



Graceland
CBCSD Newsletter #37
July 16, 2023

"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:

Dear Family,

Thank God for giving us CBCSD as a big spiritual family in which we are leading a rich and colorful life - because of God's grace, we have been given different serving positions to serve each other and build the church; because of God's love, we care for each other and support each other! Through reading the Bible and praying, we experience God's presence, His faithfulness, love and power together, and we grow spiritually! The theme of this issue is "My Church My Home – I Love the Church Life." Brothers and sisters share how they love church life from different aspects. Hope you are encouraged and love this family too!

My Church My Home – I Love the Church Life

I love Serving at Church

By Erica Leung, Cantonese Congregation

Q: Could you please share with us how you came to CBC?

A: I married my husband in 2002 and migrated from Hong Kong to San Diego. I joined an evangelistic event held by the Cantonese congregation because of an invitation from a Christian friend, and I made my conviction right away. Naturally, I joined CBC's big family.



Q: Which serving position do you enjoy the most?

A: I think it was the service at the Evergreen Fellowship (Seniors). I also extended the service from there to the church office position. Those were both very enjoyable experiences.



Q: Could you please share the reason behind it? Or any special encounters?

A: I like the Evergreen Fellowship service because it trained me to have a caring heart for others, especially for those seniors. I think it was in 2021, when Pastor Ed invited me to be the leader in the Evergreen Fellowship; he

didn't finish his sentence, and I already answered with a yes! God also worked miraculously. He prepared sisters Maple and Fung Lynn to join the core team, and helped us do everything so efficiently, with everyone contacting seniors we had rarely seen since the pandemic, so we were able to have our first online fellowship meeting in April. Most surprisingly, many seniors overcame technical barriers and joined the online meeting! I was so excited to see them. That was quite a memorable experience! We thank God for His grace! In September, we started in-person fellowship. Everyone cheered when we met. The most touching thing to me is that every serving sister or brother all worked in unity, and everyone actively sought to serve. Most recently, they proposed that we participate in the Fundraiser Carnival for Africa School Outreach. They invited the seniors to make delicacies for a booth. When I saw all the seniors' willingness to serve, and willingness to breakthrough for Christ, I was very moved by their determination and cohesion as a team. As a matter of fact, since the pandemic, we have been serving together, praying together, experiencing God's grace together, and building a solid friendship.



I have been working as an administrative assistant at church for almost five years. I got to see brothers and sisters from different congregations, and I also made arrangements for different things, from fun to thorny. Some things were very minor and simple, for

example, opening the church door for some brothers and sisters. I felt it was very meaningful to be able to help pastors, brothers and sisters. However, sometimes I also encounter something challenging. One time, a gentleman requested something that our church couldn't help with, so I suggested for him to look for professional companies. He then cursed me on the phone.



Q: Among all these services, what are your biggest takeaways?

A: Through serving those senior brothers and sisters, I felt as if I was caring for my own parents. I believe God is delighted in what I do, and at the same time, God also takes care of my parents in Hong Kong. Before my mom was taken to our heavenly home, she was presented with an opportunity to make her conviction to Jesus. She also experienced peace from God while in illness. Praise God for that!

The service in the office helped me grow a lot in terms of being in contact with many people, improving my communication skills, and learning how to get along with people. The most precious experience is whenever I experience God's promise after I encounter challenges or difficulties and pray to Him. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7) I learned to trust God completely! ◆



My Understanding through Serving

By Yuezhen Tang, Downtown Worship Center



In July 2021, the Downtown Worship Center resumed in-person Sunday service. At that time, I was very worried and scared. Every senior at the seniors' apartment has, to different extents, underlying conditions. We were at high risk, especially in an enclosed environment with no fresh air or other circulation. I was afraid of getting infected with Covid-19.

However, I also thought about Jesus our Lord, who gave up His own life to save us on the cross, so that our sins are forgiven and we have everlasting life. Church is essentially the body of Christ and the house of God. It is the pillar and foundation of truth; it is sacred, inviolable, and needs to be respected.

