms. We are pretty short of people. You do not need to know how to arrange as we have sisters in the ministry who are most happy to guide you. We only need people who appreciate God's creation and are willing to learn and come forward to serve in this ministry.

DG: It has always been a great joy to serve through floral arrangements. It is my hope that more will be inspired and encouraged to take up the challenge and share their gifts.

AT: Join us as long as you appreciate and enjoy God's creation and have a willing heart to learn and serve.

Left to Right Dorcas Goh, Eva Sek and Amy Tan



Sisters' Ministry Special Meeting: "The Proverbs Thirty-One Woman"

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On Saturday, 4th July 2015, the Sisters' Ministry organised a special talk on "The Woman of Proverbs Thirty-One" by Chua Yen Ching, attended by about 80 sisters.

Yen Ching brought us through Proverbs 31, verses 10 to 31, noting that the woman in Proverbs 31 was precious (v10), trustworthy (v11-12), resourceful (v13-15), diligent (v16-19), charitable (v20), prepared (v21), respected (v22-25), wise (v26-27), rewarded (v28) and renowned (v29-31). Although the standards of the Proverbs 31 woman are high, we are still encouraged to aspire to be like her, which reminded me of the old adage, "Nothing is going to happen to me today that God and I together can't handle".

One of the five questions the sisters discussed reminded us that the Proverbs 31 woman is committed to God and family; she is competent and compassionate. Another

question made us realise that the biggest hindrance to becoming the Proverbs 31 woman is self-centredness that causes us to do things our own way. The biggest motivation to like this woman is the desire to be God-centred, to be obedient and please God, to complete the work He has given us, and to depend on Him to be the woman He wants us to be:

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Psalm 127:1.

Yen Ching illustrated a lesson using a pencil, loops

of paper and a piece of paper with happy and sad faces on it. When the piece of paper with happy and sad faces on it is folded and cut in a certain way, the sad faces disappeared, reassuring us that bad times will pass, and we can be happy as we have the Lord. Each participant was given such a piece of paper with happy and sad faces, a publicity flyer for this year's Gospel Rally and a red heart-shaped smiley-faced stress ball.

The talk ended with a time for refreshments and fellowship.



Yen Ching, speaker for the Sisters' Ministry's Proverbs 31 Woman

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The hymn sung that day was "May the mind of Christ My Saviour". Undoubtedly, it reflected the aspiration of every lady present to seek a deeper understanding of the "excellent woman" in Proverbs 31.

Yet is the Proverbs 31 woman a rarity? Is her moral excellence too daunting for present-day application? How does a godly woman manage her household amidst the whirlwind demands of

establishing a family and caring for children? We wondered if it was even possible for a woman to encompass half the virtues of Proverbs 31. However, it was heartening to know that with the multiple roles of womanhood, God has given us not only the examples in scriptures but His abiding presence throughout our lives.

Loyalty was among the top virtues my group discussed. As we studied the excellent woman's loyalty to her husband, we were saddened

at the lack of spousal loyalty in society today. Yen Ching joined us then and gave us two wonderful verses :

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39.

Gratefully we came away knowing that at all the key moments of a woman's life, God has laid down biblical precepts for us in Proverbs 31. In the difficult choices we make in life, the defeat of hasty and impatient decisions and at the many painful crossroads, God is present and He knows the struggle of our hearts.

My heart was blessed and refreshed and I left with the following stanzas of our starting hymn echoing in my heart.

**May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea
Him exulting, self abasing
This is victory**

**May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go**



Discussion time



Proverbs 31 Woman

An Interview with Indonesian Missionary Yosua Suwaji

Tell us about yourself.

My name is Yosua Suwaji – “Yosua” is “Joshua” in Bahasa Indonesia. The Lord has blessed me with my wife, Wiwid, and two sons. By God’s will, we also adopted our daughter, Wiwin. I am a church planter in Blitar (a city in East Java, Indonesia) and am currently serving with *GLO Ministries*.

What moved you to serve God in this area?

God first loved me, and He has helped me so much throughout my entire life. When I understood that my

salvation was only possible because of His great love for me, I wanted to love Him back and dedicate my life to serve Him – by spreading the Gospel in Indonesia.

