

From Our Senior Pastor:

Releasing People to Bless the Universal Church



by PASTOR STEVEN CHIN

Starting with 18 people, the Lord has blessed our church with numerical growth over the past 55 years. Many of our members came to Christ through the ministry of BCEC. However, many were Christians already when they started coming to BCEC. But just as people have come to our church, people have left our church as well. Understandably, some have moved away from the area. Sadly, some have stopped actively following the Lord. But some have decided to go to other churches in the area. How should we see those who transfer to other churches?

Of course, people leave churches for a variety of reasons. Some may not agree with the teaching of the church in a particular area. Some may not like the pastor, whether his preaching or personality. Some may have moved to the suburbs and want something closer to where they live. As people have families, some seek a better children's or youth program. Some want a better facility or easier parking.

Relationally, I will miss the fellowship and service of those persons or families. It also causes me to reflect to see if there is anything I or our church could have done better, in terms of ministry, that would have prevented that person from seeking another church.

I realize that BCEC is not a perfect church. We have strengths, but we also have weaknesses. Of course, there is no perfect church out there. Maybe that is why movement within the Universal Church may be a good thing. We realize the Bible teaches that all local churches with orthodox beliefs belong to the all-encompassing Universal Church. Christ is the Head of the Universal Church. BCEC is not the only church under Christ's leadership. If Christ sees a weakness or need in one local church, can He not move someone from another local church to that church with the need?

BCEC may not be the right church for everyone. I tell Christians who ask me that they should generally go to the church, as directed by the Lord, where they can grow the most or where they can serve the most. Sometimes that may be BCEC, but sometimes it may be another local church. If a person is stagnant in a church, or is not serving, or is unhappy, maybe a change is needed. Maybe that person would be happier and more involved.

I have experienced this personally. I used to at-

tend a multiethnic* church in Cambridge. (*This term was not used then. It was a largely Caucasian church with some Asian Americans and African Americans). That was the church where I came to Christ. That church gave me a good foundation in the Bible. But when I went to college in New York City, I experienced English ministry in a Chinese church. When I came back to Boston, I first wanted to come back to my old church, where I enjoyed the teaching, but I was not serving. The Lord led me to transfer to BCEC to help develop the English speaking ministry there. Of course, the Lord also led me to eventually serve full time at BCEC for almost 40 years. If I did not transfer to BCEC, humanly speaking, I would probably not be a pastor today. My gifts and passions fit BCEC better than my old church.

As much as we want people to remain in our church, we must have Jesus' perspective, as the Head of the Church. So, if people transfer to another church where they can grow or serve more, it is actually a blessing to the Universal Church. We have certainly been blessed by many people who have transferred into BCEC. So, let us not hold on to people too tightly, but release them where they can be a blessing to other churches, so that the Universal Church can grow. The ultimate priority is not our church, but His Universal Church and the glory of God.



1-2) Christmas Eve Service (12/24); 3) Special Christmas event called "Merry Christmas Sing-along Worship Concert" (12/3)

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Chinese Missions Conference:

Adopting a more God-glorifying Posture



by MARGARET AND
STANLEY WONG,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"
- Psalm 46:10 (ESV)

"Cat and dog theology." Bob Sjogren, the plenary speaker on the first night, drilled this notion into our heads. A cat's perspective is that "God exists to serve me." A dog's perspective is that "I exist to serve God."

A bit simplistic, but it dug deep – we have had a tendency to start our prayers with "Lord, bless me..."

It gave us pause to re-examine our posture when we approach God. We have to confess that too often we take up a cat-like mindset. If there was one take-away from the Chinese Missions Conference (CMC), it was that we have it wrong when we consider it a primary purpose that God is to serve us. Instead, we are created primarily to *glorify Him*.

One practical change that we have done since CMC is praising Him first and foremost in our prayers — it is often too easy to begin our prayers with what we would like to see God do in our lives. This intentional shift has a funny way of getting us to go back to the scriptures, particularly in Psalms, so that we are praying directly from the original material. This also allows us to center ourselves with His will, instead of starting with our desires and asking God to align Himself to us.