The Lord Jesus called people to be close to Him. When people are willing to submit to Him through faith, they will break their chains of restraint and be completely free. Therefore, I moved back to the seniors' apartment from my daughter's house. (When the pandemic hit, my daughter took us into her house to care for us.) We then started serving at the in-person worship at the Downtown Worship Center. Every Sunday service became my happiest day. So many brothers and sisters gathered as a big spiritual family. When there were brothers or sisters enduring hardship or physical pains, we could pray together and care for, comfort, help, and encourage one another. All the coworkers shared everything intimately to do a better job at welcoming and taking care of those who couldn't walk. With God's protection, not one person was infected during our Sunday service.



In March 2022, Pastor Qin asked me to be the presider for Sunday services. I was panic-stricken; I had never spoken to so many people before. Preparing the offering prayer especially was a huge challenge for me, a 78-year-old, who hadn't held a pen to paper to write anything in the past decades.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.

John 15:16

Nothing is more reliable and long-lasting than Jesus's love as a disciple of Him. Only when we are touched and motivated by the love of Christ can we be motivated and able to serve the Lord. With the Holy Spirit's guidance and encouragement from Pastor Qin, his wife, and many sisters, I completed this service and grew a lot through it.

Every Thursday afternoon, we had Bible studies and prayer fellowship. Every time we prayed, I always felt that I had little faith and wasn't sure what to say. Pastor Qin's wife helped us with the practice of intercession; I learned that intercession is repeating what God has told us to release His power. Prayers of intercession are guided by the Holy Spirit, to plead to God the Father in the name of Jesus. "So that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you." (John 15:16) When I encountered difficulties serving, being misunderstood, or being tortured by sickness, I relied on the Holy Spirit and prayed. Then I was not afraid. Because of the prayers of brothers and sisters, two sisters who suffered abdominal pains were healed. I believe in God's promise: "...whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:24)

My life has been changed through serving, and I drew closer to God. Even though I can't memorize it all, I still persist in daily devotions, reading the Bible, and prayer. In my heart, I often yearn for God's presence, count my blessings, draw close to God, and am always thinking of Him. God's comfort, peace, and joy will rest in my heart. "... your strength will equal your days." (Deuteronomy 33:25) ◆



From Misunderstanding to Serving

By Lucas Tsai, Main Campus



On Saturday, May 20, our church had a fundraiser carnival for AWANA's Africa School Outreach. I originally thought that I could write this reflection under the shade of a booth, but because I had to perform with the children's band at noon, I had to go to the lobby by myself and practice for two long hours while all the delicious food outside was

continually being consumed. Thanks to the Lord, my wife fortunately still thought to save a zongzi for me, and I managed to get through the performance without making any big mistakes.

I am a coworker at the Family Ministry in CBC's Mandarin congregation. My wife, Sophie, and I, with our three sons (Justin, Austin, and Benjamin) moved here from Houston in 2016. During the pandemic, the worship service which I was involved in for over 10 years came to a complete stop. I was looking for a service to do. I could help with masks. I thought about playing drums because I like to mark the beat when singing. However, I didn't have time to find a professional teacher, so I checked out YouTube to learn from the very basics, starting at how to hold a drumstick.

My service started from a misunderstanding. When the children's program finished, a girl was still sitting in front of the drum set. I happened to carry my drumsticks with me (I was planning to practice when nobody was around), so I went over and wanted to lend my drumsticks to her. Unexpectedly, she said that she didn't know how to play and ran off. At that moment, Pastor Melody from the Children's Ministry came in with a group of kids who were going to practice their worship songs. She thought I was there to help with the drum since I was sitting there. I thought to myself that I'd been trapped by that girl, but I was also afraid to escape, so I bit the bullet and practiced with them for that one time. Because there was no drummer, Pastor Melody asked me to accompany a few more songs, and I readily agreed. Later, I found that the songs they practiced—weren't only for regular service, but also for the Easter performance. This misunderstanding had just grown bigger. My son also said, "Dad, how can you agree to perform before you even learn how to drum?"



