



From Our Acting Senior Pastor:

Reflections on the Pandemic



by PASTOR DANIEL CHAN

When people around the world celebrated the beginning of 2020, there was great optimism about the economy. The tech heavy NASDAQ index rose almost 8% in just two and a half months. However, when things seemed so promising, a perfect storm was quietly brewing.

At the end of 2019, a mysterious virus was infecting people in China. At first, the world was not alarmed. However, following the first fatal case in January, public health departments and organizations began to pay attention. Very soon, curfew and mandatory quarantine were imposed on many Asian cities. The Western Hemisphere, however, initially looked at this as an Asian problem, and did not take serious steps to combat it. Only when the virus, named as COVID-19, started to spread around the world, did people realize that things were getting really bad. Stock markets around the world began to tumble. From February 20, the three major stock indices in American fell 30% in just a month.

Governor Baker of Massachusetts declared a state of emergency on March 11. BCEC immediately formed a Churchwide Response Team the same day. The team decided to move all worship services, fellowships, and Sunday School classes online starting that same night.

In the following two months, I have witnessed admirable creativity, adaptability, and learning speed from the pastoral staff and volunteers. Fellowships started to use Zoom to conduct virtual gatherings and small group meetings. Many members of fellowships for seniors do not have online capacity, but they still choose to maintain fellowship by tele-conferencing. Although this type of arrangement is not a perfect replacement for onsite fellowship, it produced some good results. Some members who could not attend meetings regularly due to lack of transportation can now join in online. As members became familiar with the new technology, they started scheduling additional small group meetings for support and prayers. Hence, they now “see” each other more than before the pandemic.

Since March 15, we have offered five different worship services every Sunday. The Chinatown English service is live streamed via YouTube at

“The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.”

-Ecclesiastes 7:8 (NIV)

9:15 a.m. The Chinatown English congregation has set up a studio at the 120 Shawmut Ave. for live streaming. The Newton English service is pre-recorded from the homes of pastoral staff and volunteers, and is made available at 11 a.m. The two Mandarin services use prerecorded praise songs and sermon. Right after the sermon, which is the same for both Chinatown and Newton services, Pastor Andy and Minister Patrick will host sharing and prayer groups on Zoom. There is a single joint service for the three Cantonese congregations. It is prerecorded at the Newton Campus sanctuary. The three Cantonese pastors rotate to preach. Worship teams of the three congregations rotate to lead the music part. The three Cantonese pastors also host sharing and prayer groups after the service. I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the volunteers who make our online ministries possible.

It is hard to count the number of attendees for online worship services. We have the number of “hits” for each service, but it does not represent the number of attendees. Some families watch the service together with a single hit while some individuals do multiple hits to watch different services. Nevertheless, from the available figures, we believe that service participation percentage of our members is quite high. It should also be noted that some relocated former members and local Christians from other Chinese churches told us they also watched our online worship services.

The pandemic has certainly affected the dynamics among our church members. However, when they have gotten used to using social media for church functions, we actually observed more interaction. Moreover, in our virtual meetings, prayers usually become an integral part. As a result, BCEC has become a more prayerful church.

The pastoral staff has conducted a few reflection sessions during the pandemic. We reflected on how this crisis affected the way we do ministry, including worship, fellowship, discipleship, prayer, Christian education, evangelism, mission, administration, and the use of our facilities. A common theme evolves from the reflection — we can use technology and media to enhance ministry. Church growth teachers have informed us for years about the importance of media for the church in modern times. This little virus finally forces us to take the potential of media seriously. BCEC leaders will continue to use the lesson we learned to strengthen our church during and after the pandemic.

Massachusetts is one of the hardest hit states in this pandemic. As of May 12, four current or former BCEC members have sadly died from COVID-19. Four to five parents of our members (most of them lived outside of the state) also passed away because of the coronavirus. They were all over 80 years old. There are two current members receiving treatment for the coronavirus in a hospital. Most elderly housing or nursing homes in the state now ban visitors. Our members who live in these facilities feel lonely and isolated. The pastoral staff and volunteers are checking on them by phone calls.

The country is debating when to reopen social and economic activities. BCEC will follow guidelines from health authorities regarding reopening. We shall also consider our own conditions when making this decision. Please continue to pray for our society during this time.



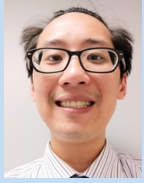
Pastor Daniel representing BCEC during the Davis Topping Ceremony on March 9, 2020, signing on the beam

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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER

Faith in God during Adversity



by JAY LEUNG,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD
SERVICE

COVID-19 has been an unprecedented time of crisis, spouting uncertainty, anxiety, suffering and perhaps even hopelessness. However, this can also be a time of opportunity for our faith in God to shine. In my opinion, adversity is the time where God shines the brightest, and I hope that our Christian faith will allow us to become a city on a hill, especially today, where the light of Jesus Christ can shine even brighter, and it cannot be ignored.

The COVID-19 figures are staggering though: more than 4 million confirmed cases and 280,000 deaths have been reported around the world. The United States have more than 1 million cases alone, and the unemployment rate has risen to 14.7% (from only 3.5% in March), with 20.5 million jobs lost in April. More than 33 million people have filed for unemployment benefits over the same stretch. Hospitals are either at or near their breaking point in terms of capacity, and many medical institutions have reported a lack of necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

This is without mentioning how COVID-19 drastically affected our daily lives. If you are not working from home, at least your children are

certainly not going to school, and this is if you are fortunate. For those who cannot work from home, you are at risk daily to potentially contract the virus from strangers. Even then, I do not know what is worse: being at risk every day from being an essential worker or having to contend with no income if the pandemic caused your job to be eliminated.

No matter what situation we are currently in, is COVID-19 not only testing the perseverance of our faith, but also allowing Jesus to become even more indispensable in our lives? As we are becoming lesser, is He becoming greater?

The Bible has countless examples of God shepherding His followers out of adversity. God parted the Red Sea in two to allow the Israelites to cross the body of water and later the Jordan River. Before David became king, he had to run for his life from his predecessor until his death (while Saul became the perfect example of what happens when a leader is separated from God). The early church spread quickly from Palestine to the Greek regions and eventually Rome because of both the dedication of the followers and their forced scattering to various regions due to persecutions.

For me, the recurring theme is this: God can show His most awesome power only when there are worthy foils and only when we actually let Him.

Therefore, I am thankful to see that there are signs where our faith is not fading away in these uneasy times, and COVID-19 is quite the foil. For example, I want to thank all who made a do-

nation towards our COVID-19 special offering for the Boston Resiliency Fund. The total final amount collected is \$29,476 – praise the Lord! Priorities of this fund include providing access to food for various at-risk populations, technology to Boston Public School students for remote learning, and support to first responders and health care workers who are on the frontlines fighting this pandemic.

I am also grateful to all those who have participated or inquired about either volunteering at 120 Shawmut Ave. for our food-serving partnership with Boston Public Schools or donating PPEs to Tufts Medical Center. We will have other people writing about those in this *Connections* issue!

Personally, I do not see COVID-19 fading away anytime soon. So instead of receding into our own shell and focusing only on ourselves further, I hope that we can continue to become a beacon of light to all those who may feel fearful, desperate, or perhaps even hopeless during this time and that our faith and actions can compel them to finally seek God. I hope that people on the outside, particularly the communities that our church is in, will be able to see the love and hope offered by Jesus Christ with us being His hands and feet.