But it would be amiss to say that this was the only thing that stood out from our time in Baltimore. We had a chance to reconnect with this past year's BCEC Missions Conference speakers, James



and Faith Cha. They shared about how to witness cross-culturally and how the notion of worldview informs how we should approach evangelism. Being individuals of Chinese heritage who grew up in American society, we recognized that our own tendencies are rooted in a worldview that is at once both shame-based (Chinese) and guilt-based (American). By understanding this, we are empowered to leverage these values and behaviors to connect with others who view life through a similar lens.

In addition to cross-cultural evangelism, we were also inspired to grow in personal evangelism through the course of our daily lives. Becky Pipert walked us through stories of everyday evangelism and how to design and facilitate a seeker-friendly Bible study. A natural extension of this is to think more strategically as to how we can minister to those in our respective workplaces. As we both work in the business world, we felt stirred to examine and think through opportunities to share about our faith through personal evangelism and to potentially facilitate a workplace seeker Bible study.

Currently, we are called to be salt and light in our respective workplaces and to act as "senders" — people who support missionaries as they go off to the missions field. Pam Arlund exhorted us that

senders have just as an important role to play as missionaries do on the front lines. She shared examples of encouragements of how churches committed to praying regularly for missionaries and educated themselves on the people groups that their missionaries were serving. This was a reminder for us that we need to more regularly pray for and support our missionaries by growing our heart for the people groups that they are serving in the field.

And there were many other defining moments for us — from David Choi's sharing about how his church in Chicago grew from one to hundreds within a span of a few years to Francis Chan calling out the racial prejudice that resides latent in the Chinese heritage church (and has no place in the kingdom of God) — these messages stung us through the audacity of David's prayer and the rawness of Francis's rebuke.

As we reflect upon CMC, we walk away driven to adopt a more God-glorifying posture in our daily lives and to grow our hearts for the unreached people groups in the world — so as to effect the change foretold in scripture, *"...this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come"* - Matthew 24:14 (ESV).

Chinese Missions Conference Reflection



by IRIS SU,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

I am so grateful to God for allowing me to go to CMC 2016 to really understand who He is and how much I really need Him. I always seek control over my own life, but I know that God needs to be my driver. CMC 2016 really opened my eyes to see that I can't do anything by my own

means. Only God can help me and it's because everything is for God's glory. My main calling and every other Christian's primary calling is to show God's glory. I always believed that Jesus died for our sins to save us. However, CMC 2016 brought to light that He did die for us, but it was for God's glory. Everything points back to God, and I'm really glad to have learned that and reanalyze my definition of Jesus' death and resurrection.



Obeying God's Calling



by ANNIE TRAN,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

Most typical working adults use their holiday vacation to visit family, share abundant meals with friends, or take trips to much warmer climate. But for me, the Lord decided that He wanted to bring me to Chinese Missions Convention (CMC) 2016 in Baltimore, Maryland. If you are not aware of what CMC is, let me give you a quick snippet of it! It is a triennial mission-oriented convention ministering to local Chinese churches of both Chinese and English-speaking believers, promoting the common goal of reproducing disciples of all nations globally and locally. This convention helps to equip both students and professionals to be a vital force for God's harvest field.

At the beginning, I didn't have strong intentions of going to CMC. At least, not until my little brother was recruited to help with the English-speaking track's worship team. One car conversation later, I found myself planning my time-off around that particular week. I didn't know what to expect or what to gain from this convention. But God already made great plans before I even said "I'll go."

Nearly 3,000 individuals were at CMC. Amongst the thousands were missionaries and pastors that came to share their personal testimonies about their experiences in the spiritual battlefield to share the gospel with others. Through the general sessions and workshops, I had just a glimpse of what a life of full commitment to the Lord looked like. Each individual expressed how tough the missions field can be. Fear of rejection, isolation, and death were many of the common

reasons why most fail as missionaries. But behind the fear and suffering is a deep understanding that God's glory needs to be known. God has so many abilities that honestly, He really doesn't need us. He could have shown His glory all by Himself. But He decides to use us sinful people to be an example to the world just how glorious He is. Just understanding how He has given each of us a glorious calling despite our failures drives many individuals to follow Jesus Christ. As a missionary puts it, "How can you not follow a God who has created every atom in the universe and yet still wants to use you for His Kingdom?"