But now word was out. My wife fully supported me by purchasing an electronic drum set, and I started checking out YouTube demos during work breaks, albeit on slow play mode. I drew various self-created “clear codes” on the score to help me remember each new rhythm. (These were all foreign to me.) On the day before the performance, I even practiced with the church drum for four hours until my leg cramped, and finally, I narrowly passed.



Later, Jessie and Jack, two drummers at our church, heard of my practice methods and gave me many precious tips and tricks. I started practicing and playing two songs a month. I’m very grateful that I got to know many coworkers and parents through music. I felt that I was more involved in the church.

To sum up my drumming experience, I can use a basketball analogy: “watching an NBA game is always smooth and flowing, but playing in

a small park has dangers springing up all around.” Playing drums is a step of growth for me to learn with humility and overcome myself. Every time I made a few steps after jumping through hurdles, I am assured that it is enough, just by the grace of the Lord.



The Joy in Service

By Fang Ye, TVC

March 11, 2023, Ye Song and I had the honor to serve at the Tijuana refugee center. We were a group of 75 people from different churches in southern California. The weather was not cooperating. We started driving in the heavy rain early in the morning, and we kept praying to the Lord because we were worried that the rain would not stop. When everyone got out of the car, the rain stopped miraculously. Although the roads were muddy and difficult, we were grateful because God had stopped the heavy rain. When we arrived at the refugee center, what we saw were refugees lying on the ground, some in messy clothing. The expressions on their faces were dull, as if they were completely lost in their trauma and pain...

Everyone started working spontaneously and orderly. The youth group was the first to play the guitar and sang "I Give You Glory" in Spanish. It quickly quieted down the chaotic and restless crowd. The singing resounded throughout the church, making people feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. This kind of power replaced the depressed faces of the refugees with smiles. Adults and children raised their hands in unison, praising the amazing God. It was full of joy.



Adult ministries prayed for those in need and Pastor Zhao preached on John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The words of God brought strong emotions among the crowd, and many people came forward to ask Jesus to be their Lord, hoping to be prayed and interceded for. The medical team also didn't want to be outdone. They distributed medicine, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and other health products. Dentists and acupuncturists also treated many patients. We also distributed a lot of food, clothing, and daily necessities together.



A long and memorable day came to an end, but it had left us with a lot to think about. I learned in service that many people still don't know about Jesus. The children here are not in school, and their future is so uncertain, even to drastic changes. It was only during my service there that I realized how blessed and joyful we are to have God's presence! May God enlighten this dark corner and remove the fear and bondage in their hearts. May God grant us a compassionate heart, to be compassionate servants, and be the hands and feet of Jesus. "... Not that we loved God, but that He loved us..." (1 John 4:10) ◆



Come Near to God

By Wendy Weng, Feng Yan Congregation



My husband and I ought to be veteran Christians. But looking back, we have owed God a lot. Before, we only got close and prayed to God when we had difficulties or needed something. However, every prayer was answered. We have been blessed countless times from God's grace.

One day in the midst of the 2020 pandemic, our daily bible group from Feng Yan Congregation read James 4:8, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." I was very touched and be-

