

# GRACE News

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## Editorial

### FAMILY OF FAITH

In Christian circles, phrases such as 'our church family' and 'brothers and sisters in Christ' fall easily from our lips without much thought. But they are not just platitudes – there is a deeper spiritual significance here which bears closer examination. If fellow Christians are as close to us as family because of the faith we share, how does this play out in practice, and how can we increase in love and fellowship towards those who worship God in the next pew?

In this issue of Grace News, the last on the theme of strengthening family ties, we have put together some articles to help us think more about this important topic. On page 1 Pastor Arnold gives us an overview of the Bible's teaching on the importance of family, and on page 2 you can read personal testimonies from our own church members describing how GBC has been like a family to them. On page 4 we look at the role care groups play in church family, and on page 8 Pastor Oliver reviews the book *True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia* by Jerry Bridges.

In addition, Melissa Fam has penned some reflections on her experiences serving on the Church Building Task Force, which you can find on page 3, and on page 5 we have a write-up of the Christian Education on Sunday Ministry (CES).

We pray that you will be encouraged as you read about our very own GBC family. Shalom!

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## KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Pastor Arnold Wong

Today, families are crumbling under heavy social and political pressures. In this environment, what God says about the family is critical not only for a few but for all. Healthy stable families are a must for humanity's survival. **The key to stable families is having healthy thriving relationships with God and others.**

The most important relationship of all is the one we have with God. We ought to love God with all our heart, soul and strength (Deut 6:5). When God is our first love and we obey Him, loving others becomes a part of our spiritual DNA (1 Jn 4:7-14). **After loving God comes the priority of loving and respecting spouses.** Husbands are to love their wives and wives are to respect their husbands (Eph 5:33). When there are healthy relationships between God and spouses, families have a strong foundation on which to build.

This brings us to relating well with children in a family. **Parents are to raise generations of godly children to know God and His ways** (Ps 71:18; Prov 22:6). This is accomplished by a combination of teaching God's Word to children to honour God and to obey their parents, and parents not provoking their children (Deut 5:16, 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21).



This can happen as each parent learns and lives out the truths of God for each generation to observe and embrace (Deut 5:33; Ps 119:1-3, 11).

**The Bible also tells us to relate with our 'extended family'. For believers this is the local church family.** The Apostle Peter sums up how to relate to one another in God's family with the exhortation to live harmoniously, sympathetically, kindly and humbly with each other (1 Pet 3:8). This can happen practically by serving, forgiving, encouraging and spurring one another on to love and good deeds (Gal 5:13; Eph 4:32; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24). A family's presence and participation in a healthy church family will keep families together.

**Families stay together when they have healthy thriving relationships with God and others.** Let's do it together with the help and enabling of the Holy Spirit. Ω

# SNIPPETS OF A LOVING CHURCH

compiled by Seah Yen Goon

Loving acts are the hallmark of a follower of Christ, who commands us to 'love each other, as I have loved you' (John 15:12). Every small act of service or hospitality, word of encouragement, visitation, gift or prayer, knits us together as God's one happy family. Being in a care group avails us to give and receive loving care and encouragement. We hope that these sharings by some of our members encourage you to do likewise.

"I felt the warmth of friendship on my first visit to the church. Mark approached and introduced me to church members and had meals with me. Some of the members even dropped by at my office to find out how I was doing and invited me to church retreats."  
- Ryan Tan

"Both of us are Malaysians working in Singapore, and we enjoy the warm fellowship in the church and CG. Church members are hospitable and generous and have invited us for home-cooked dinners, even during the CNY celebration. We felt loved like 'adopted children' with members looking out for us."  
- Eunice and Esther Yap

"A church member connected me to a sister-in-Christ from the Chinese congregation who is a breast cancer survivor. She not only shared with me her experiences but also gave me a book on breast cancer to read. This sister's regular phone calls to me were acts of care and concern. Church members sent me encouraging text messages and told me personally that they were praying for me. One even offered to bring me meals when I was resting at home recovering from my surgery. Their sweet gestures uplifted me in my most difficult moments."  
- Carrie Chow

"We thank the Chinese congregation for rescheduling their annual meeting so that we could have our church wedding. We also appreciate all those who helped at our wedding. It was a great opportunity to bond with one another."  
- Mark Chan

"I thank God for every church member who showered loving care towards me and my sisters. When my sister Mary fell down, church members helped to admit her to hospital. Dr Tan Chong Tien operated on her and with his wife, Cheng See, followed-up with home visits. Many church members prayed, encouraged and visited us. Old as I am, I receive love, concern and respect from both young and old church members. As I receive love, likewise I am privileged to be entrusted with their confidential prayer requests and pray for God's abundant provision and blessings upon them."  
- Rosaline Sng

