



From Our Senior Pastor:

Developing a Culture of Encouragement



by PASTOR STEVEN CHIN

I grew up with typical Chinese immigrant parents. My mother and father both worked hard to support the family. They encouraged us children to study hard in school, to get good grades, to get into a good college, and get a well-paying job.

So I did study hard. But when I got a high score like 95% on a test, I thought my parents would be happy and proud. Certainly, the parents of my classmates would be overjoyed with such a grade. But instead my parents would be critical that I did not get 100%. They said I needed to work harder and watch less television. This is not an isolated story, but typical of many children with immigrant Asian parents.

I think my parents meant well, as they tried to help me to continue working hard and achieving even more. But, honestly, it made me frustrated and less confident.

This type of thinking was ingrained in me, so that when I grew up and had children of my own, I did the same thing. I had to consciously avoid criticizing and start encouraging.

I think this type of negativity from our upbringing can overflow into other areas of our lives. It can af-

fect how we relate to our spouse, those we supervise at work, or even to those we serve with at church. We can be negative and critical rather than positive and encouraging.

The Bible tells us the importance of encouragement.

“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.” (Proverbs 12:25 - ESV)

In Boston, we are familiar with the 26-mile Boston Marathon. I am amazed that people can complete this challenging course. I doubt if I could even walk 26 miles.

At about the 20-mile mark of the course, there is a place called “Heartbreak Hill.” It is called Heartbreak Hill because many runners give up as they face the hills in Newton. But many spectators gather there to cheer on the runners. They yell to them “Don’t give up” and “You can do it” to encourage them. For many runners, it makes the critical difference between quitting and finishing.

Serving in ministry can be challenging and difficult whether it be serving in music ministry, teaching children, or even sitting on a leadership board. The task seems so huge. It seems no one is helping. It seems no one seems to care. Sometimes we tempted to give up. But an encouraging word can make the difference between quitting and persevering in ministry.

The Bible tells Christians to encourage one another.

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 - ESV)

But sometimes we can be too critical without realizing it whether it be in a family setting, work setting, or church setting.

When I had young children, I remember attending a parenting seminar where the leader helped people to understand from the child’s perspective what he or she is hearing every day. She “played back a tape” of what a typical child hears from the parent every day.

“Hurry up. You are making me late.”

“Stop hitting your brother.”

“Did you eat all your food? If you don’t eat it all, there will be no dessert.”

“Clean up your room. This place is a mess.”

“Why didn’t you go to the bathroom before like I told you?”

It sounded like me. I realized I was being much too critical with my children. I resolved with God’s help to be more positive and encouraging — not only with my children, but with my wife, with my coworkers in ministry, and even on the basketball court.

Yes, sometimes we need to be critical when things are not done right. There is time to reprove, to correct, or even to rebuke. But it is done speaking the truth in love, and it is done to build the person up to be like Christ.

We do not realize how negative we can be. For many people, they average 10 negative comments for every positive comment. We think we can get better results by being negative. But the reverse is true. Harvard Business Review reports that the most effective leadership teams in business average 6 positive comments for every negative comment.

With a culture of encouragement in your home, your workplace, and in your church, you can transform your relationships with your children, your spouse, your coworkers, and church members for God’s glory.



Boston short-term missions (8/14-8/20)



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My First Sabbatical



by PASTOR BARRY LAM,
NEWTON CANTONESE

From June 15 to August 14, I took my first sabbatical since joining the pastoral staff at BCEC.

I then realized that there are some misunderstandings about taking a sabbatical. One of them, which turns out to be quite interesting, stems from the Chinese translation of the word “sabbatical.” It gives people the idea that a sabbatical lasts for one year. Therefore, when I came back in August, many brothers and sisters asked me why I came back so soon.

Before my sabbatical, I was hoping to spend more time on prayer, the Bible, reading, and meditation. I longed to be still in God, let Him renew my strength, and have a great revival of my relationship with Him. However, it did not turn out as planned. God wanted me to learn and experience Him in other ways.

First, I returned to Hong Kong where the rhythm of life is completely different from that in the United States. Every day, from waking up in the morning to going to bed at night, I felt like I was always busy with something continuously. Within one hour, I went to many places, passed by many people, and heard a lot of noises. Not only I could not be still, the crowded environment made me even more impatient. At one point, it struck me that, ever since I was baptized in 1998, it was the first time I did not have to serve or attend fellowship, Sunday School, or a prayer meeting. I found myself sinking into the busyness of life, gradually becoming a “Sunday Christian” — someone who, once a week, spends a few hours in worship. It felt very strange, and brought me to question myself: Am I still a pastor? Am I even a Christian? Suddenly, all the discouragement in ministries rushed into my head. The disappointment towards myself, others, and the church flooded in. I felt the spiritual battle inside. I am thankful to God that many brothers and sisters were praying for me across the world. I received text messages from those in Boston telling me they had been praying for me. As I fell on my knees, God led me to a new affirmation. It is true that He has called me to be a pastor, but all it means is that I was chosen to serve in His Kingdom in this particular role. However, the more important identity is I am God’s child. Nothing can take that away, and nothing can separate

me from the love of God. I immediately confessed and rededicated myself to follow Him. God’s peace filled my heart, and the negative thoughts did not surface again.

God also gave me opportunities to go into the world to see how His grace shines among those who live in hardship. I visited the Silver Lining Foundation and its poverty relief work in Guangxi, China. My whole family and I went to the city of Nanning to join a team of workers at Silver Lining Foundation parent-and-child camp. We also visited the orphanage and care center at Da Hua. The trip lasted for only six days, but it left many beautiful footprints in my life. I would like to share two stories with you here.

