

# church

THE CHURCH IN SINGAPORE



# times

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## From The Elders' Room...



**H**ow quickly time has flown, we are now in December 2017! Praise the Lord for keeping us through all this time! Much has happened from the last time we were sharing from the elders' room.

The last few months, particularly August, saw the occurrence of so many natural disasters, like hurricanes Harvey and Irma which lashed the gulf states of the United States, hurricane Jose hitting Central America, the devastating earthquake in Mexico and many others. With all these natural calamities and wars and rumours of wars, we can be easily persuaded to view all these as "signs" of the Lord's imminent return. Many are waiting for the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians that will signal the start of the last seven years spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

Dear brothers and sisters, are we to be captivated by all these things? Or should we? When Jesus was asked by His disciples on the Mount of Olives, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?", His reply was, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Mark 13: 4-5).

Yes, these happenings can be a cause for concern for all Christians who await the Lord's return eagerly. "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ... All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matt 24:5-8) However, the Lord also reminded His disciples and all around, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father", and exhorted them to "Take heed, watch

and pray; for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).

From this discourse on the Mount of Olives, we can see that the Lord wants us all to watch and pray; not for when these things will be or for what the signs will be. Rather, He wants us to watch our daily living, that we are ever ready to meet Him when He returns. To be watchful, we need to pray, to be in constant contact with our Lord. This way we will know His heart's desire and can respond accordingly.

In our recent Service Retreat held in King's Green Hotel, Malacca, many of us had a good time to Reflect, Refresh and Recalibrate (our 3Rs).

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|--------------------|--|
| <b>REFLECT</b>     | – to see how our life has grown.                         |
| <b>REFRESH</b>     | – our vision and our service to the Lord and His church. |
| <b>RECALIBRATE</b> | – ourselves for His service.                             |

It is our prayer that all who attended the Retreat will gain much as we reflect on the past, refresh the present and recalibrate for the days ahead.

As 2017 draws to a close and 2018 comes around, it is an opportune time for us to encourage and exhort each other to watch and pray, for each sunset brings us a day closer to the Lord's return. Let us therefore take heed, watch and pray, for we do not know when the time is (Mark 13:33).

# Loving One Another



## Why we need to love one another

**O**ur God is not only a God of love, He is love, His nature is love. He wants us, His people who have a relationship with Him, to manifest Him by our conduct and so attest to the reality that He is with us. “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”; “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him”; “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment” (1 John 4:8, 16; 3:23).

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:10-11) We sinners deserve God’s wrath, but in His great love, **He gave His only Son to die for us on the cross as our sin offering**, so that we may escape His righteous judgement and wrath. If God so loved us, we also ought to love our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.” (1 John 5:1) **We are born of God** and have His life of love, so naturally we love the members of His family. Romans 8:29 says Christ is the firstborn among many brethren. God is our Father, Jesus Christ is our eldest Brother, and we are all brethren.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34) **The Lord Jesus commanded, not suggested, that we love one another**, i.e. it is not optional but mandatory. The apostle John reiterated: “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”; “And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also”; “And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another” (1 John 3:11; 4:21; 2 John 5). Today the Holy Spirit in our spirit likewise reminds us to keep this commandment.

## How we show our love for God & the brethren

The Lord’s followers are a community that loves one another. In this fallen and sinful world where people hurt one another, our love for one another is a most powerful testimony. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:2-3) It is not sufficient to just say we love God. **Our love for God is shown in obeying His commandments**. True love delights in living out the will of God who loves us.

**“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren**. He who does not love his brother abides in death”; “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”; “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:14; John 13:35; 1 John 3:16). **Jesus Christ set the standard of love by sacrificing His life for us**. Therefore we also ought to love one another with His sacrificial love.

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”; “Therefore, putting away lying, **‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour,’** for we are members of one another” (Eph 4:29, 25). We should practise speaking the truth and words of edification in love.

**“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”**; “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Eph 6:18; James 5:16).

**“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”** (Gal 6:2) A burden is an unbearable load. When someone in God’s house has such a burden, those who can should learn to share and lighten his load, e.g., “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17)

**“Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality”**; “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another” (Rom 12:13, 10). Being offended is inevitable, so both the Lord and Paul teach us: “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses”; “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do”; “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Mark 11:26; Col 3:13; Eph 4:32).

