

Graceland

CBCSD Newsletter #38

October 15, 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,

The theme of this issue is "My Home My Church - My Family (Members)." Those who share include some new members to this spiritual family of CBCSD, or brothers and sisters who have been in this family for a long time; some are young, and some are older. They share their feelings about the family, fond memories, special experiences, and some unforgettable experiences they had here at the church family. Hope we get to know more about our family members.

My Home My Church - My Family (Members)

My Testimony & Calling

By Rev. Tony Hao,
Lord's Grace (English) Congregation Pastor



I was born and raised in Manila, Philippines. I grew up in a traditional Chinese family where religion was syncretic and pragmatic. On a typical Sunday, my family would attend Catholic mass in the morning, then worship at a Buddhist temple in the afternoon. Before going home, my family would stop by the local Taoist shrine to say some prayers. At that time, there was no conflict in faith, as it was seen to be ultimately beneficial.

When I started high school, I began searching for a personal relationship with God. It was then that a friend introduced me to Christian radio (Far East Broadcasting Co. FEBC), and specifically the program "Back to the Bible." On October 30, 1979, I heard Dr. Theodore Epp share from Eph 2:8-9 on how one is saved by grace through faith in Christ. On that day I trusted in Christ alone, and was truly saved.

Soon after, I began to attend Grace Christian Church where our pastor was teaching through the Book of Revelation. Understanding that our Lord will return again, I realized the need to live for Him and share His Gospel with others. I began to serve the Lord at our local church, and received God's call into Christian ministry. My steadfast purpose in life is to be pastor and teacher for God's people. As the Lord enables and leads, I commit to serve Him faithfully all the days of my life, together with my wife, Jennifer, and our sons, Nathan and Joel.

Indeed, there is joy in serving Jesus since I trusted Him as my Savior and Lord in 1979. I can summarize my Christian service in three time periods of my life: Student Ministry (1979-1990), Pastoral Ministry (1990-2009), and Teaching Ministry (2009-2022).

- **STUDENT MINISTRY** - I served as youth ministry leader at Grace Christian Church, leading Bible Study and youth activities. I continued serving through college. I was also involved with Campus Crusade for Christ at California State Polytechnic University. I participated and led in evangelism outreaches and short-term mission trips in the US and Philippines.
- **PASTORAL MINISTRY** - Having studied and graduated with my MDiv and ThM at Talbot School of Theology, I served for 15 years at the Evangelical Formosan Church in Walnut CA, then served for 4 years at Dallas Chinese Bible Church in Richardson TX. My ministry included preaching and teaching at my local and daughter churches. I was committed to discipleship and leadership development. For five of those years, I served as mission director of our denomination where I led mission trips to Mexico and Taiwan.
- **TEACHING MINISTRY** - For the past 13 years (2009-2022), I have had the joy of serving as missionary-faculty at the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines. I taught courses in hermeneutics, homiletics, pastoral ministry, and New Testament studies. Representing the seminary, I preached and led seminars in churches throughout the country. I met with local church and community leaders regularly. Together, under my administrative leadership, we strategized and implemented effective plans. I was also involved in faculty and student recruitment each year.

Since I started serving the Lord in 1990, I have held the words of the apostle Paul in Colossians 1:28-29 near and dear to my heart and life. First and foremost, it is "Him we preach." It's all about and

nothing other than the Lord Jesus, and “Him crucified” (1 Co 2:2). It is the person and work of our Lord that is paramount in everything I do. For this reason, we “warn (solemnly exhort unto repentance) every man, teaching (instruct from all part of Scripture) every man in all wisdom (with all clarity and effectiveness).” The desired result is that “we may present every man perfect (complete and enable to obey) in Christ Jesus.” In the same way, like Paul, I commit to “labor (with full dedication and skill), striving according to His working which works in me mightily (acknowledging the complete dependence on the Holy Spirit’s enabling work in and through me).” This can only be achieved, again like the apostle Paul, when I count all as loss for Christ, and “be found in Him, not having my own righteousness ... but that which is through faith in Christ ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering being conformed to His death” (Phil 3:9-10). This is at the core of my life, teaching, and ministry. ♦



Yihui Chang, Main Campus

On June 11, I was baptized into the name of the Lord, joining the CBCSD spiritual family. Thanks be to our Lord; glory to Him!