The first footprint:

All orphans and children with cerebral palsy have tearful stories in their lives. When we first listened to their experience, we were overwhelmed with sadness. Yet, we were touched by Silver Lining’s volunteers and staff who have expressed their love and brought hope for these children. My heart melted every time we saw the innocent smiles on their faces. It never occurred to me that when you feel loved, your smile can be so precious and beautiful. It touched me even more to see them making an effort to overcome everyday obstacles, and never stop challenging themselves in learning. When I encouraged them, I was also encouraged to face my own challenges. They have become the angels in my heart.

The second footprint:

I was invited to give two workshops for parents in the camp. I spent a lot of time to prepare, hoping that my talks could help the parents and caregivers of the children with cerebral palsy. However, at the end of the workshop, I found myself at the receiving end of a precious lesson instead. All the parents were given a difficult choice when they found out their children were suffering from cerebral palsy: Should I keep or abandon the child? They knew all the difficult challenges ahead; yet, they still chose to face them with courage, and continued to nurture the children.

On the second night of the camp, we went to the night market for a barbeque. During the trip to the market, I volunteered to help one of the mothers to carry her almost 10-year-old son on my back. Although he was tiny, he felt heavy as his limbs did not have any strength. In fact, I had to switch my arms every ten minutes before I could continue. In our return journey, it started to rain. The mother declined

my offer to help and carried her son herself. We were all soaked after walking in the rain for almost 30 minutes, but she did not look strained but was actually rather relaxed, chatting with us along the way. Looking at her shadow, I was very touched by the love of mother. These parents have shown me how to dance in the rain and face every challenge with courage and perseverance. They have become the real heroes in my heart.

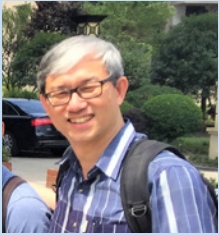
My visit to Silver Lining Foundation has brought me to a reflection: Are these families less fortunate than those of us who live in the comfortable lifestyles offered in the United States? In many people’s eyes, these families look poor, but they experienced contentment more readily. We live in plenty, but we keep longing for more, making us poor in spirit. Their lives are tough, but it helps them develop perseverance and resilience. Our lives are comfortable, but we have lost our strength against adversity, easily knocked down or hurt by our surroundings. It is a fine line between our perception of good and bad. All these have reminded me that we are all born in this fallen world, and it was never our choice to decide where we were born. However, God has led me to see that the one central, important message remains: We all need the salvation of Jesus Christ to bring us hope and deliverance. We all need to rely on God’s love and grace.

Lastly, I give thanks to God for letting me experience the missions field and understand His Great Commission on a deeper level. How God works in the missions field is as miraculous as how a tiny seed can spout between the cracks of rocks. I also understand the lives and emotions of missionaries more. They are not “spiritual superheroes,” but ordinary brothers and sisters. When God called them to become missionaries, and they responded in obedience, God Himself mold their lives to become beautiful silver linings as witness for Him. From the perspective of an outside, they have sacrificed a lot, gone through much hardship, and there are many more challenges ahead of them. Nevertheless, they are filled with joy, as they experience the power of God. When I see how they faithfully serve God and the people, I am also encouraged and inspired to better pray for and support their ministries.

Although it lasted for only two months, I feel rested and at peace during my sabbatical. I want to thank all my fellow pastoral staff members, elders, deacons, and brothers and sisters for your support.



LETTER FROM MINISTER PETER WONG



Dear brothers and sisters,

Peace be with you in our Lord Jesus!

I thank God that He has brought me to be a minister within the Boston Chinese Evangelical Church (BCEC) for the past four years. I primarily ministered to the Newton Mandarin service, the Sucai Fellowship in the Chinatown Campus, and later joined the Missions Committee. Under God's grace I was able to help build a new congregation with my fellow pastoral staff as well as brothers and sisters, learning along the way to become a minister that is after God's heart. I can only offer God my thankfulness! God deserves all the praise and glory!

I still remember during my interview for the ministerial role, one of the pastors asked me about my long-term serving direction. Even back then, I explicitly and honestly expressed the strong calling I felt towards global missions. In the past few years through various avenues, God allowed me to see the need of all in the global world who has not yet known Jesus Christ and the role that Chinese churches can play in this ministry. Even though I am no longer young, God still gave me the burning desire to be commissioned, so I responded to God's calling: "Lord. Here am I. Please send me!" As it is likely in the future that I will be spending more time outside the United States than inside in my service to God, I want to avoid affecting the ministering of both the Newton Mandarin congregation and the Sucai fellowship. With the support of my family members and the understanding of the pastoral staff and the board of deacons, I will be resigning from my current role starting September to focus my time and energy on global missions, using Boston as my base of operation.

As I looked back on my four years at BCEC, God gave me many memorable lessons and savory experiences through this church. First, our church consists of three languages and people from countless cultural backgrounds spanning multiple generations. It is definitely a blessing to have served in such a developed church! I deeply believe that the experiences I gained in such a diverse setting will only help me to serve in various situations in the future. I always hear brothers and sisters in BCEC mention that unity is in our church DNA, as members from different congregations respect each other and will even be willing to slow down potential growth in their own congregation, so that all congregations can advance as one. Our leaders are willing to use their power not to lead in a worldly manner, but instead to wait upon and then follow our Lord's command and direction with a servant's attitude. Such a church is one blessed by God. Another one of BCEC's special attribute is faithfulness. BCEC did not emphasize increasing attendance figures and offering amounts like other rapidly-growing churches in North America, but it faithfully and quietly waited for opportunities given by God and stayed focused on keeping Biblical commands, tending to God's flock and letting the spotlight shine on Jesus Christ. Someone once said: "Faithfully tending to small things is a big deal itself." I believe that the faithfulness exhibited by BCEC is priceless in God's eyes. God is indeed blessing BCEC! I sincerely pray for this church: "Lord! I pray that you will continue to look after this church and that you will grant them an unquenchable fire for your Great Commission in truth and through the Holy Spirit. Pray that the church will be blessed by You, so that it can also become a blessing to many others!"

