

GRACE NEWS

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Grace Baptist Church is a disciple-making church that transforms lives with the gospel and love of Jesus Christ.

Being Built Up in Christ

This year, Grace News is taking as our theme the spiritual significance of the growth of the church by way of a rough analogy with the actual progress of our new church building. The previous issue looked at the importance of firm foundations. In this issue we move on to examine the structure or 'frame' of God's house, as exhibited in us, His people. We are to be built up in Christ so that our faith grows, matures and shapes our whole life.

*But what does it mean to be built up in Christ? Here **Pastor Arnold Wong** shows us from Scripture that God uses every life experience, 'good' and 'bad', to grow our faith in Christ.*

“ Accepting Christ as one's Saviour is not the final destination but the beginning of a life-long journey to maturity. God's people are engaged in an ongoing process of personal spiritual growth. ”

In Colossians 2:6-7 we discover an exciting truth: "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, having been firmly rooted and now *being built up in Him* and established in your faith..." (NASB). Accepting Christ as one's Saviour is not the final destination but the beginning of a life-long journey to maturity. God's people are engaged in an ongoing process of personal spiritual growth. So how does God build us up in Christ?

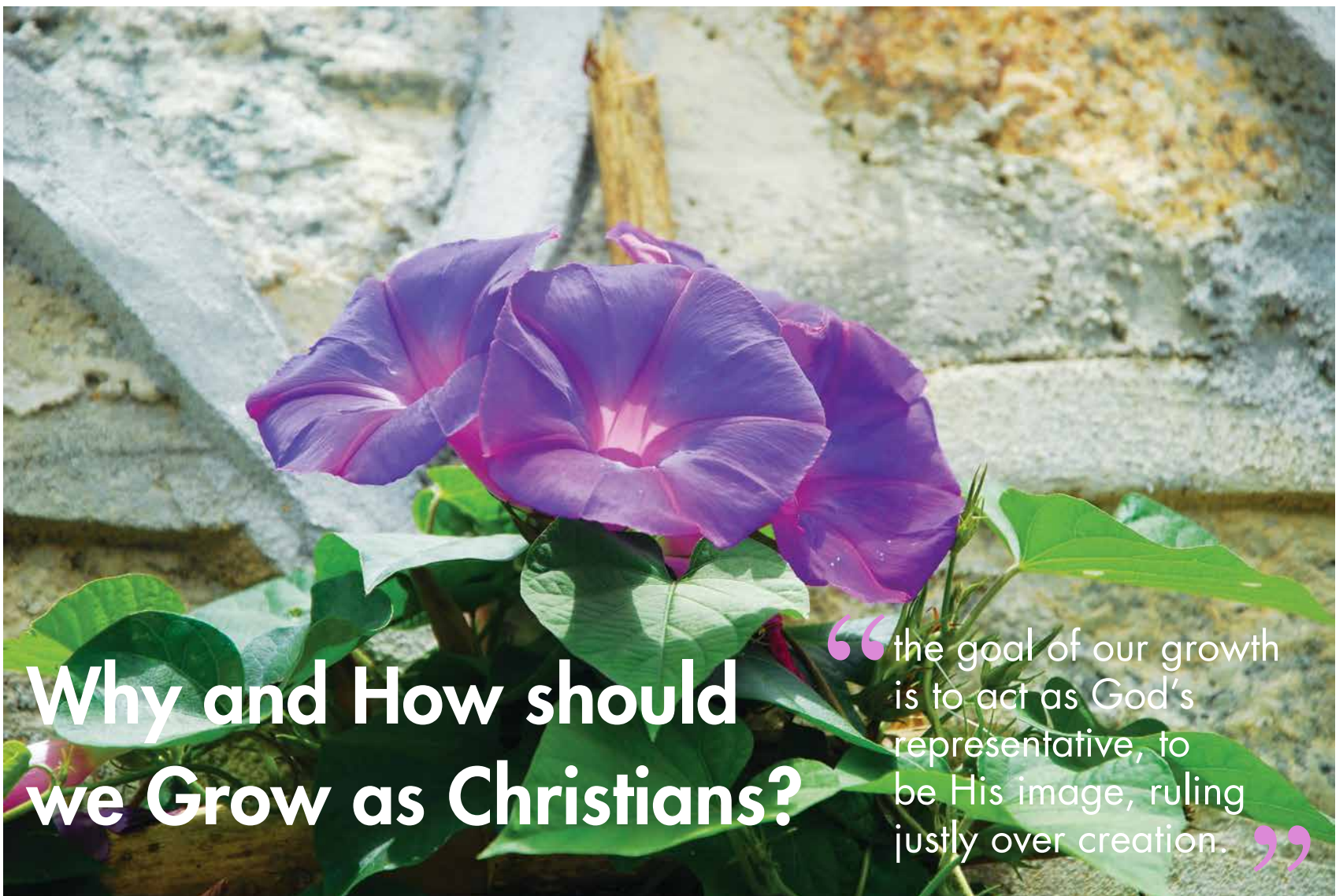
Basic to being built up in Christ is growth in our understanding and knowledge of Christ. Knowledge of Christ helps us to understand and know God because when we see Christ we see God (Jn 10:30; 14:9). All the truths and facts we need to know and can know about God come from God through creation, His word, and through Christ (Rom 1:19-20; Prov 2:6; Col 2:1-3). Hence, we are built up or matured in Christ, by *what we learn* about life and God from God's word with the help of God's Spirit.

