



500th Anniversary of Protestant Reformation

Sharing of Lives in Pastors' School

Take-away From Preach Sharp Session Led By Rev Dr Gordon Wong

Jeremiah School

Ecumenical Solidarity Service held on April 04, 2017



Seated from Left to Right : Rev. Dr. Ng Swee Ming, Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri, Rev. Dr. T. Jeyakumar, Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik, Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim, Archbishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing.

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Rev. Dr. T. Jeyakumar
President, TRAC

500th Anniversary of Protestant Reformation

This year all around the world Protestant communities will be celebrating 500 years of Reformation. The Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany on the 31st of October 1517. Here are some samples of the Theses translated into English from Latin:

1. When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says "Repent ye," etc., he means that the entire life of the faithful should be a repentance.
2. This statement cannot be understood of the sacrament of penance, i.e., of confession and satisfaction, which is administered by the priesthood.
27. They preach human folly who pretend that as soon as money in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs.
62. The main treasure of the church should be the Gospels and the grace of God.
95. And so let them (Christians) set their trust on entering heaven through many tribulations rather than some false security and peace.

Traditionally the Sunday closest to 31st October has been set apart as Reformation Sunday. It is my hope that our churches will not miss this opportunity to commemorate this great event in history by setting aside 29th of October this year as Reformation Sunday.

The Protestant Reformation is important amongst other things for the following reasons:

1. The Reformation taught us that we are justified by faith (put in a right relationship with God). We are saved by believing in Jesus Christ and not by our good works. This is offered to us by the grace of God.
2. The Reformation helped the people to realize the supreme authority of the Bible – sola Scriptura. The Bible derives its authority from the Holy Spirit who inspired human writers to pen down what God was saying to them (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, man-made tradition cannot supersede the authority of the Scripture and neither can it have equal authority with Scripture.
3. The Reformation also helped people settle the dispute on which books constituted the Scripture. The Reformers rejected the Apocryphal books from which the Christians then derived

many of their traditions and practices. One of the main reasons the Apocryphal books were rejected was because the Jews consistently did not accord canonical status to these books.

4. Owing to the Reformation the Bible was translated to the language of the people and made available to the laity. Additionally Bible commentaries were written by the Reformers and made available together with the Bible to help even the laity understand the Bible.

Without the Reformation wrong teachings which gave rise to wrong practices, like absolute power and corruption within the Church then, would have continued. The Reformation helped create a restraint on these. Today as in yesteryears we need to remind ourselves that if the Church is not careful then we too will fall into the same trap as that of the Medieval Church. Money, sex and power are as dazzling and tempting today as they were during the pre-Reformation era. Interpretations of the Bible without any regard for the original context will destroy the hard-fought efforts of the Reformation. Extra-biblical visions of church leaders that can override the content of Scripture will ruin the Church of Christ.

In commemorating 500 years of Reformation we are not praising the efforts of certain men. We are aware that the Reformers were not perfect and in their enthusiasm they overreacted on certain issues. Personally I am saddened by the countless number of Protestant denominations (and non-denominations) and the many self-appointed popes that have arisen because of the Reformation. In spite of that, I am glad for the Reformation for pointing us to:

- i. The need for faith and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ii. The authority of the Scripture that is above man-made traditions and councils.
- iii. The need to become biblically literate.
- iv. The need to faithfully interpret and preach the word of God.

The Methodist Church follows the Reformation understanding of Scripture, Justification, Grace and the supremacy of Christ seriously. So much so in the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church the following are mentioned amongst others:

Article V. -Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scriptures we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

Article IX. - Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

Article X. - Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XIII. -Of the Church

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

My appeal is that we hold fast to the spirit of the Reformation, being guided by the Holy Spirit of God through the Holy Bible to be the Church that God has meant for us to be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Arminianism and Calvinism: How should Arminians (and Calvinists!) Respond.

By Rev. Andrew Tan and Mr. David Tan

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth and final article in a series written to assist Methodist members to be aware of their own doctrinal position which is Arminian. In the first article, we explained how the “Young, Restless, and Reformed” movement has brought Calvinism back onto the theological centre-stage, and raises challenges to our Arminian beliefs. We discussed issues of God’s sovereignty, human free will, and the problem of evil and unbelievers. In the second article, we examined some of the key Scriptural passages in this debate. In the third article, we looked at some common misunderstandings about what Arminians actually believe. Here, we put forth our suggestions about how to address differences and disagreements in our church communities and in wider Christian circles. We hope that this series of articles will help us not only to understand our doctrinal position and the Scriptures that support it but also to see it as credible, and be able to articulate and defend it – and with this article, to work out our differences in a manner that honours God.