What challenges do you face in this current ministry?

I believe that all challenges are given by God, and He has called me to overcome these obstacles. Sometimes it really is difficult, especially with the harsh conditions here: poor infrastructure, humid weather and heavy rainfall. As the churches are quite far

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apart, these conditions make it difficult for me in commuting from one church to another. However, all these are part of taking up my cross and walking with Him. So, despite the obstacles I face, I continue to be faithful.

How can we pray for you?

A few brothers and I have been trying to share the Gospel with certain tribes in the more rural areas in Indonesia, but they can be quite hostile. Please pray for opportunities to spread the Gospel to more people in Indonesia, and for our safety! Please also pray for sufficient manpower to help build essential infrastructure in the area, such as the piped-water supply project, which is part of my ministry here. Finally, please pray that the Lord will grant me and my family wisdom and strength: for me as I continue in my ministry and teach my young children, and for my family as they support me.



Suwaji and his family

A&A Works at Bethesda Hall Ang Mo Kio Sep - Oct 2015 update

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It is the moment we have all been waiting for. The A&A works are now 100% complete and we thank the Lord for finally granting us the building’s Temporary Occupation Permit (TOP) on 1 September 2015.

After a challenging month in August, where we dealt with key inspections and clearances from the authorities, we are relieved that the difficult part is over.

THE A&A WORKS ARE NOW 100% COMPLETE AND WE THANK THE LORD...

On 29 August 2015, around 100 members from our assembly and another 40

from the Hokkien Assembly were given a preview of the ‘new’ premises. Many were pleasantly surprised to see how much we have achieved through the A&A works, given the cost and site constraints. Many gave encouraging feedback.

Here are the updated milestones:

- BCA Temporary Occupation Permit (TOP) inspection: 31 July 2015
- BCA Temporary Occupation Permit (TOP) issuance: 1 September 2015
- BAMK target takeover of site: mid-September 2015
- BAMK target move-in: 27 September 2015

Pray that the contractor will diligently complete the final touch-up works in time for a smooth hand-over process.

A Note to All Members

With our impending relocation, on behalf of the Joint Building Committee (JBC), please let me share several salient points pertaining to the BAMK A&A works:

- 1) The JBC was convened in early 2008 to oversee the BAMK A&A works. It is collectively responsible for all decisions made on the project.
- 2) The committee spent several years deliberating, exploring development options, testing out best use of site and engaging various key stakeholders from both the English and Hokkien Assemblies.
- 3) We worked with a tight site constraint, a short construction timeline and a stringent budget mandated by the Assembly.
- 4) We endeavoured to keep the essentials, discard and



View of West façade as seen from the HDB carpark. The red architectural metal roofing-façade defines the entrance.

rework the non-essentials, enhance the existing functions and inject new ones to achieve successful adaptive re-use.

5) There was a need to bring the existing building in line with new local building regulations and code compliances. You will notice the following in the new building:

- a. A lack of window openings and an increase in compartmentation for rooms / spaces so as to prevent the spread of fire from one room / space to another.
- b. An increase in the number of fire doors, smoke-stop lobbies, enclosed staircases and solid walls in the building.
- c. New facilities for persons with disabilities e.g. handicapped toilets, tactile floor finishes at certain staircase landings, extended handrails and Braille indicators.

6) The project is not perfect due to the difficult nature

of the A&A works. There will be shortcomings, unmet expectations and unfulfilled needs.

7) Members are encouraged to give feedback when we settle in. Where practicable and implementable, the JBC will consider further alterations.

8) In spite of the many challenges, we certainly thank the Lord for what He has given us:

- a. The funds for land lease extension for the next 30 years
- b. The funds to carry out major A&A works
- c. An increase of around 15% in floor area
- d. An increase in the number of meeting / prayer rooms
- e. An increase in the number of toilets / showers
- f. An increase in recreation and hangout spaces
- g. An increase in air-conditioned facilities
- h. New facilities, furniture, fittings, etc.

As we look forward to moving into our newly renovated premises, let us:

- Be thankful always for the Lord's provision.
- Think of where we were in the past and where the Lord has brought us today.
- Take good care of the Lord's property; we are all stakeholders of the Lord's premises.
- Use our new building to the fullest to propagate the Gospel and for the building up of one another.

