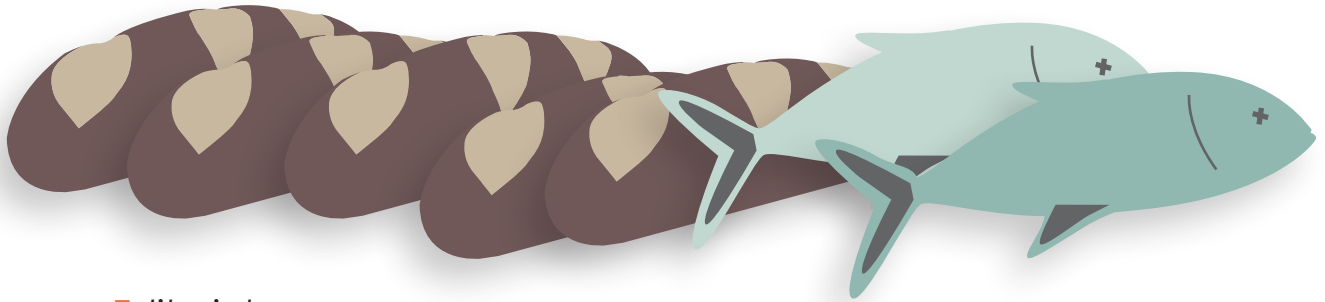


GRACE NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter of Grace Baptist Church Limited MICA(P) 027/04/2012 APRIL - JUNE 2012



Editorial

THOUGHTFUL THINKING

We all like to think of ourselves as thoughtful people, but would those around us confirm this view? In this issue of Grace News we challenge you to think more about what thoughtfulness is, and how you can practise it. Read Pastor Arnold's article to find out why thoughtfulness is more than just loving care and consideration, and then turn to Pastor Eugene's article on page 2 to learn about the radical thoughtfulness of Christ. On page 3 Li Shi Wei looks at how thoughtfulness is being applied in some of our church ministries, and on page 8 this theme continues in our regular Children's Corner and Book Review.

Our Ministry Focus for this issue is the Children's Music Club – turn to page 4 for photos and an overview by Chua Jo Keow, and read inspiring testimonies from alumni of how their days in the CMC paved the way for them to serve in the Worship Ministry today. We also feature a letter from Fedora Teong writing from Thailand about her life and ministry there.

Finally, do take the opportunity to learn more about our new Church Administrator Kuan Kok Pui by reading his interesting acrostics on page 5!

We hope this issue's articles will be food for thought(fulness!). May you be blessed as you read.

The Editorial Team
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Thoughtfulness

Pastor Arnold Wong

Have you been the object of someone's thoughtfulness? It probably happens more often than we think and less often than we would like.

Last year, out of the kindness of their heart, someone cooked one of my favourite dishes. I immediately expressed my heartfelt thanks to them for their *thoughtfulness*. Why not just thank them for their loving care and consideration? The reason is that thoughtfulness involves more than that. Thoughtfulness takes into consideration and anticipates the wants and needs of the person – the unique situation and disposition of that person. The person cooking could have just made what was quick or handy, or maybe even something they would like to eat. It would take less time and trouble. I was deeply touched by their thoughtful gesture. Why and how can we train ourselves to be more *thoughtful* towards others? We can train ourselves to be more like our heavenly Father.

The Bible tells us that God thinks a lot about us. "Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, and Your thoughts toward us." (Ps 40:5) "How precious also

are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" (Ps 139:17) God thinks a lot about us and about what happens in our lives. Therefore, we should think more about others and what is



Thinking + Praying + Acting = Thoughtfulness.

happening in their lives.

When we hear a prayer request we should think about that person. Every day we can ask God to bring people to our attention. As God leads, pray for that person. Send them an SMS with an encouraging message, or maybe even meet their need.

The Bible also tells us that God's thoughts are much higher than our own (Is 55:8-9). We are not capable of thinking and acting the way God does. Hence, we are very limited in ways we can help others – thinking only inside the box. But we can seek the Lord and get His wisdom, guidance and solutions. This will lead us to more thoughtful efforts towards others.