All figures are obtained courtesy of the BBC, Johns Hopkins COVID-19 tracking dashboard at <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>, and the US Department of Labor.

Compassion Response to COVID-19



by LING-MEI WONG,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD
SERVICE

The coronavirus has upended life for many, particularly frontline medical workers caring for COVID-19 patients. In response to the more than 4 million cases of this highly infectious disease around the world, Boston Chinese Evangelical Church members stepped up to fight the virus to collect Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Tufts Medical Center's health care workers.

The Social Responsibility Committee contacted Tufts Medical Center to find out the Boston

Chinatown hospital's needs. They accepted mask donations, including surgical and homemade cloth masks sewn to its specifications¹. The hospital also welcomed surgical gowns, eye protection, hand sanitizer and "missing you" cards for Chinese patients.

A call went out to church members in March to donate any PPE they had on hand. To date, BCEC brothers and sisters have given Tufts Medical Center at least 8 hand sanitizers, 1,744 masks, 339 N95 masks, 1,900 wipes, 1,500 gloves and 100 cards. We thank BCEC members for giving so generously — so much that the committee lost count of exactly how equipment and cards went to the hospital!

We appreciate our members who did not hoard masks. Surgical masks were in short supply, with members donating masks sent from overseas relatives in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan,

South Korea, or Vietnam. Church members throughout greater Boston gave of their personal stashes of surgical masks or spent time sewing cloth masks.

The cards showed creativity and care, without being overtly religious according to the hospital's request. One member drew 35 cards to cheer Chinese-speaking patients; she appreciated the opportunity to use her craft skills while working from home. Other families included children's artwork in the thoughtful cards.

The Social Responsibility Committee welcomes any contribution of PPE and cards! Find out more at bcec.net/src.

¹ Video link for mask sewing specifications and instruction can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Hon3XuHKv0>

Serving Chinatown



by CHARLES LAI,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

What do I want for lunch/dinner? That is a question I like to think about because I enjoy good food. However, since the recent impact of the pandemic, many people are now wondering how they are even able to just get a proper meal.

For about a month now, BCEC's 120 Shawmut Ave. has been a host site for the City of Boston for people and families from the surrounding South End and Chinatown communities to pick up meals. They come by on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. to pick up two days' worth of breakfast and lunch. There has been a good rotation of choices ranging from cereal and muffins, burgers and chicken nuggets, pasta and veggies topped off with either an apple or an orange. There is a bit of nostalgia while looking at the milk cartons, as that brings me back to my childhood days of being a student at Josiah Quincy Elementary School.

Given my flexible work hours because of the stay-at-home advisory and my proximity to BCEC, since I live in the South End, I felt God nudging me to help out when I heard BCEC was going to become a site for meal distributions. In

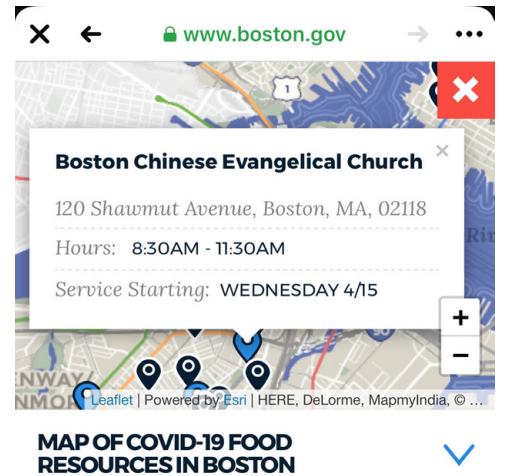
addition, at this point with the quarantine, I would do just about anything for real human interaction.

From this past month of helping out, I have started to see more of the needs of the community. We started off with only about 10 people coming by and serving about 80 or so total meals per day. After about a week or two and more word getting out, we've been able to increase our deliveries to accommodate about 25+ people per day and serve close to 400 meals on some days!

In this time, we've started to recognize a lot of the regulars and see more new people come by. At this point, some of the volunteers can even recognize the regulars as they are crossing the street and know how many people they are picking up for and whether or not they want milk. We have even recognized some parents of kids who come to our youth programs.

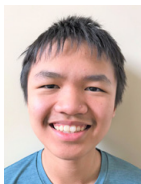
As they are waiting for their food, some tell us that their kids are bored at home or that they have also come to pick up for their neighbors because they are fearful of just going out in public. We have learned that other sites may be a bit far for them or that the lines are too long. It is encouraging to hear that this is really helping them out and how thankful they are and how this is such a convenient location. I am sure the fact that we are Chinese and able to communicate with them in Chinese adds to their comfort.

As I reflect upon the time so far, I am reminded



that being a host site for meals falls right in line with BCEC's mission of serving the Chinese/Asian community and our neighbors. Having grown up as a participant in many of the programs around Chinatown/South End, it means a lot to serve the very same community that helped raise me. It is interesting to realize that some of these families who were part of the restaurant business are now the ones who are in need of food. As a result, this is why we pray before every shift that the community would know that there is a God who loves and deeply cares about them, especially during this hard time. These prayers hit home a little more to me.



*COVID-19 Reflections:***Season of Waiting**

by MICAH CHEN,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

I do not mind being stuck at home for almost two months now. There's a pattern; it's just a different one. Usually, I'd wake up, eat breakfast, go to school, and come back. Now, I would get up, eat breakfast, go on my computer to do school work, eat lunch, go back on my computer a little more, and get off my computer. That is what I'd normally do every weekday now. My teachers from school have actually lightened the workload, since school shut down because of COVID-19.

Praise God that my family is safe and healthy! My parents are working from home, and we are blessed to have enough food every day to eat. One

of my prayers to God was to help me read the Bible more. I haven't developed a habit to read His Word every day because I haven't thought about it, or I keep getting distracted. Therefore, I think to myself, "Am I crazy? Don't I know my faith is dead without actions?" However, somehow my mind always manages to stray away from reading the Bible. I am lazy, and I do not have much discipline, but I think that does not have to do with me not reading the Bible and praying every day. If I knew the endless rewards and eternal life I would receive, of course, I would believe and have faith. However, I realized faith is nothing if you don't do anything. It's like a wilted flower that will ultimately die.

At home, I haven't noticed my parents reading the Bible much (especially my dad), so I have a sense of wondering if their faith is actually true as they say. That may be also part of the reason I don't read the Bible every day, but it doesn't matter what my parents don't do. I have to do it. It is also good

for me to ask my parents to see exactly when they read their Bible. Maybe it just happens when I am not watching them.

Right now, I am in a season of waiting; waiting for God to do something I can see (maybe He has already done many miracles I did not realize). I pray God would show me something, and I pray I would be willing to go through the door He has opened for me. Regarding the coronavirus pandemic, my life has barely changed other than not going to school. I don't have much, if not any, fear of the virus, mostly because God is protecting us, and I'm a kid (that's not really an excuse to not wash my hands). I do, however, pray for people in the medical field and any affected by it because I know God knows what to do.

