
GRACE NEWS



Issue #4, 2014

A Quarterly Newsletter of Grace Baptist
Church Limited MCI (P) 049/03/2014

editorial

Many of us are familiar with Jesus' call for Christians to be salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13-16). But the question is sometimes posed: if we stay within the salt pot, what is our saltiness good for? Or if we allow our light to be covered, how can we shine to those around us? In this issue we examine why and how we can and should be engaged with those around us, both inside and outside the church.

To get the ball rolling, in his article Ps Arnold holds up Jesus as the ultimate example of a life of service, and encourages us to engage in serving others as an expression of our love for Him. On pages 2 and 3 we read about some of our church members who have chosen to be engaged in the life of the church, with unexpected results. Turn to page 4 for an intriguing take on modern monasteries by Tan Yee Kiat – it is not what you think! Our ministry focus for this issue is the Care Group Ministry: on page 5 Ps Oliver reminds us that Care Groups are the foundation of our engagement with each other in communities of fellowship.

We are also called to be salt and light outside the church, and appropriately July was our Missions Emphasis Month. Turn to page 7 to be reminded of this important event in our church calendar. Lastly, on page 8 Samuel Beh reviews the book *Maximum Life* that had a great impact on his thinking and led to a transformed walk with God.

It is our prayer that you will be salt and light with renewed zeal as you take up the challenge to be engaged.

Blessings,

The Editorial Team
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Engaged: To Be or Not To Be

Pastor Arnold Wong reminds us that *being engaged is to follow Jesus' example of service to God and others.*

An important question for every disciple of Christ to ask is, "Should I be involved in some kind of ministry or service for God?" In both the Old and New Testaments, the Bible says we should (Deut 10:12 and Lk 4:8). The moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and enter the family of God, serving God becomes a natural outflowing of our relationship with Him. Yet God's people still wonder why they should be engaged in service.

Not only does God supply the gifts to serve, but He also gives each of us the strength to use them for His glory.

Being engaged in serving God follows the example of the Saviour. Jesus Christ is our example for servanthood. He served by teaching, healing, and proclaiming the Kingdom (Matt 4:23). He came "...not to be served but to serve" (Matt 20:28). He left an example and command for His disciples to serve one another when He washed their feet and said, "I have set an example that

you should do as I have done for you..." (Jn 13:12-17). God wants us to be like His Son Jesus (Rom 8:29). Jesus was a prime example of servanthood and we should be like Him.

Being engaged in serving God uses the spiritual gifts God has given to His people "...for the common good" (1 Cor 12:4-11). God has given each of His children gifts to serve others and to bring glory to Him. The apostle Peter tells believers, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God...whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified..." (1 Pet 4:10-11). Not only does God supply the gifts to serve, but He also gives each of us the strength to use them for His glory.

It is clear that devoted followers of Christ ought to be engaged in some kind of ministry or service to God, because they would be following the Saviour's example and using the gifts given by God to serve.

Are you engaged? **Ω**

CHOOSE TO BE ENGAGED

Compiled by Tan Sze Gar and Rachel Wong



Being engaged, in the church context, can mean anything from talking to people after the worship service to serving in one or more ministries. Either way, it implies that we get involved and interact with each other with a view to encouraging each other's spiritual growth and supporting the work of the church. Below, three of our members share why they choose to be engaged, and encourage us with testimonies of their resulting increased spiritual growth and more meaningful connections with fellow believers.

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?" Deuteronomy 10:12-14

Victor Tay – From Disengaged to Engaged

Getting involved in the Pua mission trip was one of the highlights of my walk with Christ last year, as it showed me how being engaged in a church ministry can enrich one's spiritual life and open one's heart to God's work.

Until last year, ever since I started attending GBC in 2000 I had not been involved in any ministry, despite attending church and Care Group regularly. It was a comfort zone of sorts. Not being engaged in any ministry for such a long time can be compared to not doing anything meaningful in our own personal walk with God and not growing and reaching out to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and to a larger extent the community outside of our church.

So when Sze Gar first approached me to consider volunteering for the Cambodian mission trip last year, I was apprehensive. The Cambodian trip came and went. She approached me again, suggesting the Pua mission trip that was coming up and sharing with me her own joyful experience at Pua. I prayed earnestly about it and decided to take the plunge even though teaching children in a foreign country was a first for me. It was a leap of faith. It turned out to be a wonderful trip as the children, my fellow team-members, and the people there showed me how God is working in their midst. I learnt so much from the core team consisting of Beh, Kim Song, William and Yah Wu. I subsequently went for two more trips, one of which was to witness the baptism of some of the Hmong children from Kathy's Home; and I believe these trips will not be my last.