Thinking + Praying + Acting = thoughtfulness. Ω

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV (Anglicised))

Everyone appreciates a thoughtful person – someone who is attentive to the well-being of others. In a world where so many are only concerned with pushing their personal agendas, the virtue of thoughtfulness stands out. But what is the essence of thoughtfulness? And how might we cultivate it?

In Philippians 2:4, the apostle Paul exhorts believers to show thoughtfulness to one another. Each one of us is to “look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”. In other words, we are to be other-person centred, not self-centred. So it is not about meeting my wants, my needs, or my preferences. Rather, each one of us is to be more concerned about the good of others.

Verse 3 speaks of the essence of thoughtfulness. Here, Paul exhorts us to “do nothing from rivalry or conceit”. We are to reject self-seeking pride, which puts ourselves first at the expense of others. Instead, we ought to “in humility” consider others as more important. Humility is the essence of thoughtfulness. It is a servant-minded attitude that seeks to serve others for their good, even if it means sacrificing our self-interests. It is a lowliness of heart that understands we are not at the centre of the world – God is, and He is glorified when we unselfishly love and serve one another.

Such humility and thoughtfulness is radical, and it is only possible if we are in Christ. Philippians 2:5-11 speaks of Jesus’ humble service: He did not selfishly cling on to His privileges for His own benefit. Instead, Jesus “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant” (v 7). Jesus Christ is the supreme example of thoughtfulness – He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His



Artwork by Lek Ser Chong

...what is the essence of thoughtfulness? And how might we cultivate it?

life as a ransom for many. But Christ is more than merely an example. He is our Lord and Saviour, if we have believed in Him. He has freed us from our slavery to sinful selfishness and pride. In Christ, we are empowered by His Spirit to walk in His footsteps of humble and thoughtful servanthood.

Ω

Thoughtfulness outside the box

Thoughtfulness is a term whose meaning escapes precise definition, yet in its ubiquity is easily recognisable. How does thoughtfulness define the objectives and identities of ministries across our church? And what can those involved tell us about how its application reveals the issues they face?

Missions Committee - looking out for family across foreign lands

During a routine visit to a missionary in an East Asian country, Georgina Chen witnessed the worker's dilapidated accommodation. This finding was relayed to the Missions Committee back home, whose role among other things allows for regular correspondence between overseas colleagues, and, where necessary, provision of practical assistance.

Georgina cites 1 Corinthians (15:58) as inspiration for sustained thoughtfulness towards others throughout her service in the Missions Committee. In the case of the missionary: "We thought it best that she be moved out immediately when the gas began leaking," Georgina recalls. "And we arranged her transfer to another apartment with working amenities, plus improved security."

Building closer ties with seasoned hands

One of the Pastoral Care Ministry's functions is to retain contact with worshippers who – owing to a variety of factors – find themselves increasingly detached from the Sunday services. The vast experience and the network of friends built up over decades by Chan Kong Wah and his wife Poh Leng have proven eminently useful in their visits to those in need of counsel, prayer, and even monthly communion.

The feeling is reciprocal. "We are there to listen," reiterates Kong Wah. "But sometimes we see a home-cooked meal waiting upon our arrival. So it is we too who feel a sense of belonging. It's something we're very appreciative of."

Grasping the larger picture

As an Elder, Dr Teoh Swee Hin has witnessed countless instances of thoughtfulness being manifested, with much of it reflective of issues that confront the entire congregation, and indeed wider society.

He lauds a concerted effort (by another church) to organise worship services for foreign workers as an initiative we might well emulate, particularly in addressing changing age demographics and also probable increased attendance.

Dr Teoh sees a distinction between passive and active thoughtfulness, and underlies this by referencing the instructions which Joshua received from the Lord in leading the Israelites (Jos 1:8) "The true art of thoughtfulness," he explains, "has to reside in meditating on God's laws and commands and acting on them. Otherwise, your meditation is passive." Ω

The Children's Music Club is more than a children's choir. At CMC, we endeavour to expose our children to a variety of good music, encouraging appreciation and expression of different forms and genres of music. They are trained in choral singing, playing music in a group and performing before a congregation. Every Saturday afternoon, they rehearse and perform together while making friends and learning from one another.