Being Human During COVID-19

by VINCE LAU,
NEWTON ENGLISH

My professional world is based on providing answers and guidance to people. I am sure it is the same for many of you. Clients, classmates, and colleagues all expect us to justify our worth by providing them with answers. We live in a world full of data and the pressure to process the data at breakneck speed is great. If you are not able to provide the answer, someone else will, or at least try to do so, and your significance will be measured accordingly. What the COVID-19 pandemic has done, however, is to allow us to say, "I don't know." "Why is this happening?" "When will this be over?" "How do we best protect ourselves?" For most of us, we don't know and we are not expected to know the answer. I'm a lawyer, and my clients have al-

ways expected me to be able to provide them with an answer. In the last few weeks, it's been acceptable to say, "I don't know," and in fact, it's expected. Other than giving them my best educated analysis and projections, that's all I can do. What I do know is that God is all knowing, and God knows the answers. This gives me peace even when I have to say, "I don't know."

At the same time, in conversations with people, it is now more acceptable to ask how they are. Where there once was a wall of separation between personal and professional, phone conversations will consist more of discussing personal situations and video conferences will even have guest appearances from family members and pets. In fact, one of the running observations during COVID-19 is that we all now have a view into everyone else's living room. This situation has allowed us, and reminds us that we are human. We are more than just our work. We are comprised of all different aspects of our lives. At the same time, it has opened up the opportunity for us to care for one another, to check

in on one another. In the same way, we know that the God we worship is all loving. He would want us to extend His love to all those with whom we interact. And during COVID-19, loving others is more needed and relevant than ever before.

Throughout all of this, more than ever, we see how frail we are as human beings. Even the mightiest are not immune from the impact of COVID-19, as political leaders and celebrities succumb to it. For me, seeing how the whole world, not just a specific region or a specific class of people, is subject to the same fears and same vulnerability reminds me how much we really need to rely on God. God is all powerful. He has demonstrated victory over all past challenges, even victory over death. Therefore, how much more can we trust that He has victory over COVID-19 and anything else that comes our way?

During this time, I ask myself each morning as I get up (and stay at home) how I will react to the fact that God is all knowing, all loving, and all powerful. I invite you to do the same.

Realization through Pandemic

by JOSEPH WONG,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD
SERVICE

Dear brothers and sisters, may the peace of the Lord be with you. It has been seven weeks since we have been staying home due to the pandemic. Sometimes I do worry. My biggest fear is, what if my wife and I both get infected? What would

happen to our three children in that case? We are thankful to God for His protection; our family has been safe and healthy. By now, we have gotten used to all the changes in our daily lives, since the stay-at-home order has been in place. Now that I do not need to drive to work, I have time each mornings to read the Bible, do devotions, and pray with my family. Being at home all the time allows me to spend considerable time with my kids and play with them, but it also means it takes us even more time to deal with the different needs and requests from each child. The most difficult thing for us is to split up our time amongst our three children, while also

needing time in solitude occasionally. I suddenly realized how blessed we used to be. Before this pandemic, we could drop off the kids at Sunday School or Kid's Club every Sunday. Now that everyone is at home, I find it much more difficult to focus on the worship service. Even though there is still a lot of uncertainty in the development of this pandemic, we have come to realize that life does not need to be full of excitement in order for us to find it enjoyable. Our lives can be full of laughter and sweet memories even when we are staying at home and spending time with family.

Peace in the Midst of the Pandemic



by KAREN LIANG,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 2ND
SERVICE

I still remember it was the mid-February when my husband and I accompanied our son on his return to college. While we were on campus, we saw many young people who were chatting or reading, leisurely enjoying campus life, and some of them were running to the cafeteria to grab some food. At that time, I said to my husband, "I am so envious of college students in America, who are so richly blessed!"

Little did we expect that a month later we would receive a notification from the college that the campus would be closing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and students would have to leave school and return home. Consequently, our son returned home where he would be attending classes online. Shortly afterwards, Massachusetts issued a stay-at-home advisory. Various businesses have to shut down temporarily, and people have to quarantine themselves at home to maintain social distancing. All of a sudden, the whole world has stopped, and we feel so helpless.

During this pandemic, I have noticed that many people are scared, and they wear face masks and

gloves to protect themselves from being infected whenever they venture out. When they go shopping, they do so in a hurry. Many people follow the stay-at-home advisory and stop participating in outdoor activities. Students learn online. Many people have lost their jobs, and some have become infected and lost their lives.

Every week a few volunteers and I would visit a rehabilitation center, where we have built good relationships with some of the residents during these visits. We brought with us the love of Jesus, leading many of them to Christ. I felt like we were part of a family, and I was thankful to be involved. In mid-March, the rehabilitation center stopped welcoming visitors, so we could no longer go. We miss seeing those elderly people, and we constantly pray for them. In mid-April, we received the unfortunate news that several residents inside the center and even some of the employees had become infected. Bad news kept coming, and multiple people have passed away due to the coronavirus. During this period of time, I miss them and grieve over their passing, but I am also thankful that many of them had already put their faith in our Lord.

I see God's protection and grace in the midst of the pandemic. Although I have to stay at home and cannot attend Sunday worship service in person, I have been able to participate in worship via the online virtual meeting platform Zoom. Even though we cannot go to church to serve, we can still call each other on our phones to check in and

show our care for each other, sharing God's love and grace and encouraging each other to love our gracious God even more. Our environment has changed, but nothing can separate us from the love of God.

During this time, I realize that life is unpredictable. Human power has its limits, and we cannot even control a tiny virus. Only God is the true healer whom we can rely on, and He watches over us. There are still so many people in this world who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior and remain in the bondage of sin, so what will happen to them? My heart aches for those who are condemned to the abyss in hell when Jesus returns to judge at His Second Coming. As children of God, we are commanded to bring the gospel to all nations. Are we fulfilling this responsibility? The Bible reminds us to "preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction." (2 Timothy 4:2 - NIV) Paul was teaching believers to do our duty to spread the "Good News" promptly, so that the salvation of Jesus Christ may reach all of those who are willing to repent from their sin. God will forgive those who come before Him to confess. Let us receive the true peace in Christ Jesus.

Our Lord, we have sinned against You, so please forgive us, end the pandemic, and heal this land. May Your name be glorified. Amen!

Looking Up to God in the Midst of Suffering



by YI WING YAN,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD
SERVICE

I entered the year of 2020 with a resolution of building up a healthy lifestyle, which includes exercising regularly and watching my diet, continuing to learn about God's Word, and growing spiritually alongside brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, a global pandemic, like a whirlwind, has disrupted my life and the lives of billions of others. Since mid-March, as COVID-19 descended upon Massachusetts, meetings and gatherings have stopped at schools and workplaces. Even church gatherings and services have switched to an online format. My daily life has also changed substantially. My roommate has returned home in March; some members in Joshua 2 (J2) Fellowship have also chosen to leave Boston and return to Hong Kong. I felt very sad when I heard about this, because those decisions were made abruptly, and I was unable to bid them farewell in person due to the pandemic. This made me question God, "Why do we have to experience

such sufferings?"