It was the beginning of September when I first came to CBCSD.

Since June last year, my health started deteriorating due to my concerns for my child. I was overly anxious. The anxiety plunged me into depression without me realizing it. I couldn’t sleep at night for a very long time. Until one day, while I was driving to work, I started crying for no reason. This was a wakeup call that made me recognize my depression. At that time, a good friend of mine was a sister from CBCSD. I asked her to take me to church for Sunday worship service, and this changed my life. During Sunday worship, I sat in the corner and listened to hymns, and my tears kept flowing. For the first half hour, I emptied out the sadness with tears and then refilled my life by listening to the sermons. Just like this, I began coming to Sunday worship every week, and my heart gradually felt more at ease as I started gaining strength. I wanted to become a better person, full of love, believing in love, practicing love, and willingly giving like my brothers and sisters in Christ.

At the end of September, I joined the 7th Happiness Group. The passionate, loving hearts of the group leader as well as the coworkers touched my heart, and I felt more at peace. At the last meeting of the Happiness Group, I made my confession under the guidance of a sister. I finished the baptism class early December, and I was

planning to be baptized during Christmas. However, when I considered my family's more traditional views, I wished to communicate with them first and gain their support on my trip to Taiwan. Unfortunately, my plan for baptism was unsuccessful. I could sense my father's displeasure as the first-born son that I wouldn't fulfill the responsibility of worshiping my ancestors.

This May, I wanted to sign up for the baptism. Feeling defeated by all the obstacles, I decided to talk to my child first and let him know that I had committed to Jesus. I hoped that he could understand and support me. My child could feel that I was trying to be a better, more supportive mom. So he told me, "Don't worry mom, I can take your place to worship our ancestors." Praise God! I was overjoyed at that moment.



On the morning of the baptism, after I prayed to God, I gathered my courage to call to my parents in Taiwan. I told them how I experienced the valley of depression throughout the past year and how my reliance on the Christian faith made me a better person and a support to my family, instead of a burden. My parents, who are still extremely traditional, told me, "As long as you are happy, do what you want to. The tradition of worshipping our ancestors can be discontinued by our generation; don't worry." I praise God for doing miraculous work in my parents' hearts. I am so thankful!

I am now taking the discipleship training course, learning how to become a true Christian and a person delightful to God's eye. I hope I can be like other brothers and sisters, filled with joy, hope and peace while helping others. CBC is a such place: a family full of joy, warmth, and love. ♦



John Guo, Temecula Valley Campus

In the valley between Los Angeles and San Diego lies a small city known for its wineries and tourism – Temecula, my hometown. As a Chinese resident in the minority here, far from the more populated Chinese communities, I naturally longed for a spiritual home nearby with a group of brothers and sisters with a similar culture and language. Thanks to the Lord, I found such a home not too far away from the city center. God has led me to this home with unwavering

steps, first through online worship and then through physical gatherings. I've been here for over half a year now. Unlike other churches which have their own buildings or are located in city centers, our church is very small and housed in a rented space in a school. Still, none of that has diminished its ability to serve as our spiritual home and lighthouse, and as the epicenter and receptor of love and hope embodied by brothers and sisters and seekers alike from the surrounding area.

Our pastor and his wife are as hard-working as bees; they arrive early at the church on Sunday mornings to set up seating and prepare for worship. Likewise, Tom greets brothers and sisters at the church