In a few weeks, my role as a minister in BCEC will be changing, but I will have a new start as a missionary in God's kingdom. I felt like my missionary predecessors who faithfully pursued a road unknown, but also deeply cared about those they had ministered to and the future progress of their old church. Pray that God will be merciful and lead the way! I also ask brothers and sisters to pray for my family so that we as a family can continue to serve God under His watch and care until the day when we see our Lord!

God's servant,
Peter Wong

Bonding in Jesus through Ping Pong



by GUOXIAN WEI,
CHINATOWN MANDARIN

Ever since I was young, I have loved playing ping pong. It is a sport that combines exercise, competition, and leisure altogether. I learned to play ping pong in elementary school and participated in tournaments held by schools and local organizations. The frustration of losing games and the happiness of winning tournaments are part of my teenage years. I am now over 50 and wish to play ping pong again. Thank you God for providing me with an opportunity to participate in the 2017 BCEC Ping Pong Tournament. Unlike other tournaments I joined in the past, I had a different feeling this time.

First of all, I received support from the brothers and sisters of Paul Fellowship when I joined the tournament; they gave me strength and confidence. They encouraged, supported, and cared for me like a family, and only in Christ may we become family. Before the tournament began, they treated me like China's national treasure — pandas. They didn't allow me to do things such as moving ping pong tables and deco-

rating the venue, out of concern, and even bought me lunch. They sacrificed their time over the weekend to cheer me on. Although they were in the shadows while I was under the spotlight, when I was nervous, they felt double the stress. With every bat, their hearts tightened, and I thought of how we were bonding closely in God's love. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we go through thick and thin together, and enjoy the triumph of victory!

I also want to thank those who organized the tournament. From enrollment, publicity, and venue decoration to tournament arrangements, they have done a lot of work. Their warmhearted serving made the tournament go smoothly and contributed to the event's success! This is all by the grace of our Lord. Praise God!

The participants did not take their tournament results or ranking to heart. They focused on peace and joy in the Lord, as well as interacting with other brothers and sisters. At the tournament, I enjoyed the match between Pastor Barry and Pastor Kenneth — they were evenly matched and their brilliant play won applause from the audience. It could be considered a professional ping pong tournament. Both sides played with sportsman-

ship, especially when the umpire decided Pastor Barry failed to serve the ball in accordance with international standards. He accepted the decision gracefully without anger. On the contrary, I felt wronged when the umpire reminded me how to serve the ball. Why did we have contrasting reactions? It is due to our differences in spirituality, having a humble heart, and having an open soul. The pastors are "masters" who deserve respect and the honor to be our role models.

Although a ping pong ball is small, it is the best way to meet new friends. Through playing ping pong, we can build friendships with brothers and sisters in church, strengthen connections with friends, and experience God's love, guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the glory of God. I hope ping pong will continue to be used in furthering God's ministry, spreading the gospel, and showing Lord's glory.



East Asia Missions:

Reflection on East Asia Short-Term Missions Trip

by EAST ASIA SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAM

Peter Wong (Team Leader)

Thank God for sending workers to different places in the world for His Kingdom! This year is the third year that our church sent a short-term missions team to the territory, which was seriously destroyed by a catastrophic earthquake. After so many years, as one brother said, the physical buildings and cities have been rebuilt, but the hearts and traumas of affected people are far from being healed. One of the purposes of the team is to share the love to the teens and kids in that area. We believe love can heal pain and trauma in anyone's life. In addition, the gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit can bring real hope to people who had once so desperately longed for peace in disaster. This year, we ran two camps simultaneously in two locations. A teens' camp for six days was held in a countryside hotel and a kids' tutoring day camp for two weeks was held in the city.

God called totally nine brothers and sisters from six congregations of our church to form the missions team to serve this summer. In addition, He also called five brother and sisters from a local church in a nearby city to join us. Thanks for the prayers from our church! The two teams, even with different languages and cultural backgrounds, worked quite well together with harmony, and unity for His Work. We experienced what the Psalmist said, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1 - ESV) God also protected us from interruptions from local officials and serious illnesses. Furthermore, He gave us opportunities to share the gospel with participants and their families. It was so grateful and joyful to see people praying to God to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. We witnessed a couple who knelt down on the ground to humbly pray to God, and there was a depressed woman who opened her heart to Christ. All the teens were open to receive Christ's faith by the end of the camp, and most of the children responded to the altar call to accept Christ. The team also enjoyed having fun with the participants even though most of us became targets of the water balloons. Thanks God for opening the opportunities for the team to meet up with some 50 parents in the town during our parenting talk. Most of them felt overwhelmed with raising their kids. We are thankful for having the opportunity to minister to them.

At the end of the camps, we visited a church in a rural area. We worshipped Jesus with brothers and sisters in a village church. The kids in the church sang a hymn which they learned at the kids' camp. The hymn says, "The sun above the cloud has never changed." It reminds us that our Lord will not change no matter what happens to us. He is faithful and trustworthy!

We pray that what we have glorified His Name, and He will continuously take care of the children there.

