

# BCEC *CONNECTIONS*

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



## **A simple faith**

BY SENIOR PASTOR DANIEL CHAN



Mark 10 recorded that people were bringing children to Jesus for Him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. In Mark 10:14-15 (NIV), Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs*

*to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”* The same saying is also recorded in Matthew 19 and Luke 18. When we share the gospel, we may encounter situations that many intellectuals may have as well. They were interested in the gospel. Unfortunately, they could not make up their mind to believe in the Lord. Indeed, sometimes people are too experienced. Their thinking is too complicated to become a Christian.

Of course, we should not encourage a simple-minded belief and accept it without thinking.

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The Lord Jesus reminded us that before God, we needed to have a heart as simple as a child. We may still remember when we first believed in the Lord that our sins were forgiven, our souls were set free, and the joy of knowing our Heavenly Father. When I first believed in Christ, the carefree joy and change in my worldview was still vividly remembered. When I was walking on the roadside and saw a little flower or a flying bird, it reminded me of the greatness of the Creator.

As time went by, the childlike mentality was relatively reduced and was replaced by various life skills and experiences. Recently, during my devotions, I was reading Chronicles in the Old Testament. Asa, king of Judah, caught my attention. The Bible briefly sketched his life. He was the grandson of King Rehoboam, who caused the division of Israel into the north and the south. His father, Abijah, died after only reigning for three years. The Bible did not mention how old Asa was when he ascended the throne. But knowing the ages of his father and grandfather, Asa might have been under 20 years old when he was crowned king. He reigned Judah for 41 years.

Asa was a good king from the beginning. 2 Chronicles 14:2-4 (NIV) states, *“Asa did what was good and right in the eye of the Lord his God. He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the pillars into pieces. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands.”* God was also pleased with him. During the first 10 years of his ruling, the country was at peace and not at war. After the tenth year, King Cush led one million troops from Egypt to attack Judah (see 2 Chronicles 14:9). In a situation where there was a huge disparity in military power, Asa relied on his faith in God to defeat the powerful enemy. Historians told us that Egypt no longer interfered with Palestinian affairs by force for 300 years.

Asa won the battles. He did not become proud or arrogant. Instead he humbly accepted the teachings of the prophet Azariah and followed the Lord wholeheartedly. During his time, many people living in the northern kingdom of Israel envied the spiritual atmosphere of the southern kingdom of Judah. They immigrated to Judah. In the 15th year of his reign, Asa led the people to make a covenant with God to “seek the Lord...with all their heart and soul“ (2 Chronicles 15:12 - NIV). At that time, Asa’s grandmother, Maacah, relied on her status as queen mother, and erected idols across the country. Asa decisively abolished her position and preserved the purity of the country’s faith.

For the next 20 years, the country continued to enjoy peace. But during the 36th year of Asa’s reign, Bashanai, king of Israel, attacked Judah. In desperation, Asa sent money to Ben-Haddad, king of Aram, asking him to abandon the treaty with Israel and attack Israel. Bashanai had no choice but to withdraw his troops. Afterwards, God sent the prophet Hanani to rebuke Asa, pointing out that he had replaced his reliance on God with political tactics. Unexpectedly, Asa denied the accusation. He imprisoned the prophet and torture people who seem to be against him (see 2 Chronicles 16:10).

In Asa’s late years, he relied on his own wisdom. His tendency to forget to rely on God became more and more explicit. In the 39th year of his reign, he suffered from an illness. He did not ask the Lord but the doctor for help. Two years later when the medicine failed, he died. The young Asa was a good example of relying on God wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, he also was a negative example of losing simple faith.

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# Pastor Daniel: A simple faith

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One thing we should have learned from him is the inheritance of the truth in his family. In 2 Chronicles 17, his son, Jehoshaphat, succeeded him as king. Jehoshaphat became a good king. In 2 Chronicles 17:3-4 (NIV), “*The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baal but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel.*” In closing, here are the lessons Asa taught us: 1. Don’t forget your original intention. 2. Do not take criticism lightly. 3. Do not replace God with experience, skills, or talents. 4. Pass your faith onto the next generation. This may be the salvation of your own reputation.



## Winter Local Mission

BY JOHN WONG, NEWTON CANTONESE



“*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*” (Isaiah 9:6 - NIV)

In December 2023, Boston Short Term Mission organized another winter local mission trip in collaboration with Boston Chinese Evangelical Church and Chinese Christian Church of Grace in Malden. A total of 75 Christians from ten Chinese churches signed up.