But we may not realise that we are also built up in Christ by *how we live out* those truths in our daily lives. God uses *blessings*, and even *sufferings, testings* and *trials* in our lives to build us up in Christ. From the Hebrew and Greek words translated as 'blessing' we understand that blessings are acts or words that contribute to our material or spiritual happiness and welfare. God's material and spiritual *blessings* are abundant (Matt 5:45; Eph 1:3). God also uses *sufferings* to teach us the importance of trusting in our sovereign God (Ps 103:19). God allows *testings* in our lives to prove to us that our faith is real (Jas 1:2-4). And God also uses minor and major *trials* to develop a godly character in us (Rom 5:3-5). Every life experience happens for a good purpose (Rom 8:28), and reinforces or fulfills some truth God has revealed about life and/or Himself in His word (Ps 37:5).

The process of being 'built up in Christ' begins when we accept Christ as our personal Saviour and continues throughout the rest of our life of faith. It happens through what we learn and how we live. Ω



Illustration by Lek Ser Chong



Why and How should we Grow as Christians?

“the goal of our growth is to act as God’s representative, to be His image, ruling justly over creation.”

*Would a potential questioner find us stumbling over our answers to the above queries? Stumble no more: **Leow Wen Pin** provides clear answers to these fundamental questions, and challenges us to grow towards Christlikeness.*

Many of us know that after we believe in the gospel of Jesus, we should live as His disciples. But *why*? And *how* exactly should we live out a commitment to discipleship? These two questions motivated our recent Discipleship Seminars (DS) module on Christian Growth called ‘After You Believe’. This module is foundational to our multi-year DS syllabus. This is because, before we participate in the rest of the DS programme, we must first have a clear understanding of *why* we want to grow and *what* is the goal of all our growth.

I had the pleasure of teaching the three sessions of this module. In the first session, I answered the question of *why* we should grow. My simple answer is this: **if we believe in the gospel, we must also want to grow**. Let me elaborate. First, note that the gospel assumes that each of us is sinful. If we believe in the gospel, we therefore recognise that *we* are the ultimate problem. (In contrast, sometimes I hear God’s final judgment presented as the ultimate problem of life. This is sub-biblical. Rather, God’s final judgment is good because His judgment will make right the evils of this world. Rather, the ultimate problem of *the sin in us* is what

causes us to be rightfully punished at the final judgment.)

And so, if we recognise we are the problem, then after we believe, why would we want to continue to be the problem? By disregarding growth, we are essentially saying that the problem that the gospel presents (ie, sin in us) is not serious. We cannot affirm the gospel and not pursue growth. Instead, if we affirm the gospel, we must grow. We should submit to the Spirit given to us by Jesus and allow the Spirit to fashion us to become more like Christ.