Agnes Man

I am thankful to our Lord for giving me the opportunity to participate in the East Asia short-term missions trip for the second straight year. Praise the Lord for His grace to grant me a memorable and joyful experience, which was the same as last year! This year, God continually used me to serve children, teens, parents, family members, and brothers and sisters in Christ through various events. It could be heartbreaking at some points while seeing the struggles of teens in growth, the unmet special needs of children, the cultural impact on family system, and the emotional detachment of Christians in the relationship with God. In addition, I was unfortunately sick during the first week of this missions trip. Our Lord allowed the experience of my physical and psychological weakness to teach me to focus on spirituality as the core of the mission. His word came to comfort and remind me "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9a - NIV) God helped me to practice what Apostle Paul said, "Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9b - NIV)

I believe no one wants to be weak, especially when serving others, however, once again God teaches me He is the only One (our Savior) to plan, to guide, to lead, to execute, and to achieve His work. A lesson of humbleness, obedience, and surrender He has given me through the short-term missions trip this year. For Christ's sake, I was delighted in weaknesses, as I have learned and experienced when I am weak, then I am strong! Praise the Lord for He carried me through all events He assigned to me during this trip. Being able to experience His grace and presence again in His missions trip, I continue to pray for those people that reside in the place our missions team served, and pray for myself to respond to His voice and calling for His Kingdom's sake, as Isaiah stated, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8 - NIV)

Louis Leung

Before I started my East Asia short-term missions trip, I encountered some visa-related problems, which might have prevented me from leaving the United States this summer as an international student. At that moment, there was a huge possibility that I would not be able to attend the short-term missions trip. However, by God's miraculous and mighty help, I eventually received the necessary documents to start my journey.

I had a great experience during the two weeks we were in East Asia. I have seen a lot of God's work throughout the trip. Starting with the Teens camp, we



had less students than expected; we had 21 students last year, but only 8 this year. However, God gave us more opportunities to bond with each of the teens. It is a lesson of trust and obedience. God gave me a lesson to trust that He is the one who provides. If it is His will that 8 students were enough, then we have to obey. More importantly, we need to learn that the number of students who enrolled, participated, or even accepted Christ are less important than our obedience to serve and love Him. All the good "results" are mainly because of God's grace.

But still, my soul is satisfied by only experiencing God's grace throughout the trip. Thank God that all the students that we served accepted Christ. Thank God for His protection throughout the trip. Thank God for providing a good teens' campsite. Thank God for giving us unity to serve Him throughout the missions trip. To God be the glory!

Helen Szeto

This year was my second year in a row joining the East Asia short-term missions team. It was truly a humbling experience for me as I brought in my own expectations of what this year would be like after having a precious year's experience. Last year, I was able to bond with some of the teens, and I was hoping this year would be the same. However, I was a little disappointed as it was very different with only 8 teens in our teens' summer camp. I realized God had a greater plan than what I expected and His plan was indeed better. God blessed us with 8 teens and over 30 elementary children during our two weeks there. Most importantly, these teens and children were able to come to know God and accept Him as their personal Savior. Praise God for teaching us precious lessons!

Angel Zhao

It is wonderful to see the expansion of our East Asia short-term missions camps every year. Praise God that this year the whole team had the opportunity to serve in two different English camps and reach out to students ranging from kindergarten to high school. Our missions team organized an English camp for teenagers the first week. There was less enrollment this year, but God enabled us to get to know the students well so that they opened up the last few days of camp and accepted Christ as their Savior! The camp's theme was self-identity, which was a good reminder for me throughout this missions trip to rely and trust in God. If I claimed to have an identity in Christ, I

needed to model Christian behavior and attitudes. The Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 came in handy for this. Modeling the Fruit of the Spirit was especially challenging for me during the second week of missions, when the team helped out with an English camp for elementary students. I tended to focus too much on teaching the students well rather than truly loving them, and many of the students sought attention, draining my energy, and therefore, testing my patience levels. Patience is a characteristic I struggle with in general, so I am very glad God provided wonderful BCEC and local Christian team members who modeled how to deal with the students and how to love them despite the difficulties. Their kind actions and words showed me that it is important to remember each student has his/her own special talent from God because He designed each student uniquely for His glory. Being able to joyfully serve with Christians half-way across the world is a blessing and demonstrates to us all the power of serving in Christ. As Chris Tomlin sings, "Greater things have yet to come and greater things are still to be done in this city." I hope future East Asia short-term mission trips will continue to reap fruitful results because indeed great things are happening and more is yet to come in that area.

Stephanie Lam

This was my second time going to East Asia, and it was very different from last year. This year I had the opportunity to work with both teens and elementary school kids. I was quite nervous to work with both. This year the teens camp revolved around helping the kids find their self confidence. As teachers and later on friends, we played with them and shared our experiences. Most importantly, we shared our experience in finding our self confidence as children of God. We taught the teens, but the teens also taught us. Every teen is different but the community that we created had the same feeling. I learned that even if we are very different from each other at the end of the week, we were able to bond and create a loving relationship through Christ. Every action that we made mattered because to the teens it showed that we cared for them.

The elementary camp was a surprising experience. I taught elementary school students last year, so I expected the experience to be similar, but this year it was not. God really pushed me to be able to love all the kids. This year's kids not only wore me out physically,

but also mentally because of their constant energy and desire for attention. There were many times when I wanted to hide from the kids, but I knew that since God shows us unfailing love I also have to have unfailing love and patience. God never gives up on us, and I am to walk in his steps. I felt God pushing my patience, as well as my obedience. He was testing me to follow Him wholeheartedly. I had the support of brothers and sisters on the trip to teach me how to love patiently. Watching them as role models helped put my own experience in perspective. I was able to grow in love and in faith after watching them walk and follow after God faithfully.

Brian Sou

First, I want to thank God, BCEC, and all my supporters for giving me the opportunity to serve in East Asia.

Leaving for the trip, I was unsure of what to expect; I had prepared myself for a completely different working environment and a great deal of pleasant and unpleasant surprises. I think it is called being "culture-shocked." In multiple ways, experiencing another culture so different than my own has broadened my perspective on what is important in life, and I have seen this positively impact my own life.

The greatest significant part of the trip for me stemmed from the conversations I had with each student and their families I had met and amongst the people whom I was serving with. While each day was exhausting, I found rest and energy in my surroundings. I learned to appreciate good air conditioning and western toilets. Jokes aside, so much of my life is being constantly rushed and stressed, giving myself time to unwind and appreciate everything around me — it was refreshing to use my time to serve a community with other brothers and sisters. Because of the rural location, I did not have much cellular service; it was a much-needed break, and I was finally able to live

in one moment without having to be concerned with other obligations.