CMC provides a holistic music experience that extends outside of classical exam curricula. We welcome all children from K1 to P6, including friends from outside Grace Baptist Church. If you are looking for an avenue for your child to develop that God-given musical talent for His glory, do consider encouraging your child to join us! Ω



Children from CMC performing at Sunday Worship.



From left: Ong Ling (coordinator); Krystal Wee (current term teacher); Grace Ang (coordinator); Chua Jo Keow (teacher-leader)

Hear from some of our alumni:

"I'm thankful for my CMC experience: it was where I first experienced the joy of making music with other talented kids, and my first opportunity in accompanying the choir."

- Krystal Wee, EC

"Through the guidance of many music teachers in CMC, I learnt the finer nuances of music, allowing me to serve in the Chinese worship ministry. Teaching in CMC has again made me remember this love."

- Kong Tao Yat, CC

"Joining CMC was a step into an enchanting world. I remember first being amazed by the harmony created which together brought me so much joy in worshipping God."

- Kiyoko Mori, EC

"CMC is unlike any other music school in that its teachers don't teach just music, they also express their love for God and thankfulness for Jesus through the gift of music."

- Toshi Mori, EC

"Growing up in CMC laid a foundation which naturally led me to use my voice to serve in worship. It also helped me overcome my fear of performing in front of an audience and to enjoy and use these gifts God gave me for His glory."

- Jonathan Tang, CC

"CMC sparked my love for singing and music... and as a music school directly serving a church with a living body of God's people, it inspired me to serve and bless others through the worship ministry today."

- Caleb Yap, EC

Conversation with Kuan Kok Pui



Seah Yen Goon

Whenever a new leader takes charge, we expect to see some changes. Kuan Kok Pui, the new Church Administrator, brings to the church office his personal style of working, perspectives and strategies honed from years of management experience in the marketplace. Older members who know him well say that he is friendly, helpful and open to new ideas. His responses to my interview reflect a man with robust values that have been his guiding principles throughout his personal and working life.

Although you have been a member of GBC for 33 years, many new and young members do not know you. How would you like members to see you?

I came to Grace Baptist in 1978 and was baptised in 1979.

I would like members to see me as a BROTHER.

B – Biblical, one who loves God's word.

R – Respectful, respects authority – law, superiors, seniors and everyone.

O – Obedient servant of the Lord.

T – Trustworthy servant of the Lord and a trustworthy friend.

H – Humble servant of the Lord.

E – Enduring servant of the Lord.

R – Reliable servant of the Lord and loyal friend.

Except for a short stint working with the pastoral team, your career has largely been in the public space. What do you think are some good values to emulate and some bad habits to avoid?

Take away the bad and cultivate good habits in one's life and work.

B – Boastful – Do not be boastful or arrogant. Remember the Chinese saying 'there is always a mountain higher than yours'.

A – Assumption – Do not take things/people for granted. It often leads to misunderstandings and disappointments.

D – Demarcation – Do not draw boundaries on your work and with people you come into contact with. Treat everyone equally.

H – Humility – Be humble, know your limits. Admit that you do not know everything and cannot do everything.

A – Attempt – Try and do whatever you can.

B – Believe – Have confidence in your own and others' abilities to do the job.

I – Integrity – Be a person of high integrity and honesty in all you say and do.

T – Teamwork – Be a team player – we achieve more as a team than as individuals.

S – Standards – Set high standards for your work and your life.

In your new role, describe how you will meet the various requirements of pastoral teams, directors and members.

I hope to make everything SIMPLE, so that we all enjoy working together in serving God and the church.

S – Standardised – establish standard procedures that are clear and easy to follow.

I – Innovate – be creative and helpful in finding solutions to improve on current practices.

M – Motivate – motivate, encourage and challenge one another in our vision and service for the Lord.

P – Prioritise – everything is urgent but not everything is important. Help one another to balance our priorities.

L – Love – love, accept and appreciate one another. We are all created differently and we need to accept one another's styles and personalities.