In the first weekend of December, participants learned how to share the Gospel with strangers, including using a Christmas card as an evangelistic tool, and participated in street

evangelism at different locations in Malden. They also visited a group of elderly people at a residential facility, chatting, singing Christmas carols, and playing games with them.

This year, we also went to Square One Mall in Saugus and sang Christmas carols to remind busy shoppers the true meaning of Christmas. Unlike in previous years, this year the Malden Housing Authority requested us to

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# Winter Local Mission

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Boston Short Term Mission went caroling at the Chinatown Gate in December 2023. (Image courtesy of John Wong).

submit an application before we were allowed to visit the residential facility, and the shopping center requested us to provide proof of insurance before we were allowed to perform in public. We thank God that both applications were approved.

In the second weekend of December, we moved our attention to Chinatown. In addition to street evangelism, visitation, and Christmas caroling at the Chinatown Gate, participants learned how to take part in follow-up ministry with those who are interested in Christianity or have accepted Christ as their Savior. Because that was the same weekend that the Gospel movie “Love Plan B” was shown in our Chinatown Campus, participants served as greeters and counselors for the 130 people in the audience. The last activity of winter local mission was an evangelistic gathering called “Christmas Program of Fun,” where we mingled with dozens of students of our community ESL ministry, enjoyed dinner together, and shared the Gospel with them.

This year, there were several Christians who participated in local short-term mission for their first time, and a few had participated many years ago but stopped participating. They expressed that it was very meaningful for them to be able to proclaim the birth and salvation of Christ during a time of global celebration through different evangelistic activities. Boston Short Term Mission would like to thank the cooperation and support by both co-sponsoring churches, including Local Evangelism Department, community ESL ministry, Minister Benny Chiu, and Minister Venus Yim. We also expressed our appreciation to the deacon board of Chinese Christian Church of Grace in Malden for supporting and participating with us.

*“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.” (Luke 2:14 - NIV)*

# Learning to lament

BY THE BARRIER BREAKERS

I joined the Barrier Breakers Small Group during Fall 2022. When I joined the group, I was already friends with some people that I had known for many years at BCEC, but I also had the opportunity to become friends with some people I met for the first time. All of us were looking for a “safe” place to grow and to share.

During this past fall, our group began to take a hard look at lamenting. For several months, my wife and I went to a local Quincy church. I was confronted with two scenarios. First, a former BCEC member witnessed the deaths of his sister and a beloved mentor on the same day. Second, a Haitian brother shared the plight of Haitian immigrants who are fleeing the violence and poverty of their country. In both cases, the only appropriate response is to lament, and I realized I really did not know how to lament. I felt my shortcomings, even more, with emails from some of our global partners.

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.

In “Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy,” Mark Vroegop says that a lament usually contains four elements:

- addressing God,
- a complaint,
- a request, and
- an expression of trust and/or praise.

One of the times Barrier Breakers cherish the most are Monday night meditations, when we look at one of the psalms. Many psalms are laments with all four elements, and they help us practice.

Over the past several months, I have gone to a number of funerals of dear saints. The lament process that we have learned helps in the grieving process. I come to God, knowing who He is and thanking Him for the times my friends and I had together. My complaint is an acknowledgement that, for now, the friends are no longer here with their counsel and encouragement. I ask God to comfort us and to use the grieving to teach us. Finally, I can realize that God increases our faith, hope and love in Him.

I know I have not experienced the trials of my Haitian friend, nor have I experienced the war and prejudice of our global partners' friends. Yet, the lament also helps us. We can approach God, and offer our complaints and remark, “Why?” Then we can ask God to act in a way that reveals more of who He is and give us hope.

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# Women's Retreat 2024

BY EMILY LIU, CHINATOWN ENGLISH



In January, Web of Women hosted a Women's Retreat at Brookwoods in Alton, New Hampshire. Although it was the coldest weekend of the winter, we experienced the warmth of fellowshiping together with women across various life stages. Some of the 34 attendees were just at Brookwoods in September for the Young Adult Retreat. For others, it was years or even decades, since they attended a retreat. We were richly blessed by the many differences and commonalities we shared.

God showed His grace and provision throughout our weekend together, including a last-minute speaker change. Our planned speaker had a family emergency, and Katie Luc stepped into the role. She taught from

the book of Ruth in four sessions, leading us to look closely at the relationship between Ruth and Naomi and also their relationships with God. Katie encouraged us through Scripture to know that we belong to God, and because of this, we can love others proactively and sacrificially.