In the next two sessions, we then answered the question of *how* we should grow as Christians. In order to know how to grow, one must first know the destination of growth. To answer this, I presented the class with the overall storyline of the Bible: God created man to be His representative to exercise His goodness over creation. However, man rejected God and deviated from His purpose. God’s plan of redemption, first begun in Abraham and completed in Jesus, is designed to return man to his original purpose in the New Eden. **In other words, the goal of our growth is to act as**

God’s representative, to be His image, ruling justly over creation.

Given this vision for our growth, we then ask ourselves: who is the best exemplar of acting as God’s representative ruling over creation? The answer is obvious: Jesus Christ. **Thus, how we grow into our desired state is by becoming more like Christ.** I then shared with the class four ways that Scripture gives for us to grow in Christlikeness: (1) the study of Scripture, (2) imitation of good Christian models, (3) participating in wise and thoughtful personal and communal practices, and (4) life together in Christian community. (These four ways were adapted from NT Wright’s book *After You Believe*, which the module was named after.)

I am thankful that the participants’ feedback for the module was positive. My thoughts above are just a brief summary of what we covered in the module. If you are interested in learning more, feel free to join us when the module repeats in January 2017, or watch the videos online at the GBC website. May God bless your journey of growth in Christ. Ω

Jesus Builds the Church – a House of Prayer for All Nations

“the parable teaches us that Jesus came to the Jews ‘looking for fruit’ but found none. The church today will do well not to make the same mistake.”



Illustration by Lek Ser Chong

Tan Yee Kiat shows that Jesus is a masterful temple-builder, and reminds us that Jesus is expecting today's church to bear fruit for Him.

I recently chanced upon a question asked in the online Q&A forum, *Quora*, which aroused some interest. The question posed was, “Why didn’t Jews accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah?”¹ There were a lot of interesting responses and honest answers from Jewish respondents. Two in particular stood out because of their similarity. Detailing a list of criteria, they both gave an explanation that they expect the Messiah to rebuild the temple. The passages cited to support this position were Ezekiel 37:26-28 and Jeremiah 33:18²:

“I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” (Ezekiel 37:26-28) (ESV)

“... and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.” (Jeremiah 33:18) (ESV)

According to Jewish thought, since Jesus did not build a temple, He therefore cannot be the Messiah.

It is important then for us to realise that Jesus is in fact very much a temple-builder. And a masterful one. The whole of Mark 11:12-12 details Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the temple, and ends with Him teaching the parable of the tenants. This passage gives extreme insight into what Jesus hopes to achieve with His temple.

He cleanses the temple from a hub of financial exploitation with the aim of restoring what the temple was always meant to be – that is ‘a house of prayer for all nations’.

The scathing remark at the end of the parable in Mark 12:9 is a direct condemnation of what the Jews were doing with the temple. Instead of bearing fruit, they were concerned with financial gain and exploitation: “What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

Paul sums up how he sees Jesus’ teachings in the Epistle to the Ephesians. He latches

on to the idea that there is now no Jew and no Gentile and sums up our unity with “... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:20-22) (ESV)

The sum of all this is that Jesus is building something wonderful with the church. The church is the new temple – a visible sign of Jesus’ ongoing work. But these passages should be taken as both comfort and warning. Comfort, for our inclusion in this ‘temple project’ is glorious, the end of which we will see at the New Creation. Warning, because the parable teaches us that Jesus came to the Jews ‘looking for fruit’ but found none. The church today will do well not to make the same mistake. Ω

¹ “Why didn’t Jews accept Jesus Christ as their messiah?” Retrieved from <https://www.quora.com/Why-didnt-Jews-accept-Jesus-Christ-as-their-messiah>

² “What will the Mashiach Do?” Retrieved from <http://www.jewfaq.org/mashiach.htm#What>

Strengthened in Christ – the Word of God in our Own Language

Saluan believers singing Christian songs in their own language for the first time. Heidi is third from the left.



Heidi Leong reminds us of the immense privilege we have of being able to read the Bible in our own language, and testifies that it is God's word that strengthens and sustains her and her husband Tzi Ping as they serve as missionaries in Indonesia.

Back in 2009, we went into a remote area of Sulawesi (Indonesia) to visit a village high up in the mountains that was near our future home. Immediately, we were bombarded with questions about Michael Jackson and his death the day before. We were amazed how informed they were about the recent death of a celebrity far away from them, yet after more than 2000 years they still had not heard of Jesus' death on the cross for their sins.

