

BCEC *CONNECTIONS*

A publication to inform, involve, and unite the BCEC extended church family



Why this waste of perfume?

BY SENIOR PASTOR DANIEL CHAN



I have a close friend who is a medical doctor. He joined a short-term medical missions trip in a Muslim country, and that has transformed his life. He felt called to become a long-term medical missionary among Muslims.

His wife, an OB-GYN doctor who was with him on the same trip, also felt called when she saw many Muslim women were underserved because some of their fathers or husbands would not allow them to be seen by male doctors. Unfortunately, there were not enough female doctors in that country because of the disparity in education.

When my friend shared his plan with his parents, he was met with strong objections. “What a waste,” they told him. “I didn’t send you to medical school to work in a third-world country.”

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Even his colleagues told him that his mission plan bordered on professional suicide because of the primitive medical technology in that country. Nevertheless, my friend and his wife answered the call. God used them to bless many people in the mission field. Eventually, even his father acknowledged that he made a noble choice.

As BCEC ministries slowly recover from the pandemic, we need a lot of resources and manpower. Where can we get the resources and how can we motivate our volunteers? I wish to use the episode recorded in John 12: 1-8 to encourage ourselves.

The apostle John told us that the story happened in Bethany, a small town about two miles from Jerusalem. A meal was given in Jesus's honor. Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from death, was at the party. Martha was doing her specialty of making food. And Mary was the woman who poured out an expensive perfume on Jesus' feet. I wish to share three insights from the passage.

First, in love there is no waste. The anointing act of Mary was prompted by her love for Jesus, so much so that she was able to overcome criticism and jeering. The social status of women was generally low 2,000 years ago. For a woman to pour perfume on Jesus' feet and wipe them with her hair in front of at least 15 men was sensational. To an outsider, it was a scandal. In a small way, it is like reading the Bible in public or saying grace in a busy restaurant. However, Mary, the quiet and gentle woman, did it out of a simple heart of devotion.

Judas was not happy to see Mary's action. In Mark 14:3-9, which many commentators believe to be recording the same event, Judas, together with some of those present, complained, "Why this waste of perfume?" Please note that this comment did not come out of the mouths of non-believers. It was some believers commenting on the God-loving act of a fellow believer. Mary should have anticipated such criticism, but she had overcome it because of her love for Jesus. Her example gives us at least two applications. First, what is our perfume? Is it our money, our talents, or our time? Do we keep it in a jar, or pour it out to fill our surroundings with fragrance? Second, will we commit the same mistake of Judas in discouraging others from doing acts of devotion?

The second lesson we can learn from the passage is that we should grab the opportunity to make a good "waste," because the opportunity may not be there forever. Jesus came to Mary's defense upon hearing the criticism. "Leave her alone," He said. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me." No one in the house, Mary included, could have predicted that Jesus was to die on the cross in a few days.

According to Jewish tradition, a dead person should be embalmed with spices. However, Jesus died shortly before the Sabbath. There was not enough time to do a proper embalming. Later, on the first day of the week, when the Sabbath was over, some women brought spices to the tomb to anoint Jesus. Nevertheless, the body was gone, as Jesus had resurrected. Therefore, Mary was able to perform a service to the Lord that had significant spiritual meaning. When the Lord needs our service, if we delay a little or flip flop a little, the service may become like a belated birthday gift. Also, as we procrastinate, we may become occupied with other things, and will not be able to answer God's calling.

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The third lesson we can learn from the passage is that our so-called waste will be remembered by God and by people. Judas wanted to give Mary a hard time, but Jesus said in Mark 14:9 (NIV), “*Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*” The passive voice here is quite important. Jesus was not telling us to mention Mary’s act whenever we share the gospel. If so, we are all guilty of not following His command. Rather, Jesus was predicting that the example of Mary would be remembered wherever the gospel is preached. More importantly, the prediction is fulfilled by the fact that the story is recorded in the Bible for everyone to read. However, Jesus meant something deeper. He was confident that Mary’s example would inspire many people. Love is contagious. The best way to encourage others to love God is not by slogans, but through our own example. May we inspire others by our example to love God more, give Him more, and share with others more. In Philippians 2:21 (ESV), the apostle Paul lamented that the people around him “...all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” May the Lord raise up more Marys in our midst!



Winter Local Mission

BY JOHN WONG, NEWTON CANTONESE



Held in December 2022, the Winter Local Mission was organized by Boston Short Term Mission

(BSTM) in collaboration with Boston Chinese Evangelical Church, Chinese Baptist Church of Greater Boston, and Episcopal Boston Chinese Ministry. There were 55 participants in the four-day program, including 21 BCEC congregants but not including several who participated without registration. Although we faced a variety of challenges, we persevered with God’s grace and guidance.