gate every Sunday, essentially the living logo of the church. He's kinder and even more charming than Colonel Sanders from KFC and was the first person I met when I came to the church. Since Sunday sermons are bilingual, we also have very skilled interpreters who can always keep up, no matter how fast the speaker talks. Sitting among the audience, I sometimes end up worried for them, but always end up relieved. In addition, thanks to dedicated media workers, I was able to join online worship, get to know the church, and listen to God's word – all online. Their ministry is like opening a window to the church for those online. Regardless of where you are, you can worship God through this window. Meanwhile, in-person, standing alongside Tom at the church gate are our brothers and sisters who serve as ushers. Every Sunday, they welcome every brother and sister and new friend enthusiastically and warmly. "Good morning" and "早" resonate at the church gate. Some thoughtful sisters also bring nicely prepared refreshments for everyone to enjoy after worship. I'm honored to have become a part of the usher team. Every time I stand next to Tom, I am reminded of the first time I entered the church gate. Of course, we can't forget the coworkers who take care of and teach the children in Sunday School. They are like gardeners and provide peace of mind for brothers and sisters with children, allowing them to worship the Lord without worrying about childcare. There are many other lovely brothers and sisters here who care for each other, greet each other, and are not just acquaintances but rather a big family in Christ.

I thank God for leading me to this spiritual home and for allowing me to meet more brothers and sisters here. May the spiritual seeds in our big family here grow into even larger flowers and bear more fruit. ◆

The Birth of a New Life at North Campus

By Qiaoqiao Yang, North Campus

I came to know Sister Lijing when we hosted her at the request of a mutual friend. She was supposed to arrive and stay in LA where her daughter would pursue post-graduate studies, but ended up having to be housed in Carlsbad, a city near our church instead, for three weeks due to some logistics mishap. I picked her up at the airport on Wednesday and took her grocery shopping at Costco on Thursday. While we were at Costco, I casually mentioned, "I've already had zongzi for the Dragon Boat Festival at our church today."

"Church? Can I join too?" Sister Lijing asked me.

It turned out that Sister Lijing had a very close friend. Both her friend and her friend's husband went to the same high school as Lijing. The couple immigrated to the United States many years ago, and the husband passed away around the age of 50. When this friend visited China later, she stayed at Sister Lijing's home. She shared how she had survived the grief over her husband's premature passing with the support of her brothers and sisters at church and the comforting and encouraging words from God. Sister Lijing had also experienced the loss of elderly family members and seeing the peace and resilience in her friend despite the grave loss of a loved one, she became curious about the source of power behind her friend's transformative journey.

So, I asked Sister Xuening to give us a ride to our church the following Sunday. The brothers and sisters at North campus gave Sister Lijing their usual warm welcome. Brother Zimin from the Evangelism Explosion III team made arrangements to share the gospel with Sister Lijing via Zoom at 7:30 the next evening.

On Monday night, the four coworkers from the Evangelism Explosion team prayed for Sister Lijing 30 minutes before the scheduled Zoom meeting. Previously, they had also shared the prayer request in the North Campus prayer group, so a lot of brothers and sisters also prayed about it. During the one-and-a-half-hour gospel presentation that night, many of Sister Lijing's questions were answered, and without any hesitation, she said the prayer to accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior.



As we were about to end the call, one of the coworkers suddenly asked, "Is your classmate in North Dakota? Is her name Zhao Xiaojun?"

"Yes, that's right," Sister Lijing replied in disbelief.

"When you shared your classmate's experience, it sounded very much like the story of a sister I knew from my previous church. I wondered if it might be her."