As the prophet Samuel said when he set up the stone *Ebenezer*, "Thus far the Lord has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12). Let us be reminded of the Lord's faithfulness in all His wonderful provision.

Our help is in the name of the Lord...

Psalm 124:8a



Completed North façade, roof top function room and play area. The red roofing helps 'break down' the overall building mass. In the foreground, landscaping is being carried out.



North-West aerial view showing the finished roof and rear canopy extended to the boundary edge. The red roof is designed to 'wrap around' the building, binding the old and new into one; just as the Old and New Testament form one complete Word of God.



Worship Hall with re-varnished pews now in place. There are still some touch-up works to be done at the front stage area.



Assembly members were given a first-hand preview of the premises on Saturday 29 August 2015.

Reflections on AGR 2015



Bethesda Choir singing at AGR 2015

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The Assembly Gospel Rally was held from 17 to 19 July 2015. It has always been one of our assembly's big events of the year. I've always felt a special buzz about it for two reasons.

First, we obey the great commission by inviting loved ones and friends to the rally. In our lives, there are people who have impacted us greatly, yet do not know the love of God and are outside His kingdom. Every invitation to attend is accompanied by hope that it would be accepted. When

accepted, we pray that the rally would be the tipping point for them to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Whether or not this hope is realized, I remind myself of the passage in 1 Cor 3:6-9. Some of us are meant to plant, others to water, but it is the Holy Spirit that convicts and converts! As stewards of the faith, we have fulfilled our duty of sharing the Gospel, but perhaps rejection is God's way of teaching us patience, perseverance and prayer?

Second, we get to do something different from usual. Being involved in the musical

item and cleaning up helped me gain a greater appreciation of the dedication of God's people.

**SOME OF US
 ARE MEANT TO
 PLANT, OTHERS
 TO WATER, BUT
 IT IS THE HOLY
 SPIRIT THAT
 CONVICTS AND
 CONVERTS!**

Everyone had different parts to play, some more obvious

than others, but everyone was just as committed and willing to serve with love. If you have never participated in the rally, please give it a shot and you will see 1 Cor 12:12-31 (unity and diversity in the body) in action!

Each night of the rally, dinner was served on the dot at 5pm by the dear ladies of the kitchen. My only regret was being unable to eat more due to nerves; I have a feeling that I was not alone in this. At the end of each night, a group of young men were on hand to willingly help with the clean-up. Their humble service was a reminder that we are one in Christ, and every contribution is important.

Stepping into the hall, we were transported from affluent Singapore to ancient Jerusalem. The ambience helped the audience imagine the time Jesus taught the Word and the night Nicodemus sought the Lord. Kudos to the organisers for

building this time machine!

The darkness and the warm glow of the "firelight" in the hall reminded me of Psalm 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path". How true it is that we are walking in darkness and we need God's light to guide our path. It was wonderful to hear that some had found the Light at this rally, and others were seeking to discover this Light for themselves!

As if spending all this time in church was not enough, even at home I shared the same roof as the speaker – my father! So you can understand when I say that AGR 2015 was a rather immersive experience for me!

I am praying that the seed sown will produce fruit abundantly in the days ahead. Already 5 guests from the rally have joined the Basic Training Class at Depot Walk the following Sunday, 26 July 2015.

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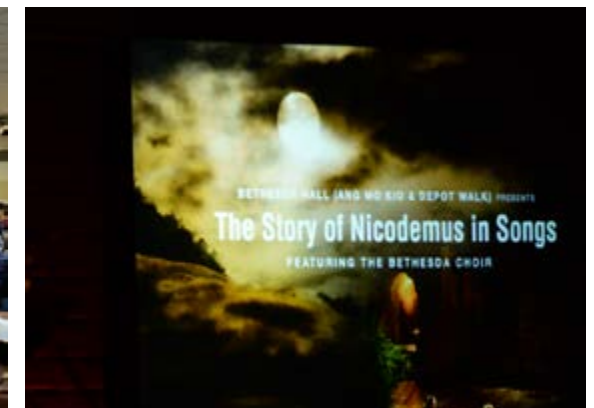
When we started rehearsals for the rally in April, I expected to do what we always do for church events – put on our baggy white choir robes, go up, sing an hour-long cantata, come down, take off our baggy white choir robes. How wrong I was!