In the past, the featured activity of Winter Local Mission was Christmas caroling. In recent years, this had to be canceled due to the pandemic and replaced by online events. Today’s society is almost entirely back to normal, so BSTM arranged caroling activities at a shopping mall, a rehabilitation center, and the Chinatown Gate.

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Boston Short Term Mission went caroling at South Shore Plaza in December 2022. (Image courtesy of John Wong).

In early November, BSTM reached out to South Shore Plaza, stayed in contact, and even signed a contract; however, on the first day of Winter Local Mission, we still had not received notice about the precise indoor location of our performance. As a result, a decision to cancel was being considered, but a reply eventually arrived in the evening before our activity. In addition, we had previously scheduled a performance date with South Cove Manor, but reality always sets in and shakes things up. Fortunately, we found a solution to the issue, and the last-minute Christmas card giveaway following the carols was warmly welcomed by the senior residents unexpectedly. We really thought the easiest part was caroling at the Chinatown Gate. However, at the scheduled time, no one showed up. To our relief, we found out that the participants were only late because of traffic.

Besides caroling, the Winter Local Mission participants had the opportunity to sing in a Christmas concert at St. Paul Cathedral, yet another surprise followed along. The pianist whom we had previously arranged was a no show, so we had no choice but to recruit a participant on the spot to provide accompaniment at a different key at our request, resulting in a well-received performance. Other planned activities included a Christmas dinner, street evangelism, arts and crafts for evangelism, and supermarket evangelism. All these events were completed successfully without a hitch, even though more preparation would have been preferable.

Through these events at different locations, participants were able to proclaim Jesus and share with the community the true meaning of Christmas. Whenever we saw how problems were resolved beyond our imagination, we witnessed God's amazing grace. We would like to express our gratitude to BCEC's Local Evangelism Department for their assistance and to all participants for their understanding and support. Glory to God! *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28 - NIV)

Finding joy in God's healing

BY THE BARRIER BREAKERS

As I had done many times before on my way to work, I turned into a side street to bypass the main road. I noticed a crow gorging itself with some poor creature that had met the front bumper of a car. It was about 100 yards ahead, so I didn't think too much about it. When I got to about 50 yards away, it was still focused on its selfish pursuit. I thought, "Surely, it will sense the danger and fly away before I get there." Finally, just before it was to meet the same fate as its food, it flew away. I thought, "Hmmm, that was interesting." Then I heard the Spirit say to me, "That's what sin does to you." Now let's put aside the fact that God spoke to me quite clearly so early in the morning and focus on the message.

An obedient Christian would have pulled the car over to the side of the road and fallen to their knees (if only in their head) and repented of their sins. I don't have any doubt that is what I should have done – or least it should have been the focus of my thoughts. However, I didn't.

I had spent my life in New England mainline protestant churches, where sin and repentance were not mentioned. There is an emphasis that God is your friend, and we are not sinners. Anyways, God continued to remind me of this requirement for Christian living. However, I just couldn't get myself to feel very penitent.

To be clear, through all this, I never felt condemnation from a judging God. I *did* feel wisdom and guidance from God's loving Spirit – a Spirit that knew what was required to sanctify my salvation.

All this came in the midst of a serious struggle with depression, mainly caused by major life mistakes and dealing with the fact that at a major turning point in my life years before I had said, "No" to God. I just couldn't seem to get my life in line with God. The depression had started long before this episode on the topic of sin.

Interestingly, I became more concerned about my lack of penitence than God. In fact, all I kept hearing from God was "I love you." He told me to read Romans, and He gave me Romans 8:38. Eventually, I went to a healing service to deal with this, and in a most supernatural way, I fell to my knees and soaked the carpet with my tears. It was such a release. God really knows what's best for us!

This journey to confession took several years. It's not something that I'm proud of.

Although this was a key point in my healing, I was still depressed. I suffered from the "woulda, coulda, shouldas." I had several people pray for my depression – and there are certainly some stories there.

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Finding joy in God's healing

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However, most times when I asked for prayer, I asked for anointing and blessing on my ministry and my soul – not for my purposes primarily, but for His. And I think God honored that (see Jabez). However, I admit that I did desire the abundant life.

One day, I was watching a music video from one of my favorite Christian bands. In a most supernatural spiritual way, I felt God's love for me just smash – I mean obliterate – that wall of depression. I imagine that it was as loud as the wall of Jericho coming down. I felt so much joy that I thought my chest was going to explode. I had to go for a walk to process what had just happened. Not to mention that I could barely see because my eyes were so full of salt water. That was about seven years ago, and my eyes are full of tears even now as I write this.

