

# Graceland

## CBCSD Newsletter #32

### April 17, 2022

*"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of ... is a land of the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it... (Deuteronomy 11:11-12)*

#### **Words from the Editor:**

The theme for this issue is "Actions to Renew" to further explore the church's main theme in this year, "Renew & Transform." I hope that through some new, constantly renewed, ongoing or planned ministries, brothers and sisters can understand how to practice a "transformed" life, that is, to receive a vision from God through participating in different ministries, experiencing God's presence, power, and guidance, and being molded and renewed by the Lord in the process, so that the life would be transformed!

## Actions to Renew



## The Metaverse Church at CBCSD

**By Rev. Paul Qin, Pastor of Missions and Development**

In the era of multimedia and digital internet, a new model of church was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic: the metaverse church (Meta-Church). The metaverse church is a virtual reality church. It works to apply biblical teaching in the digital era. It continues to aim at accomplishing Jesus Christ's Great Commission based on the teaching of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, making disciples of Jesus Christ through the Internet and in various communities according to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:16. The basic strategy of the Meta-Church is to incorporate an incarnational and missional approach of evangelism through a hybrid of in-person and online meetings to accomplish the Great Commission.

The principle of operation under CBCSD's Meta-Church is to obey biblical teaching and remain submissive to the Holy Spirit. Its operation model is simplicity, flexibility, and clarity:



- ⇒ Small-sized meetings: keep every internet or in-person gathering under 50 people.
- ⇒ Flexible approach: focus on relationships, not formalities. Be flexible on the schedule and approach based on each group's situation. Prioritize building up local coworkers and focus on worship in spirit and honesty.
- ⇒ Easy-to-understand message: make unchangeable gospel truth easier to understand based on the seekers' cultural background.

CBCSD's Meta-Church includes Online Church and Cell Church. Online Church includes worship and Bible study online, focusing on spreading the authentic gospel to Chinese people around the world through the Internet. Eventually, it develops into local in-person small churches – cell churches.

Online Church uses internet and social media to spread the gospel to Chinese people around the world. It shepherds new believers and trains them to become missional disciples who are able to bring people to know Christ in their local social circles. It focuses on facilitating the **BBB** (Belonging Before Believing) atmosphere, helping people to first belong before leading them to conviction and taking part in church.



Relying on the omnipresent Holy Spirit, Online Church operates on the internet, shepherds sheep according to the Bible, and builds up disciples. Currently, it is being conducted in four sessions, and about 200 people participate. The main audience are the overseas friends and relatives of CBCSD congregations, their Happiness Group believers, and CMC's "Next Step" friends. It offers online worship and Bible studies in many forms, as well as simple but effective caring. When the online church matures and the time is right, the online church can be developed into a cell church.

Cell Church is a kind of micro-church, meeting in-person in various communities with different cultural settings and able to proliferate. Cell churches are part of CBCSD satellite churches, scattered around the world and rooted in their respective local communities. Every cell church is connected to CBCSD but operates independently and does not overlap. All cell churches likewise have the goal to spread the gospel and accomplish the Great Commission, but each one chooses a different form of gathering and gospel strategy according to their local culture. It emphasizes on creating **CAYA** (Come-As-You-Are, this is The Way) culture – that is, to accept every seeker's current life situation without criticism, and to focus on telling the gospel truth in an understandable manner. It is necessary to love these seekers sincerely and let them feel Jesus' love so that they are willing to change,



# A Feast of Abundance

By Katherine Liao, Feng Yan Congregation

On an autumn day in 2007, Yvette and I were praying earnestly at the parking lot in front of New Panda Buffet. We asked for the Holy Spirit's presence for when we shared the gospel with the restaurant's workers. I was excited and nervous; excited from the long waiting period of seeking and praying



that precluded our first visit to the restaurant, and nervous from my worry over their reaction to us approaching them as ministers instead of customers. Would they coldly refuse us? But we went in and handed "The Herald Monthly" to the sushi chef, and he unexpectedly accepted it and started talking to us! The other workers were also very friendly and even wanted to exchange phone numbers. Wow! I'd never dreamed it would go so smoothly! We later found out that God had softened the soil for us through another brother who often visited and connected with them! This encouraged me: as long as we initiate the first step of sharing the gospel, God always provides and guides our way! All of my coworkers in the Restaurant Ministry were encouraged and we continued to visit other restaurants to care for their needs and invite them to our services. The Restaurant Ministry was formally established by Pastor Sue during the Thanksgiving of 2007 to serve the people working in the restaurant industry.