For a start, the songs (from "The Witness") were much more challenging than usual. The rhythms weren't easy to follow, the melodies were unusual and not necessarily tonal, and the sudden changes in tempo were tricky. During the first few rehearsals, we spent most of our time practising our individual parts without accompaniment. When we sang with the CD, the choir in the CD sounded a lot more certain of themselves than we did! I remember feeling worried during our last practice before the June break, as we were still sounding shaky.

During the June break, we



Nightly crowd at AGR 2015



AGR 2015



The enchanting children's programme at the rally

began to think about costumes and a cappella arrangements. Both were completely foreign to me – in my two-and-a-half years with the choir, we'd never performed in anything other than our choir robes, and we'd never sung anything without the security of a plus-one track. Anticipation and excitement grew as we shared photos of our costumes and worked on our acappella songs ("Believe in Your Heart" and "The Old Rugged Cross"). The rally was

going to be very different from anything we had done before!

When we resumed rehearsals in July, it was with a palpable sense of urgency. We hadn't rehearsed with everyone else, nor had we rehearsed with the stage and lighting. Separate rehearsals were wonderful for efficiency, but meant that we had little idea how our parts would fit into the grand scheme of things.

By God's guidance and grace, the full-dress

rehearsals went smoothly. Asher's narration of the story of Nicodemus, Auntie Swee Choo's reading of "They Took Him Down", our singing... everything fell into place. We prayed that those attending the rally would come with open hearts and minds, and that Uncle Oon Soo would be able to present the truths of the gospel with clarity and conviction.

Finally, the first night of rally arrived. As we waited in



Rally Speaker Khoo Oon Soo

the quiet darkness backstage, I was reminded of the lyrics of "Born Again":

"Let the Son take your darkness away...For all the light and all the life of Jesus shine within, when you've been born again!"

As Christians, we are privileged to be vessels for God, broken vessels through which His light and love shine into the lives of others. He wants us to work enthusiastically and wholeheartedly at whatever He calls us to do, while remembering that it is He – and He alone – who works in the hearts of those we reach out to.

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I was very privileged to be approached to serve as the chairman of the children's programme at the rally this year. I accepted because it was a service to God, and because I think that as a church, it is important for us not to just engage with those of our age group, but also with the younger ones. I was glad I did, because the children's curiosity and vigour helped me to remember my own excitement when I first heard the Gospel at the age of seven.

Preparing my heart and mind for this event was not easy. I had close to zero

experience with children, and now had to manage fifty-plus children at once on my first try.

THE CHILDREN'S CURIOSITY AND VIGOUR HELPED ME TO REMEMBER MY OWN EXCITEMENT WHEN I FIRST HEARD THE GOSPEL

Thankfully, I had experienced friends from church such as Rhoda, Dawn, Robyn, Raeann and Ren An whom I could learn from. This reminded me of how we are

called to help one another glorify God, growing as a body (Ephesians 4:16).

Chairing for the children was tiring because there needed to be a conscious effort to get and to hold their attention. However, I realised that even though the children were noisy at times, they were more responsive than teenagers or young adults. I was very encouraged to see many children actively voicing their opinions or answering the questions I asked. I could teach the Gospel in a way that satisfied their enquiries.

My intention was to use chairing as a platform to teach the Gospel to both believing and unbelieving children. In retrospect, I think that I actually learnt much more than I taught.



Jenna Goh, one of the speakers for the children's programme

Reflection on the Young Adults Retreat 2015

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This year's Young Adults Retreat fell on the 7th of August and the theme of the retreat, **Hold Fast**, was taken from Hebrews 10:23-25. It was chosen to encourage one another to run the race faithfully and in unity.

The retreat differed from the usual Bible studies and Bible talks, and focused more on practical discussions around four workshop topics. The workshops on school, career, family and finance were taken by brothers Joel Boon, Kan Shik Lum, Law Gin Lieng and Andrew Kwan respectively.