Do We Need to Talk/Teach About This?

Theological differences over Calvinism and Arminianism have created dissension among fellow believers, split local churches, and caused denominational splits. Many Christians have gone through their whole lives without ever learning about this issue and seem to be just fine in their faith journey. Why can’t we simply shelve this issue, which seems to be more trouble than is worth addressing, and let people believe whatever they want to believe? We (the writers) obviously think this is an important issue, or we would not have dedicated four separate articles to this topic. Here is why we think our churches need to teach on this issue.

The issue of salvation is important to Christian belief and practice. It informs our understanding of our relationship to God, to our sinful past, and to the future destiny to which we have been saved for. The Scriptures clearly and repeatedly state that salvation is God’s initiative, not ours, and that Christ gave us life while we were dead in our sins. Both Calvinism and Arminianism attest to this. When we fail to teach a sound doctrine of salvation, we create a vacuum that can be filled with false teachings. In many Christian circles, the default understanding of salvation is semi-Pelagian, which

amounts to “I chose God of my own free will,” without the acknowledgement in Arminian theology that it is God’s grace that enables any choice at all. This faulty understanding claims human credit for God’s gift, and can lead to pride and a misplaced sense of worthiness. Going back to the Scriptures for biblical teaching on salvation will quickly lead to passages that discuss both the divine and the human role in the process of salvation. Any effort to form a coherent and consistent understanding on the subject will lead to Arminianism, Calvinism, or some other position. Thus, it is not possible to study salvation deeply (and to the degree that the writers think we ought to) without grappling with the issues at stake in this theological debate.

Given that this is such an important yet divisive issue, we need to know how to work out our differences in a loving manner without pretending that these differences do not matter. In the remainder of this article, we provide some suggestions for our interactions with individuals, in our churches, and in interdenominational spaces.

Addressing Differences with Our Fellow Believers

When we began this series of articles, we pointed out that the debate on Calvinism and Arminianism has been ongoing between evangelical Christians for over 400 years. It is not going to be resolved soon – and will probably not be until Christ returns! When encountering a fellow Christian with whom we disagree on this issue, let us remember first and foremost that they are a brother or sister, a fellow believer in Christ. This means our response should not be to treat them like an unbeliever that we need to convert to our point of view. There are some within the “Young, Restless, and Reformed” movement who treat Calvinism as if it were on par with the gospel, Arminians as deficient Christians, and aggressively attempt to convert them. It was such incidents that led us to write this series of articles. We are unaware of Arminians doing the same in the Malaysian context, and hope that remains the case. We call all sides to put this matter in proper perspective. Salvation is an important topic and our understanding of the process of salvation has tremendous implications, but neither Calvinism nor Arminianism is the gospel. The gospel that Jesus preached is “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the gospel!” (Mark 1:15). Paul writes about the gospel in Romans 1:16 that “it is the power of God for salvation

to everyone who believes.” The gospel is God’s kingdom and power and the invitation to participate in both through repentance. And, thank God that our salvation and participation in God’s kingdom does not rest upon our ability to correctly understand and articulate the process of salvation!

There is certainly room for dialogue and debate. In this, we encourage fellow believers on both sides to seek to understand the other, and hope that our tone and approach have been a model for how to do so.

Addressing Differences in our Churches

We think and hope that what we have written thus far is uncontroversial. How this debate plays out in our churches, however, is more difficult and may bring back unpleasant memories for some of our readers. Let us make clear that what we suggest here is in our best attempt to grapple with this matter in the context of imperfect knowledge, communities, and organisations. We have already laid out our case for teaching a robust theology of salvation. Naturally, if that is to take place, it must happen in our churches. How do we decide what to teach? What should we do if we do not agree with the teaching in our church? These are difficult questions we will try to answer here.