“But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak”; **“But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ”** (1 Cor 8:9, 12). In the church, we cannot just act according to our views without considering if our actions may affect someone’s conscience. We must examine if what we do is out of love. “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another,

## Youth & Young People's Camp – 11-14 June 2017

We give thanks to the Lord for the 38 youths who attended this year's camp. In the previous two camps, we looked at faith and hope respectively; this year, the Lord led us to consider love. Our burden was for the youths to appreciate more of God's love and to translate it practically into loving one another and spreading God's Word to their friends.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us." (1 John 4:7-12)

The youths were first asked to respond to three key questions on a scale of one to ten:

1. How much do you think your parents/siblings love you?
2. How much do you think God loves you?



*Let's learn to love one another!*

*Continued from page 2*

as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10). The Holy Spirit has given each of us at least one spiritual gift. Let us use them to serve one another as good stewards.

### The result of loving one another

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight"; "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him"; "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us" (1 John 3:22, 24; 4:12). Our love for one another expresses God visibly.

**"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may**

3. If you neglect/forsake God, how much do you think God loves you?

After this self-discovery activity, each was asked to write a love letter to God. Then they were exhorted to show God's love in very practical ways. In their respective groups, the youths went through some of the following questions and came up with their personal and group plans:

1. Are there any deeds you can do for your family members? Help a younger sibling with his homework? Do some cleaning chores to lessen your parents' burden? Spend some time to talk to your family members instead of isolating yourself in your room?
2. Are there brothers or sisters in your age group who have not been coming to church meetings? Have you sought them out to see if they are alright? What can you do to bring them back?
3. Are there ways for you to connect with saints who are not meeting? E.g. form study groups/group chats, go out for meals, hiking, biking, etc?

Finally, the youths were encouraged to look forward to the time when the Lord will come back for us and His kingdom. May we be inspired to love God and others as we eagerly await the Lord's appearing!



*Together we prevail!*

**have boldness in the day of judgement" (1 John 4:17).** If we love one another, we will see "how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa 133:1) Besides our personal walk with the Lord, whether we can receive God's blessings for the corporate body depends on our relationship with one another. Therefore, if we desire to have an impact on those around us, we have no other way except to love one another.

While loving one another does not seem to be a profound truth that requires much attention, God's blessings upon our oneness and love are tremendous. Whether we love one another can even affect our standing in the day of judgement. May the Lord grant the church grace and strength to live out the reality of loving one another, amen!



## Adults Retreat – 11-14 June 2017

The theme was “Joy in the fellowship with God”. Our objective was to encourage the saints to lead a life that is constantly seeking the Lord. The programme consisted of group activities and messages, which focused on Psalms 95, 32 and 63 to anchor our objective.

Our fellowship was about the need to know our God, and the importance of living a holy life and having an intimate relationship with God. We also had fellowship about the attitudes of the psalmists who wrote these three psalms: to be pro-active, humble and obedient, and to have a teachable heart. In conclusion, we prayed that God would grant us all a pure heart for Him.

### Sharing

The fellowship on Psalms 32, 63 and 95 helped me to understand more of the Lord’s heart’s desire for His church/bride. The saints’ sharing of how real the Lord was, especially in tough times, uplifted me to the point I regained strength from the Lord to run this spiritual race. I also learned to seek the Lord and place Him on the throne of my heart, and to deal with the leaven in my heart that prevents me from enjoying His blessings. The Lord desires to tabernacle with us. However, we often place ourselves first instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to govern our lives. That is why we need to lead a life of daily repentance in order to have that sweet fellowship our God so desires with man.

## Elderly’s Outing – 5 September 2017

This time the outing started at 1pm. In the morning it rained, but by noon the skies had cleared. We were full of thanksgiving for the Lord’s grace and mercy, knowing that He had arranged the rain to make the day cooler.

The 77 of us took two private buses to the Pasir Panjang Ferry Terminal for the ten-minute boat ride to Pulau Semakau. After learning about the development of and plans for the Samakau Landfill, we were amazed that incinerated ash could be put to such use, just like we, the



*They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight (Ps 16:3b)*



*United we stand!*

Although the game we played was mainly for fun, it was also meaningful as we had to go through different stations to rescue the “victims”. The unity among the brothers and sisters in each team, no matter how old or young, made the game special. The same principle applies to the church. Without unity among the saints, how can the church prosper for His glory?

At the retreat, I could see the love of God among the brothers and sisters, be it playing a game or having a scrumptious meal together. Meeting the brethren in Christ is where I find the true peace and joy which are everlasting. It is like coming home where I can feel the presence of His agape love. I am looking forward to the next retreat and pray that the Lord will continue to secure the bond among us, to build His kingdom and prepare us for His second coming. Glory be to God!

*Sis Bianca Coyuco*

dress of the world, could be fit for the Lord’s use after His transformation. May the Lord encourage us!