In addition to learning from the Bible together, the retreat provided space and time for friendships to grow and develop. We bonded over conversations, playing games, painting, puzzling, and walking in nature. We hope to build upon the connections fostered at the retreat, as well as to extend it into our church community.

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# Social Responsibility Committee hosts congregational prayer luncheon

BY LING-MEI WONG LEUNG, CHINATOWN CANTONESE



Several Social Responsibility Committee members and some of the pastoral staff visited the Boston Missionary Baptist Community Center together. (Image courtesy of the SRC).

The Social Responsibility (SR) Committee hosted a quarterly prayer luncheon on Nov. 12, 2023 at 120 Shawmut Avenue. About 20 participants came to hear about the committee’s work, the organizations supported by BCEC, and partnerships with other churches.

Former Committee Chairperson Pastor Steve Liu updated attendees on the committee’s work over the past three months and upcoming plans for the next quarter. This included the Chosen child sponsorship in October 2022, where BCEC brothers and sisters sponsored 169 children from Honduras. Pastor Enoch Liao and Pastor Steve Liu visited the Choluteca community, seeing firsthand World Vision’s work to provide clean water, education, Christian parenting support, and communally transformative programming.

A local event was the ACCESS Fall Family Festival in October 2022, welcoming children and their families to a festival at 120 Shawmut Avenue. Other local year-round events include Chinatown Respite Care, which serves children on the spectrum and their families. Another year-round event is Boston Rescue Mission, which serves food to the homeless.

The SR Committee also featured four partner organizations in its 2023 Stories of Hope series. These organizations were Hope Prison Ministry in South Africa, Provision Ministry, Silver Lining Missions, and Route One Ministry. Provision Ministry had a student care pack building event in September 2023. Silver Lining Missions serves children with cerebral palsy, orphans, and children with other special needs in China, Myanmar and Vietnam.

The SR Committee partnered with Haitian American church Boston Missionary Baptist Church Center, which is located in Boston and Brockton. The church serves Haitian immigrants displaced by the 2021 earthquake and violence. Massachusetts has about 60,000 to 80,000 Haitian immigrants. A winter clothing drive was held at BCEC in November 2023; the clothes were delivered to BMBC in December.

Attendees split into groups to pray together. May we remember community needs near and far.

# Route One Ministry uplifts women working in strip clubs

BY LING-MEI WONG LEUNG, CHINATOWN CANTONESE



Route One Ministry's Co-founder and Executive Director, Minister Bonnie Gatchell, spoke about Christmas gifts for women working in strip clubs on December 2, 2023 to 120 Shawmut Avenue. (Image courtesy of Canva).

The Social Responsibility Committee welcomed Route One Ministry's Co-founder and Executive Director, Minister Bonnie Gatchell, on December 2, 2023 to 120 Shawmut Avenue. She shared about the ministry's mission, ongoing work, and who the ministry serves. Participants put together gift baskets after her talk, which were delivered at Christmas to women working at strip clubs in the greater Boston area.

Route One's vision is to minister to women exploited by the sex industry in the Greater Boston area. Through building relationships with these women, the ministry hopes to be the light of Christ and provide for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, with the additional hope that they will eventually step out of the industry.

The ministry's staff and volunteers enter strip clubs to pray with the women on a regular basis. A Christmas gift basket is comprised of items such as earrings, lip gloss, and nail polish, so women can feel warmth in the holiday season. Gatchell said for some women, the gift baskets were the only present they got for Christmas.

The ministry's name comes from Route One in Massachusetts, where Gatchell noticed a number of strip clubs. She and other sisters founded the ministry together, and have since expanded from one club to several. For more information, visit [www.lovedbyrouteone.org](http://www.lovedbyrouteone.org).



# Newton Campus celebrates 20 years

BY THE CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL TEAM



Boston Chinese Evangelical Church at Newton celebrate 20 years on Sept. 24, 2023. (Image courtesy of Chi Chung).