This trip has been truly one of these greatest experiences of my life. Although challenging and stretching in abounding ways, it provided me the conditions and opportunities for growth. I engaged and embraced each juncture the best I could and was privileged to be here in East Asia. This trip allowed me to gain greater appreciation for service learning. I have always believed in learning by doing, but this trip was one of the first times my learning came mostly from my own experience.

Overall, the East Asia short-term missions trip has been impactful in ways I cannot fully explain yet. I want to thank God again for giving me this great opportunity to serve. If it is God's will, I pray He will give me another opportunity to be a part of the East Asia short-term missions team again next year.

Wanda Lam

It is a blessing to be able to serve.

It is a blessing to be able to work with and learn from the brothers and sisters.

It is a blessing to be able to enjoy the creation of God.

It is a blessing to be able to work with the local children and understand them more.

It is heartbreaking to see the breakdown of the family system.

It is heartbreaking to know how much the teens have suffered.

It is heartbreaking to know how addicted are the children on smartphone games.

It is heartbreaking to know how the special needs children are denied learning opportunities because of their disabilities.

May God continue to bless this place!



*Dominic Republic Missions:***Gloria a Dios in Santo Domingo**

by ROCKEY CHAN,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

There are many words I could use to describe the experiences God gave to BCEC's Dominican Republic short-term missions team. "Encouragement" was God's purpose for the team serving in Santo Domingo. "Divine appointments" describes the many people God led us to so we could pray, comfort, and encourage in Los Mameyes and Margara. Ask my teammates for their words, and they will share words uniquely their own that describes how God used them in Santo Domingo. But there is one word that I think my teammates will say and its "Gloria a Dios!"

The BCEC team of 10 adults with 3 children served alongside the local inner city churches of Santo Domingo. The local churches requested the team to prepare two training and equipping sessions, conduct two Vacation Bible School (VBS) events and daily prayer walks with the local churches, and speak at two church events. We thought God wanted us to minister and serve with the local churches like last year's trip to the rural region of Manabao. God gave the team another mission for this year's trip. It was during a prayer walk Pastor Ricci's wife, Yolanda, shared their trials and challenges in the past year that greatly discouraged them. She was convicted that God brought our team to specifically encourage them during this



difficult season of life. God encouraged the local church even more when He brought about 230 children to the VBS event. The church workers were encouraged because they saw the needs of the children and more importantly, they saw that God needs them to continue sharing God's love to the community.

God taught the importance of divine appointments as the team went on prayer walks, VBS, and sharing the gospel in the community. The team encountered a girl living in Margara named Ashanti who needed comforting after a bullying situation. The team spent time connecting with Ashanti by showing her God's love and comfort. God used us to show Ashanti His love, while God used Ashanti to teach us the importance of connecting and investing in relationships. God led us to a teenager later on who was sad and concerned for her friend going through surgery. We stood at the door consoling, praying, and sharing the gospel with her. We felt God purposely connecting us with many of the people in Margara and Los Mameyes to witness and glorify Him.

The local churches and my team praised God by saying "Gloria a Dios" when we shared stories that glorified Him. There are many more stories of these God moments during the trip I would like to share, but reflection articles have space limits. Stories about people accepting Christ, like a salesman who became a Christian during a house visitation. Stories about how spiritual warfare is real in very tangible ways such as Pastor Ricci's church tent serving as the church building being taken away. Stories about how the team leaned on each other and God like the Los Mameyes VBS with about 230 children. These stories are a testimony of God using the local churches and short-term missions teams to share the gospel in Santo Domingo. We hope future teams to Santo Domingo will continue to plow, water, and harvest the gospel seeds God has spread there.



United Kingdom Missions: Praise Him All Together

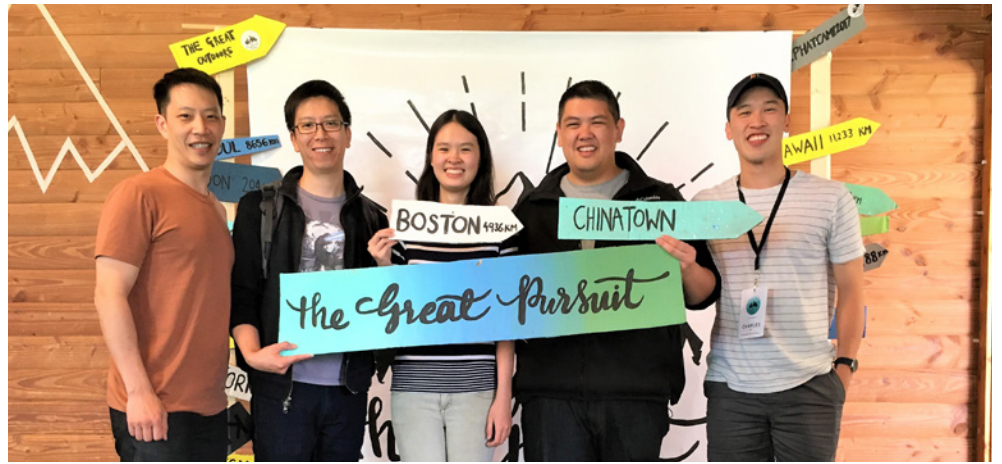


by TIM TE,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

The summer is almost over and the United Kingdom Short-term missions team is back from PHAT camp. It was a physically demanding trip for most of our team, but it was a blessing to see God working among the Chinese churches in the UK!

Our missions team served with local youth workers at PHAT camp (Praise Him All Together!), a four-day long national youth conference run by Chinese Overseas Christian Mission (COCM). The camp was somewhat similar to BCEC's Summer TC. The camp hosted churches from London, Manchester, Birmingham, Dublin, and many more cities in the UK. Camp leaders had two days of prep and training and four days of the camp itself. Those were long days! Prayer meeting started at 8 a.m. and the final scheduled activities ended around 10:30 p.m. The camp had around 150 kids and about 40 small group leaders (two leaders per group). It was really amazing to see Chinese churches from across the nation worshipping God together.