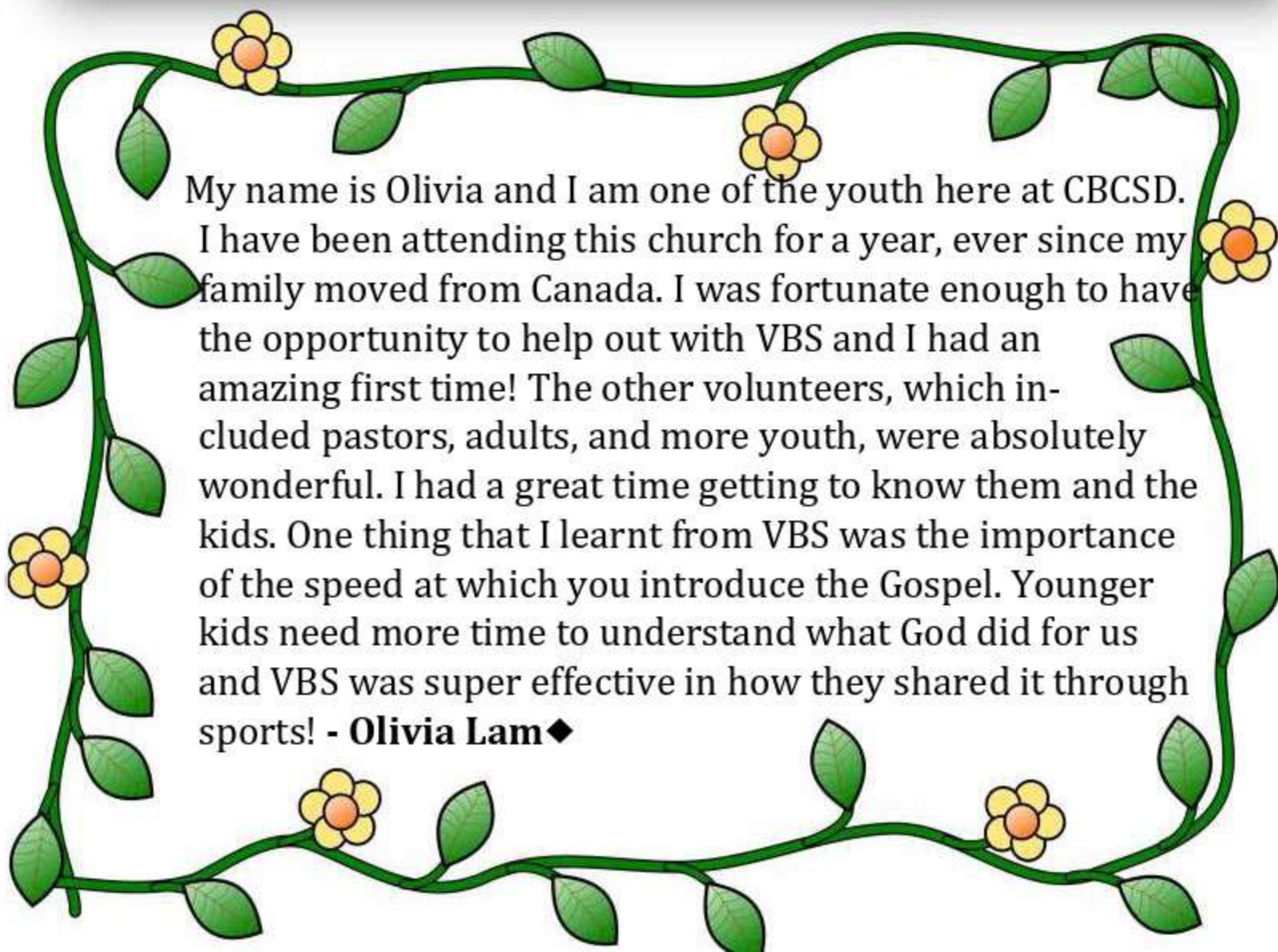
Wow! Everyone was amazed at the fact that someone on the evangelism team would know Sister Lijing's classmate. All agreed that this was not a mere coincidence, but rather a miracle, confirming God's powerful guidance over Sister Lijing's journey to faith!