After over 10 years, the Restaurant Ministry had become a home to many. It attracted many restaurant workers and even people working in construction, massage therapy, and many other businesses. We then changed our fellowship name to “We Serve.”



We had gatherings every other week at the Main Campus, 10pm-12am. We studied the Bible, encouraged one another, and prayed for one another. Many miracles had unfolded among us. Our days were no longer full of hectic rushing, but full of hope. Our gatherings often lasted beyond midnight, but no one wanted to leave.

During the pandemic, we moved our meetings online and had Pastor Joseph Gong and Brother Runfeng speak about the message. The virtual meetings on Mondays were widely anticipated. Some people even joined the meetings during breaks at work or on the way back home to not miss the message and testimonies. Some brothers and sisters living outside of California also participated online and we took communion and prayed together. In July 2021, our church resumed in-person worship, and we, too, resumed once a month in-person gatherings. Thanks to God, the baptism ceremony last December had 56 attendees, five baptisms, and one on-site conviction.

I still remember seven years ago, when Pastor Lam shared a vision with us to establish a grassroots church where brothers and sisters in the service sector could have a spiritual home. This vision became our hope and our direction. Under the protection of God, we evolved from the “We Serve” fellowship into a church. Last January, Feng Yan Congregation was officially formed!



“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” (Psalm 23:5) I resonated with this verse which Pastor Lam chose for the Feng Yan Congregation. This verse truly reflects how lives are changed after getting to know our God. Our brothers and sisters began as spiritual babies who needed help and care, and now they have grown up to Christians who are persistent in caring for others, sharing the gospel to their family and friends, and doing their daily devotions. They are living out a different life.◆





# Connected to Christ and Follow His Footsteps

By Grace Fellowship, Downtown Worship Center



Psalms 1:3 says, “That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.”

From conception to fruition, Downtown Worship Center thrives through its connection to Christ just like a tree planted by streams of water.

## God Answered Our Prayers

At the beginning, Brother Daniel Poon recommended starting a bible study group in downtown San Diego. Later with Pastor Wanda’s help, Grace Fellowship was established. It started with just a few people, and they would have to overcome all kinds of challenges in order to make it to Sunday Services. Such

challenges were alleviated sometime later when organized volunteers from our church started providing transportation for those folks. However, when the number of people increased to more than 40, there were simply not enough cars to take them.

Many brothers and sisters had been praying for years for a place of worship in downtown San Diego. And God answered our prayers. Pastor Lam was able to announce the founding of Downtown Worship Center in a planning meeting on January 8, 2019.

## Following God’s footsteps in the face of challenges

At the conclusion of the planning meeting and through the hard work of Pastor Joseph Gong and Sister Livia, it was decided to have a test run of a Sunday Service in a downtown apartment building on February 24, 2019. After another month of preparation, the Downtown Worship Center officially debuted on April 21 Easter Sunday, with as many as 87 attendees! When we prayed for a permanent place of worship, God also answered our prayers. We were able to hold worship services at the Chinese History Museum starting May 5, 2019. Praise the Lord, our wishes finally became reality.