The experience taught me that being engaged in a ministry is a form of discipleship that allows God to open our eyes and hearts to people around us. The Pua trip is also a small way of helping the children at Kathy's Home in their walk with Christ, an extension of our outreach to the community outside of church.

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Victor took the plunge to go to Pua and saw how God is working among His people.



As Chuan-Xin serves in the Children's Ministry, he is constantly reminded of the faithfulness of God. In the photo, Chuan-Xin is teaching the children about God's faithfulness during a Sunday School class.

Mok Chuan-Xin – Encouraged by Being Engaged

As a leader and teacher in the Children's Ministry, I often walk around the classrooms to ask my fellow teachers if they need materials and to check in on the kids. When I look at the teachers' dedication to the children and the effort they put in to prepare for the classes, I see their love for God and the children, and this becomes a strong motivation for me to continue my service. It is such an encouragement that it helps me get through a tough week and reminds me how I can always strive to be a better Christian. It is a special privilege to witness this living breathing testimony every week.

I'm actually not very good at engaging people to help serve in the ministry. But somehow, time and time again God provides people who are willing to serve. In the two years that I have had the privilege to serve, I don't think there has ever been a time when we were short of teachers. There were plenty of times when I thought we would be short-handed, but each time people just stood up and asked me if I needed help. Maybe God carved it on my forehead or something, but each time people just seemed to pop up saying, "Hey, I would like to serve." Each time this happens I am reminded that no matter how bleak the situation, God always comes through for His own.

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Tan Sze Gar – Call to Be Engaged

I first came to GBC with two very close friends, but after some time they left for another church and I was coming to GBC alone. As a result, there were times when I felt like 'skipping' church, but thankfully because of my ushering duty I could not. This may not sound like a great reason to be involved in ministry, but looking back, I am grateful that God used ushering duty to keep this young Christian then from staying away from church, and perhaps straying from Him.

Over the years, serving in Grace News and more recently going for mission trips have helped me integrate into the GBC family as I get to know more church members and build deeper relationships. Often I am humbled by the people with whom I work, and am amazed by how God uses such diverse individuals to accomplish His purposes – it never ceases to amaze me how each issue of Grace News falls into place!

I have also come to appreciate how being engaged in ministry can help to nurture the fruit of the Spirit: as we interact more with imperfect people like ourselves, we learn to depend on God to love one another. It is a very humbling experience. We tend to view service as a sacrifice or duty, but as we serve, we will find that the joys and rewards from serving far outweigh our time and effort. It is thus a privilege to be able to serve.

If you feel isolated from church consider serving in a ministry. Ask around or look out for opportunities highlighted in the bulletin, and keep in mind that the most important qualification is a willing heart rather than specific talents or gifts. God Himself will enable. **Ω**

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Sze Gar shares the joys and rewards of being engaged in service and encourages readers to serve the Lord and each other as one family.

Engagement and the Modern Monastery



*A short trip into Christian history can help us learn from past mistakes. **Tan Yee Kiat** takes us back to a time when engagement with those outside the church was minimal, and shows how this can still be a problem for us in modern times.*

‘Monastery’ is probably not a word we expect people to have much use for in the 21st century. It conjures up images of men and women from a distant mediaeval age who lived in seclusion and forsook all worldly goods. Chastity vows, devotion to prayer and meditation, renunciation – these and more are the things we associate with monasticism.

The modern monastery begins to exist when today’s Christians have only Christian friends, participate in only Christian fellowship, and busy themselves *exclusively* with all sorts of Christian activity.

On one level, one can’t help but admire the spirit of these early monastics. They made a faithful attempt to live out the biblical teaching of not conforming to this world (Rom 12:2). Yet historically there are many reasons why these institutions did not last. One such reason is that they simply didn’t work. Stuart Colton writes: “Putting to death the sinful nature is not achieved by withdrawal from the world and people, but by the Spirit through the Word He inspired.”¹

But what if, upon deeper reflection, we realise that monasteries are not dead, but have merely manifested themselves in a modern form?

The modern monastery begins to exist when today’s Christians have only Christian friends, participate in only Christian fellowship, and busy themselves *exclusively* with all sorts of Christian activity (conferences, Bible studies, internal ministries, etc). When there is little to no interaction with those who are outside the church, we have created a

monastery. The traits of separation and seclusion, though not erected consciously, are nonetheless present.

While it is sensible to be wise about the company we choose (Psalm 1:1, 1 Cor 15:33), and not to conform to the patterns of this world (Rom 12:2), the result of such a lifestyle is the loss of engagement with those outside. In being faithful to some of the Bible’s commands we end up losing track of heeding some others – “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” (Rom 10:14 - ESV).