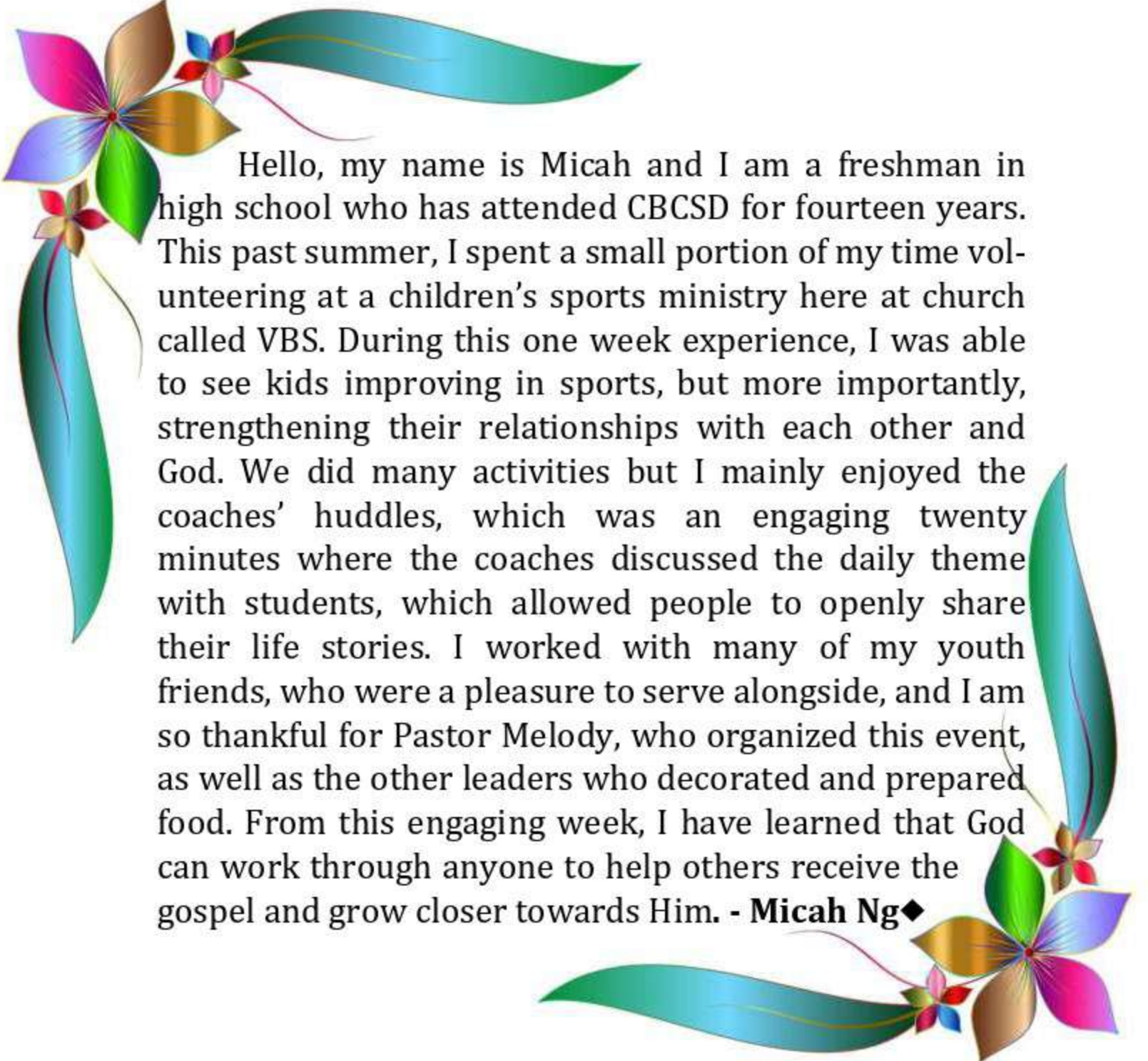
Sister Min from the Evangelism Explosion team shared a verse later on to mark the occasion: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you." (John 15:16)

Amen! Praise the Lord! ♦



My name is Olivia and I am one of the youth here at CBCSD. I have been attending this church for a year, ever since my family moved from Canada. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to help out with VBS and I had an amazing first time! The other volunteers, which included pastors, adults, and more youth, were absolutely wonderful. I had a great time getting to know them and the kids. One thing that I learnt from VBS was the importance of the speed at which you introduce the Gospel. Younger kids need more time to understand what God did for us and VBS was super effective in how they shared it through sports! - **Olivia Lam** ♦





Hello, my name is Micah and I am a freshman in high school who has attended CBCSD for fourteen years. This past summer, I spent a small portion of my time volunteering at a children's sports ministry here at church called VBS. During this one week experience, I was able to see kids improving in sports, but more importantly, strengthening their relationships with each other and God. We did many activities but I mainly enjoyed the coaches' huddles, which was an engaging twenty minutes where the coaches discussed the daily theme with students, which allowed people to openly share their life stories. I worked with many of my youth friends, who were a pleasure to serve alongside, and I am so thankful for Pastor Melody, who organized this event, as well as the other leaders who decorated and prepared food. From this engaging week, I have learned that God can work through anyone to help others receive the gospel and grow closer towards Him. - **Micah Ng**◆



Experiencing God's Great Love

**By Xiaohan Jin,
Downtown Worship Center**

I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior at the lowest point in my life and was baptized at CBCSD on February 19th, 2011. I have been a believer ever since and regarded the church as my eternal home!