These workshops, along with precious insights from the facilitators, provided sound advice and generated lively discussions based on the Word of God. They also served to remind the young adults of the availability of a community for mutual encouragement, to live out the gospel of faith in school, at home or in the workplace. Xin An concluded with a message from the theme verses, challenging us to live out lives of faith and love, with full confidence in the promises of God.

The day ended with games

organised by Dwayne and Lydia, followed by captain's ball and football, leaving participants with their energy well spent. Looking back, it was encouraging to see many young adults turning up for the retreat and spending the public holiday to strengthen relationships with one another, building a strong community in Christ.

We thank God for the turnout and the smooth running of the programme. We also thank God for the preparations by the worship team led by Brandon and God's Word delivered by



One of the YA breakout groups, deep in discussion



Xin An, with other young adults, sharing a lighter moment

the workshop facilitators as well as the speaker.

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.
—Hebrews 10:34

Personally, whilst many of the messages shared at the retreat were not new, they were nonetheless a refreshing reminder to live out a life for Christ. I was encouraged and thankful that Jesus Christ is supreme above all. Hebrews 10:34 is poignant and thought-provoking. The Christians were joyful even in the face of losing out in this world; the reason for that joy in the midst of suffering is the faith that Christ, by His death and resurrection from the dead, has procured for us something far more valuable.

In our current day and age, young adults face many challenges in school, at work and at home. These include the desire to fit into society, the desire for career progression, the desire to excel in school, the desire for love and companionship, etc. These desires may impede our ability to live out the gospel of faith. This verse in Hebrews, along with the rest of Hebrews, remind us of the surpassing worth of Jesus Christ. Suffering worldly losses, such as not getting a promotion or not conforming with societal norms and trends for the sake of the gospel, should not discourage us because we have something far better. Having confidence in the promises of God and trusting that we have a far better treasure must mean the actions and priorities in our life should also

reflect this confession of faith accordingly. It would mean we must live out a life of faith and love: faith in the eventual fulfilment of God's promises, and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are facing persecution because of their desire to live out the gospel. The challenge is to constantly remind myself that Jesus is indeed worthy, and to make life decisions that reflect faith and love in Jesus Christ.

**This life I live is not my own
For my Redeemer paid the price
He took it to be His alone
To be His treasure and His prize
The things of earth
I leave behind
To live in worship of my King
His is the right to rule my life
Mine is the joy to live for Him**



YA Retreat 2015

The Use of Musical Instruments

Introduction

I was asked to pen an article to share my thoughts on the recent decision by the council of elders to incorporate the use of the piano during our breaking of bread meeting. This article is not meant to be a position paper, but a perspective on why we took the decision to make this change.

It should also be stated at the outset that the use of piano in itself is not novel in our various assembly meetings and activity groups. For instance, the piano has been used for the past decades in our Sunday School, Christian Education Programme, Young People's meetings, Christmas and Easter services, Gospel meetings and the like.

In contrast, the introduction of the piano at our worship meeting in June of this year represented a departure from what had been an unbroken 150-year practice of a cappella singing at worship meetings. It is therefore understandable that some members have experienced unease with the change; yet others have reported a sense of relief because of it.

Regardless of one's persuasion and convictions, thankfully, instrument accompaniment during corporate worship or otherwise, has never been a fundamental tenet of our Christian faith.

The Past 150 Years

It is useful at this point to review the key points in our assembly's position paper, written in 2004, on this topic and understand the reasons why the assembly adopted the practice of NOT having musical instruments during worship:

1. To begin, the fact remains that the use of musical instruments in worshipping God is common in the Old Testament and also found in the book of Revelation.

For instance, we see in 2 Chronicles 5:12-13 (emphasis mine):

*“and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having **cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and***

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*twenty priests sounding with **trumpets**—indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and **instruments of music, and praised the Lord...**”*

Also in 2 Chronicles 29:25-28,30 (emphasis mine): *“And he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with **cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the **trumpets**... And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord also began, with the **trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded...So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.**”***

And finally in Revelations 5:8,9,14:

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song...And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”

Significantly, the above examples are all found either in Old Testament passages or in the book of Revelation which describes the ages to come. There is NO specific mention of musical instruments being used in worship in the New Testament church.