A compromise that seems appealing at first glance is to teach all the theological options we consider consistent with the Scriptures, and let individuals decide what to believe. The first difficulty with this is how a church community decides what is consistent with the Scriptures – many Calvinists have seen Arminian theology as incompatible with the Scriptures, and John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, did not think that Calvinism was an acceptable option either! Assuming, that a church was able to agree to teach both Arminianism and Calvinism while closing the doors to other theological options, it would still face the challenge of achieving consistency and coherency in teaching and pastoral care. This debate on salvation has implications far and wide, touching on the origin of evil, the problem of suffering, and understanding how God’s sovereignty and human choice interact not only for salvation but on all other matters as well – including subjects such as prayer and seeking guidance. When incoherency on such a scale is exposed, it generates confusion and dissonance, and tends to lead to a desire for resolution, unless these logical incompatibilities are hidden by generally avoiding teaching and discussion on these subjects.

If churches need to make a choice on what to teach, who exactly gets to make that decision? That depends. In some denominations, stances on many theological issues are decided at the local church level, and it is

appropriate that the church leadership and members resolve these issues according to the decision-making framework they have already established. In the Methodist Church, we commit to sharing a broad array of theological stances at the denominational level. From an organisational perspective, this is important as pastors belong to the denomination – not the local church – and it is unhelpful for teaching and pastoral care in a local church to undergo massive changes whenever a pastor is transferred in or out of the local church. The Methodist Church has historically been Arminian in its stance – and our founders and their successors played a significant role in shaping this theology. We may have neglected this teaching in various local churches from time to time, but when we examine our beliefs as a denomination and draw upon our shared history and heritage, it would take a seismic and unforeseeable event to re-evaluate a position so core to our roots.

What does it mean for the Methodist Church to be Arminian? It does not mean that we exclude Calvinists from our community. It does, however, mean that preaching and teaching in the Methodist Church should be consistent with Arminian beliefs, and that those in preaching and teaching roles take care not to use their platforms to contradict these beliefs. These are rules and guidelines that enable church communities – Arminian and Calvinist alike – to function. We think it wise for Christians to seek church communities that they can be at home in. If a Calvinist finds his or her home in a Methodist church and can live with teaching and preaching consistent with Arminian theology, well and good! But, if an Arminian goes to a Calvinist church and finds those teachings difficult, they should either resolve to make the best of things without stirring up debate or seek out another church community that is a better fit.

Addressing Differences in Inter-Denominational Spaces
We have advocated that churches ought to teach theologies of salvation in spite of the controversy that can arise because of the importance of sound and biblical belief. It is an unfortunate reality that differences in doctrinal conclusions (among other factors) create denomination divides, and that while we recognize each other as brother and sister in Christ, we may need to work out our faith and practice in different spaces while we await Christ’s return. It is good for us to come and work together wherever and whenever we can. In these spaces, it is right and appropriate to de-emphasize differences. Inter-denominational spaces can be a good place to dialogue about different beliefs, but seeking to emphasize differences and win debates only serves to further fragment the broader church.

A particular inter-denominational space that we should seek to preserve are college and university

Christian Fellowships (CFs). These are important both for Christians seeking to find fellowship in their place of study, and as a witness to the non-Christian community looking in. We have made the case for solid and robust teaching in local churches, and empathise with those CF leaders who would like to see the same in their organisations. We urge you, however, to consider the unique position you are in: the diverse theological backgrounds represented in your midst, the visibility you have to non-Christians, and that most of your members are also part of a local church. We know of several CFs that have run into significant difficulties over Arminian and Calvinist theology. Do consider carefully what role you will play in advancing God's kingdom where you are, and what doctrinal essentials are necessary in that role, and who you include and exclude in the process. Short of splitting the CF, those Christians who cannot accept your essentials have no alternative to participate in.

Final Thoughts

Thank you again for accompanying us across these four articles. We hope that this will provide a helpful reference point for a difficult subject, and that it will serve as a guide not just for the debate, but how we ought to approach this subject with one another.

We have only sketched an outline of this topic. For some, that will be sufficient. Others may have a deeper interest in this subject, and will wish to read further. For the latter group, we include some suggested readings, many of which have had an influence on the authors' perspectives and understanding of this issue.

Further Readings

For those new to this subject, and would like an example of advocates for Calvinism and Arminianism interacting with each other *Four Views on Eternal Security* presents a dialogue by Michael Horton, Norman Geisler, Stephen Ashby, and Steven Harper.