During my time at CMC, I did not expect to see familiar faces at this convention. And these weren't just any familiar faces. These were faces of missionaries that I have seen at BCEC during our own missions conferences. These missionaries and their personal testimonies have shaped the way I view and value missionaries. Through my fellowship with each of them, I was able to see that these new friends of mine also embodied this deep understanding that our God truly deserves to have His glory be known to all of the nations. They have tasted and seen the goodness of His Word while following God. And because they have experienced His goodness, they desire have everyone else get the chance to hear and taste this goodness themselves.

These wonderful missionaries have taught me that the Great Commission is not just found in Matthew 28. It is found throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. God has called His people to go out and make disciples of all the nations. It was not only Jesus that gave this command. It was God from the very beginning. These beloved missionaries have shown me with Biblical references that all Christians are called to bring glory to God's name by witnessing to others. This should be our response to the blessings He

has poured onto us, and yet so many nations still have not heard the sweet words of Our Amazing Father. Nearly 1,900 people groups still have not heard the name of Jesus Christ in their life. Or ever seen a Bible. This number made me cry. The number sounds enormous, but technically speaking, if all of the CMC attendees went out into these unengaged and unreached countries, we could have reached "all" of the nations. And yet, not many are being sent to these regions of the world.

God brought me to CMC because He wanted to call me Himself. To witness how there are individuals out there that are living and breathing examples what full commitment to Him looks like. He wants to use a sinful woman like myself to go out and witness to the unengaged and unreached. The realization of His calling is truly overwhelming, but I took a big leap of faith and prayed a bold prayer to commit my life to the Lord for possible full-time missions.

I want to end this sharing with an encouraging interaction that I had after my big prayer of commitment. I hope this will fuel many people at BCEC to continue to seek God's voice. After another sister-in-Christ prayed over me for my commitment, a young woman approached me afterwards with words of encouragement. She told me, "I was watching you as you were receiving prayer and I just wanted to let you know that God is going to do great things in your life."

I didn't know who she was or where she came from, but the warm hug that I gave her felt like I was hugging an angel of the Lord, who wanted to tell me that He is listening. Before I knew that I was going to CMC, God already planned to have me surrender my life to be His disciple. My prayer is that more and more Christians will trust that God is always at work, and He is with us. We can surrender our lives to Him because we have nothing to fear when He goes before us.



Unleashed to Bless Others for God's Glory



by NATHAN HO,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

We are to be “Unleashed” into the world to share God’s love to everyone around the world. Chinese Missions Convention (CMC) emphasized this throughout the week-long conference in Baltimore, Maryland in December 2016. This was my second time at the convention, but this was my first time as an adult program attendee. The adult program allowed me to hear from a variety of speakers. We heard from Bob Sjogren, Becky Pippert, David Choi, and Francis Chan. All of them have written and spoken about the need to share God’s love and to minister to those who don’t know the name of Jesus Christ. The speakers challenged us to love, pray, give, go, and make disciples. Along with the keynote messages, there were many workshops that allowed us to hear from more of the speakers and missionaries from around the world with a wealth of experiences in reaching the lost. Workshops ranged from “How Worldviews Influence Cross-Cultural Ministry” to “How Work Leads to Transformation in God’s Kingdom.” The smaller workshops gave us more opportunities to talk to missionaries and pastors and discuss how we can make a difference in how our respective churches view missions and influence others to follow God.

As I heard each sermon and each workshop, I was constantly thinking of what BCEC has when it comes to missions. Missions at BCEC is already at a greater advantage compared to the missions programs at other Chinese churches. I love that we are continually supporting missionaries and sending short-term/long-term missionaries to various parts of the world. We also have our own annual Missions Conference, which allows us to focus on missions. If you have not noticed, there are also weekly prayer requests written for our missionaries overseas in the bulletin. Missions is an extremely important part of our church. When I talked to others from other churches around the East Coast, they all had similar responses. They do not have the same kind of view on missions that BCEC does. Our church is very blessed. We are blessed to be a blessing. Let us use our blessings to glorify God.