### Sharings:

1. When I went to fetch a sister, it was pouring, but we were full of faith, knowing God was faithful and would give us the best. By noon, it was sunny! Our God is truly great!

*Sis Mary Ting*

2. The outing went smoothly, as if the Lord Himself was there leading us. He heard our prayer and gave us excellent weather. The cool breeze, clear sky, blue sea and radiant faces of the saints made me feel like in paradise. The Lord was the Director and we could experience His presence everywhere. We also have 3Rs: Rejoice, Rejoice, Rejoice!

*Bro Neo T.K.*

3. When we were taking a group photo, surprisingly our tour guide asked us to shout “Hallelujah, amen!” Overjoyed, we responded loudly, “Hallelujah, amen!” not just once but a few times! Thank the Lord for reminding us, through the prebeliever tour guide, to also give thanks when having fun!

*Sis Twan T.H.*

## Horatio Gates Spafford (1828–1888)

Spafford was a prominent American lawyer and Presbyterian church elder. He is best known for penning the Christian hymn “It Is Well With My Soul”, following a family tragedy in which his four daughters died aboard the S. S. Ville du Havre on a transatlantic voyage.

Spafford married Anna Larsen of Stavanger, Norway on September 5, 1861, in Chicago. The Spaffords were well known in 1860s Chicago. He was a prominent lawyer, a senior partner in a large and thriving law firm. He and his wife were also prominent supporters and close friends of evangelist Dwight L. Moody.

Spafford invested in real estate north of an expanding Chicago in the spring of 1871. When the Great Fire of Chicago reduced the city to ashes in October of that same year, it also destroyed most of Spafford’s sizable investment.

In 1873, Spafford decided his family should take a holiday somewhere in Europe, and chose England, knowing that his friend D. L. Moody would be preaching there in the fall. He was delayed because of business, so he sent his family ahead: his wife and their four children, daughters eleven-year-old Anna “Annie”, nine-year-old Margaret Lee “Maggie”, five-year-old Elizabeth “Bessie”, and two-year-old Tanetta.

On November 22, 1873, while crossing the Atlantic on the steamship Ville du Havre, their ship was struck by an iron sailing vessel and 226 people lost their lives, including all four of Spafford’s daughters. Anna Spafford survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford beginning “Saved alone.” Spafford then sailed to England, going over the location of his daughters’ deaths. According to Bertha Spafford Vester, a daughter born after the tragedy, Spafford wrote “It Is Well With My Soul” on this journey.

Following the sinking of the Ville du Havre, Anna gave birth to three more children. In August 1881, the Spaffords set out for Jerusalem as a party of thirteen adults and three

children and set up the American Colony. Colony members, later joined by Swedish Christians, engaged in philanthropic work amongst the people of Jerusalem regardless of their religious affiliation and without proselytizing motives – thereby gaining the trust of the local Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities. During and immediately after World War I, the American Colony played a critical role in supporting these communities through the great suffering and deprivations of the Eastern front by running soup kitchens, hospitals, orphanages and other charitable ventures.

Four days shy of his 60th birthday, Spafford died on October 16, 1888, of malaria, and was buried in Mount Zion Cemetery, Jerusalem.

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say,  
“It is well, it is well with my soul!”*

*It is well with my soul!  
It is well, it is well with my soul!*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

*My sin – oh, the bliss of this glorious thought –  
My sin, not in part, but the whole,  
Is nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more;  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live;  
If dark hours about me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.*

*And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,  
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,  
“Even so” – it is well with my soul.*

(Extracted from Wikipedia)

*Continued from page 4*

## Children’s Camp – 7-9 June 2017

We are grateful to the Lord and praise Him that more than 70 children attended the camp! The theme was “The Christian Adventure”. We adapted some teachings and lessons from John Bunyan’s classic “The Pilgrim’s Progress” to present our Christian journey in today’s context. Our burden was to show the children that in our Christian walk, God is always here guiding us, no matter what we encounter along the way.

The key verses were Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”

The Adventure started with a skit showing the protagonist Christian being troubled by the thought of

being in a destructive city and deciding to journey to the Celestial City. The children went on to experience different stages that Christian passed through, along with games, Bible-reflection and other activities. They were each given a personal passport with stamps and verses to mark their completion of each stage of the journey. We enjoyed a morning of fun at the Hort Park too. The Adventure ended with the children entering the Celestial City, cheered on by the serving ones. Parents were also invited to cheer their children on as they presented songs of worship and praises to the Lord.