Among contemporary theologians and preachers, John Piper is perhaps the most well-known advocate for Calvinism. There are many writings on this subject at the *Desiring God* website, including *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*. Michael Horton is another theologian who has written at length in support of Calvinist theology, including the book *For Calvinism*. Another influential Calvinist voice in the evangelical movement was J.I. Packer, who voices some of his views in the paper *Arminianisms*. Finally, the Gospel Coalition is an evangelical Calvinist network of churches. This network produces and disseminates a wide variety of resources, not limited to Calvinism. These resources are generally of high quality and well thought-through. We note, however, that the views espoused there are almost

exclusively from the Calvinist/Reformed/Puritan wing of the evangelical movement (the other historical wing being the Arminian/Holiness/Pietistic wing). One article we recommend for its relevance to this discussion is an interview of the Wesleyan theologian Fred Sanders by John Starke, in the article *You're a Calvinist, Right?*

For further Arminian resources, we begin our recommendations with Ben Witherington. The Asbury Seminary where he lectures at has a YouTube channel, *Seven Minutes Seminary*, in which faculty covers a wide array of topics, including Witherington's *Romans 9-11: Seven Minute Seminary*. He also wrote *The Problem with Evangelical Theology*, in which he critiques weaknesses in prominent evangelical theologies, including the Calvinist perspective on predestination and election as well as the Arminian concept of prevenient grace. We previously referenced Roger Olson and his book, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* in the third article in our series. He also has a blog at patheos.com, with many posts on this and other theological subjects. Another important theologian who passed on in December 2016 is Thomas Oden, who discusses God's relationship with human beings in *The Transforming Power of Grace*. There does not exist an Arminian counterpart to the Gospel Coalition in terms of its reach of audience, prolificness of writings, and scope of study. However, the Society of Evangelical Arminians will have solid and extensive resources on Arminian theology.

Those who wish to dig into the historical writings on this subject will have to begin with Calvin's *Institutes*. Translations of James (Jacob) Arminius' writings – which are the beginnings of modern Arminian theology are available at [Wesley Center Online](http://WesleyCenterOnline.com). The Wesley Center Online also hosts the sermons and other writings of John Wesley. His most famous polemic against Calvinism was *Predestination Calmly Considered*, which may have benefited from a calmer disposition! Among his many writings, the longest treatise he wrote was *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience*.

One final suggestion for further reading. One reason why the Calvinism and Arminians debates have often become so fierce and acrimonious has been the frequent perception that the gospel truth itself is at stake. We have said earlier in this article that salvation is part of the gospel message but is far from the whole thing, and that at the centrality of the gospel is God's kingdom and rule. We do not have time and space explore this here, but recommend *The King Jesus Gospel* by Scott McKnight and *How God Became King* by N.T. Wright as good introductions to this subject. We hope that with a focus on what we share in common, other important but secondary differences can be put into perspective.

Sharing of Lives in Pastors' School

TRAC Pastors' School was held on 25-28 April 2017 in Penang. Bishop Emeritus Dr Robert Solomon (The Methodist Church in Singapore) was the speaker.



Sharing of the Word and lives are always connected.

And so it was the case too at the Pastors' School.

In the opening Holy Communion Service, President Jeyakumar preached on "Soul Preparation" based on Acts 12:1-24.

In the course of his sermon, he shared his life with us. He recalled in detail a time when he could not carry out his ministry adequately as a Pastor. As a result he sought outside help.

Later, when Bishop Emeritus Robert Solomon preached on "Soul Care for Pastors" (Mt 11:25-30), he alluded to the above testimony. He shared his own testimony about his mood swings on Sunday nights.

Such frankness resonated with fellow Pastors.

If there is one takeaway, it would be that we heard both of them share with us not only the Word of God, but also their lives (1 Thess 2:8).

Indeed, Bishop Emeritus Robert urged us to build a healthy community. He encouraged us, saying "try to pray for your fellow Pastors ... find out about them ... make a list of their family members who may not be well ... pray for them ... send a message."

This exhortation was not lost among us. Before our Pastors' School ended, our President requested all the Pastors to form groups of not more than four, and share our lives and pray for one another. We got to know each other personally, even for that brief moments, as our prayers went up to God like incense.

Thank God for another edifying Pastors' School.



Quotable Quotes by Bishop Emeritus Dr Robert Solomon

By Pr Robert Khaw, Subang Methodist Church, PJ.



“Never say ‘I enjoy your sermon’ to your Pastor after the sermon. Rather say ‘I was comforted.’ ‘I was disturbed.’ Or ‘I was both disturbed and comforted.’”