Every morning, I feel anxious when I read about all those heartbreaking news reports. The thing that I fear most about this pandemic is not how contagious it is, or how much physical suffering an infected person has to endure. I am most concerned that these patients have no family member or friend that can be with them in person when they are on their deathbed. They would have to leave the world alone. I certainly am fearful of death myself, but I am even more fearful of being unable to bid farewell to my parents and friends and tell them, "I will see you in heaven!" I feel unsettled when I think about this. I turned to YouTube and looked up a hymn to calm myself. When I heard the lyrics that go, "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." / "Are you not of more value than the birds of the air?" / "All these things will be added to you", etc., my mind was finally able to calm down. I lay in bed and prayed that God would grant me peace.

Even though we are unable to worship together physically right now, we are able to see brothers and sisters online and worship together in spirit, thanks to modern day technology. Through the sermons, I understand that God has already

planned everything for us. As a result, we do not need to fear anything, because His righteous hand will give us strength. Each time after I listened to the sermon during the Chinatown Cantonese 3rd Service, I no longer feel fearful but I am inspired.

As I reflect, at least I still have a place to stay, have sufficient food, and have family and friends who care about me during this pandemic crisis. This "suffering" I am going through is nothing compared to those in Africa who are in unending famine, or those Syrian civilians that live under ongoing warfare. I believe that the message that God has for us is to stop, appreciate, and be thankful for everything that we already have, instead of asking Him for more all the time.

None of us know when this pandemic will be over, but I hope that every one of us will continue to have faith in God, because He already has a plan for us. We will have our moments of weakness, but do not forget that our God is omnipotent. When we are fearful, that is when we need to rely on Him the most. I pray that all brothers and sisters in BCEC will come to support each other during this hardship, and that we will eventually overcome the darkness and be able to see the light again.

Pray Continually and Give Thanks in All Circumstances



BY ERIC SZETO,
NEWTON CANTONESE

In every region or country, whenever the number of positive cases of the current pandemic reaches zero, I believe that people will feel excited and joyful. At present, there are still more and more confirmed cases, surpassing one million and reaching a shocking number of sixty thousand reported deaths. The good news is that there have not been any new cases in Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Macau for a period of time.

According to news reports, the pandemic originated from a wet market in Wuhan called Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, but additional investigation is needed. Once the outbreak began in China, an increasing number of people became infected. Many workers returned home during the Lunar New Year holidays, allowing the disease to spread further. Soon the situation landed in Eu-

rope, the United States, and other places and got out of hand. The World Health Organization declared a pandemic and named the virus SARS-CoV-2, which causes the coronavirus disease 2019 (abbreviated as COVID-19). Governments of many countries have imposed entry restrictions at airports, closed their borders, and implemented quarantine measures (such as announcing stay-at-home advisories, prohibiting mass gatherings, requiring physical/social distancing, and mandating face masks), hoping to slow down transmission of the disease. To truly control the virus, they also try to seize the moment in developing vaccines and treatments. Moreover, healthcare workers including doctors, nurses, and emergency medical technicians are all selflessly making contributions and sacrifices, reflecting the love of God.

I had originally booked a flight ticket to return to Hong Kong in May, and had applied at work to take a vacation. However, because of the rapid spread of the pandemic, my work situation was affected. In March, I was laid off by my company, and the airline canceled my flight. In addition, there were also several unexpected events happening to my family and me, leading to my insomnia

and anxiety. I used to be in control of everything, and things always proceeded according to my plans. However, humans are in fact powerless. I am thankful for the guidance and encouragement by our pastor. I have also found our online workshops to be quite informative and helpful in releasing my anxiety. Now I have learned to cast my burdens and rely on God. In addition, I am willing to confess my sins and repent, and I seek His forgiveness. Furthermore, I have learned to give thanks in all circumstances, pay attention to the needs of others, be obedient, and pray continually. All these things have enriched my heart and spirit, so I praise God!

During this pandemic, we are all victims. The pandemic will eventually pass, so regardless of our current situation, everything happens according to God's will. Having gone through this experience, there will definitely be changes in our lives. These changes are lessons from God that we should learn from. We should always remember God's words and be alert, so that the number of positive cases in our hearts will reach zero. To close, Psalms 107:43 (NIV) says, "*Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.*"

Transformed by the Pandemic



by WINNIE GEE,
CHINATOWN CANTONESE 2ND
SERVICE

Ever since the pandemic has begun, the news and messages on my phone that I see every day has been related to this crisis. The spread is getting worse each day, and it is worrisome. Fear is growing in day by day, making my heart heavier and heavier. I have a habit of writing down scriptures that I find particularly encouraging, so I dug through these Bible verses, and ask that God will again encourage me with His Word.

God spoke to me through Isaiah 43:1-5 (ESV):
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

...

For I am the Lord your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...

Because you are precious in my eyes,

and honored, and I love you, ..."

After I meditated the above scriptures, the burden and fear in my heart disappears, and I finally felt at ease. Truly, every Word from God is powerful. Thank you, Lord! I was being reminded again, that if I kept on focusing on the pandemic only instead of on God, I will keep falling. I will fix my eyes upon God, for He alone is my strength and hope.

From then on, I started to view life and things through a very different lens, a lens that gets brighter each day. I began to pay attention to what God is doing in me, started to count my blessings, and I felt more and more joyful. I am thankful that I have learned the correct way to wash my hands through this pandemic, which benefits the rest of my life. Previously, I would just use things without thinking too much, but I have not learned how to be less wasteful, especially regarding toilet paper. Who knew that one day it would become a commodity that so many people are fighting over? We used to buy or eat anything as we wish without worrying too much, but now we must plan everything meticulously. Thankfully, God has provided, and we have not run out of food in the fridge or anything around the house yet.

In the past, life seems to be quite busy. Nowadays we are to stay home, and there is more time, yet my life is even more fulfilling. I get to spend more time with God, listen to different sermons by various speakers online, participate in Bible studies

organized by CGST, etc. All of which were spiritually nourishing. I am now also able to read the Bible with my elderly mother, pray with her, and sing praises with her every day. This brings me so much joy!

Last but not least, this pandemic allows me to see the true love in humanity. According to the news, thousands of medical workers, many of whom are retired, have volunteered to help with the urgent medical needs of New York. Every one of them is risking their lives to take care of those who are sick. A minister drove his car out to an empty street and broadcasted the hymn "Amazing Grace" from his car. Slowly, the nearby residents open their doors and windows to listen. Some even came outside and joined him in singing. There are also countless people who spread their love to the frontline medical workers by making DIY (Do it yourself) masks and headbands for them. We at BCEC are also doing everything we can to care for all the elderly brothers and sisters and those who are in need, including volunteering to give out meals to families who are in need during this time. Every one of these acts of love encourages me. I pray that God will help me live out a life full of His love that is glorifying to Him!

God is Our Refuge and Strength



by FIONA TSANG,
NEWTON CANTONESE

Entering into this coronavirus pandemic, my husband and I have two elementary school children, and my job is in the medical field as a registered nurse in a rehabilitation hospital. During this pandemic, I have experienced our humbleness in God’s creation, prayerful support from brothers and sisters, and my love for God and others. God has also blessed me with a treasured experience. It is a revival both of my personal calling as a nurse and of a positive growth in my family with God as a result of the significant impacts of COVID-19 in our lives.