Having lived for two years with the Saluan people in the coastal town of Luwuk, it is sad to note that they still do not have a complete Bible translated in their own language, nor do they have any discipleship resources. All they have are a few translated chapters from the book of Genesis and a movie on Jesus. The movie has been shown to the Saluan people countless times, and they always shed tears of joy as they realise that God loves them, speaks their language and cares for them. Such joy has more than strengthened our walk of faith and challenged us to continue serving the Lord among the Saluan.

Being a missionary can be a lonely experience as we are far away from everything that we are used to. Most importantly, we are away from those who speak our heart language. Despite being able to speak local languages, we are still not considered one of them. This

is compounded by cultural differences. Sadly, we will never be fully understood.

Fortunately, we have Jesus. He always understands and He is always our faithful friend to build us up and encourage us. To have His word is a precious gift that I could not live without. I praise God for the privilege that He has given me to own His word and be nourished by it daily. When I read the Bible in English, I feel blessed. When I read the Bible in German, I feel an instant connection because it speaks to my heart.

Apart from the Bible, the wealth of Christian books we have in English often makes me wonder: "How can any of us ever have a weak faith?" We can encourage ourselves in Christ round the clock. Not so for the Saluan. They have no encouraging Bible verses to turn to in times of need, no worship songs to uplift them, no evangelistic sermons that expound God's grace and no one to teach them the Bible. These are key enablers to help us grow in Christ and strengthen our faith in Him.

Apart from my personal relationship with the Lord, nothing has strengthened my faith more than to share Christ with others and to do His will. There will always be challenges. It takes courage and we may be misunderstood at times, but the overwhelming joy of seeing

people saved more than makes up for it.

Together with about 25 Saluan speakers, we have compiled about 8000 words to form a dictionary to help strengthen the learning of the language, especially for new missionaries joining in the work there.

The Saluan are musically gifted so we encouraged them to translate Christian songs into Saluan, which they sang in church. Soon they started to create their very own songs, which became the first ever Christian songs in Saluan. That encouraged us all greatly. Not knowing the content of one of their songs before hearing it, we were amazed as it became clear that God planted a desire within them for their own people that they could be reached for Christ. The song was created after meditating upon Romans 10:14:

"How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Indeed, our work for Him is not in vain. Our faith in Him is deepened because of what He has done for the Saluan people. Our walk in Him is strengthened because He is with us. Ω

Adopt-a-Missionary (AM) Programme

– Caring for our Missionaries by Adopting Them

Who are our missionaries, what they are doing and where are they serving?