“Make me hungry again for Your Word.”

“God’s intrinsic power is not in me, but through me. Remember this!”

“We cannot make up our failure in our devotional life by doubling our service time.”

“Pray for someone who is a thorn in your flesh. God can do something in that person.”

“We tend to check the smartphone or online news first thing in the morning. Make a pact with God for His Word.”

“Give up something to make space, e.g. favourite TV show or going to shopping complex for the sake of guarding our time with God.”

“We need to fast from addiction of social media and human chatter, so that our hearts will listen to one voice - God’s voice - that really matters.”

“God does not cleanse us with anesthesia, but cleanse us with a painful process (Isaiah 6:6-7).”

“How much you know your people’s brokenness is how much you have loved them (Isaiah 6:5).”

“God’s Word is a wonderful combination of ‘glory and sorry’ (Isaiah 57:15).”



Take-away From Preach Sharp Session Led By Rev Dr Gordon Wong

February 27-28, 2017



“Show how the main point has been applied” - **Soh Tian Soo**

“In preaching, love the people more than the subject.” - **Cheah Seuk Poh**

“Prayer-paration is our duty.” - **Lucy Lee**

“Preaching is beyond information to transformation - it is about how the information from the Bible makes a difference in the way we live.” - **Eddy Marson**

“The Word became Flesh.... A regular heart scan by the Holy Spirit would help keep my flesh from turning it into just a word.” - **Jonathan Yeoh**

“Prayer-paration” - this is part of our pastoral duty.” - **Chang Choy Quin**

“Sermon preparation is key to Preaching Sharp.” - **Gilbert Tan**

“Be driven by the Scripture, listeners’ need and your motivation.” - **Koe Swee Kee**

“Express the sermon’s main POINT super clear.” - **Tan Moy How**

“It is crucial that our sermons be controlled by Scripture.” - **Gaurri Maniam**

“Preach SHARP [Scripture-Based, Holy Spirit-Empowered, Attitude-Transforming, Response- Encouraging, Pastoral-Significant] sermons.” - **Kelvin Yong**

“Preach to inspire change in accordance to God’s Truth.” - **Teoh Lee Yng**

“Communicate pastoral insights.” - **Jeya**

“There is a need for self-denial even in preaching since preaching is for the edification of the hearers, not the preacher.” - **Mike Ngui**

“Preach for transformation not (just) information; for devotion not (just) doctrine.” - **Tan Chew Mae**

“In order to preach sharp we must make room for learning: Teach Less, Learn More” - **Joshua Khong**

“Make sermon preparation part of one’s busy-ness in pastoral ministry” - **Ting Moy Hong**

“Paying attention to finding/creating a suitable story to communicate effectively.” - **Shearn Sya**

“Giving focus/attention to pastoral devotional element.” - **Andrew Tan**

“The seminar did not just teach but exemplify communication needed for preaching sharp.” - **Alex Tan**

“Observation, Interpretation, Application, Communication, Good Presentation for Better Living.” - **Bernard Yogaraj**

“The empowering of the Holy Spirit in preaching God’s Word.” - **Buell Abraham**

“Work at asking questions to find challenges/applications for congregation.” - **Robert Khaw**

“Be in dialogue with the text; keep on asking questions.” - **Joshua Hong**

“One sharp main point; related and relevant application.” - **Anna Ng**



Jeremiah School

– Excerpts from Participants

January 03-24 & February 05-26, 2017



DANIEL LIM – 3 lessons I learnt from JS:-

- Solving conflicts – I learnt how to mend relationships with friends and God. I also understand more about my friends.
- Evangelism – I learnt “why God has put me on this earth”. I felt “electricity flowing in my veins”. My prayer was answered in Matthew 28: 19-20 – The Great Commission.
- Seeking God’s will – In time God will show His full plan for me. For now, God is showing me “step by step” and I have full faith God will reveal in His time.

JS changed me physically and spiritually. I gained weight and I no longer read the Bible out of duty bound. I wish to seek God’s presence and I now know God can use sinners like me to serve Him. “I am nobody but with God I am somebody.” I can do all things by God’s grace.

JS taught me to trust God for my future. God will lead me!

NATHANIEL ONG – Lessons I have learnt in my 6 weeks in JS. Be prepared mentally, spiritually and physically for all the events scheduled. Be disciplined and consistent especially in prayer. I also learn how to witness to people – “do my best and leave the results to God”.