At the onset of the coronavirus situation, when a few patients were found to be infected at the rehabilitation center, I started to become fearful and worried, because I had been caring

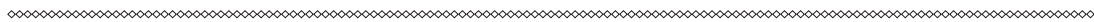
for these patients before they showed symptoms of COVID-19. After the next two weeks, I was symptom-free, and I thanked God for this peace with me, while I waited for the next challenge ahead, as I continued to take care of the patients at the rehabilitation hospital. The next challenge came when my co-workers began to get sick, and some tested positive for COVID-19. However, during this entire time, prayers from brothers and sisters comforted and strengthened me, and I know God is there with me. Before I entered rooms of COVID-19 positive patients, I had no fear, God’s love is with me, and I cared for them and valued them. Through this, God affirms my passionate heart for the patients.

After one day working for 12 hours in the Rehab, I came home and was knowing that the important thing is my work for today is finished. My legs were very sore after long day of working. My headache and my fever caused me to go to sleep early after dinner. The next day, the responsible thing to do is to get tested for COVID-19. As my family and I were waiting for the test results, God

gave me peace, and I knew I was ready to accept whatever God allows as the test result.

After one day, the test result was COVID-19 positive. Now my family and I are ready to cope with this result, continued to be bathed in prayerful support by brothers and sisters, and God’s merciful love. I am so thankful for my husband, as he has been taking care of the two children, while I was working in the Rehab. My children have grown spiritually. At start of the coronavirus pandemic, my younger son began to plead for my quitting of my nursing job due to its level of risk of getting infected; now, my children grew to be closer to the Heavenly Father, and they pray and know that God looks after us all. Indeed, I was never alone. God is always with us.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”
(Joshua 1:9 - ESV)



Lament

by FRANKI KAM, CHINATOWN CANTONESE 3RD SERVICE

Since I returned to Hong Kong from my farm last November, these crises happened one after another: the African swine fever, the instability of the Hong Kong society, and lately, the COVID-19 pandemic. Having gone through such instability from January to April, I cannot help but reflect upon the following: “Why is the situation so terrible? How will all these crises end?” Perhaps the worst is yet to come; viruses knows no boundary between countries or power. Where is the peace? Which country can completely stay out of this pandemic? When God created the world, there was no race, there were just human beings. We can only come humbly before our Creator, admit that we are merely His creation, and that we do not have much control over this at all. Many are in unbearable misery right now. I pray that God will have mercy on us, and grant leaders from countries the righteousness and wisdom from above to lead their people through these difficult times. I want to give thanks to the Lord for His protection and care during this period of sorrow and uncertainty over my farm family, my team of coworkers, and my dear friends who are working at the farm the entire time that they remain safe. There are some coworkers who are still stuck in South Korea; please pray for their safety.

It was unanticipated that I would hear about my

mother being sick in the midst of me writing this sharing. Back when China was going through the worst period of the then epidemic (now pandemic), the United States, being on the opposite side of the earth, would experience an exponential growth of confirmed cases as well. The nursing home where my mother lived has prohibited all visitations since mid-March. I was devastated to hear three weeks late that my mother has diagnosed with COVID-19, and she went home to be with the Lord ten days after that, which happened to be Easter. During my days of mourning, I reflected on memories on our days together, remembering her voice, her facial expressions, her healthy days, her sick days, etc. I have been thinking about returning to the United States from the day of her confirmed diagnosis, feeling conflicted about the thousands of confirmed cases and hundreds of deaths each day. I continually prayed in lamentations for my brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as my friends, as I cry out, “Lord! Do you see it? Do you hear it? Your people, my beloved friends and family are calling you in the midst of the pandemic. Please, your righteousness be shown upon those who are more vicious than the virus itself.”

I am thankful that my family was able to make arrangements for my mother’s funeral in a timely manner given the circumstances. My mother is quite blessed, because she has many children, as well as many sisters in the church who love her. It was bright and sunny on her burial day. It was as though God was reminding me that He is al-

ready taking good care of my mother. I prayed to Jesus, “Please tell Mom that I am thankful for her love and upbringing all these years. I am thankful that she has already received the gift of eternal life. Lord, Mom, please be merciful of my incompleteness. I pray that those in our family who are not believers, yet will get to know You and believe in You. I also pray that my uncles and aunts in Hong Kong will have the opportunity to know You through Mom’s blessings, so that they can be reunited in the future.”

I can only submit to God and thank Him during this time. I am but an insignificant being in this world, yet He has prepared for me many brothers and sisters who comforted me and accompanied me in prayers. Even though I am still in sorrow, I know that the Lord fully knows and understands my feelings. During this pandemic, churches are transforming the way they hold gatherings, and our daily lives and contact with people are also transforming. These changes in turn transforms how we follow Jesus. May we not live mindlessly anymore, but perhaps begin to care about those friends and relatives that we might have neglected for a long time. Moreover, we need to cherish even more the opportunity to worship with others in person. Last but not least, let us all ask for the Lord’s mercy together!

College Retreat Online Reflections



by RYAN SO,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

Having College Retreat Online was an exciting, new way for College Ministry to explore hearing about God's Word, as we used a new medium to discuss and talk about God. However, if I am being honest, it was not our first choice. We held out as long as we possibly could before making the decision and even then, we had our concerns. Will people join? What if students are distracted? What if the Internet cuts out?

Concerns, disappointment, and discouragement were some of the largest obstacles we had to face before going online. Nevertheless, through the hard work of both the college staff and student leaders, we were able to create an online experience that would help set the stage for our future move online as concerns of the pandemic increased.

Pastor Wayne Lee, our guest speaker, also played a huge role in making this online retreat happen. His willingness to learn new software, set up and prepare a quiet space at home despite having children, and speaking in a different way to engage and captivate

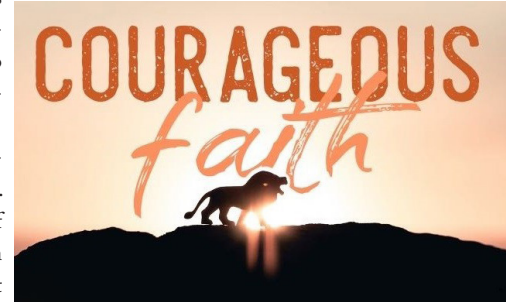
students encouraged us as we prepared to go online for the first time.

Pastor Wayne spoke about courageous faith through the journey of Joshua. Helping us see and explore his walk with God and the need and desire for courageous faith during those times. It was a topic that was almost too timely when fear and anxiety were at the forefront for all. Even in our own fears and worries about the program, as well as the structure of the online retreat, these feelings seemed to melt away as students engaged and participated in activities, small groups, and sermons.

We as a ministry learned many things that weekend. Technology and its uses were just one of them. However, we learned a lot about courage in times of disappointment. Moreover, we learned about faith in times of fear and worry, we learned about trust, not in our abilities or plans, but trust in a God who provided a way when we could not clearly see a way.

Our journey to College Retreat was much like that of Joshua. It required us to be strong and courageous, hold fast to the Lord, and trust in his promises.

College Retreat Online was both a learning experience for the students and staff, helping us go beyond our normal means of ministry and preparing us for the next few months that we would spend conducting our ministry online. God has been faithful and encouraging even when it looked like things would end. God always provided a way.