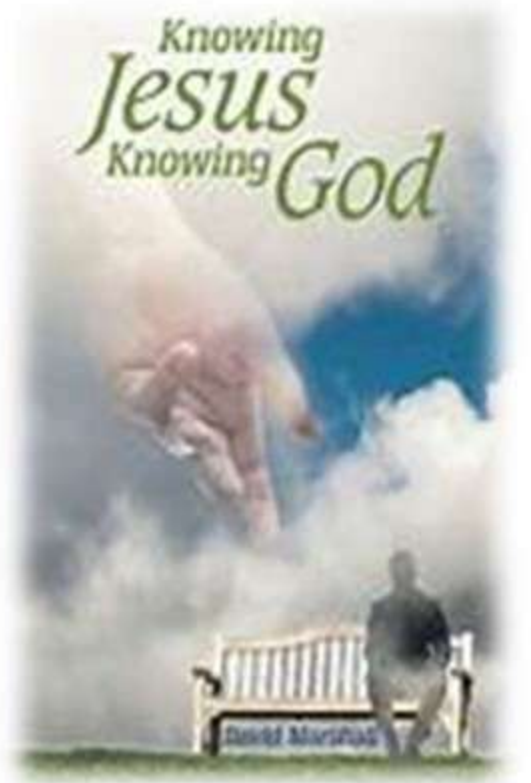
came determined to draw closer to the true living God, grow to know Jesus more, and bring more people to believe in Him. Sister Bei Chen was called by the Holy Spirit to set up a Harp and Bowl online prayer meeting that met twice daily, which I participated with a learning mindset because I knew I wasn't good at praying. With my brothers' and sisters' patience and help, especially Sister Bei Chen who used many Bible verses to help me understand, my spiritual life improved. I also deeply believed that Jesus, with his almighty power, would grant me the ability to pray. For the past two years, I came nearer to God through twice daily prayers, praising Him, and studying His words. God is trustworthy. During those two years, I miraculously and narrowly missed car accidents more than once. It reminds me of Psalm 91, "He is my refuge and my fortress, no harm will overtake you, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways...." Brothers and sisters, God is faithful! When you go near to Him, He is right there with you.

In March this year, my husband and I had to go to China to make arrangements for my father-in-law's funeral. However, we run a Chinese restaurant here. We were a little worried about us both leaving for China since there are many trivial matters with running a restaurant. We were especially worried about the biannual inspection from the Department of Environmental Health and Quality. God seemed to know what we were worried about, and the inspectors came to our restaurant the day before our departure. Thank God that we passed all our inspections and were able to leave with a peace of mind.



I grow more and more in love with God with daily Bible reading and prayers. I am also more assured that God is faithful. When my husband participated in the training for Triple Gospels, I also started evangelizing. Relying on the power and authority granted on me by Jesus Christ, I had the courage to share the Lord's testimony and truth with relatives and friends. In those three months of training, I told 11 friends about the truth of Jesus. 10 of them believe in God! Thanks be to God!

Daily bible reading and prayer is like seeing the Lord face to face. It shows me the glory of the Lord. He not only gives me wisdom, but also a lot of peace and joy. Because of many trivial things related to our business, my husband and I had often bickered. However, now we are more caring to each other. The most exciting thing is that my 7-year-old grandson also likes Jesus. I pray that the life of Jesus is planted in his little heart. My son's family also started going to church for Sunday service now. I would like them to know that the best blessing in life is to get to know Jesus our Lord. ◆



Walk Together in Unity

By Lillian Ran, North Campus

2022 was a year of challenge for my body, heart, and soul! This year can be said to have been of high mountains and low valleys, tears and laughter, busyness and quietness, and being weak and strong. But I must say, "Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago." (Isaiah 25:1) I believe that God is the God who answers prayers without delay, the God who is merciful and gracious, and my dearest Abba Father. Those who trust in Him will not be ashamed. Among many moments, the most touching one was to experience the power of praying with brothers and sisters. Miracles happened in my home.

In November last year, my mother was infected with Covid-19 and was admitted to the hospital. She was later in the ICU. As my mother was already 90 and the virus had claimed so many elderly people's lives, you can imagine how nerve-wracking it was for me. Because it was





Lord,
Hear Our
Prayer

infectious, the hospital didn't allow family members to accompany or visit. My mother doesn't know English and couldn't communicate directly with the doctors and nurses, and due to dementia, she often refused to cooperate for her treatment. Situations like these made me feel like I was on pins and needles. These many circumstances overtook my inner peace and plunged me into an abyss, breathless. But thanks be to God! He had not forsaken me. He didn't leave me in such a situation for long. The Holy Spirit led

me to share my mother's hospitalization and conditions with the pastors and the church, and to ask brothers and sisters to pray for my mother's health and healing.