The camp directors are working on developing programming for the camp, as well as training and mentoring their youth workers. Our roles as missionaries were to offer our experience and perspective on minis-



try. Being a national conference, the local youth workers vary greatly in experience and training. Many of us on the BCEC team were paired with younger less experienced leaders to help give them guidance and a little bit of training. While the PHAT camp ministry still has some need for honing, they have grown a lot over the last year.

Ryan So and I were blessed with the opportunity to give workshops during the camp. Ryan taught on biblical views on anger, and I taught on Christian views of evolution and creation. Both workshops seemed to go well, and many campers had positive experiences.

After the camp ended, the BCEC team spent some time with the local leaders at COCM in the city of Milton Keynes. We were also able to attend Sun-

day worship at one of the churches in London. The church we attended was a small church in a residential part of London. That Sunday, the English service had around 5-6 adults and around 15 youth. While the church may be different from ours in terms of size, it was a real joy to worship the same great God with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

For me, it was a joy and blessing to see the passion and enthusiasm that the directors and leaders have. The way that they serve God was wholehearted and genuine. While many of the churches may have fewer resources than BCEC, they dedicated themselves to God in serving their youth. All of us on the missions team would love to return to the UK and continue to support the work that God is doing there.



*Hong Kong Missions:***Find True Peace in God**

by MENA LAM,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

I was given the opportunity to go to Hong Kong this summer. I went with an organization called English Language Institute/China (ELIC). ELIC is an organization whose purpose is to reach the heart of students across Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa through teaching English. The hope of ELIC is that we will build relationships with the students we get to interact with every day and ultimately have the opportunity to share the hope we have with them.

I went as a Team Leader for Engage Hong Kong. Engage Hong Kong is a short-term opportunity to work as an English Teacher in Hong Kong, to get a glimpse of potential long term work in Asia, for college-aged students. As a Team Leader, I cared, mentored, advised, and help developed curriculum with the English teachers. We worked in a local middle school teaching English in the morning then interactive activities in the afternoon.

Initially, I was excited, but doubt crept in and I became really nervous, overwhelmed, and discouraged. I didn't think I was competent enough to be

a team leader. I'm not a teacher, and I did not have any clue what I was getting into. I got cold feet and wanted to drop out, but I still took that leap of faith and got on that plane to Hong Kong despite entering the unknown. We started training as soon as we arrived in Hong Kong, and my summer with Engage Hong Kong 2017 began.

This was my third time in Hong Kong, and it was eye opening to come in with ELIC and not on holiday. I learned a lot more about the injustices and social issues in Hong Kong; what breaks their hearts, what they struggle with, and where the city is going. I saw this play out in the complicated education system, and my school that is a Band 3 school. Band 3 schools are the lowest performing school category in Hong Kong. Typically, students here usually are not proficient in English, are from lower income backgrounds, and have higher discipline issues — it's the underprivileged of Hong Kong.

It was such an honor and privilege to work at a Band 3 school. We were given a special opportunity to work with these students, who have low-self esteem and undervalue themselves due to their status of being a Band 3 student. The opportunity of getting into university is slim for them; many of them are hopeless and have given up in trying. It really broke my and my team's heart to recognize how they really undervalue themselves.

A trending theme we all encountered while interacting and getting deeper with our students was the idea of peace — “to be complete or sound.” We shared our stories about God with our students; to share our hope and the peace He can give us. Peace from not being just a number or a career, but a person who is valued and loved for not what they do but who they are. Although we may not see the fruit of our labor, we recognize we are planting seeds or watering them. We have the hope and peace that God has handled, and through Him, He will meet the needs of our students.

God manifests differently to meet every country, culture and person. I learned God really meets us where we are and satisfies our needs despite our differences in culture, race, ethnicity, gender, etc. I learned to see others how God views them, God really values them and loves them so much. It just takes a little bit of effort on our part to see that and rely on Him to love others. I'm very thankful for my experience in Hong Kong, where I was able to see how great and loving our God truly is. This experience affirmed my calling to counseling. It will help me as I continue and finish up my studies in counseling, learn how to be a better counselor, mentor and friend, and reflect on the love God has shown me on this trip to the world.



1) Engage Hong Kong 2017 Group photo 2) Team leaders 3) My teammates

*Uganda Missions:***God Hears our Prayers**

by VIRGINIA NGAI,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

I returned about a week ago from six weeks of short-term missions work in Lukodi, Uganda with Child Voice International, through a partnership with the Overseas Missions Practicum at my seminary, Gordon-Conwell. Our primary target group was the Acholi and S. Sudanese women and children, affected by war and political instabilities in the region. At Child Voice International, my prime responsibility was working in the area of spiritual formation of the women and the staff at the center. This included leading Bible studies and trainings, as well as meeting individually with the women to disciple them, as well as answer questions of those who had not yet received Christ as their personal Savior. The women were single mothers from the surrounding community, as well as a selected number from internal displacement camps in Uganda. They were selected, as the most vulnerable and needing shelter and support through a structured residential program.