E – Empower – delegate and share responsibility so that everyone will be able to learn and grow together.

In your various ministries, what examples of thoughtfulness have you experienced in the body of Christ?

One example was when I was sick in 2007 some members of the church came to my home and brought me to consult the doctor. Our various thoughtful acts help to cement members together and build up the church. **Ω**

EVENTS

Ladies Ministry visit to Quan Fa Organic Farm – 20 Mar 2012



The pleasing aroma of organic herbs was a delight to the senses!



The guide at Quan Fa Organic Farm explaining the health benefits of organic herbs.



Koh Siang Kiang sharing what it means to be an organic Christian.

April Fool's Day Makan Race – 1 Apr 2012



One of the four groups enjoying their meal at the Circuit Road Market station.



Apart from eating, participants had to complete a fun challenge at each station. Here participants play the Humdinger game - guessing a tune being hummed!



A group picture after completing their makan at Circuit Road Market station.

We bid farewell to Wing Cheong and Ai Hwee – 5 Feb 2012



(far left) Apart from a sumptuous dinner, there was a lucky draw sponsored by Wing Cheong and Ai Hwee! (Rosalind Sng announcing one of the lucky winners!)

(right) Heartfelt and humorous tributes from old friends left Wing Cheong and Ai Hwee in stitches!

(far right) Queuing up to bid farewell to the couple – wedding dinner-style!



(left) A token of appreciation for the couple's many years of faithful service to GBC.

Letter from Thailand

Fedora Teong

Fedora Teong left for Thailand early this year for a one-year stint as the most recent addition to our missionary corps. Here she writes of her experiences in Thailand so far.

It has been about two months since I arrived in Thailand and there have been many lessons that I have learned.

After six weeks of being a full-time student learning Thai in Lopburi, I am now in Lampang where I have to teach and study at the same time. My ministry mainly consists of teaching English – practising conversational English with students at Thammasat University (Lampang Branch) and two classes at The Lighthouse (the school where my team conducts activities like Kids' Club, Playgroup and English lessons). I would greatly appreciate prayers for me to be disciplined in my preparation to teach English and study Thai.

My team also tries to meet up with the people who come to The Lighthouse regularly (outside of our scheduled programmes) to get to know them better. Through the friendships, we hope to share with them about Christ. So far, I have been invited to go out/eat with some of my students, an encouragement for me.

Please pray that the people's hearts will be ready to receive the Good News and that the devil will not have the upper hand in their lives.

Being an Asian, there is not a lot of adjustment for me. I am also living in the heart of Lampang, where it is relatively convenient. I have found it more of a challenge when adjusting to the expectations and cultures of my fellow missionaries. Our

preferences and how we have been brought up has caused friction. This obstructs the work God has called us to do. Please pray for all the Christians to work in the unity we have in Christ. Ω

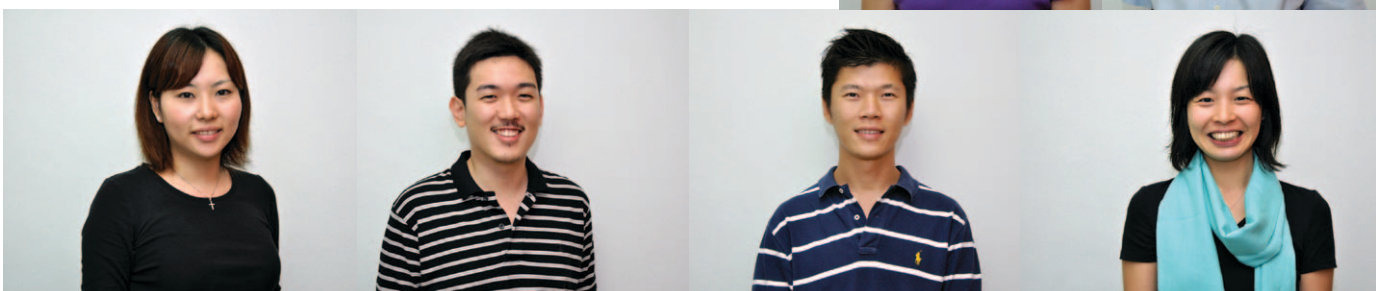


Left:
Some of Fedora's students at The Lighthouse.