"I was really touched by the love and support shown by the church during my mum's demise recently. Many visited, including those members whom I do not even know. An elder even sent me a personal note. And Ps Bobby readily agreed to conduct the second wake service when my elder sister's pastor couldn't make it unexpectedly. GBC and my CG also showed love for me in '06 when my dad passed away, and in '08 when my brother passed away. GBC as a church has become my family and it's a relationship that I cherish. To me, this is really what being in a church is all about: to show love, care and concern for one another, and to build relationships that last."  
- Victor Tay



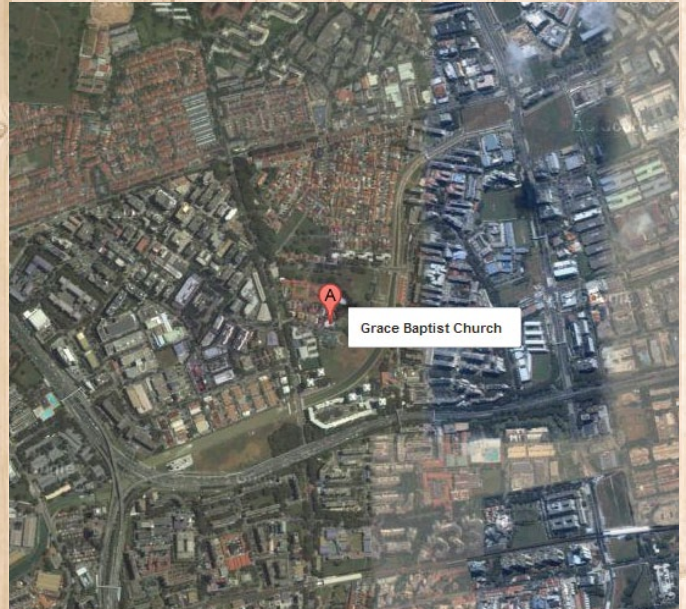
# What Does it Mean to Build a Church?

by Melissa Fam

## Reflections on the Church Building Task Force

In early December last year, the church leaders announced possible plans to embark on a church building project. As part of this consideration, the leaders also re-evaluated the vision of GBC. This exercise of vision-casting in light of the decision on whether or not to rebuild went beyond the physical infrastructure needs of the church, since we believe that a church is more than just a building. Fundamentally, it begged the questions: "What is God's purpose for the church?" and, "How do we build a church community?"

The Church Building Task Force was set up to gather feedback and data from the whole church to assist the leaders in making this decision. It comprised five members from the EC and CC, and I was privileged to be part of this team.



*Through my participation in this task force, I realised it was no accident that God brought each one of us, with our different personalities, gifts and talents, into GBC.*

We may have differences in opinions, thoughts and desires for the church, but God is able to bring glory to Himself through our unity in Christ.

So as we continue to seek God and discern His will for our church, "...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." (Heb 10:22), because "...neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." (1 Cor 3:7,9) God's purpose for the church and God's plan for building our church is not separate from Jesus, and that knowledge of His sovereignty should bring us much joy and comfort. Ω



From the outset, I was confident that my relevant work experience would be sufficient for me to carry out this task well. However, as more members came alongside us and prayed with us, God humbled me. He made me see that there is a role for each and every one of us in church building – it is a community project. As Paul said, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Cor 12:12) Through my participation in this task force, I realised it was no accident that God brought each one of us, with our different personalities, gifts and talents, into GBC.



# EXPAND your COMFORT ZONE

## The Role of Care Groups in God's Plan

by Clara Tung

**The church** is God's first display of the complete unity which He will bring to pass under Christ at the end of the age! (Eph 1:9-10) And our care groups are a part of this amazing plan. It's sometimes easy to forget that when we're in the comfort of our weekly meet-ups with the same familiar faces. Here are some practical (and hopefully fun) suggestions for how we in our CGs can live out this unity:

**A**pply what we learn in each week's CG Bible study, especially in relation to our attitudes and relationships with our CG members, and with the wider church.

**P**ray through items in the church bulletin, together as a CG.

**G**et to know the members of another CG! Recently our CG had a combined CG BBQ with another CG - it was great fun; we made new friends, and got to enjoy lots of yummy food. You can also visit each other's CGs.

**E**ncourage your CG to attend monthly prayer meetings together.

**L**ook out for your CG members' strengths and talents, and encourage them to use these to serve in the church.

**M**ake CGs a topic of conversation in church fellowship! Ask "Do you attend a CG?" and "How's your CG doing?" when mingling before and after Sunday service.

## UNITY – The By-Product of Flesh-Killing

by Tan Yee Kiat

**G**reg Gilbert explains – "Unity exists when Self-Regard dies, and Self-Regard dies at the foot of the Cross". It is clear that if we do not slay the 'flesh' within us, unity will remain elusive. Gilbert suggests that the only way flesh can be slain is to stand before the Cross and remember who we are.