I wish that I had written down the date – it was such a monumental moment in my life. Honestly, I don't have any idea why I didn't write it down. Perhaps I thought that it was fleeting, and I would soon return to being depressed. I didn't and I haven't. There are times when I feel it hanging out just waiting for me to come

crawling back and take comfort in my pity pool. Nevertheless, God saves me every time. I pick up scripture, listen to music, or confess. Confession isn't a one-time thing. It should be done regularly – it's good soul maintenance. Then I get to feel God's love wash over me yet again. How awesome is that?! (Matthew 11:28)

Am I happy? Not really. In a worldly sense, I still have too many regrets. But the joy, oh the joy! The joy of God's salvation (Psalm 51, Ephesians 6 on the helmet of salvation) far outweighs my unhappiness. In addition, I feel the unhappiness getting choked out by the joy – like the wheat choking out the chaff or the grass choking out weeds.

Yeshua did not come to condemn us, but to save us. That is the true meaning of His name. Thanks be to God. And I said, "Hallelujah! Amen."

God healed, God heals, and God wants to heal you. Seek it now.

For information about the healing ministry, contact Isa Chen at secretangelofgod@yahoo.com.

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Chinese Heritage Church Collective brings leaders together

BY THE ENGLISH PASTORAL STAFF



The English pastoral staff attended the Chinese Heritage Church Collective together. (Image courtesy of the English Pastoral staff.)

Sharing by Pastor Ken Liu

I appreciated the space created to gather ministers from the Chinese heritage church context. The stories shared by the presenters and those around the table were personally relatable, meaningful, and at times, heart-wrenching. Typically, church conferences center on stories of triumph. It was refreshing to hear from ordinary people striving to be faithful to their calling in their respective contexts. It was also great reconnecting with old friends I haven't seen in a while from my previous ministry contexts. Moreover, it was also encouraging to meet other pastors from all over North America. It is rare to find spaces like these and I am thankful to God for the opportunity to attend.

Sharing by Minister Chris Horte

"I don't understand what it means to be part of a Chinese heritage church" – this is what I told people who asked me why I was attending CHCC. Throughout the collective, I met people who have spent a lifetime in the Chinese heritage church, and I also met people who joined as adults despite having no background in it. I heard stories that drew a narrative Venn diagram, overlapping feelings of lamentation for the current state of the Chinese heritage church, as well as feelings of encouragement about God leading the charge to its promising future. Many seemed to sense that there is disharmony in the church, though this was not the status quo – rather, the sense of urgency to be united as Christ commands us to be was much more prevalent. I still don't understand what it means to be part of a Chinese heritage church just yet – but I'm incredibly grateful to learn from so many people who do.

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CHCC brings leaders together

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Sharing by Pastor Calvin Chu

It was beneficial to connect with people not as much from different churches and different parts of the country, but from different realms of ministry. Discussions I participated in that were most fulfilling highlighted the challenges that Chinese heritage churches have encountered, discussed some developing theories based on history as to why these are some specific difficulties Chinese heritage churches face, and discussed parts of potential remedies to these issues.

Sharing by Pastor Steve Liu

At CHCC, I was inspired by hearing about local pastors' networks in other regions. I'd be interested in exploring a prayer/fellowship group for Chinatown area Christians serving in outreach/community organizations. It was also helpful to connect and form new friendships in ministry outside our region. There are more folks outside of our church now that I can share burdens with and ask for input, as well as to recruit for guest speakers. Also, I gained a renewed appreciation for the legacy of those who have persevered over a long time in Chinese heritage churches, seeing how God has made them fruitful in multiplying and impacting other ministers/ministries.

Sharing by Minister Ryan So

I was both inspired and a bit daunted by the differing journeys of the many pastors and ministers. While there were many wonderful stories of God's hand working, there were also many about the difficulties of ministry. This collective was a wonderful way for us as brothers and sisters in Christ, who are serving the church, to come together to encourage, inspire, and motivate each other to continue to strive towards the goal of furthering the kingdom. I pray that this would continue to be a place for ministers and pastors to never feel alone in their ministry journey. The collective has been a great way to encourage and be encouraged.

Sharing by Minister Lorraine Ho

Regardless of which part of the country we are from, Chinese heritage churches have many commonalities with similar mission, shared dreams, issues, and struggles. God has a special purpose for Chinese heritage churches and especially the English-speaking ministries to reach the lost in our communities and around the world. CHCC offered a way for ministers and pastors from similar theological background, history, and experiences to connect and learn from each other.

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CHCC brings leaders together

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The Chinese Heritage Church Collective brought together church leaders from North American churches. (Image courtesy of the English Pastoral staff).