Before attending JS my life was pretty meaningless – addicted to computer games. Now I feel I have grown physically, mentally, emotionally and most importantly – spiritually. I had to leave my comfort zone to make new friends and learn to evangelize.

In JS I had a lot of fun in a “heart-warming” family. Here I am allowed to make mistakes and still feel loved and healing in this family. I trust God all the time and I hope to be the salt and light of the world, glorifying God every day.

RACHEL N. – JS has changed me greatly – inside and out. We explored and did things ourselves. My weaknesses were revealed and I learn to overcome them. Journaling help me see God moulding me. I now have a deeper relationship with God and am sensitive to the people around me. JS taught me to be humble and compassionate and to be aware of the community I am in. JS was a session of transformation – surrendering myself to the Potters hands.

RUTH Y. – I learnt to discern the will of God through 5 easy steps – PEACE. Providential, Enemy, Authority of the Bible. Confidence and Ease. I learnt to love myself; I have a unique and special role here on Earth. Problems do not stress me out so easily anymore because I learn to lay them before God and I trusts in God alone. God is always there with me. I will always have time for God.

BENJAMIN C. – JS help me to grow in my walk with God. There is Freedom in Christ. Inductive Bible Study inspired me. I also learnt how to share the gospel with non-Christians through an illustration on a piece of paper. I also learn fasting and Quiet Retreat.

VICTOR. – JS taught me Inductive Bible Study, community living and fellowship and everyone require hope, reassurances and purpose. I have turned away from a life of constant back sliding, weak faith, and immersion in sin to a prayer filled fellowship, daily bible study and a deeper incorporation of faith into my daily life. I now have patience, forgiveness and love for others.

CHEW WJ – JS is one of the highlights in my life and a fruitful experience. I learnt Spiritual Disciplines and also Biblical understanding. Thank God for reaffirming me of my identity in Psalm 139:14 for “I am fearfully and wonderfully made by God.” I learn to trust and obey God in all situations. I have decided to walk closely with God by reading God’s word daily.

ESTHER L. – I learns to work together with people. I struggled with friendship issues but I am now better able to face issues and not avoid them.

BRYAN T. JS taught me prayer profiling, prayer maze, inductive bible study. I enjoyed the presence of God and learning more of myself. God is amazing and I am now more aware and thankful to God. I now commit myself to be a God fearing, faithful, persevering and selfless person.

EUVINA L – JS is a 6 weeks program to grow closer to God. I had no feelings towards my earthly father. I learnt that how I feel towards my father here also affects my relationship towards my heavenly father. JS taught me to trust God and that everything will be fine. Nothing is impossible for Him. I also learnt how to deal with conflicts and be a better leader.

HOWARD C. – I learnt 3 things. How to do fasting. How to trusts people and work as a body in the community. Lastly, Journaling to reflect on the day. I commit to read God’s word to learn more of Him and do my quiet time.

NGO CE. – JS was difficult for me. I learnt not to lean on my own understanding and wisdom but rather lean on God who holds my future and my life. I struggled with a lot of pride and through “Freedom in Christ” I learn to break my pride. In Silent Retreat I felt the real presence of God. God is faithful and keep me on the right track. I will continue walking with Jesus through this journey.

LEAH T. – I am the youngest in JS. Through the scolding and conflicts I have learnt so much. I have 3 favourite lessons – Discerning God’s will Leadership and thirdly, the daily routine in JS. I now have the joy of serving which I never felt before. I now can trust God with my future. I will Trust and Obey.

JESPER FOO – JS was a lot of fun and a time for learning too. We learnt Inductive Bible Study and Evangelism. In the Evangelism session, we got out of our own comfort zone and do the things we don’t normally do. I am reading the bible daily to have an intimate relationship with God.

WILFRED C. – I learns to have freedom in Christ. In Christ nothing is impossible. I now want an intimate relationship with God.



THOMAS L. – Coming to JS was no mistake. 3 lessons learnt – Trust God in everything, be friends with everyone and finally – Discover the will of God and follow them. I hardly read the bible and God was not my number one priority. I know He was there for me, omnipresent and omnipotent. My attitude has changed. Now, God is my number one and I have daily quiet time. I rely more on God and my future is in His hands.