As a college student, I had a different approach to this convention. Instead of thinking of where I could go for long-term missions, I was figuring out how I could use what I’m learning in school and apply it to missions. How can I use the talents and skills to glorify God in the missions field, or on my campus? Missions is not only just going to another foreign country to share God’s Word. There are many opportunities in our own backyard. Boston is quite diverse. We are a city with college students from all over the country and the world; it is a city with a mixture of lower, middle, and upper classes, oppressed, persecuted, etc. There are currently endless opportunities to minister right here in Boston. In Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV), God calls all of us to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” We are called to make disciples of ALL nations. Nations have come to us, and many students are open to spiritual things. BCEC is also strategically located in Boston where we cross paths with the homeless, as well as people who own million dollar condos. As Christians, we need to respond to the call wherever God wants us, no matter the opposition. An important point that was made by speaker Becky Pippert was that one of the major fears that all Christians have is lacking the confidence to share the gospel. We may have the fear of rejection, the fear of saying the wrong thing or giving the incorrect explanation of the gospel, the fear of not knowing the answer to their questions, and the list goes on and on. The only way we can overcome those fears is to fully believe in God and trust that God will give us the knowledge and the confidence to share His Word. He will use us in our weaknesses as long as we are willing to be used by God.

My main takeaway from this whole convention is simple. As Christians, we are to display and share God’s love, compassion, and awesome wonder to the unreached. God will send and use us as His servants to make disciples of all nations, whether it be halfway around the world, or on your college campus. We are to be unleashed together for God’s global glory.

Sharing the Good News to the Unreached



by VIRGINIA AND
ROCKEY CHAN,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

My family attended the Chinese Missions Convention (CMC) 2016 in Baltimore, Maryland in order to learn about how God is moving and revealing Himself in other countries and participation in God’s mission to redeem the world to Himself. God challenge us to learn and understand his passion and meaning for his mission. God also blessed us with other BCEC members, so we can share and reflect together the insights and challenges from the speakers and workshops. This reflection includes some of the thoughts and commitments God convicted us in those five days in Baltimore.

God challenged my wife and me in how we un-

derstand the purpose of salvation, the purpose for God calling Christians to missions, and opportunities to participate in missions. Bob Sjogren, a plenary speaker, spoke how many Christians limited their perspective of God’s redemption plan to themselves. Oftentimes, we end up thinking God is for me because Christ died for me. However, Sjogren challenges us to break this mentality with this statement: Christ died for me so I can glorify God because Christ died to give God the greatest glory. Bob used the analogy “cat behavior” for God is for me mentality and “dog behavior” we are to glorify God mentality. I sensed God encouraging me in my ministry as an intern at BCEC, as the plenary speakers fleshed out this concept of giving God the greatest glory. One reason I love ministering is because I want others to know the depth of God’s holiness, truth, and loving kindness are worthy of all His glory. Yet, I hesitate sometimes because of how counter cultural this concept is in Christian culture. I also felt challenged because there are areas where we have to live selflessly for God, especially when it comes to missions.

God challenged me to participate in missions.

The seed was planted a few months earlier when I spoke with James and Faith Cha who were BCEC’s Missions Conference speakers back in mid-November 2016. James asked if I had an interest in short or long-term missions. I informed James Cha that I felt God calling me to keep teaching and discipling people to serve God in their lives, and I had not thought about missions. He challenged me to participate in a missions trip in order to teach and disciple others to serve on missions trips. I met with James and Faith Cha again at CMC, as they provided workshops for reaching Muslim people groups. God used them and other workshop speakers to share about the great spiritual need of the Syrian refugees and other Muslim people groups who are living in unreached areas of the world. I decided to commit to a short-term missions trip this year, which is ironic because God was also working in my wife’s heart about sharing the gospel to unreached people groups.

Virginia attended CMC after Justin and I shared with her what we learned three years ago. She wanted to learn more about areas where peo-

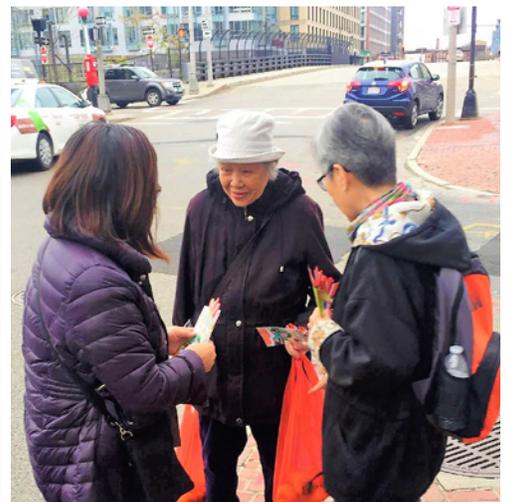
ple groups have not heard the gospel and workplace evangelism. God used specific workshops about missions to refugee Muslims and in former Soviet Union countries to call her to participate in a short-term missions trip. She surprised me by sharing her desire to witness to her Muslim co-workers and unreached people groups. I wanted to look for opportunities to teach and share the gospel in Central or South America. She wanted to witness in areas like Lebanon or a Central Asian Muslim country. God would decide for us later in the convention through Lorraine Ho, a BCEC missions committee member. She asked if I would