2. There ARE references to musical instruments in the New Testament.

In 1 Corinthians 14:7-9, we read the following (emphasis mine):

*“Even things without life, whether **flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the **trumpet** makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken?”***

In this instance, while the text above makes mention of

musical instruments such as the flute, harp and trumpet, they were cited as parallels to illustrate the importance of clarity in speech, rather than to stipulate or encourage the use of musical instruments during worship.

3. Some may point to further references in the New Testament that allude to the use of musical instruments in worship unto the Lord. We see this in the following verses:

Ephesians 5:19: *“speaking to one another in psalms (Strong's 5568) and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody (Strong's 5567) in your heart to the Lord”*

Colossians 3:16: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms (Strong's 5568) and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

While the passages here employ the Greek words 'psalmos' (Strong's 5568) and 'psallo' (Strong's 5567), both of which suggest the striking or plucking of musical strings, they are used to describe the singing in one's heart, which is inaudible. The use of musical instruments is not directly prescribed here.

4. Conversely, the two key ingredients that MUST be found in worship is revealed to

us in the book of John:

John 4:23-24: *“true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

From the above, what is needed of us is very clear... to worship *in spirit and truth*. It is also equally clear that there are NO stipulations that require New Testament saints to employ musical instruments to supplement or complement our worship of the Lord even though such possibilities are described in the Old Testament and Revelations.

As such, the council of elders who drew up the assembly's position paper in 2004 concluded then as follows (5.6.5-5.6.6, page 26, emphasis mine):

*“While there is nothing in Scripture to prohibit the use of musical instruments, the elders **prefer not to introduce the use of musical instruments in the Breaking of Bread and Prayer Meeting. However, musical instruments can be used in other meetings...** But the instruments used and music produced should be for the edification of saints and spiritual, and not perceptibly worldly such as pop and rock music.”*

Paramount in the minds of elders (then and now) was that the centrality of Christ

must be preserved and not compromised, unto whom we gather first and foremost, in direct communion with the Lord at our worship and prayer meetings.

By extension, even when musical instruments are used as an accompaniment at our other assembly meetings, it should not cause distraction by way of being excessively loud, unrestrained and/or inappropriate.

The final tenet to mention here which is precious to uphold is that *“all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor 14:40). Indeed, *“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints”* (1 Cor 14:33). How wonderful it is when saints gather in such fashion as prescribed by God. Any use of musical instruments should therefore not derogate from, but instead adhere to, this principle. Hence the “not...pop and rock music” type commentary in the position paper as stated above.

The Present: Why the change? Why now?

It is no secret that there has been much feedback from assembly saints over the years, with respect to the use of musical instruments during worship. With the passing of each successive year and decade, and the home-calling of precious senior saints,

it has become increasingly challenging for the assembly to recall on demand the tunes from our beloved Believers Hymn Book, apart from the usual handful of favourites.

Hymns that are sung infrequently stand little chance of being offered during worship, let alone sung with inspiration and gusto. On occasion, we have experienced awkward silences and momentary disruptions during worship as brothers attempted to kick-start the singing with a familiar tune only to find within the next few lines that it was out of sync with the lyrics. We may recall the times when read-backs, instead of the singing of a hymn, became necessary. And then there was the not-so-infrequent singing to a wrong, uncomfortable or different pitch and timing.

Are these minor issues? After all, we are the Brethren, singing unaided in meetings which are free of form, moving as the Holy Spirit shall lead. Or are these part of a gradual but continual slipping away from the decent and orderly conduct instructed and expected of us in scripture?

We also need to reflect whether the general malaise that some of us sometimes experience during worship could be an indication of a greater ill within the assembly: the failure to recognise the need for change,

where long-held practices become subconsciously institutionalised over time, just because they have served us well in the past.

The elders have deliberated over this for some time, whether to effect changes, or maintain the status quo. While all are in agreement that the use of musical instruments during worship has no doctrinal underpinnings, it is a matter that is potentially charged with strong responses given the rich and long history of our assembly.