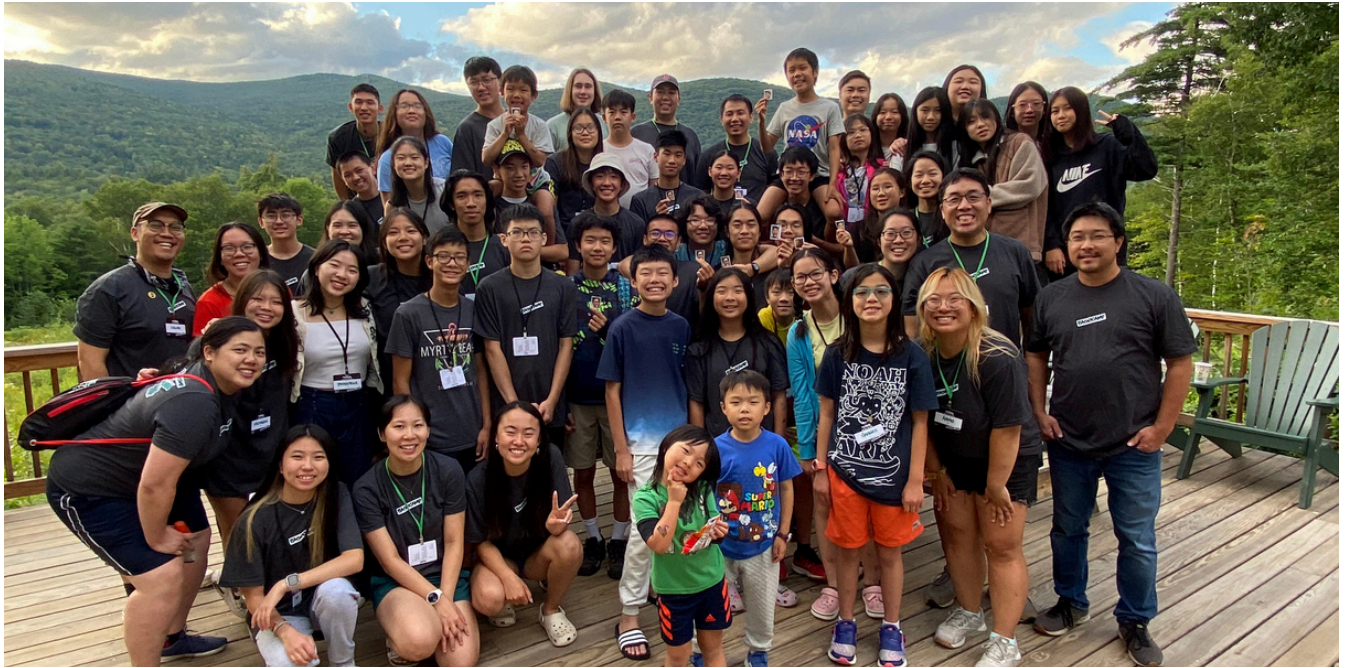
BCEC's Newton Campus celebrated its 20th anniversary on Sept. 24, 2023. Praise God for the first joint worship in the renovated Newton sanctuary to celebrate God's faithfulness in "Building Blessings, Growing Generations."



Children raise their hands in worship at BCEC Newton Campus. (Image courtesy of Terri Mock).

# Chinatown English youth attend Basecamp

BY THE CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL TEAM



BCEC youth from the Chinatown English worship service attended Basecamp on August 25, 2023. (Image courtesy of Karen Wong).

Youth from the BCEC Chinatown English worship service attended Basecamp on August 25, 2023. Thanks be to God for drawing these young people into His presence, as well as to grow deeper in their knowledge of Him. The youth enjoyed worship and teaching from Pastor Calvin Chu.



Three boys study a water bottle while at camp. (Image courtesy of Karen Wong).

# BCEC celebrates baptism of brothers and sisters

BY THE CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL TEAM



Nine brothers and sisters from the English congregations were baptized on December 10, 2023 at BCEC Newton Campus. (Image courtesy of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church).

Baptisms for the English congregations took place on December 10, 2023, and Easter Sunday on March 31 at Boston Chinese Evangelical Church's Newton Campus. May the blessings of the day fill their lives with joy and peace forever.



The baptized brothers and sisters were all smiles with the pastoral staff on Easter Sunday on March 31. (Image courtesy of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church).

# Deacons' retreat provides a time of planning and reflection

BY THE CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL TEAM



The deacons' retreat took place on February 18. (Image courtesy of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church).

The Boston Chinese Evangelical Church's deacons engaged with one another during their retreat on February 18. They represented different congregations, languages and age groups, coming together to serve the body of Christ. The retreat featured team-building exercises, discussions, and prayer.



The BCEC deacons came from different congregations. (Image courtesy of Boston Chinese Evangelical Church).