like to participate in BCEC's Dominican Republic short-term missions trip this summer. Virginia shared how we do not pray enough, so we decided to pray about it before deciding. James and Faith Cha challenged Virginia about being bold and audacious in prayer. He suggested that we don't pray boldly because we don't believe God will answer or feel the need to pray. We live in an American society where many of us don't feel the desperation or the boldness to pray and depend on God for our daily needs. By the end of the convention, I made a commitment to join BCEC's Dominican Republic missions team.

Virginia, Justin, and I finished the convention participating with others in prayer and commissioning during the closing ceremony. Virginia committed herself to being more intentional as a witness of the gospel at work. We hope that we are able to participate in short-term missions at the beginning of this summer. I still am processing what God has shown me during the convention in the context of ministering at BCEC. I know that I will be striving to model a fuller perspective of salvation.

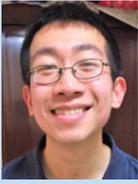


Missions Conference (11/11-11/13): Various meetings and home gatherings



Boston Short-Term Missions (10/29)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER



One of my first experiences with a Social Responsibility outreach was serving at Boston Rescue Mission (BRM), an inner-city ministry for the homeless. I signed up for serving at BRM with a group led by John Wong. After a prayer and some words of instruction, we walked together to the rescue mission. Inside this fairly nondescript building was a warm basement filled with round tables, a kitchen, and a double row of lockers decorated with the Ten Commandments. We donned hairnets, looking a little bit like aliens, and prepared for the several waves of people that would come for food. Members of the BRM recovery program came first to eat. We distributed beef noodles, chicken, and vegetables from a friendly neighborhood restaurant — Chinese food served by real Chinese people. After a brief lull, Nancy, the coordinator, opened up the serving area to any people from the street who were hungry. It was a full house.

After I served there on other occasions, several things impressed me about BRM. One was an overwhelming, almost palpable sense of thankfulness. It was a feeling that radiated from those being served, and also those serving. In stark contrast to the bare and somewhat drab surroundings, past and present beneficiaries of the program were serving cheerfully, helping alongside us to wash dishes and mop the floors. They would mention the Bible studies that were being held there, and some were attending church as a result of being involved in the mission.

Another thing that struck me was the diversity of the people from BCEC who came to serve. On one day, an energetic group of J2 college students came to ladle out portions of chow mein and wash dishes. On another occasion, I met most of the Newton men's group, who had come all the way to Chinatown for BRM. This seemed very appropriate to me — that though BCEC is comprised of many congregations of different languages, the place where we come together is where we serve.

I found one trip to BRM particularly memorable. I had recently read a book entitled *The Power of Habit* about constructive and destructive habits and how they are formed. One of the stories stuck to the top of my mind like chewing gum. It described research studies on the uncanny effectiveness of the Alcoholics Anonymous regimen, and how it helped to break feedback cycles of addiction. But oddly enough, this secular book also mentioned that the most crucial element of the program was a dependence on God, without which members would regress rapidly. After serving food that day, I spotted a man who was sitting alone at a table. I filled up a drink, my phony pretext for coming to talk to someone without the awkwardness of just sitting and staring. With drink in hand, I sat down to chat with him. He outlined his history with alcoholism and how BRM's recovery program had been a great help to him. I happened to mention the book and how it describes addictions are broken. I touched upon the book's point about how reliance on faith is essential for recovery. He said that he wasn't a very religious person. But he seemed to find the case study interesting and relevant to his personal life. A short exchange, but something that increased my awareness of how God can use seemingly random parts of your life to potentially touch others.