Transitioning PDAS Online



by STEVE LIU,
CHINATOWN ENGLISH

How do you move everything online? That is the question everyone has been trying to figure out, and it has been equally true for Project Destiny Autumn to Spring (PDAS), BCEC's Chinatown youth drop-in program that met daily. A week before much of our state shut down, I remember telling the youth: we are probably going to shut down soon. Kids were understandably excited, and I had to convey to them that this was going to be an unbelievably long shut down. "It's not going to be a week or a month," I told them. "You're going to be waiting week after week, and then you're going to be sick of it, and then we'll still be waiting." It has largely played out that way, with most of the youth we talk to being confined indoors in urban apartments, without permission to even open the front door for months on end. The need for community is more real than ever to them.

On the last day of PDAS, we had time to say goodbye, not knowing how long we would really not see each other. We had the idea of trying to move online but how? We knew the core of our ministry is mentor relationships and homework help with plenty of fun

and games. So, how do you replace that?

The first step was to find a way to at least be in touch with everyone. Email, Facebook, and texting were not going to do the trick. We needed a persistent online community that would allow large groups, small groups, and various "rooms" to interact in with different social settings and purposes. This is where God used the video-gaming counselors and youth to suggest Discord, a chat server program mainly used for gaming. Before the day was over, some of the PDAS high schoolers had put together the structure for the chat server, and we began to test it out. Soon, we were able to invite everyone and almost all of the regular students are reachable through the chat server.

The second step was to get counselors on board. To that end, we taught a webinar to training on our online tools, with tips about interacting. In the second or third week we were having a lot of good conversations about what it means to be online. We have tried to do things like scheduling counselor "office hours" and assigning students for regular check-ins via text or voice. We had to apply the practices of cross-cultural ministry to our new work, analyzing behaviors, learning social patterns, and processing the ups and downs together. Some of us made the change quickly, but some are still trying to figure out how to get online.

The third part of this was to figure out how to do Bible and relational content again. I started recording and editing vlogs with devotional messages to post, about once/week, which I think most folks are watch-

ing. We have tried to host activities online — sometimes succeeding and sometimes falling flat, like the time I hosted a Tae Bo session and only counselors showed up. Failure is a bigger part of the norm than we would like, and it's a challenge for all our counselors to stay encouraged when things don't work.

One of the lessons we learned is that we are not well suited to have large group interactions because people may not all know each other and only the most socially forward youth and counselors will venture to interact in those large settings. We needed to lean on "home bases," small groups of socially similar kids who meet together weekly. They play video games, group games, watch movies together, have discussions, and try to share a bit about life with each other. This takes a lot of work and investment, and I have been encouraged to see how counselors do their best to keep on engaging through uncertainty and limited feedback.

We are still trying to figure this out. We know at this time that we all tend to yearn for community. How can we help provide that to our local youth in a way that directs us all to Christ? This is one of the main questions we are trying to figure out as we plan Project Destiny Summer Camp online and PDAS for next year. It has put us in a position of humble prayer and learning. We trust God will continue to guide, and we cling to what he has taught us in the Bible about reaching out in love, while serving a community that is underserved.

Five Loaves and Two Fish: Relying on the Lord



by SHAOBING SU,
NEWTON MANDARIN

The Scripture says, “And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.” (Ezekiel 22:30 - ESV)

Approximately two months ago, I felt a calling when I heard a pastor beginning his sermon with the above Bible verse. During that time, I said to God, “Lord, I am willing to stand in the breach for the land if there is a need.”

When the coronavirus epidemic first originated in Wuhan, I was touched when I saw many photos of brothers and sisters in Mainland China running around, serving others in the name of the gospel. I was also envious of them that they were called and used by God. Shortly after, the coronavirus started to spread in United States as well. It was timely, as I also heard the sermon by that pastor, which felt like God speaking to me. May the will of the Lord be done.

During that time, I joined a weekly online prayer meeting on Thursdays organized by a few brothers to pray for the pandemic. Several times, I felt so moved during prayers that I cried, “Lord, send us and use us!”

Afterwards, something miraculous happened. Our vacation in March had to be canceled due to the pandemic, and it turns out that it was the perfect time for God to use me. Another two brothers had been thinking about serving, and I coincidentally conversed about this when we spoke on the phone. We decided to pray together and lift it up to God, and that is how the whole process began.

We have decided to raise some money to procure some supplies for pandemic relief. We did not know how much we would be able to raise, nor do we know where to procure those supplies, or how to have them

shipped here. We could only depend on God, so we prayed to God ceaselessly that this would be a ministry that would please Him. We desired that His will be done and that His name would be glorified.

During our time of service, we have experienced so much grace, strength, and wisdom from Him. There were countless times when our prayers were answered almost as soon as we finished praying. His amazing work can be seen day in and day out.

Amazing Grace #1: Planning for fundraising. From March 18 until the end of the month, we have raised almost \$30k in a short period of time, and we were able to complete three massive procurement and shipment of epidemic supplies. We sourced almost 20,000 facemasks, 650 protective gowns, 1170 face shields, and 150 safety goggles, which were donated to 23 hospitals, organizations, or healthcare professionals. We even managed to set aside a substantial supply of facemasks to spread the gospel by giving them out to the community. The Lord has supplied more than we asked and imagined, just like the miracle of five loaves and two fish.

Amazing Grace #2: Provision of reliable supply chain. The Lord has led us to kind individuals that we do not know to a reliable source of quality facemasks and medical supplies that are reasonably priced. God has also resolved our roadblocks during times when much of the international supply chain has been interrupted, so that we were able to receive the supplies smoothly.

Amazing Grace #3: Navigation during procurement. At times when we were looking for medical supplies, we felt as though we were wandering in the wilderness, going about without any clear direction. We could only rely on God and follow Him step by step, and we were constantly amazed at how wondrously He has been leading us. In the end, we were able to donate to the hospitals what they needed the most at that time, and at the same time, we avoided the pitfalls that many other donation organizations have encountered.

Amazing Grace #4: Leading us to the hospitals and facilities in need. One of our sisters have mistakenly sent a text to a stranger who happened to be a Spiritual Care nurse in a hospital, and they are in urgent need of supplies! Many medical staffs who received gospel brochures with inspirational quotes from us were encouraged and sent us group pictures of themselves with smiles on their faces.

Amazing Grace #5: Promoting the gospel in the community. The Lord has allowed us to procure a large quantity of facemasks suitable for daily use, allowing us to give them out in towns that are high risk and low income. Those who received facemasks from us said, “This is the best gift!” Some even exclaimed, “Thank you, God!” Just as Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40 - ESV) I give thanks and praise to God for giving us the opportunity to serve Him!

Dear Lord, You have created the heavens and the earth with Your Word, yet You are willing to use those of us who seem worthless, so that we may experience your amazing grace! I recall this saying from a reputable pastor, “No matter what situation we are in, we must think of what God want us to do, and what we can do for Him. And His will will be done.” This ministry seemed like a dream to the few of us. It was as though we have achieved so much “effortlessly,” because the burden was on God Himself. He was the one who did all the work. Having been “equally yoked” with God, we have truly experienced that the Lord’s yoke is easy and light, and our hearts are filled with joy. May God raise up even more believers to stand in the breach for the land, and greatly empower the work of the gospel, so that all people and all nations will be able to receive His blessings! Thanks and praise be to God!



Our Trip to the Holy Land



by EMERITUS PASTOR STEVEN CHIN

We all have probably taken trips to different places that were fun and relaxing. Recently, my wife, Nancy and I took a trip to Israel, which I would not call fun or relaxing. In fact, we had to get up at 6:00 a.m. every morning. It was probably more like a school field trip, but it was a trip that was life changing and brought us closer to the Lord.