RACHEL L. – Joining JS is one of the best decisions I have made. When giving a sermonette, I learn to trust in God’s strength. In Evangelism I learn to share my faith. Fasting for 48 hours was a new and great experience. In the Journey, I learn to hear God saying to me “ Trust me , surrender it to me.” I am now committed to quiet retreat and experiencing God and enjoying His presence.

HAN R – JS was an eye opener. I had no motivation or drive in reading the bible or doing my quiet time. Now I listen to God through His word. I struggled a lot with my self- confidence but after JS, I am now more confident of myself.

DAYNA S. – Before joining JS I fear interacting with others. At the end of 6 weeks we were an extended family, sharing our struggles and problems and bringing joy into my life. I can say I have grown in my relationship with God and I have faith in Him.

CEBRIAN – My mum signed me up for JS and I am not regretting it one minute. 3 things I learnt, the importance of reading my bible. I learned Evangelism is not only done by missionaries and pastors only but by everyone .I learned going to church to enjoy God’s presence. JS has been the best experience in my life.

MICHELLE K. – I now know prayer is important and without God’s strength I cannot do anything. I felt my burden of sin lifted up and I now aim to be the salt and light to the world.

TIMOTHY P. – I am transformed; I am now dependent on God. By faith I surrender my future to God.

NATHANAEL K. – The most beneficial lesson I learnt was that I can reach out to people to let them know Christ and bring them a step closer to knowing God. My mum raised me up as a single parent and I experienced the pain of my father leaving the family. In JS, I came to know God the Father and how much God loves me. I am now changed, I forgive easier, I have more self- control, I no longer speak vulgarity, and all my lustful thoughts and fantasies are all gone.

SALLY T. – JS was an eye opening experience. I learn not to judge people, resolve conflicts, have a more consistent prayer life and to be able to thank God for all the good and bad things that come my way. I want to be the salt and the light to my community.

The Pastors' Wives Retreat 2016 at The Haven Resort, Tambun, Ipoh

6th - 8th of June 2016

By Ms Joyce Hue

Theme: Be Still

A feeling of uncertainty coupled with mixed expectations was my sentiment as I arrived on a bright and sunny afternoon on 6th of June, being a first timer to a retreat of this nature.

I was pleasantly surprised to step into the tranquillity of this place called 'The Haven'. Bestowed with lush greenery, the place exudes serenity. How appropriate, I thought, a place of safety or refuge, a good choice and match for a retreat and to our theme to BE STILL.

There were 12 of us including the facilitator, Kim Guat. A 'Getting to know One Another' ice-breaker was led by Stella requiring each one to use an image to share our present state, or to tell our story. The group soon gravitated to one another being able to understand or identify the struggles in our respective journeys as wives of pastors.

Stella continued to lead the group during meal times on a game to guess 3 truths and 1 lie concerning each person. There was much cracking up mingled with pleasant conversations during such times, and in between sessions, Grace found opportunities to share her passion to help others by advising them to eat correctly based on an authentic research for improvement of physical and emotional health.

All sessions were preceded by a time of worship.

On Day 1 in the evening, we went into Session 1 with Kim Guat setting us on the mode to be aware of what is happening within us and what God has stirred in our hearts. She led us to some soul searching questions:- What drew us to come to this retreat? What is our desire? How do we feel where we are at? Where is God leading us to? We were then led to look into the condition of our heart and everyone was requested to draw an image to express that. There was a stirring felt within each one during the silence to be open and real. An unspoken mutual acceptance within the group had progressed to sincere sharing and emotional release for some.

On Day 2, the morning session of the retreat was focused on spiritual discipline. The passages given for meditation were:- Ps 139; Isa 43:14-28; Jn 15:1-17; Matt 14:22-36. The group broke out to spend time in solitude and silence to listen to what God is saying to each one of us. The afternoon was free and easy. The group found time to relax and some gathered with interest and excitement for a brief time to learn some beautiful praise dance steps.

This was followed by a time of light-hearted sharing. The session ended with Kim Guat sharing some insights on how to manage expectations as pastors' wives. In the evening, the group gathered to focus on reflecting on our lives. We were led to plot out our own life maps to trace the journey from where we were at till to date. The process was intended to help us see God at each stage of our journey. Some were moved to share their reflections.

On Day 3, the last session was preceded by a fun-filled preference and choice game led by Kim Guat. The session was about embracing who we are and celebrating our lives. We were requested to list down our giftings followed by a time of sharing. The sharing was beautiful with encouragement and affirmations from one another and Kim Guat as facilitator.