On the one hand, we had members of our assembly who preferred the status quo. On the other hand, we had those who waited patiently for years for practices to change. In the middle ground were those who were comfortable taking a broader view, equally agreeable with either option. At extreme ends of this spectrum were the few who had intimated that they would leave if changes were made, or conversely, if changes were not forthcoming. Regardless of their convictions on this matter, all of these members are God-fearing and God-loving saints: all precious members of our assembly.

After much prayer for the Lord's leading on this sensitive matter, the elders came to the decision and were at peace to proceed with the introduction of the piano during worship. One small step, with respect to

a change of practice; yet one giant leap for the assembly.

Interestingly, if we look at the position paper put forth by the council of elders back in 2004 on this subject matter, the overall views have not really changed. The relevant paragraph (5.6.4, page 26) is reproduced here in its entirety for easy reference:

“In the OT, the people of God sang many of their praises to God accompanied by various types of musical instruments. The praises of the people were set to music and sung. Music can be used to quiet our hearts and minds and focus them upon God and His goodness. Music can also be an instrument through which our praise and adoration can be expressed to God. While we do agree that music can be used in praise and worship, we realize that not all music is appropriate for worship. Let us be careful to select music which is appropriate in helping us to focus upon God and to express adoration and praise to Him. 1 Corinthians 14:26- “... Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm,... Let all things be done for edification.”

For those who have graciously accepted and supported the change in the name of assembly unity, despite personal discomfort, Psalm 133:1 comes to mind, *“Behold, how good and how*

pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Looking Ahead

A few members of the assembly came up to express their concerns right after the announcement on this matter was made at the pulpit. Thankfully, Christian grace and love for fellow saints prevailed.

Some others who are in their 60s, came up, literally with tears of joy, to say thank you to some of the elders for what was in their mind a landmark decision. Yet, even these members acknowledged and appreciated the fact that this was made possible only through the accommodation of members who might be less comfortable.

Is this a harbinger of things to come? Are more practical changes likely to come our way in the foreseeable future? Perhaps. What can be safely said at this point is that the elders have been looking into, and will continue to evaluate a range of issues and practices that may benefit from a re-affirmation or revision of our existing position.

On what basis will the elders determine which sacred cows to slay and which to keep? The Scriptures provide us with the necessary framework and toolbox to navigate these matters. For instance, 2 Thessalonians 2:15 exhorts us to stand and to hold fast

unto our traditions. This is an immutable instruction: immutable because it is unchanging regardless of the passage of time; and an instruction, in that it is something we must actively carry out. On the other hand, Matthew 15:9 cautions us not to teach commandments of men as if they are doctrines. This is an imperative injunction: imperative because of its vital importance; and an injunction in that we are to actively refrain from promulgating such teachings as doctrines.

Taken together, and God willing, these immutable instructions and imperative injunctions will provide us with the necessary principles and a balanced perspective to ensure we do not dilute or distort truths that are founded in Scripture; nor to add to or alter biblical teachings such that they become traditions of men. Indeed, we must be careful not to supplement nor supplant God's Word.

In summary, we will continue to look to the Lord for His direction, His timing and His way of leading the assembly through each new chapter of our church history, as long as our Lord has not yet come. In this, we would continue to seek and covet the intercessory prayers of the members of our assembly. Maranatha!

Sep-Oct 2015 Assembly News

FAREWELL

- 23 Aug 2015 - Cedric Chua left for a 5-year medical programme at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland.
- 25 Aug 2015 - Yeo Ern Jie left for a 5-year dentistry programme at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland.

BEREAVEMENT

Our deepest condolences to:

- Wong Kang Xun & Family, on the passing away of Kang Xun's grandmother on 1/8/2015.
- Kwon Dae Yun & Jenny, on the passing away of Jenny's brother on 11/8/2015.
- Andrew Prem & Bhuvana on the home-calling of Andrew Prem's mother on 21/8/2015.
- Tay Teng Hwee & Shirley on the passing away of Shirley's father on 26/8/2015.
- Caroline Tan, Tan Kian Hong and Tan Ah Lim & Susan, on the home-calling of their brother, Kian Hua, on 1/9/2015.