I think I would bore you if I just described to you the many memorable places we saw. Instead, let me share with you first how the Lord opened the door for this trip, as well as to reflect on how this trip has impacted me.

As a Christian and as one who sees the Bible as a guidebook, I think I always had an interest to visit the Holy Land. However, there were always reasons why I could not take such a trip. I had church responsibilities, family responsibilities, financial considerations, and safety concerns. Thus, a trip to Israel never got beyond the dream stage. However, last year things began to change, as both my parents went home to the Lord, and I was planning to retire. In the summer before my retirement, I began to explore the idea. I even checked out the prices of various tours. Nevertheless, coming from a frugal immigrant family, I was uncomfortable spending thousands of dollars on myself for a two-week trip. Therefore, I put the idea on the back burner, thinking I had my entire retirement to do it.

However, it seems God wanted me to go sooner. The Lord used a Christian sister, who lives in another part of the country, to give me this message. She had family connections to BCEC, but she had never regularly attended the church. This dear sister had gone to the Holy Land recently and wanted me, as a pastor, to experience the change and challenge she received. Thus, she sent me a generous check to encourage me to go. I was floored by this gesture and tried to give it back to her because I certainly had the money to go. I learned early

in my ministry that I needed to graciously accept gifts, so that the giver will be blessed. It was her act of love that was the catalyst for the trip.

Nancy and I chose to go to Israel with a tour under Insight for Living, which is the radio ministry of Chuck Swindoll, a preacher and writer we had long been blessed by. He was formerly the president of Dallas Seminary, where I had attended. Swindoll was now over 85, so we thought this might be the last tour opportunity to sit under his teaching. Apparently, many other people thought the same thing as a record number of over 700 people from the United States and Canada joined the tour. I was even concerned that an unexpected health issue would prevent him from teaching on the tour, but he made it, though sometimes he needed help getting up to the platform. His sharing was so insightful and meaningful.

Nancy and I realized even more after we came back that God wanted us to go on this Holy Land trip. Our tour took place during March 1-12, 2020. The dates were set, and the flight tickets were purchased many months before we ever heard of the "coronavirus." Our trip occurred just as the pandemic was spreading, especially in Europe. Any slight change meant the trip would be canceled or cut short. The only issue our tour had was we were unable to go to Bethlehem and Jericho. Literally, our direct flight back to Boston was the last flight out of Israel before they closed the borders. As we sit, confined to our home with no travel allowed, we are amazed the Lord allowed us to make this trip.

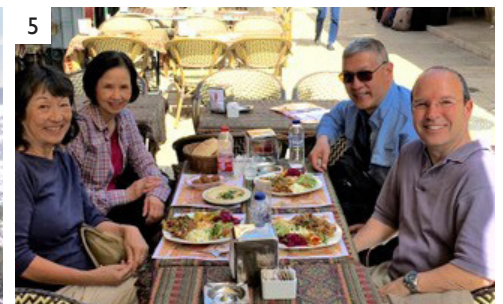
Let me conclude with how the trip has impacted me:

1. It has increased my faith. I can say first hand that the Christian faith is not based on fiction or fairy tales, but upon facts and real places and real history as recorded in the Bible. Jerusalem is not some imaginary, mythical place. It is a real place with all the specific places mentioned in the Bible. It is the spiritual center of the world. It is where Jesus' death and resurrection took place and provided a way of salvation for us as sinners.
2. It helps me to read the Bible with greater insight. I can now visualize the many of the places mentioned in the Bible like the Sea of Galilee or the Garden of Gethsemane. It

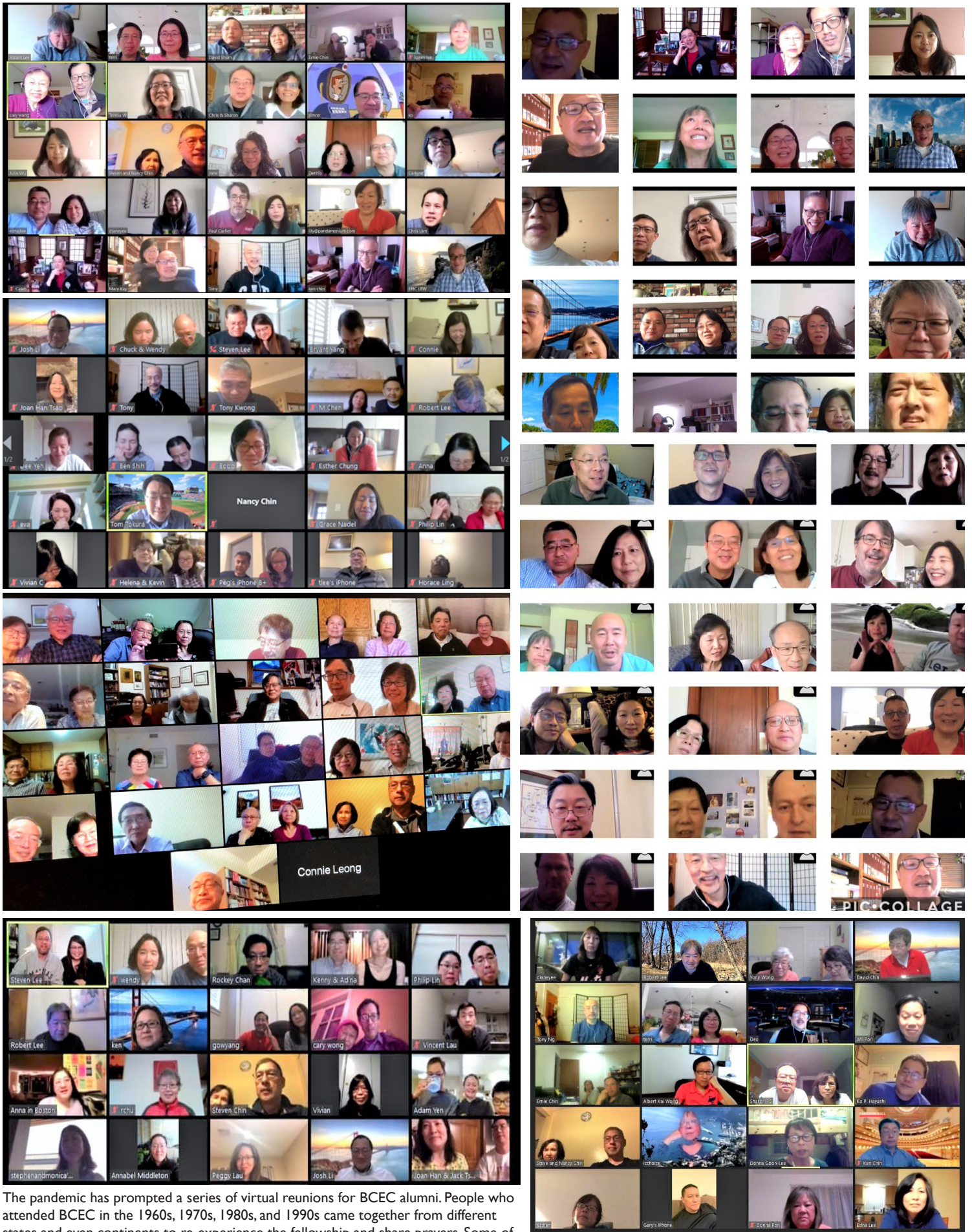
helps me understand the Bible, especially the narratives, even more. I can now read the Bible in color and HD versus in black and white.