We give heartfelt thanks to the serving ones, youths and helpers who prayed for and served in the camp. We also give thanks and glory to the Lord for blessing us abundantly. We pray that the children will remember to trust in the Lord and be brave in this journey. May the Lord continue to strengthen them as they walk this narrow path to the Celestial City!



## The Prince of Peace and Immanuel

### The period of storms and insecurity

I was born in 1964 into a traditional Chinese family. My parents were shocked when they learnt that I was born visually handicapped. They were clueless about how to raise such a child. My mother was especially devastated and felt responsible for my condition. She was very protective and so kept me at home by her side, which made me feel insecure and unable to take care of myself. Thus I began my formal education only when I reached 11, after strong urging by an ophthalmologist. From 1975 to 1979, I spent most of my time in a special school, coming home only for the weekends.

When I was eight, my father died of a heart attack. In the next seven years, the burden on my mother to bring up the family took its toll on her health. She contracted breast cancer but kept it to herself and sought medical attention too late. On our last weekend together, I had the uneasy sense that her end was near. So I stayed by her bedside and wept uncontrollably. On the following Monday when I said goodbye to her, she could only moan in pain. On Thursday, my second sister brought me the dreaded news. Staring at my mother's lifeless face, I was so numbed with grief that I could not cry out. I felt totally lost and despaired at the thought of what would happen to me.

I had barely overcome my grief when tragedy struck again in the year following. My eldest sister was swept away by waves at St. John's Island. By 16, I had lost three loved ones! I was dogged by thoughts of bad luck and constantly expected the worst to happen. My feeling of insecurity intensified and I began to question the hand of God in all these misfortunes.

### The struggle with God

I first encountered Jesus when a Christian group came to my primary school to conduct Sunday school. I enjoyed singing hymns and was told Jesus loved all of us. After my mother's death, I began to doubt: If Jesus truly loved me, why did He let terrible things happen to me? My doubt deepened after losing my eldest sister. Where was God when my father, mother and sister died untimely deaths?

At 16, I was bitter and far away from God. Since God did not exist as far as I was concerned, I would depend on myself. I tried ways and means to develop my self-confidence, reading every self-improvement book I could lay my hands on. The process was tough as I did not have a healthy self-esteem to start with. The religions I turned to made me more disillusioned. For a few years, I diligently knelt and chanted Buddhist scriptures, sometimes for as long as eight hours at a stretch. But it did not bring the peace and rest I sought, it merely gave a sense of accomplishment and temporary euphoria.

My emotional state hit rock bottom in my first year at university. My second sister got married and my younger brother was in army camp, so I was left all alone at home. On top of this, I had to deal with myriads of challenges posed by my visual disability. I felt so depressed that I considered suicide. Fortunately, a friend came to know about it and managed to dissuade me.

My life experienced a turning point in 1988 when I met Lai Mui who became my wife two years later. Gradually and surely, she helped to bring me out of my despair. She introduced me to her church friends. However, I was still very bitter and not ready to be reconciled with God.

### My Prince of Peace & Immanuel

Although both Lai Mui and I have vision defects, God

blessed us with two healthy boys. He also provided me with a job after my graduation. Looking back, I see God's hands helping me to return to Him. Now I realize there are many things I cannot understand or know with my finite wisdom. God's word has showed me the errors of my ways: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end"; "As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything"; "God thunders marvellously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend" (Eccl 3:11; 11:5; Job 37:5).

Slowly I learned to trust God, that He allowed those misfortunes for me to learn life lessons. My grief and mourning have opened the eyes of my heart and given me a glimpse of His perspective. I cannot question how He should arrange my life: "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands?'" (Isa 45:9) These experiences exposed my inadequacy and weakness, and taught me to be humble and to trust the sovereign, loving God.

I can empathize with the bereaved, assist and comfort them better with the same comfort I have received from God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Cor 1:3-4) Knowing the fragility of life, I treasure the people around me.

For many years I asked the wrong questions. What everyone should ask is: Where will I go after I die? Our lives are not in our hands: "whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:14)

God is faithful, He loves and takes care of all who trust in Him. He is the Prince of Peace who gives the peace and love I had been seeking all those years. Whenever I am fearful, anxious or troubled, I go to Him and He gives me peace and rest. "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isa 41:10) The Lord Jesus is Immanuel, God with us! My parents and eldest sister have left me, but my Jesus will never leave nor forsake me.

*Bro Sim K.Y.*



### Announcements & Prayer Items

#### Gospel Meeting

Date : 25 Dec 2017, 30 Mar 2018  
Time : 10.30am  
Venue : Meeting Hall

Date : 6 Jan, 3 Feb, 3 Mar 2018  
Time : 7.30pm  
Venue : Meeting Hall