Missionary (Mission Organisation)	Service
Chan, Tony and Yoke Meng (Wycliffe)	Based in Singapore. Coordinating language projects in Asia-Pacific area, church engagement, project admin training and IT consultation.
Chandler, Tom and Clare (Strategic Indigenous Initiatives Resource Group)	Based in California. Mentoring emerging leadership in South Asia. Counselling and consultation services.
Chang, David and Gladys (OMF, Thailand)	Based in Thailand. Church planting, mentoring younger missionaries, preaching and advisor to churches.
Chong, Sylvia (CRU)	Based in Singapore. A member of the Leadership Development Human Resource Team.
Erdman, Doug and Joyce (Navigators Singapore)	Based in Singapore. Doug is Director and Joyce provides care to the female staff as a group, care to certain individual female staff, and assists with various staff conferences and meetings.
Family A (on project basis)	Please approach MC member for info.
Kwek, George (AIM, Myanmar)	Based in Australia with ministry in Myanmar. Provides discipleship training to churches and seminaries and engages in the prison ministry.
Koh, Siang Kiang (SBC)	Professor in Singapore Bible College. Manages the Chapels and Pastoral Care Groups.
Leong, Tzi Ping and Heidi (Wycliffe, Indonesia)	Based in Indonesia. 2015 is the second year they have been in Luwuk. They are involved in the Saluan Dictionary Project.
Lin, Barnabas (IVF, USA)	Based in the US. Involved in campus ministry at the University of Chicago. Studying at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, second year part-time, pursuing a Masters of Divinity.
Pang, Lily (East Asia)	Based in East Asia. Involved in monthly remittance of living allowances and any other financial needs to students and/or their families, calls to teachers and/or students under sponsorship to check on their progress in schools, and visits to homes and schools in towns or villages where we have a sponsored student.
Soh, Desmond (SBC) and Wendy	Professor in Singapore Bible College while Wendy is finishing up her MA in Counselling. Desmond teaches masters and doctoral level homiletics, missions and Practical Theology.
Teh, Seng Chuan (OM Singapore, on project basis)	Please approach MC member for info.
Teo, Deborah (Project Khmer Hope, Cambodia)	Based in Cambodia. Serves as an English Teacher cum Coordinator in PKH (Trang). PKH works to bring literacy to the minority communities of the tribal Suoy and Krung peoples living in Aoral District.
Teong, Fedora (Missionary-in-training, OMF)	Undergoing seminary training at Singapore Bible College. Upon completion she will serve in Thailand.
Wong, Evelyn (Wycliffe Singapore)	Based in Singapore. Serves in the Finance Department preparing financial reports and monthly reports for international office in Dallas and for language project team in Singapore.
Yao, Jonathan and Eng Meng (CRU Singapore)	Associate Principal of EAST and Dean of Advancement, Jonathan is part of the leadership team to lead and grow both the local Singapore campus and the Extension Centres beyond Singapore. Eng Meng serves as the Assistant to the Associate Principal and provides administrative assistance.
Yap, Esther (Wycliffe Singapore)	Undergoing training and upon completion will serve in language translation.
Yap, Kim Meng and Beow Kheng (Navigators Singapore)	Based in Singapore. Director of Alumni Community Ministry and together with Beow Kheng (Assistant Director and Area Rep) lead a core team. They are also in the Missions Leadership Team and provide missionary care services.

Why we must care for our missionaries?

- They are in the frontline out of their comfort zone carrying out the Lord's command in Matt 28:19 to "...go and make disciples of all nations..."
- Following the lead of the early church:
The church at Antioch, in a sense, adopted Paul and Barnabas as special messengers of the Gospel to Asia and Europe (Acts 13:1-3).

"Missions are a way of nourishing your soul on God." John Piper

How can we care for them?

1. Commit to pray for a specific missionary and communicate that commitment directly to our partner.
2. Sign up through your care group to receive your adopted missionary's updates and prayer letters to enable effective prayer on your missionary's behalf.
3. Host a table during Missions Emphasis Month in July on your missionary's behalf as a means of highlighting his or her ministry to the GBC congregation.
4. Commit to a visit once in your two-year commitment. Ω

CHURCH REBUILDING PROGRESS 1Q2016



Building being demolished and demolition completed in Nov 2015.



Two piling machines, one small and one big, were deployed on-site. They worked in tandem to meet the piling schedule. Care was also taken to avoid damaging the trees that we chose to preserve.



Earth Control Measures (ECM) pit along the perimeter of the site being prepared and filled to prevent silt from polluting our waterways.



Pile cap being prepared and cast. Additional rebars are inserted to strengthen the support structure. Pile caps are thick concrete mats that rest on the piles and form part of the foundation of the building. The design calls for 45 pile caps. Piling was completed in February 2016 with a total of 264 piles installed.

YOUTH MINISTRY OUTING 23 JAN 2016



The youths had a great time getting to know one another at the Youth Ministry BBQ. "Being new to the youth group, I was glad that I went to the BBQ session as I got to know some of them better." Ethan Lam (standing 3rd from left)

FAMILY MEAL 6 MAR 2016



More than 200 worshippers joined our first Family Meal at CHS. There was a simple packet meal accompanied by rich fellowship, and an atmosphere of warmth and community was enjoyed by all.

PS BOBBY APPRECIATION DINNER 20 MAR 2016

The church prayed for Ps Bobby Lee and his family as he begins his new role as Executive Director of the Singapore Baptist Convention. An appreciation dinner was held to thank him and Lydia for their twelve years of fruitful and faithful service with GBC.

"As I move on to serve beyond the four walls of Grace Baptist Church, I look forward to a continued partnership with all of you: a partnership of prayer and participation."
Ps Bobby Lee



BAPTISMS AND TRANSFER 24 JAN 2016



We celebrated with great joy the baptism of (R-L) Gerald Chua, Liew Ian Hwee and Harriet Lee. We also had the privilege of witnessing a father baptise his own daughter when Harriet was baptised by Ps Bobby. To add to the celebration, we welcomed Esther Ng (L) to the GBC family upon her transferral of membership to the church.