Artwork by
Jean Ning Phua

BAPTISMS & NEW MEMBERS

Six new members were added to the GBC Family on 15 Jan 2012:
(right L-R): Liz Ng and Ng Cheng Hock through transfer of membership;
and (below L-R): Chihiro Yamada, Kyle Boon, Vincent Ong and Sachie Hori through baptism.



Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

Rachel Wong

Artwork by Jean Ning Phua

Children's
Corner

Have you heard the saying, "You can never really know a person until you've walked a mile in their shoes"? What this means is that we should try to put ourselves in someone else's position in order to understand what life is like for them. The way to do this is to try to be sensitive and thoughtful towards other people, and to always put other people's needs before our own. Jesus put it like this: "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matt 7:12, NASB)

What are some ways we can do this? We can try to listen carefully to other people, to notice their moods and be aware of their points of view. It is important to show people we care, for example by not forgetting their



birthdays, remembering their names, and asking them questions about their lives. We should pay attention to other people instead of only being concerned with ourselves.

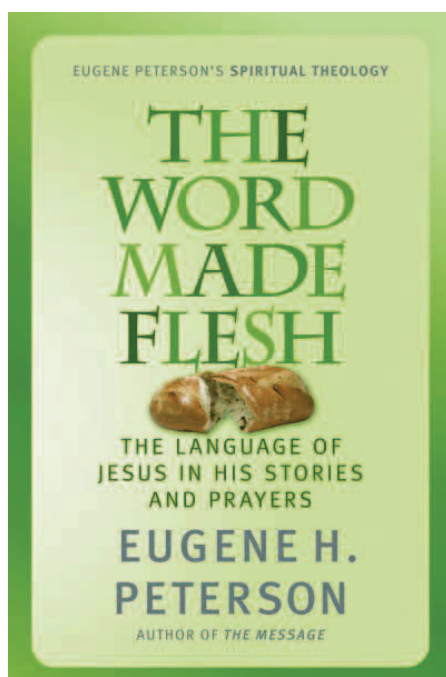
There are many people in the Bible who showed how thoughtful they were to others. Paul always remembered thoughtfully all the people he had met on his journeys (Rom 16); Jesus was thoughtful about the needs of His disciples and the crowd when He fed the 5000 (Matt 14); and Peter's friends thoughtfully prayed for him in prison with amazing results (an angel rescued him!) (Acts 12).

So take off your own shoes, try on someone else's and walk in them for a while! It will help you be more thoughtful and sensitive. Ω

BOOK REVIEW

review by Yap Kim Meng

The Word Made Flesh by Eugene Peterson



Eugene Peterson's *The Word Made Flesh* (2008) is the fourth in his series of five on Spiritual Theology. I recommend this because it is easy but thought-provoking reading. It centres on the Travel Narratives through Samaria with a focus on ten parables told by Luke. While not entirely focused on thoughtfulness, what drew my interest was the seemingly relaxed way that Jesus approached the final part of His journey heading towards Jerusalem. There were so many issues that He needed to convey to His disciples, yet He engaged them with unhurried parables in storytelling fashion, each presented as answers to questions posed by those around him as they made their way through Samaria. In hindsight this seems a deliberate approach, and sensitive to the disciples' future need for understanding when

Jesus would no longer be around.

Peterson is a master wordsmith. He is able to intrigue and arouse curiosity, as well as give penetrating insight into Luke's careful selection of these parables (most not found in Matthew and Mark) and the lessons taught.

I find myself reading and re-reading this book. It gives me fresh appreciation of the Gospel writers and in this instance Luke, for focusing on parables that have a primary spiritual message, yet are couched in familiar and personal terms for the disciples. I am more and more convinced of the need to study the Word, seeking to understand and apply it in my own life, and then having the God-given opportunity to teach others, seeking to let Scripture renew and transform the lives of many (Ezra 7:10). Ω