One of the major lessons I learned during my time away was that we indeed have a God who listens to our prayers. James 5:13-16 offers counsel on the “prayer in faith,” which is able to make the sick person well (v. 15 - ESV), and we also learn that “the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (v. 16 - ESV). The passage continues to state that Elijah was a man like us, yet he prayed that it would not rain and it did not rain for 3.5 years! (v. 17 - ESV). Prior to going to Uganda, I had a skeptical and somewhat weak understanding of how one should pray. I

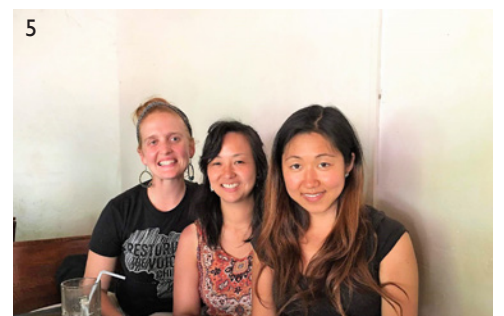
think I was satisfied with praying at a mediocre level and knowing that most of the time, even though I knew my prayers were probably heard, that God’s answer was usually “no.” I went in expecting little, demonstrating little faith, that God would answer. It wasn’t until I was confronted with the local believers’ true faith in the power of prayer, as well as a situation where I was required to use this same faith, that I began to fully believe God’s word in this area, that He does hear our prayers. We must ask earnestly,

This experience, which I believe my team and I will take with us from here on out, is that spiritual warfare is prevalent and obvious in the regions of the world that don’t take science and human reasoning as their primary worldview. At the center, during week four of our stay, three of the women were experiencing spiritual attacks, which couldn’t be accounted for anything else medically or otherwise diagnosable. These women were all exposed to local witchcraft and spiritual occult practices, prior to coming to our center. As a result, we as sent missionaries were expected to pray and cast out spirits as well as pray and fast, along with the staff, for the women. After a week of several attacks, we partially fasted three days, and prayed during missed meals. When the period of intercession and prayer was over, I didn’t have enough faith to believe that much would change for the women’s conditions. Instead, I was proven wrong. God delivered two of the women from their attacks, and one shared that she no longer was seeing people in her hut, but was now hearing the Jesus who was showing her how to cast out spirits. The third woman, who was not a believer before, accepted Christ on the spot after our prayers for her to be delivered.

After God answered our corporate prayer, I was able to take home the lessons I learned, of having an active and powerful faith, with me here in Boston.



And it has shaped me to have a hunger for prayer, to move into a direction of regular prayer, as I return back to the tasks of everyday life and the challenges that present themselves here. It is always stated that short-term missionary work often has a greater impact on the missionaries being sent more than on the local believers, or at most that they impact each other equally. I have heard that our team’s involvement short term was able to relieve the problem of a staff shortage at the center, as we were able to invest our time in medical work, counseling, as well as discipleship. But far greater were the rewards of being able to partake in the body of Christ all the way around the world and to make disciples, as well as encourage each other on in Christ. I hope to remain active in prayer, as I see God work in the lives of people here in Boston, at BCEC, and in my own life. Thanks for reading, and please let me know if you would like to meet up and hear more about the trip. I’ll be happy to meet up and share more about my experiences.



1) Outside of Lukodi Community Church 2) With an Acholi mother, and child, whom I discipled 3) The view of the center and classrooms 4) My spiritual formation supervisor, Rita 5) Teammates from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER

Social Responsibility

Open House



by JOHN WONG,
NEWTON CANTONESE

The Social Responsibility (SR) Committee recently hosted four Open House gatherings in April through July to facilitate communication with our different congregations.

Not counting our committee members and helpers, more than 30 people attended these events, and we would like to thank those of you who took the time to come, not just to hear what we had to say, but also to ask questions and share your thoughts.

The mission of the SR Committee is to mobilize BCEC members to live out your faith by actively

sharing the love, justice, and mercy of God as exemplified by Jesus Christ. Mainly through supporting programs, stewarding the charity fund, and hosting the SR Conference, we provide opportunities for our congregation to serve, support, and be educated about God's love for those who are in need.

At the Open House gatherings, we discovered that many people were not very familiar with our ministry. Therefore, we enjoyed the chance to answer questions about volunteer opportunities in the local community (including events that are kid-friendly), organizations that the Charity Fund financially supports (please see our webpage at www.bcec.net/src for a complete list), and possibilities for church fellowships and small groups to collaborate with us in workshops and kit-building events. We also provided an update on applications to the SR mini-grant (details to come). Furthermore, we re-

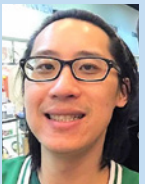
ceived from you many constructive comments about our current activities and wonderful suggestions on different directions to explore.

Please feel free to reach out to us by email (srministry@bcec.net) or in person if you have additional comments and ideas or would like to receive a copy of the slides that we used at these gatherings.

Do you have a passion to be involved with social justice and mercy? Do you have skills that you would like to use to serve our community? We also welcome you to join us as committee members or helpers or just to check us out at one of our monthly SR committee meetings. Let's work together to demonstrate God's love, justice, and mercy to our community and beyond.

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18 - NIV)

Unity and Disagreement



by JAY LEUNG,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD
SERVICE

A few weeks ago, a Christian friend who attends another church returned from a medical missions trip. For a full week, she went with a team of Christian medical professionals to Tanzania to provide free clinical care to the poor there. The experience was fine and eye-opening, both good and bad. The bad for her?

She was part of a team full of Christians who voted for Donald Trump.

She, of course, voted for Hillary Clinton and had huge reservations about the "Orange One." She was also the only one in her group.

Her team seemed to fit every stereotype about Trump voters: white, rural, from the Midwest or the South, and right wing, just to name a few. She especially threw up in her mouth during their breaks when they repeatedly praised Trump and the Republican Party, saying things like, "He's a gift of God!" or "We now have the holier politicians running the country again!" Whenever the conversation turned to politics, she would try to excuse herself, because she was concerned her incredulity could result in unnecessary discord.

Given her temperament, I praised her restraint and desire to maintain unity. However, I was personally disappointed that she was unable to have a meaningful discussion on politics with the "other side," because would it not be helpful for them to

know where she is coming from and that not everyone who is left wing and/or living in coastal cities is "a child of Satan?"