CHILDREN'S OUTING 19 MAR 2016



Children, parents and teachers from the Children's Ministry enjoyed their visit to the Central Fire Station to watch demonstrations and learn how a fire station works. Afterwards the younger children went to Fort Canning to play, while the older group took part in an Amazing Race around nearby buildings. A most welcome picnic ended the morning.

GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER 25/27 MAR 2016



Good Friday was observed with a quiet, reflective service of remembrance of our Lord's Passion, and gratitude for His finished work on the cross.



"Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" These rousing words of greeting marked the start of a joyful service to celebrate Resurrection Sunday. The songs of worship, Scripture readings and gospel message gladdened our hearts with a powerful presentation of the true meaning of Easter. All glory to His wonderful Name!

Ministry Focus – An Usher Reflects

*Ushering Ministry Leader **Bruce Mok** talks with **Li Shi Wei** about the satisfactions and challenges of serving in the Ushering Ministry.*

The photos show some of the members of the Ushering Ministry. More are needed! There are three teams:



The Welcome Team: Teo Peck Har and Chong Miao-wu Suang.



The Greeting Team: (L-R) Sandy Tan, Jane Kong, Chong Chee Leong, and Robert Oei with ministry leader Bruce Mok.



The Ushering Team: (Anti-clockwise) Bruce Mok with Philip Lim, Lee Siang Teck, Martin Chan, Patrick Fok, Eric Tan and Wilson Wee.

There is a need for more members to join the Ushering Team to help cover duties during Sunday Service, and Bruce Mok is on the case. He explains, "If you're looking to serve in a ministry, ushering is the place to start. Everything takes place during service timing, and it's also the best way to get to know everyone. You don't need any skills, you just need to be friendly and presentable."

Describing the role in detail, he highlights key duties as being to greet worshippers, lead them to available seats, and attend to new visitors. He is especially keen to emphasise

that the role is open and accessible enough for anyone to join.

In an extensive interview to be published online* on the lessons that have emerged from the team's experiences, as well as reflections on his own spiritual journey, Bruce also made known his growing concerns over a variety of recurring issues affecting the fabric of church community – among them turnout and punctuality.

Following the church's temporary relocation, the ushering team has had to cope with

an increase in the number of worshippers arriving late for regular service. He says, "People are putting insufficient effort into coming on time."

On the challenge many people face in reworking the afternoon schedule with their activities, Bruce agrees emphatically: "That's exactly correct," before adding, "But perhaps we need to ask: where is our priority?"

"It's a measurement of our spiritual maturity." Ω

*<http://english.gracebaptistchurch.sg/blog/post/an-usher-reflects>

STONES THAT ARE ALIVE

By Rachel Wong

"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house..."
(1 Peter 2:5)

Everyone knows that stones are not alive, right? In fact, stones are just about the most unalive things I can think of. (Ok, so 'unalive' is not a proper word, but you know what I mean.) So why does Peter say in the verse below that we are like living stones?

Well, it's ok to be a stone, because Peter said that even Jesus was like a stone (1 Pet 2:6). Not just any stone though, but a special kind of stone called a cornerstone. A cornerstone is the most important stone in a building because it is the one that makes sure all the other stones are lined up in place next to it. All the other stones have to follow the position of the cornerstone. If they do not the house will not be strong and may even fall down, just like when you play Jenga and the bricks become out of line - eventually the tower will topple.

What is this 'spiritual house' that Peter was talking about? Could it be the church? People

think that the church is just a building, but it's much more than that. God's church is actually us! Yes, it's made of people! The walls of a church building are made of stones, and guess what the walls are made of in God's people-church? That's right - people like us! That's why we are called 'living stones', because together we make up the walls of the church, and Jesus is the cornerstone who keeps us safe and strong. Each of us is a living stone because Jesus lives in our hearts and we build our lives of faith on Him.

I am so glad to be a living stone lying right next to Jesus. Aren't you? ☺



Church Rebuilding Update @ 31 Mar 2016