Some encouraging points learned:-

- As much as we ought to accept our giftings, it is not just about bringing each of these giftings to God but allowing Him to use us as we go with the flow of His leading and direction.
- We are not just a helper to our spouse, but are important as individuals in our own right. Celebrating our lives equates to being secured in our restedness of who we are – people who are precious to God. However inadequate we may be, or insignificant our giftings may seem, we need to learn to embrace our littleness. Loving our people is more important than how competent we are in our skills.
- The pastor's journey is tough and much more challenging than our own. We need to muster all our strength to be positive especially in our speech and actions to be supportive. The love of God will sustain us. He has seen us in our struggles and will see us through in the challenges ahead.

At the close of the retreat, in spontaneity and appreciation, everyone hugged each other and felt truly blessed.

Before departing, a word of thanks was expressed to Kim Guat for facilitating, and Grace for organizing this lovely retreat to which she expressed appreciation to all for co-operating so readily and contributing toward making this retreat a beautiful and meaningful one. The retreat turned out to be a haven for us to express ourselves. We departed celebrating and embracing our lives of who we are, and will continue to trust God in our journey to fulfil the purpose He has intended for each one of us.

TRAC Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade Camp Concordia 3

at Kem Lubok Manggis, Hulu Langat Selangor

By Voon Zhen Yi (Life Methodist Church Puchong)



70 Campers comprising of the Boys' Brigade (BB) and the Girls' Brigade (GB) from TRAC-based churches converged at Kem Lubok Manggis, Hulu Langat Selangor from the 27-30th May 2017, for a time of fun, fellowship and learning from one another.

This is the third instalment of Camp Concordia, which is the only joint BB & GB camp organised at national level. This was the first time that participants were welcomed from non-TRAC churches.

This Camp was very unlike the first two Concordia's that were held in the relative comfort of our National Service Camp-sites. This time around, the campers were made to camp outdoors in real tents. There were more GB campers, with the girls outnumbering the boys almost 5 to 1, (not that the boys were complaining I am sure).

At the beginning of the Camp, participants were all briefed on the ground rules. The most important and I am sure, the most memorable rule was to remember that the Camp Commandant - Captain Patricia Toa of 3rd Petaling Jaya GB (Emmanuel Methodist Church PJ) is "KING"!!

The camp wasted no time in getting all the participants involved with the "Explorace". Here, they were all made to explore and race to look out for their food. This was to be used to cook their own dinner that night. The participants had to undergo many an obstacle course to find ingredients which would be needed later to be used to cook their dinner in bamboo.

Our Camp Speaker was Pastor Pax Tan, a former member of the 2nd Kuala Lumpur BB Company. He took three sessions in which he spoke on the Goodness of God, Trusting God, and Fearing God. There was also a session that explained the history and background of the BB and GB. This was to encourage both organisations to work together for a single cause.

The highlight of the camp was a hike up to the waterfall. We had campers dressed up in their brave maroon t-shirts for the two-hour hike. Though the hike was tough and climbing up the steep slopes, they all got the chance to enjoy the flora and fauna along the way. The guide even advised the campers to apply mud on their faces and surfaces of their exposed skin to prevent bites from



leeches and mosquitos – this actually worked! The boys and girls had much fun at the waterfall despite their initial reluctance to even touch the water. After a two-hour hike back to the campsite, they began preparing for our fun night.

There was a proud moment for the officers when representatives from all the participating BB and GB companies requested to form a joint praise and worship team for the Grand Finale. Naturally, this combined team led a worthy praise and worship offering unto the Lord! The final night was one to remember with so much laughter. Each of the seven groups were made to present their own skit items, based on materials they needed to look for. Midway, "poison beach balls" were thrown at them that contain mandatory instructions for those who last touched them – leading to some very good comedy items and the showcasing of new talents in the Brigades. The final day of the camp was also a bittersweet one as campers broke camp, each heading home their separate ways. Although, 2017 Camp Concordia 3 was a simple camp, it is camps like this that renew our enthusiasm, the forming of new friendships and many worthwhile lessons learned from one another just by participating in the various activities.

It is hoped that with such renewed passion and fire, we will continue to burn brightly and impact positively, the lives of our boys and girls in the Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Brigade ministry in the foreseeable future.

Wesley Methodist Church Sitiawan 65th Anniversary Service – From Generation to Generation