EVENTS

17-19 JULY ASSEMBLY
GOSPEL RALLY (DW), 7.30PM

Speaker: Khoo Oon Soo

Chairman: Robert Hmar, Joel Boon & Wong Yong Jian



DW Kindergarten National Day celebration

Oral Testimony: Lee Wai Sum and Andrew He
Written Testimony: Sarah Panneersalvam, Tng Hui Ting and Hannah Erh.
No. Attended: More than 350 attended each night
 Three were counselled – One for salvation, two for assurance
 From the feedback forms received, there were 68 newcomers (36 non-believers)
 For the 176 who attended the children's programme, 11 were counselled for salvation.

6 AUG BETHESDA (DEPOT WALK) KINDERGARTEN NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

Time: 8.30 to 10 am (1st session) and 10.30 am to 12 noon (2nd session)
 More than 200 attended each session.



Andrew Kwan, one of the YA Retreat workshop speakers



Newly baptised members



A curious glance into the new baptism pool



Our new worship hall

7 AUG YA RETREAT 2015 FOR YOUNG ADULTS AGED 19 TO 35 YEARS

Theme: Hold Fast (Heb. 10:23-25)

Speakers: Joel Boon, Andrew Kwan, Kan Shik Lum, Law Gin Lieng & Ho Xin An
Venue: BDW

Time: 8.00 am to 5.00 pm
 More than 80 attended.

16 AUG BAPTISM SERVICE AT DW

The following obeyed the Lord through the waters of baptism:

1. Jared Lee
 2. Chan Yuen Kam*
 3. Wong Suit Fun*
 4. Lok Fook Weng*
 5. Mong Tard Tong*
 6. Cristina C. Diolinisio (* from Cantonese group)
- More than 100 attended.

29 AUG SITE VISIT TO BETHESDA HALL (ANG MO KIO) PREMISES.

Close to 100 attended. Another 40 from the Hokkien Assembly attended.

MINISTRY

GOSPEL SERVICE (DW)

Date	Ministry (AMK)	Ministry (DW)	Speaker	Chairman
4 Oct	Gerald Sim	Khoo Oon Soo		
11 Oct	Daniel Panneersalvam	Khoo Oon Soo		
18 Oct	Dennis Loh	Tay Kim Swee	Daniel Panneersalvam	Bryan Chan
25 Oct	Dennis Loh	Gerald Sim		
1 Nov	Kenneth Wong	Andrew Sng		
8 Nov	Khoo Oon Soo	Linus Tan		
15 Nov	Chan Man Wong	Kenneth Wong	Andrew Premsundar	Joel Boon
22 Nov	Wong Yong Jian	Kenneth Wong		
29 Nov	Harry Tan	Aaron Wong		
6 Dec	Andrew Cowell	Sam K. John		
13 Dec	Felix Lim	Andrew Cowell	Christmas Gospel Service	
20 Dec	Jeffery Jee	Tan Ah Beng	Calvin Koh	Jonathan Sikhamani
27 Dec	Linus Tan	Choy Boon Yew		

SPEAKERS FOR PRAYER MEETING FROM OCT-DEC 2015

Date	Bible Text	Speaker (DW)	Speaker (AMK)
6 Oct	Lev 24:1-9	Steve Chia (Combined Meeting @ AMK)	
13 Oct	Lev 24:10-23	Wong Tet Keong	Samuel Ten
20 Oct	Lev 25:1-17	Ryan Kwan	Soo Chai Chew
27 Oct	Lev 25:18-31	Aaron Wong	Sean Koh
3 Nov	Lev 25:32-43	Joseph Sng (Combined Meeting @ AMK)	
10 Nov	Lev 25:44-55	James Yim	Andrew He
17 Nov	Lev 26:1-13	Tan Hee Chin	Edmund Yong
24 Nov	Lev 26:14-26	Ernie Abbott	Nathaniel Sim
1 Dec	Lev 26:27-35	Tan Wee Siang (Combined Meeting @ AMK)	
8 Dec	Lev 26:36-46	Ho Xin An	Surenthiran Prabhakaran
15 Dec	Lev 27:1-13	Mah Kwok Kin	Wan Yin Chi
22 Dec	Lev 27:14-25	Samuel Chng	Wesley Ng
29 Dec	Lev 27:26-34	Sherman Sim	Yeo Tun Ren