If you have an interest in serving the local community, I would highly recommend reaching out to the Social Responsibility (SR) Committee (srministry@bcec.net) and volunteering for an afternoon at BRM. It is a ministry that requires no special talents, just a willing heart and a pair of willing hands. Experience the joy of serving, distilled down to sharing a cup of water and a simple meal. And when you do so, go ahead and sit down with someone, and "have a drink."

Reflection on AWANA Christmas



by IDA KWONG,
CHINATOWN 3RD SERVICE

During December, the month of Christmas, everywhere in Boston would be decorated beautifully and colorfully, giving off an enjoyable vibe. Every shop was stocked with products ready for voracious customers looking to satisfy their shopping thirst. Every person was busily buying gifts for their loved ones. Our kids in AWANA grow up in this environment where it is bustling, lively, and never lacking in both style

and substance.

On December 9, 2016, AWANA and the Social Responsibility (SR) Committee co-led the Boston Hope program to let AWANA kids experience a "different kind of Christmas." Boston Hope is a program started by World Vision where essential supplies are purchased, packaged, and eventually sent to beleaguered children from countries that are lacking in such necessities. For this iteration, school bags, stationaries, hygiene items, and winter items were purchased to be sent to children who are Syrian refugees. That night some brothers and sisters from the SR Committee came early to set up for the event. When the AWANA kids arrived at the scene, they were curious at what would unfold while asking many questions. The program would

start with a brief sharing on the background and meaning of the kit-building, with the key message on the blessings from being able to give and share with those in need. The kids were paying careful attention and were excited to participate in this endeavor. It was a wonderful sight!

As a body of Christ, we have a responsibility to teach our children the spirit of selflessness and compassion, especially to those who are less fortunate. The AWANA kids learned through this event to exercise the love of Christ. The Bible teaches us that we should be "not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:4 - ESV). In a world where it is normal to pursue our self-interests first, the Bible has given us an important reminder to be swayed by this inclination.





Welcome reception luncheon for Newton Interim Pastor, Pastor Ken Liu, and his family (12/11)



Staff Appreciation Luncheon (12/12)



New Year Prayer Meeting (1/1)



Community English Classes: Thanksgiving Outreach Luncheon (11/19)

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

- 11 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS
SPRING SEMESTER PLACEMENT TEST
- 17-20 WINTER TEEN CONFERENCE
(HIGH SCHOOL)
ENGLISH
- 17-27 PDAS BREAK
- 20 PRESIDENTS' DAY
OFFICE CLOSED
- 24-26 WINTER TEEN CONFERENCE
(MIDDLE SCHOOL)
ENGLISH

MARCH

- 4 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS
SPRING SEMESTER CLASSES BEGIN
- 5 CHINESE SUNDAY SCHOOL
SPRING SESSION BEGINS
- 10-12 COLLEGE RETREAT
ENGLISH
- 12 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS
ONE HOUR AHEAD

APRIL

- 7-9 CANTONESE MARRIAGE
ENRICHMENT
CHINESE
- 14-24 PDAS BREAK
- 14 GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE
- 15 EASTER HOLIDAY
NO COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASSES
- 16 EASTER SUNDAY
- 16 BAPTISM
- 21-23 DR. IN-SING LEUNG
EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS

MAY

- 4 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
- 4 4TH STEPHEN MINISTER
TRAINING BEGINS
- 7 CARING SUNDAY
CHINESE
- 14 MOTHER'S DAY



1-2) New Community (Newton English congregation): Post Thanksgiving Gathering (11/25); 3) Chinatown English: First Women's Retreat (11/14)



BCEC Connections is a quarterly publication of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church. We would love to hear from you!

If you would like to help with this publication (writing, translation, or editing), please contact Helena Fong at helena.fong@bcec.net.

Do you have a story you think would be a blessing to other BCEC members? Do you have a great photo of a recent church or ministry event you'd like to share? Please send your submissions, questions, or comments to helena.fong@bcec.net. We reserve the right to edit the submissions as we deem appropriate without notice.

Visit us on the web at www.bcec.net

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Different Christmas events around the church: 4) Newton Family Christmas celebration called "A Night in Bethlehem" (12/10); 5) Baptism (12/4); 6-8) Christmas celebration at Chinatown Mandarin Paul Fellowship; 9) Adult outreach during Chinatown Children's Christmas celebration (12/18)