On the evening of March 3, 2022, I accidentally fell from a swivel chair and couldn't move at all, as if all the bones in my body had fallen apart. During my previous checkups, my doctor had already cautioned me to avoid any falls as I had severe osteoporosis, so I thought Jesus was going to take me home when I fell from the chair. I wasn't afraid, though. My nose was bleeding nonstop, and blood was coming out of my mouth. I immediately asked Brother Qiu from the same apartment complex for help, and he quickly called 911. I was rushed to the hospital and taken into the emergency room. The examinations revealed some fractures and slight

displacements in my browbone and cheekbone. After an in-depth evaluation of my condition and overall health history, the experts in my medical team decided not to perform any surgery but to opt for conservative treatment.

After the fall, the right side of my face was severely swollen and turned dark purple all the way down to my neck. My teeth on the right side also became loose and caused so much pain that I could only consume liquid and semi-liquid foods. In addition, I had bruises all over my body and joint pain. Getting dressed and taking a walk became difficult.



God's great love is everywhere. On the second day of my admission to the emergency room, the resident pastor in the hospital prayed for me. Although I couldn't understand, his prayer warmed my heart. On the third day, after I was transferred to the rehabilitation center, the resident pastor prayed for me again, and I felt that the Lord was comforting me right by my side. The Bible says, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). I entrusted myself to the Lord despite my painful medical condition and felt that I was improving every day and was full of hope.

During my hospital stay, I had a CT scan of my eye socket done. After taking the scan, the nursing staff pushed my wheelchair to a row of chairs in the lobby and left me there to wait for the driver to take me back to the rehabilitation center. A moment later, someone approached me and began speaking to me. I couldn't understand, so I used the translation app on my phone. His message was, "You might feel lonely and hopeless, but Jesus is with you. He will help you, and you will get better!" I couldn't help but well up. I told him that I was a Christian and asked if he was a pastor. He replied that he was. I was so grateful for the Lord! The Lord has been with me all along, constantly reminding me that I am his beloved child.

One time, after a follow-up examination, I was in the lobby waiting for my ride. A pastor happened to be giving a sermon at the time. I listened quietly. After the sermon, he approached me and said, "I also prayed for you!" Such is the great love of the Lord, ever present and everywhere I go.

During my hospitalization and rehabilitation, my pastors from CBCSD, along with my brothers and sisters in Christ, prayed contin-

uously for my peace and health. Pastor Qin even organized a prayer group specifically for me, feeding me with spiritual nourishment and support from God's Word. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). Guided by the Holy Spirit, I held onto my faith and kept up with my physical rehabilitation regime, since I knew the Lord would always be there for me regardless of the circumstances, and I would always have hope in Him.

After I was discharged from the hospital and returned home, the brothers and sisters in my apartment complex showered me with great love and took care of every aspect of my life. God comforted and encouraged me through the acts of all these caring fellow human beings. I will forever cherish them in my heart as my very own family. As an elderly person in my 80s, I can still move freely and serve the Lord without any physical limitations. This in itself was a miracle, and it was the Lord Himself who healed me!

As time flies by quickly, I often thank the Lord for this experience. I pledge to serve the Lord in even greater capacity, share His amazing grace with the world, and become the salt and light to the world.

May all the glory go to the Lord our God! Amen! ♦



EDITORIAL GROUP MEMBERS:

Pastor Wanda Lam, Pastor Donald Liu, Becky Tsai, Emily Xu, XiaoQiong Dong, Joyce Yu, Lan Tang, Zoe Xu, Jojo Xu, Michael Hsu, Margaret Lee & Vivian Chiu.

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