I am in a Care Group (CG) that is somewhat different from my usual demographic – one that consists mostly of young parents, with burdens and cares very different from my own. I have tried to slay self-regard in the following ways. Perhaps some form of cross-demographic unity has been achieved.

**1** In this CG, I have been praying for things that I would otherwise never pray for. This is largely the result of observing our young parents 'parent', which is a joy to watch. In line with the mission of our church, I pray for them to be faithful disciplinarians in their households, and that Christ will reveal Himself to these young kids even at a tender age.



**2** I have found God working in me to be more patient. It was a culture shock to arrive in a CG with eight kids screaming and doing a study at the same time. For this I admire our young parents! I think one year on, I now find this a non-issue and am able to do the study (still with kids screaming).

**3** I am now more aware of the challenges facing young parents when it comes to CG participation. It is difficult to come to CG when kids fall ill. It is something to consider, especially as CG is such a staple of our church in ministering God's Word to our members.

I hope these perspectives have been useful in some way. :) Ω

## Christian Education on Sunday (CES)

*"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)*



The CES team: (L-R) Kah Yin, Ps Bobby, Kang Wei, Clara, Eddie, Wen Pin, Xinyi and Peter.

The knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, in April 2013, some members of GBC led by Elder Peter Ho Lick and Pastor Bobby Lee came together to think of ways to improve GBC's existing Christian education for adults on Sundays.

Underlying this was our common desire to put into practice the new church vision of being 'a disciple-making church that transforms lives in our families, communities and beyond with the Gospel and love of Jesus Christ'. What we did not expect was that these meetings would result in a complete revamp of the Adult Bible Class programmes into the current Christian Education on Sunday (CES)!

As we met up for the initial meetings, we were very concerned that every attendee of GBC would find a relevant Christian education class for them on Sunday. Thus, as we planned, we charted out the following programmes:

*we were very concerned that every attendee of GBC would find a relevant Christian education class for them on Sunday*

*[we had a] common desire to put into practice the new church vision*

- For those who were not Christians yet, we created the **Seekers Class** (four sessions, repeated every quarter) to be a place for them to learn about Jesus and to get their questions answered.
- For visitors to GBC looking for a church to settle down in, the **Welcome Class** (three sessions, repeated every quarter) would provide an avenue to introduce the church and its people.
- For GBC members looking to grow as disciples of Christ, the **Sunday Discipleship Seminars** (SDS) would run weekly classes (for two out of every three months) on different thematic areas of Christian living. In July and August, we completed our inaugural module 'Come Meet Your Saviour God'. Class restarts in October 2013!

Due to God's grace, the three classes have really thrived. Please continue to keep us in prayer, in particular that God will raise up more teachers and administrators for the three programmes so that the weight of ministry is more sustainably spread out.

To God be the Glory! Ω

If you have queries on CES, please feel free to email them to: [ces.at.gbc@gmail.com](mailto:ces.at.gbc@gmail.com) and we will get back to you shortly.



# EVENTS

## july-sept

### Ladies Fellowship • Jul 6



The ladies visited a frozen food wholesaler. On the bus journey to the showroom, time was set aside for a devotion on Cain and Abel, and the ladies meditated on whether they are willing to give their 'best cuts' to Jesus.



Great tips on how to marinate meat.



Items flying off the shelves, or rather, out of the freezers!

### Young Adults Retreat • Jul 13



Singing unto the LORD, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.



The young adults had a fruitful retreat discussing the topic of fighting idolatry. One camper reflected, "We all have little idols in our lives, such as our career, which we often fail to notice and thus indulge. We need to constantly think about whether there are such idols in our lives and if we're misusing God's Word to justify our idolatry."

### Kunming Mission Trip • Jul 28 to Aug 5



Singing 'This is the Day' in Chinese and Bai in a home in a minority village.

Crafts done by the children during the camp. Through these crafts, three Bible stories - Creation, Noah's Ark and The Prodigal Son - were shared.



The GBC team with the senior pastor of Sanyi International Church (last row, centre) and some of the children and teachers from the Pri 1-3 Vacation Bible School.



Children acting out what they've learnt at the concert in the Sanyi Church.

### Baptisms & Transfers • Sep 29



We welcome five new members to our church (L-R): Sidney Loo and Margaret Nah via baptism; and Low Poyen, Grace Chua and Esther Wong via transfer of membership.