Her experience really made me think about unity and differences in our church, universal or just our own. Unity is hard to achieve, since BCEC is diverse. We have seven congregations with at least three languages spoken, numerous places of origins, a dizzying array of occupations, and a palette of varying life experiences. Sometimes it is a wonder to me how we remain united. What's our commonality (aside from ethnicity, mostly)?

The textbook answer is we all come to BCEC because we are believers in Jesus Christ or seek to know more about God. We have a common salvation. We should be united in our profession of faith, declaration to live in a way worthy of the gospel, showing love to each other by kind words and service, as well as seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness together. Paul says we are the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), and healthy body parts do not wage war on one another.

We may have the Jesus connection, but inevitably differences will eventually still stand out. In my fellowship, there are guys who love LeBron James and those who do not. In the big picture, this does not matter, but other topics such as politics do and can cause rifts. I feel like the default Chinese method to handle rifts is to avoid talking about them, and hope no one attempts to light this match. Still, there will be topics that we cannot avoid, though. Church expansion comes to mind. What about pertinent cultural questions of the day?

We will always disagree on some things, but I think what matters is how we handle our disagreements. Our fellowship Bible study focused on Philippians this year, and Philippians 2:3 (ESV) comes to mind: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." We can either treat the other person who had a sharply contrasting view as "What the heck are you thinking?", thus demeaning him/her and elevating yourself. Or, we can truly value the individual and his/her input as important by being willing to listen and at least try to understand. We may still disagree in the end, but that is much easier to accept when we continue to treat each other with the love inspired by Jesus Christ our Lord. (This assumes the two sides taken do not contradict the scriptures. If that is the case, then a gentle rebuke done in a wise manner is needed, which is another topic for another day!)

I have always hoped that the church can be a place — the place — where we can have all kinds of discourse, even political ones. The church is where the people can freely express their minds without fearing retaliation or ridicule, because we are not only willing to listen to each other, but also care for each other. That does not mean we have to talk about everything, but having the freedom to do so is still liberating. To me, love when you can disagree is much harder and even more beautiful than love when everything is smooth. I think that separates us from this world and makes a good witness for our faith.

I pray that God will lead the way, so that we can remain united together in our faith and fellowship.

August Moon booth



by ISA CHEN,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

Summer is full of outreach events at BCEC. One of those annual events is the August Moon booth, where brothers and sisters share a little of their time (several hours) to help further God's Kingdom. The booth is part of an event that is coordinated by the Local Evangelistic Department (LED), and its main purpose is to introduce BCEC during the annual August Moon Festival in Chinatown Boston. This year it was held on Sunday, August 13.

We thank God at the end of the event for the unity our church body has shown to our visitors.

"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."—Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)

Here are some highlights from this outreach event:

- God sent sisters Joanne and MeiHua to be part of the committee. Both possess the spiritual gift of creativity and showed much love through their hard work and dedication. Right before the event, our text messages went back and forth every second.
- We had more than 40 brothers and sisters who signed up to help, 10 more compared to last year. Not to mention there were still others who dropped by to help as well. Some stayed all day, and some returned to help after worship service.
- Surprise! It was not initially in our plan, but the music team led by Ida proclaimed God's love through songs under the hot sun. This enticed a crowd to gather and watch. Praise God for a res-

taurant who provided electricity for us.

- God helped us design our layout this year with a flow. Participants would enter the booth to play "God's creation" and "Armor of God" games, followed by visiting the information desk, and then get a stick-on gospel tattoo. Once they collected stamps from each station, they would get a gift bag with a Bible verse and a message to encourage them to visit us. Lastly, they would visit our photo booth holding a Facebook or Time magazine front cover prop, so that they could save the photos on their cell phone or share with friends on social media. Praise God! Not only did He help us with crowd control, but God also helped us interact and get to know our visitors. Families with strollers who would normally have a hard time getting through the crowd were with us in the tent this time. There were people who asked questions about faith and our beliefs. Many asked about our ESL and citizenship classes, and they signed up with Siu Yu who has made the commitment to come year after year to talk to them individually on the street. Another person invited us to visit her family.
- We served about 300 visitors in total through this event.
- Special thanks to Wilson and Guo Hua for your labor in moving all the equipment using your vehicles. We encourage more brothers and sisters to assist in this effort next year.
- Thank you, J2, who spared their fellowship time to help add Godly messages in the gifts.

If you have experienced God's goodness through our church fellowships and activities, let's serve the Lord together! Please contact LED by emailing led@bcec.net if you are interested in being part of the August Moon booth organizing committee next year!



UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 14 PDAS (PROJECT DESTINY
AUTUMN TO SPRING) BEGINS
- 17 SUNDAY SCHOOL SUNDAY
CANTONESE
- 22-24 YOUNG ADULT RETREAT
ENGLISH
- 24 STEPHAN MINISTRY
COMMISSIONING

OCTOBER

- 14 THE MARRIAGE THING
ENGLISH
- TBA PDAS FAMILY NIGHT
- 29 ANNUAL MEETING

NOVEMBER

- 5 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS
ONE HOUR BACK
- 10-12 MISSIONS CONFERENCE
- 23 THANKSGIVING DAY
OFFICE CLOSED
- 25 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NO CEC CLASSES
- 26 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY
- 26 CHILD DEDICATION
CHINESE

DECEMBER

- 3 BAPTISM
- 3 CHINESE SUNDAY SCHOOL
WINTER SESSION BEGINS
- 9 COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS
FALL SEMESTER ENDS
- TBA NEWTON CHILDREN'S
CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 17 CHINATOWN CHILDREN'S
CHRISTMAS PARTY
- 22-JAN 3 PDAS BREAK
- 24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
- 24 CHRISTMAS SUNDAY
- 25 CHRISTMAS
OFFICE CLOSED



Chinatown Campus Vacation Bible School (8/14-8/18)



Project Destiny 2017 (7/3-8/6)

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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Ping Pong Tournament (4/29-5/21)