3. It makes me appreciate how much Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself in becoming a human being. He did this, so that He could represent us and die for us. On the trip, I could literally walk where Jesus walked. Although He is the Creator of the world, He became an ordinary person like me. Jesus was not mysteriously invisible or inaccessible in some far off galaxy. He came to us and became like us, walking where we walk.
4. I have an increased interest in Israel and the Jewish people. The nation of Israel is only about the size of New Jersey. Yet it has so much impact historically and into the future before Christ returns. I appreciate much more the suffering of the Jewish people having visited the Holocaust museum. Many are still waiting for the Messiah. I am glad we support missionaries, Oded and Bimini Cohen, who we met up with and who are sharing Jesus with the people there.

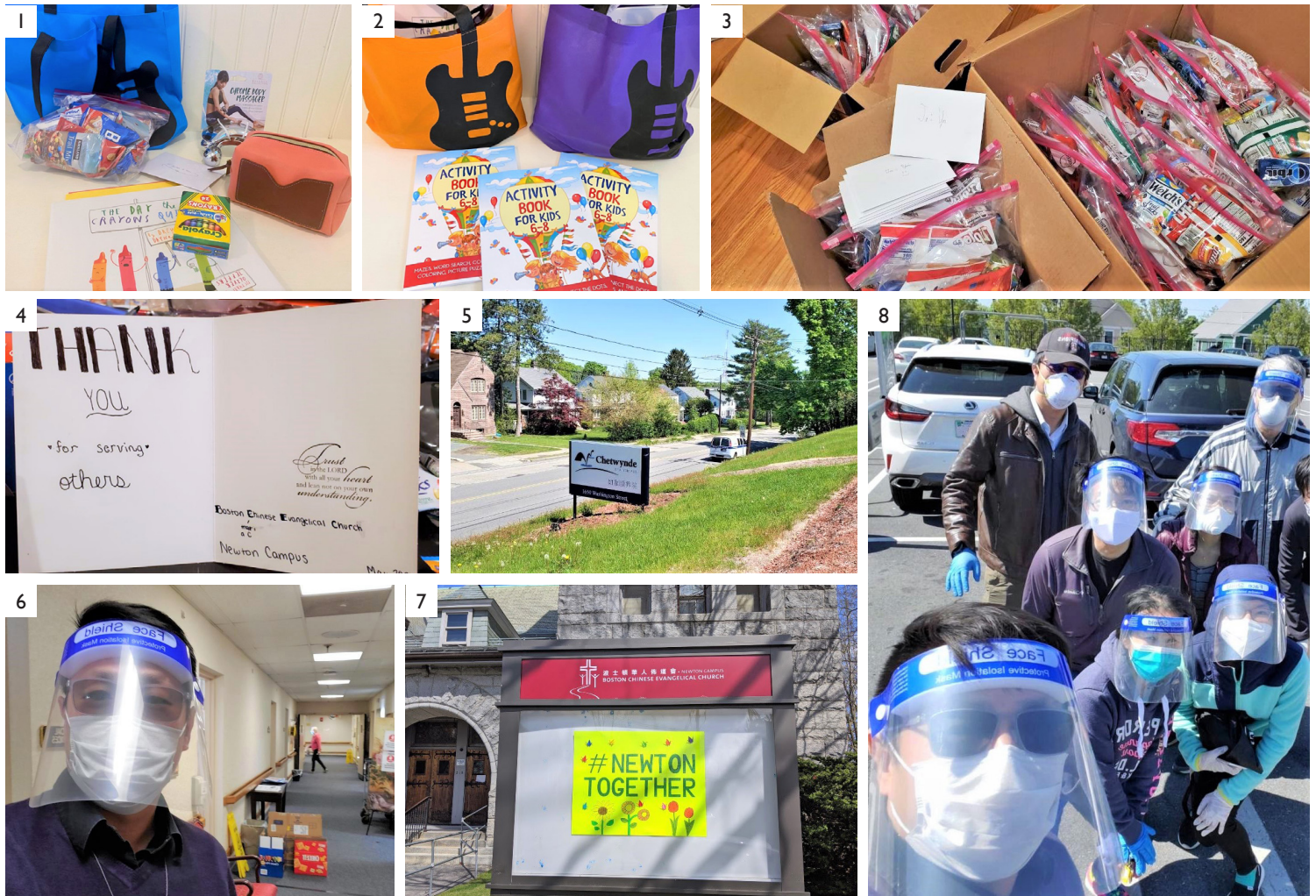
Our only regret, for my wife and I, is that we did not go earlier in our lives, so that we could be blessed spiritually earlier, and we could share the blessings in our ministry. My hope is that you will visit the Holy Land, if you have the opportunity, and that you will be blessed as we have been.



1) City of Jerusalem 2) Garden of Gethsemane 3) Empty tomb 4) Sea of Galilee 5) Visiting Oded and Bimini



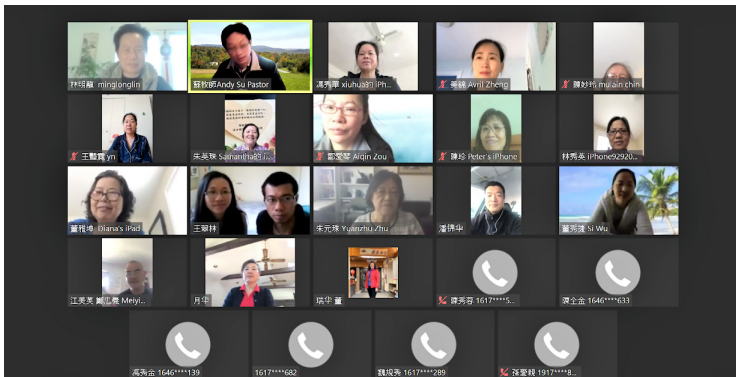
The pandemic has prompted a series of virtual reunions for Bcec alumni. People who attended Bcec in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s came together from different states and even continents to re-experience the fellowship and share prayers. Some of them have not seen each other for 50 years.



Some of the donations and support to the Newton community during COVID-19: 1-2) New Community (Newton English) prepared and delivered care packages to single moms living at The Second Step. 3-6) The Newton Cantonese congregation prepared care packages for Chetwynde Healthcare. 7) The church joined other Newtonians in displaying a handmade #newtontogether sign to demonstrate the joy, strength, and resilience of Newton. 8) The Newton Mandarin congregation collected masks and face shields and donated them to healthcare workers. They also went to the Dorchester neighborhood to hand out free masks to local residents.



Mother's Day Drive-Thru (5/10): The Chinatown English congregation served bubble tea and had photo shoot sessions for 19 mothers from its congregation at 120 Shawmut Ave.



The Chinatown Mandarin congregation, Paul Fellowship, and Sucai Fellowship continued meeting online and virtually shared meals based on creative Bible-theme food. They also celebrated Mother's Day with cards and special message from Pastor Andy.



Chinatown English live stream worship service

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.

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