## A smooth reopening and reset thanks to God's grace

For more than a year, we had to resort to virtual worship given the impact of the pandemic. How we wished we could worship under one roof just like in the old days! But who would be our shepherd? Where would we worship? Just as we were pulling our hair, we got the good news that Pastor Paul Qin would become the Executive Pastor for the Downtown Worship Center. In addition, God also brought Pastor Ho and his wife to us (they have just retired from their missionary work in Burma and are now permanently living in the U.S.). Last but not least, Brother Yu (who used to lead a fellowship group and has great computer skills) became a resident in the downtown retirement home. God

knew our needs! He never ceased to amaze us! He provided much more than we asked for! How encouraging was that! We reassembled the coworker team. God also provided an even better place for us in the Chinese History Museum.



God's grace is sufficient for us! Through constant prayers and concerted efforts by coworkers, the Downtown Worship Center resumed its services in July 2021. As of right now, pastors and coworkers are able to cover essentially all the service duties and tasks. We also re-



sumed physical bible studies and prayer meetings. We even held two evangelical gatherings within the first 6 months of reopening. Praise the Lord! All things have gotten back to normal. We would like to express our special thanks to Runfeng Tian, Bei Chen, and Calvin and Christina Mai for their commitment and service to the Downtown Worship Center and for the glory they brought to our God through the reopening and reset of the Downtown Worship Center.

We have no doubt that the Downtown Worship Center is just like a tree planted by streams of water. It was created out of nothing yet through connection with Christ, it took roots and will grow bigger and bigger and bear more and more fruits of the spirit.

**Praise the Lord! Glory be to our God! ♦**





# The Rekindled Evangelism Explosion III Ministry

By Guann Hwang, Central Campus



The Evangelism Explosion III-EE training program is no stranger to CBCSD. This training program was first started in the year 2000 and held 6 more times in the ensuing 9 years. It was very fruitful and produced an army of soldiers who were well equipped to fight the spiritual war and carry on the Great Commission. I was honored to have been trained in the program the second time it was offered. Subsequently, I was also sent to a week-long “Train

the Trainers” program in Tuscon. From the third time onwards, I was blessed to serve as a trainer using what I had learned. My fellow soldiers back then included Rev. Paul Qin and Pastor Wanda.

God’s work is full of wonders. Who would have thought this program could have such a comeback after over a decade of hiatus? He first instilled in Runfeng Tian, Yurong Wang, and me a willingness to serve and a desire to rekindle the fire of Evangelism. We started to pray for the development of Evangelism Explosion III 2.0 in November of 2020. He then gave us a sign of confirmation via the commitment of Lan Tang, Lei Tian, and Xiaolin Li. They went through intensive training to “sharpen their swords” so that they were ready to lead the evangelical visitation. In February of 2021, three trainers, three team leaders, and 29 trainees all committed themselves to this ministry and that was a great kickoff for the 2.0 program. Praise the Lord! After over 130 visitations, about 100 people committed themselves to the Lord and 15 new team leaders were certified.



Yet God’s work did not stop there, and His workers kept up with His pace. In May of 2021, we started the second round of the program which mostly focused on trainees from mainland China. We had 5 new trainers (Bryan Wang, Li Yan, Kathy Zhang, Fang Wan, and Xiying Shang) and 14 team leaders serving in this round. Under their leadership, the Evangelism Explosion III-EE program was not only expanded to new territory but also came to fruition with more than 80 people accepting the Lord as their Savior.

The pandemic brought the shadow of death for our earthly bodies as well as the hope of life through rekindled evangelism. The demolition of the physical boundaries through the internet has greatly expanded the path of the Evangelism Explosion III-EE 2.0 program. Time and time again during the course of this ministry, we were humbled by the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Gospel. Our hearts were filled with gratitude. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever! ♦



# Family Ministry

**By Victor Wong, Cantonese Congregation**

In the past few years, a few couples in Christ opened up to my wife and me to discuss their marital or parenting challenges. Marital problems are usually taboo and people often don't talk about it. We had the privilege to understand their needs. However, we felt very heartbroken to see husbands and wives who walked in different paths in their lives get into a cold war and ignore each other or argue heatedly. Marriage and children are God's gifts to us. Why would they take a big toll in our lives?