The sad result of the loss of engagement is that instead of bearing fruit, the gospel terminates with us individually. At a Navigators conference I attended recently (monastic behaviour?), I was given a booklet titled *Born To Reproduce* written by Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators. Reflecting on God’s command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’, Trotman wrote, “each one who is born into God’s family should seek others to be born again”. We are born again to reproduce.

But that can happen only if we are willing to step outside the comforts of the monastery and engage. It is understandable that we are fearful of the persecution that comes with the decision to engage. As with many things, we can imitate the apostle Paul – “To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication...that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph 6:18b-20 - ESV)

May this also be our prayer. And let us remember also: we are Christians because someone obeyed Christ and decided to engage with us. [Ω](#)

¹Stuart Colton, *Hitting the Holy Road: A guided tour of Christian history from the early church to the Reformation* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), p 105

Care Groups: Gospel and Community

Ps Oliver Chia reminds us of the spiritual purpose of Care Groups as vehicles of discipleship within our church community.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians resounds with joy. The word 'joy' occurs some 20 times in this one letter. However, what is this joy based on? A careful reading of his letter will reveal that Paul's joy comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ – the word 'gospel' occurs nine times. It is the good news of our salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ and the receiving of this gospel that fuels joy. When we trust in this gospel we are united to Jesus Christ – the words 'in Christ' occur in some form at least nine times. This means that as Christians we have been joined with Jesus and all that is his is now ours – including his status and all his resources. And as we are joined with Jesus spiritually, we are also joined to one another in the church as a community. We see Paul writing of this fellowship (Greek: *koinonia*) with the Philippian church as they partner with him in the gospel. *Koinonia* can be translated fellowship, partnership and participation, and implies community. Trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ unites us to Jesus and in turn joins us to other Christians, and we live out the power of the gospel in community. And this brings us joy.

Trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ unites us to Jesus and in turn joins us to other Christians, and we live out the power of the gospel in community. And this brings us joy.



The Care Group Ministry team consists of (L-R) Daniel P Rodis, Ngo Thian Chye, Eddie Tan, Ps Oliver Chia, Neo Yi Ling and Bibianna Yeo. Missing: Tan Chong Tien.

As a church that seeks to be a disciple-making church that transforms lives with the gospel and love of Jesus Christ, we not only seek to proclaim the gospel in words but also to live out its implication in community. Discipleship takes place within a community as individuals respond to the gospel and grow towards Christ-likeness with the help of fellow Christians. This means that the forgiven individual lives in fellowship with other Christians in community and seeks to be formed to be more like Christ. It is this fellowship in the gospel that Care Groups (CG) at Grace Baptist Church seek to promote. The CG Ministry's vision is to see communities (CGs) that seek to disciple one another in the gospel as we help one another mature in the faith. CGs also provide the context for Christians to relate to each other and for God's word to be applied into our lives. When we care, love, serve and pray for one another, we live out the transforming power of gospel.

It is this joy in gospel and community that the CG Ministry hopes to commend to you. We hope that you would consider engaging in a CG; we hope to see more of you commit to being part of CGs; we hope to see gospel communities multiply at Grace Baptist Church. The CG Ministry Team would be happy to get you connected to a CG if you so desire. If you are interested in joining a CG, please email us at cg.at.gbc@gmail.com! Be a part of our effort to multiply joy in the gospel and community. **Ω**

Note: The first paragraph draws its material from the "Introduction to Philippians" in The ESV Gospel Transformation Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2013.

4 to 6 July YA Retreat – “Mathéteuó – To Make Disciples”

31 GBC young adults spent a fruitful weekend together in Johor Bahru to examine not just how, but perhaps more importantly, why we should make disciples.

“By understanding the meaning of the lordship of Christ and how that plays out in our daily lives, the basis of disciple-making became all the more clear – that we are commanded to go out into this fallen world to teach and be taught, to disciple and be disciplined.” – Nehemiah Chong



3 Aug GBC 55th Anniversary – Set Apart for Christ



GBC celebrated her 55th year on 3 August: to God be the glory! In his sermon, Rev (Dr) Poulson reminded us of how God has provided wonderfully over these past 55 years, and explained what it means to be set apart for Christ.



The choir – consisting of members of both the English and Chinese congregations – sang beautifully in praise of God.



Fellowship over lunch after the anniversary service.