*"We rejoice on this 54th anniversary, not only to look back upon God's faithfulness, but to look forward and commit ourselves to the end that God might be able to work out that which is well pleasing in His sight."*



*In his message, Dr Poulson urged GBC to continue to grow and build upon the firm foundation which has been laid.*



*Jeffrey Teong, Chairman of the Board of Directors of GBC, presenting our annual love gift to Mdm Rostinah, on whose right are MPS Admin Manager Mr Raymond Liu and students from the school.*



*A gift to celebrate Dr & Mrs Poulson's 60 years in ministry.*

## GBC Missions Conference Jul 26 to 28

### Making Disciples through Missions

**"Go therefore** and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)



*Douglas Erdmann, National Director for Navigators Singapore and a GBC member, started the conference with a question: "Of the four action terms found in Matthew 28:19-20, which one of them – go, make disciples, baptising, and teaching – is a command?"*

*He shared how being in missions-minded churches, reading missionary biographies, attending missionary conferences and signing up for mission trips have been key to making him a missionary. "Missionaries are made, not born."*

There's only one type of Christian: those of The Great Commission. How can each of us be involved in missions?  
We can pray, give, reach and send, and go.

"Before we get into The Great Commission, we have to talk about making disciples." Doug emphasised our responsibility to make disciples and outlined three steps:

1. Evangelise – to seek and to save;
2. Establish – to follow up with young Christians;
3. Equip – to help mature Christians make disciples.


"We all talk about the second coming, but half the world have not heard of the first coming." Oswald J Smith




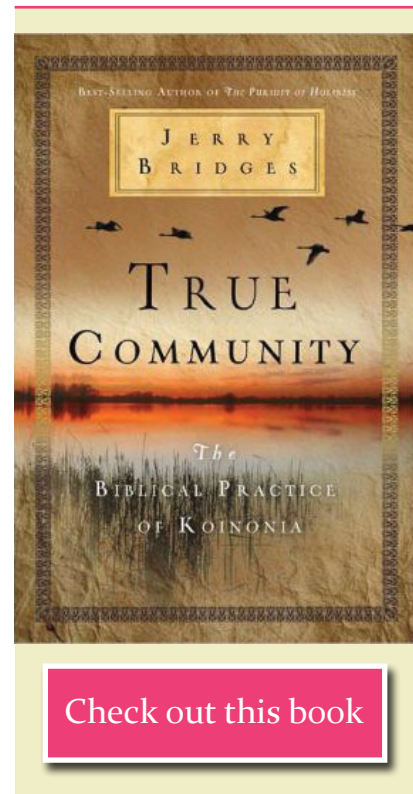
*The hearts of those who attended the workshops were roused by the mission experiences shared by our very own missionaries. From top, Rev Tan Yong Huat, Anthony Tan, David Chan, Teh Seng Chuan, and Chan Yoke Meng.*

## True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia by Jerry Bridges


Pastor Oliver's review of a book for those in the church who want to grow in the understanding of what biblical fellowship looks like in practice.

 **The importance of** community has been given much attention by Christian leaders and pastors in recent years. This emphasis is a needed corrective to many believers' tendency towards an individualistic approach to the Christian life. However, what exactly is **biblical community**? To answer this question, Jerry Bridges explores the meaning of the Greek word *koinōnia* and its most common English translation, the word 'fellowship'. What exactly is *koinōnia*? The word has two primary meanings – they are 'sharing together' and 'sharing with one another'. For the former, Bridges writes, "it is sharing a common life with other believers – a life that, as [the Apostle] John says, we share with God the Father and God the Son. It is a **relationship**, not an activity". This fellowship comes about because of our sharing together founded on the gospel (1 John 1:3). Another facet is that of a **partnership**. Bridges writes that, "whereas relationship describes believers as a community, partnership describes them as a community in action... Just as all believers are united together in a community relationship, so we are all united together in a partnership formed to glorify God" through proclaiming the gospel and the building up of other believers.

 **Bridges writes** that the latter meaning of *koinōnia*, sharing with one another, further consists of two sub-meanings: the first is **communion** with one another and the second is the **sharing of material possessions**. Communion as used here, does not mean simply



the observing of the Lord's Supper, but also the sharing of biblical and spiritual truths to deepen our relationships with each other and with God. This understanding of fellowship is not limited only to spiritual things but also includes the sharing of material possessions with those in need (Acts 2:44-45). Bridges goes on in the rest of his book to elaborate on these meanings of *koinōnia* and their implications for the church.

 **There is much** to commend in Bridges' treatment of the biblical practice of *koinōnia*. He examines all aspects of fellowship in depth and uses simple prose to communicate his ideas. He also examines how each of the meanings of *koinōnia* can be practically applied in church life – his chapter on the use of spiritual gifts within the community is a must-read, capped off by his insistence that the biblical text places emphasis on the primacy of love in both the use of and the relationship contexts in which we use our spiritual gifts. I commend this book to church members and CG leaders in the church who want to grow in the understanding of what biblical fellowship looks like in practice. Ω