After asking my brothers and sisters to pray for my mother, my heart began to calm. Knowing that God was there, and many brothers and sisters were caring and praying, my heart was at ease, and I no longer felt alone. During the treatment process, the doctor exhausted almost all methods and finally informed me that my mother, in her current state, might not survive the night. When I heard the doctor's words, my tears overflowed uncontrollably. I felt like I was being stabbed; my heart was racing, and panic and fear struck me again. The doctor said that if there was anything we wanted to do or say, to do it then, and that we had tried our best. In fact, at the time, my mother was already in a coma with her eyes and lips closed tightly, but we firmly believed that she could still hear us. So, we held her hand and laid our hands on her body and head, cheered her up, and prayed to God. Prayed, prayed, and prayed, until something wonderful happened – my mother's blood oxygen started shooting up. The doctors and nurses gathered around in disbelief. They said that my mom would be fine if such a situation held. We said that it was God. Our God heard our prayers and healed my mom! Doctors and nurses all agreed that they saw us praying and it was miraculous!

I believe that God has heard every word of our prayers, loud or silent. Brothers' and sisters' united prayers also are the source of our strength, faith, and peace. Maybe we didn't pray in the same place at the same time, but our God is all-knowing and all-powerful. What doctors and nurses can't do with medicine is not impossible with our Father! Hallelujah, praise the Lord! All glory to Him. Finally, I would like to share Romans 15:5-6, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." May the word of God be your blessing. May brothers' and sisters' unified prayers bring redemption and healing to all the people. May God bless you all! ♦



May the GOD who gives
endurance and encouragement
give you a spirit of unity.

Returning Home

By Bei Chen, Central Campus



When CBC Central Campus was just established, I was baptized for half a year. God prepared a spiritual home on Earth for me, but it took 20 years to bring me back home.

At that time, I had no appetite for God's word. I could stay up late reading novels and watching TV series, but as soon as I picked up the Bible, I would fall asleep after reading a few lines. In the spring of 2006, I was laid off by my company, but during the process, I experienced God and was born again. I discovered that not only could I read the Bible, but I also enjoyed reading it.

In less than half a year, I finished reading the entire Bible for the first time. From then on, I have longed for God's word and the filling of the Holy Spirit. God also led me to attend many conferences where the Holy Spirit was anointing me, and I was never tired of it.

I am grateful for God's preparation and guidance, and for the brothers and sisters and the church who have blessed me in many ways. But back then I was like a teenager, thinking it was so nice outside but boring at home. During the 10th anniversary of Central Campus in 2013, I was at a conference in Redding, and I felt I was pursuing God in this way. The conference was like living in heaven for me. On the last night of the conference, I was looking for my car at the parking lot. There was a very clear voice inside me, saying, "Go home." But I said to myself, "I want to move here." But the voice inside was still calling, "Go home." I said, "That's not my home." I was almost about to cry. I truly wanted to move my home to Redding. But the word of God is powerful. After that, although I said for a long time that I didn't think that Central Campus was my spiritual home, I never thought of going to Redding again.



In the conferences I attended, apart from the sermons, I especially liked the worship. When I went back to Central Campus, during the Sunday worship I was sometimes very involved, and sometimes I was judging.

I held “my ruler” to measure, ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and felt that I was particularly spiritual. Right before Christmas in 2014, I attended an intensive worship training. A speaker said that different



nations and different churches have different styles of worship. She asked us which was better, to worship with joy and enthusiasm, or worship with more reserved quietness? What is worship? Why worship? What she said stung my heart. I cried loudly before the Lord and deeply repented. Yes, it is the Lord who deserves to be worshiped with all our hearts.



After that training, our small group met at night, and I was the one who led worship. It happened that sister Jasmine was in our meeting that night. After the group meeting, she invited me to join the church worship team. In the process of serving, I experienced the grace of God’s rebuilding. At first, I was very concerned and insisted on the flow of the songs I arranged. I was afraid that if it wasn’t for this flow, God’s presence would not be great. Slowly, God opened my eyes and let me see that He is delighted to see we are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The brothers and sisters in my team and I all drink from the same Holy Spirit. It is more pleasing to God to see us love one another earnestly. He will fill us with His own presence.

Thank you, God, for giving me a spiritual home. God gives me the best. He made me no longer a consumer, but a family member. He is taking me home step by step. ◆

"The way to **Heaven** is ascending; we must be content to travel uphill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh."

Jonathan **Edwards**



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