I admit that I don't know how to sweet talk, and I'm especially not good at counseling. When God gave me a chance to talk to the husbands, I didn't feel confident to help them initially. But praise the Lord that the Holy Spirit was always with me to say the right things at the right time! I started to see some turn-around. And this experience really led me to think - what is the most important unit in our Christian life, and yet the most vulnerable to be attacked by Satan? It's our family, the nucleus unit of our life. If we don't build a good relationship with God in our family, we will not be able to serve others and our communities.

Last year, when I accepted the Fellowship Deacon position, I mentioned this experience to Pastor Lam. And surprisingly, he had the same vision for our Cantonese Congregation! God has also sent Pastor Wanda to help define the structure and mission of Family Ministry based on experience from the Mandarin Congregation. We tentatively defined this overarching process:

Introduction ➡ Education ➡ Companion ➡ Counseling ➡ External referral

First, we will start some workshops or seminars to introduce the importance of healthy relationships with our spouse and kids. These seminars will ignite the interest to focus on family. Then we can start a Sunday School to deep dive into the topics. After the class, the teachers will walk with the students for an extended period of time to practice and apply what we learned. In some cases, we may need to refer to our Pastors for counseling. If someone needs professional help, we will refer to professional counselors outside our church as needed. I'm praying this family ministry will encourage brothers and sisters to bring up relationship problems easily, not to treat them as taboo, and realize we should grow and help each other to sort out the issues.

We are still defining our directions and getting coworkers to build up this ministry. I'd like to invite you to pray for this ministry. May we grow in Christ and build strong and loving relationships with our spouses, kids, parents, in-laws, and grandchildren. Together we build God-centered Christian families! ♦



# “People With No Ideals Don’t Get Hurt” – Thoughts on the Post-Modernism Youth Group

By Michael Hsu, Main Campus

What do the young adults in urban China believe in? The song lyric “People with no ideals don’t get hurt” is a good representation. It’s the title of a punk song which reflects the current popular psyches among these Chinese young adults: “Lying Flat-ism” and “Little Bliss.”

These beliefs belong to a group of young people who grew up in a China dominated by a market economy. The cultural matrix they’ve grown up in is something their parents could never understand. They are minimally impacted by traditional Chinese thought but bear innate rebellion against authoritarian society. They dream of possessing true individual freedom but are simultaneously under great pressure caused by capitalistic competition. Eventually, they resort to decadence as they grow weary



and powerless, choosing to give in. At this moment, church could naturally become their refuge. However, the number of young adults in church has been diminishing. Why?

At the end of the 20th century, the Internet suddenly emerged. Since then, the church’s population worldwide has been shrinking. Many people attribute this decrease to generational corruption and thus fail to see a sociological phenomenon. Before the era of the Internet, people grew up watching TV and reading the newspaper. With limited options, whatever news was told was accepted. I call this period the “Era of Passive Acceptance.” A





similar model has run within the church for thousands of years – the “authority-acceptance” model. The characteristic that defines this period and model is the idea that even when someone is uncomfortable, they passively adapt to whatever their immediate culture says.

But after the rise of the Internet, individuals had the sudden freedom to choose information they preferred to consume. Newspaper and TV subscriptions decreased. At the same time, the population of young adults attending church diminished. I call



this period the “Era of Individual Freedom.” The defining characteristic of this period is the individualized experience, where people only accept or choose messages they feel comfortable with.

Those who were born after the 1980s belong to this era. This cultural matrix pushes them to clash with the church and its traditional model. Therefore, the emphasis on individual freedom subconsciously influenced youths’ decision on attending church.

Due to my word limit, I can only choose a sample of thoughts to share. Like SunZi said, “Know yourself and know the enemy, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat.” I hope this short essay can be conducive to the mission and revival of the church in this new era.

Pastor Lam preached on the church’s vision this year, and embedded in that vision I saw us as Christians being called to respond to a culturally changing world. We must be transformed and cast aside the old self, and understand that we are never the center. Instead, God is the center, and so are the sheep he entrusted to us. ☐



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