17 Aug Baptisms and Transfers



We celebrate with great joy as we welcome 11 new members to the GBC family: [Clockwise from back row third from right] Agnes Ng, Daniella Low, Andrea Lim, Jolene Loi and John Khoo via baptism; Mary Tang, Helen Thng, Ann Rodis, Dan Rodis, Jacob Rodis and Heng Wen Xiu via transfer of membership.

21 Sep Baby Dedication Service



Dedicating five precious babies to God, the parents, grandparents and church took a vow to teach these babies to love God and to raise them up for His glory.

Top photo: Pei Xian and Chuan-Xin with Yi Qian, as Bruce and Doris look on.



Bottom photo (front row L-R): Wen Pin and Xin Yi with Matthew, Melisse and Chuan-Hao with Emma, Timothy and Andrea; (back row L-R): Aaron and Angel with Katherine, Vincent and Ivy with Chevonne.

13 Sep Community Day

Praise God for the good weather and the more than 100 GBC members who turned up early on a Saturday to welcome the MacPherson community to a day of fun, food and fellowship. We are grateful for the opportunity to reach out to our community and to share with them the love of Christ.



Our guest of honour, Ms Tin Pei Ling, not only mingled with participants but also attended the finance talk and the screening of the evangelistic movie *True Prosperity*.

Missions

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

by Esther Yap



The Missions Emphasis Month team (L to R) Leow Bok Wee, Olivia Lee, Fedora Teong, Esther Yap and Alvin Lim.

To challenge the church to continually think of ways to reach out to people around us, we picked Romans 10:14 as our theme for Missions Emphasis Month this year: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

We started planning late and were initially worried that we might not be able to find speakers for the sharing sessions, but we thank God that all those asked were excited to share. We are also grateful to the Sunday Discipleship Seminars team who were gracious in letting us use the Annexe before them and even changed the timing of SDS classes to accommodate us.

The three sharing sessions were planned so that each focused on a different aspect of missions. For the first session, Sze Gar spoke on her experience at Kathy's home in Pua, Thailand. The Kovan outreach fellowship (Ps Bobby, Kah Yin and Bok Wee) took the second session. For the final session, we had a panel of guests – Lawrence Fong talked about his work with Breakthrough Missions, Han Ding shared on his ministry to fellow flight crew, and Swee Hin demonstrated how he ministers to students. On the final Sunday ten missions organisations set up tables in the church canteen so members could find out more about their work. We also distributed a missions calendar listing all the planned mission trips by GBC from September to December 2014.

We hope that the sharing sessions helped to promote the various missions opportunities available and increase awareness of the missions work some church members are involved in. May we all continue to set missions as a priority and incorporate it into our daily lives. Ω



MAXIMUM Life

Samuel Beh reviews a book that renewed his thinking about God's purpose and transformed his walk with God at school and at work.

As a working adult, I learnt to cherish every occupation as having equal honour in God's eyes instead of assuming that there were only certain industries God was interested in.

“What job does God want me to do? How do I study or work to the glory of God? Are there some subjects or work sectors that God prefers over others?”

These were all questions I found myself asking as I went through the school system and subsequently into the working world. In choosing a job, I (mistakenly) categorised different industries based on how ‘holy’ I thought they were. For example, I thought that becoming a Pastor, or being in a helping profession such as speech therapy, would certainly be ‘holier’ than other industries that were driven more by dollars and cents. I also thought that the optimal way to glorify God in school or the workplace was to evangelise as many people as I could, fulfilling the Great Commission laid out in Matthew 28.

This is where *Maximum Life* by Julian Hardyman comes in. In the book, Julian Hardyman unpacks God's purpose for us in work by showing that the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is not the only mission God wants us to accomplish while on earth. God also intends us to develop the earth, so any job we do that furthers the care and development of His creation brings glory to Him.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section applies the gospel story to work. It goes through God's mandate to Adam to develop and care for the earth and shows that work, while tainted by the Fall, is redeemed by Jesus. The second section systematically goes through the various ways we can live out God's mandate for us at the workplace or school.

I would highly recommend *Maximum Life* to anyone who was asking the same questions I was asking and is interested to find out how they can glorify God at school or in the workplace. As a student, I learnt to appreciate the subjects I was studying as they revealed to me the intricacies and beauty of our Father's creation. Studying hard is as glorifying to God as sharing the gospel with a classmate. As a working adult, I learnt to cherish every occupation as having equal honour in God's eyes instead of assuming that there were only certain industries God was interested in.

Maximum Life is written in a very accessible way, complete with reflection questions at the end of each chapter. If you only have time to read two chapters, chapters 7 and 8 alone are (in my opinion) worth the price of the book. God used *Maximum Life* to transform my walk with Him in school and the workplace. May it be a blessing to you too. **Ω**