I really enjoyed meeting many pastors, ministers, and lay leaders at the Collective. We exchanged lots of ministry ideas and helpful resources with one another. There were memorable sessions during our two and a half day gathering. Two were particularly poignant. The first was about a church that struggled through a dramatic church split. In the end, the pastor persevered through grace, stood firm in God's calling, and endured. I couldn't help but am thankful for the wonderful and humble leadership of past and present pastors and leaders, which kept BCEC away from such devastation.

The other was two women sharing their hearts about the deep pain they've gone through as women in ministry. Although they were called into ministry, worked faithfully, and have demonstrated giftedness and capability, they often faced negative comments and were prompted to keep silent even though they have unique perspectives as women. They continue to overcome misconceptions and obstacles by holding fast to God's Word, which is life-giving, empowering, and healing. Their sharing was a reminder that we are the body of Christ, partners in His work, and brothers and sisters in a family. When one part of the body is hurt or not fully functioning and flourishing, we get sick and weak and unable to exercise our fullest potential.

**TURN YOUR
EYES UPON
JESUS**



**O soul are you weary and
troubled?
No light in the darkness
you see?
There's light for a look at
the Savior
And life more abundant
and free**

**Turn your eyes upon
Jesus
Look full in
His wonderful face
And the things of earth
will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory
and grace**

Social Responsibility Corner: Stories of Hope highlights partners

BY PASTOR STEVE LIU



The Social Responsibility Committee is focusing on a theme series for this year called Stories of Hope, which is about finding God at work in the brokenness of our society.

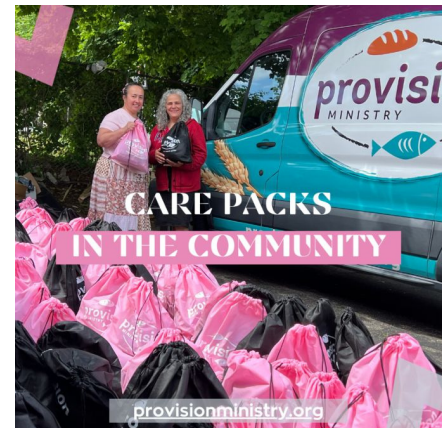
Throughout the year, the Social Responsibility Committee events will feature conversations and stories from Charity Fund partners who work in areas of high need, as well as separate hands-on service opportunities. Thus far, we have heard from Andrew

May at Hope Prison Ministry in South Africa, as well as Tom Slicklen from Provision Ministry. Andrew May shared stories of how God had worked in the lives of prison inmates to bring reconciliation between enemies through a Restorative Justice framework. Tom Slicklen shared his personal story of how God gave Him the grace to swim instead of sink when facing overwhelming losses as a young man, and how God used him to start a ministry that equips churches to care for neighbors living on the streets, military vets, underserved youth, and other people that are in need. In that same engagement, church members from various congregations came together to build care packets for people facing homelessness.

We expect several more conversations with different partners

for the remainder of the year, including Boston Center for Biblical Counseling, Silver Lining Ministry, and Route One Ministry.

Our prayer for BCEC is that by hearing from our passionate partners, we will be inspired to see more of God's hope for our own lives and to get involved in sharing God's hope to our community and world in different ways.



Brothers and sisters walk Global 6K for water

BY CLIVE WAN, CHINATOWN ENGLISH

I am grateful to God for participating in World Vision's Global 6K. While doing that, I had the opportunity to work with several brothers and sisters in Christ at BCEC and have learned about struggles that most people in developing countries have that most Americans don't think about — transportation and food/water supply.

Walking in America is a free way to get around and can be a recreational activity, but in developing countries, walking is more of a way to survive. In the United States, the majority of people don't even have to walk to get a good supply of water, as it usually comes through a faucet.

In some cases, getting food or drink also doesn't even require walking more than 50 meters, thanks to food delivery apps. Most people who live in developing nations do not have this luxury. They have to walk 6,000 meters just for water, and then lug it back home.

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Global 6K gathers brothers and sisters to walk for water

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The Global 6K for water took place around the Boston Common. (Image courtesy of Ling-Mei Wong Leung).

Think about it this way. Instead of ordering through a food delivery app and paying the delivery fee to a big tech company, pick up the food yourself and pay the delivery fee towards an organization that helps provide clean water for people in developing nations who need it such as World Vision.



BCEC members raised more than \$14,000 for the Global 6K for water. (Image courtesy of Ling-Mei Wong Leung).

BCEC celebrates baptism of brothers and sisters

BY THE CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL TEAM



Six brothers and sisters from the English congregation were baptized on April 9 Easter. (Image courtesy of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church).

Baptisms for the English Congregation took place on April 9 and July 9 at Boston Chinese Evangelical Church's Newton Campus. May the blessings of the wonderful day fill their lives with joy and peace forever.



Three brothers and sisters were baptized at Boston Chinese Evangelical Church's Newton Campus. (Image courtesy of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church).