

The Vine ^{multi}media ^{ministry} **2016** Feb

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Chinese New Year Dialect Team visit homes



What season is it?



The Vine that twines



Attaining perfection



The Vine Committee

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Cover Photo:
Dialect Team visiting
Peggy's mom and dad
on CNY 3rd day



HOM'S Reflections

The Year of the Monkey began with a big bang as buildings collapsed in Taiwan and the markets also took a nose dive. Are these events auspicious for

the Monkey year? Firstly, I do not believe that our years follow the characteristics of the zodiac animals. Every year is the year of the LORD and secondly, everything that happens is in His Hands. Let us pray that 2016 will be the year of the Lord's favour on JCC.

But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hand – Psalm 31:14-15

Someone made a study of the Bible and assumed that it contained more violence than the Koran. However, he qualified himself by saying that he used a software to search for certain words which may be taken out of context. For example the word "Kill" appears 118 times in the KJV. Pre-believers will always be confused by the amount of killing in the Bible, especially the OT and Christians are seldom able to explain it.

Rich Deem, from Evidence for God website writes:

The commandment "Thou shalt not kill" is really not as general as the King James version would indicate. The commandment actually refers to premeditated, unjustified killing - murder. Although God ordered the extermination of entire cities, He did so in righteous judgment on a people whose corruption had led to extreme wickedness, including child sacrifice. Did God destroy the righteous along with the wicked? In an exchange with Abraham, God indicated that He would spare the wicked to save the righteous. He demonstrated this principle by saving righteous people from Sodom and Jericho prior to their destruction. The charge that God indiscriminately murdered people does not hold up to critical evaluation of the biblical texts.

What was the writer of the article in the papers trying to emphasize? Was he trying to say that Christianity is a more violent religion? Perhaps he overlooked the fact that all the killing was done by man against his fellow man, since the beginning when Cain killed Abel, mankind have been in a state of war. Whenever we hear of peace, it is actually the time when both sides are reloading their weapons.

The Bible is a record of historical events and it doesn't shy away from all the killing that man do. That is why many of the Biblical heroes come with failure modes. Adam and Eve ate the fruit, Abraham did not fully trust God to provide an heir, David committed adultery and murder and even Peter denied Jesus three times. The Bible states clearly: *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) and *THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE* (Romans 3:10).

The emphasis of the Bible is that man has failed but God in His Mercy and Grace still love man and sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. The Bible records that there are only 2 shades of people in the world, either they are the Prodigal Son or they are the Elder Brother. If you are more like the Prodigal, then turn and come back to the Father. If you are like the Elder Brother, turn from your jealousy and love God and your fellow man as well.

Rounding up on a lighter note, did you know that someone actually won \$9 million from the TOTO? As a customary practice, Joo See received a TOTO ticket from her department head. She was willing to give \$6 million to the church Rebuilding Fund and keep the \$3 million for herself, if she won. Her ticket had only 1 number correct. If God wanted to work through TOTO, He could, but that is not His Way.

Thanks be to God because if we had \$3 million, it would be harder for us to enter the Kingdom of God (see Mark 10:25). Then our god would be the money. We think money will give us health, joy, peace and love. We forget that we live in a fallen world and if we have much money, we actually would not be able to move around freely for fear of being robbed, kidnapped or worse.

May you be enriched by God's Love, Grace and Mercy.

The Vine that binds ...

True Hearts Together as One....

Long, long time ago, The Vine grew with the love of men who loved God. It was a good 25 years ago where we traced the roots of how The Vine started. Let us recap through the tales of a few good men who reminisced the good old days of their walk with God to remember their first Love, "Jesus".

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." John 15:1-4

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourself to be my disciples." John 15:5-8



The vine is important as it is the source of life for the branches. Without the vine, there will be no fruit as it

provides the support and nutrients for the grapes. It is like Jesus who gives us the support and wisdom to walk with Him. God is the source of

our spiritual life and the hope to eternal life. For us as the branches, we need to draw the strength from Him at all times.

Yes, it is easier said than done. As we all know, the toil of walking and working in the vineyard of daily life is battered by strong winds, attack of insects and even natural calamity. Do we still go to the vine and wait patiently for the grapes to grow? Does it matter if the grapes turn out sweet or sour? Is this a good reminder?

What type of grapes do we want to be? The vine will always be there rooted in the soil weathering the seasons of life, patiently waiting for the grapes to grow. It takes a lot of love to see something grow. And so, we pray.

Is there hope in this love? The vine is still there, isn't it?

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.” John 15:9-10

A while ago, I asked Martin this question, “Will you be able to share the story behind how The Vine evolved at JCC?”

He said that The Vine started 25 years ago by Rev William Chang and the first editor was Se Ping. He was just helping out then. After Se Ping gave birth and decided to take a break from writing, Martin took over. There were no computers and The Vine was mostly typed out and the graphics were hand-drawn.

Martin said, “If you are interested, I think I still have issue no 1. The evolution of The Vine followed the evolution of computers...” I smiled as I read on.

Out of curiosity, I continued with my line of thought and pursued the question with Martin asking, “What kept John, Nick and your passion in having The Vine going on all these years?”

He said, "I think that our passion for The Vine is tied closely to our personal passion and skills. For example, Nick likes photography so his passion is photography and some of it spilled over into The Vine. For John, he likes to write and besides the brochures for the rebuilding, he also writes for The Vine. If you do not have a passion for writing or sharing, you will soon lose the drive to work in The Vine. The Vine does not give you the passion, (no rewards, no pay, no benefits) it is your own passion overflowing into The Vine."

I thought to myself, "Impossible without the Love of God!"

Martin said that the passion to share and skills to write kept them going in this ministry. There were times when he had to drive himself to write to fill up the pages of The Vine. In some of the months, he had no inspiration, but still had to think of something to write about.

At this point, I can imagine how it can be a challenge but I cannot visualize how he would look. I mean, literally. Sorry, Martin. Oops!

Imagine when I received an email reply so transparent, it tugged my emotions with a tinge of heartfelt thoughts running through my mind, "They did it with the help of God". This is because it is not easy to say, "I do" and continue with actions to say, "I will", in the journey of getting involved in a Ministry. The days turned weeks, months and years of toil and hard work would not have been possible without God. Or is it?

And again, I talked to myself, "If not, how could it last 25 years? It really did!"

I believe the journey is not without pain and cries from the heart to God with many questions answered but maybe with many more questions unanswered. I asked myself, "What would I have done?" I am not sure. What I do know is that it takes a lot of courage to be truthful about what we can do and will do; relying on the strength of God.

How many more years will The Vine be around? Will the branches be there to support it? Will there be fruits of labour? Only God knows. This is what really matters.

I relented and relaxed with a thought, “Do we really need to have answers all the time?”

With this, let us take this opportunity to give thanks to God for the few good men who kept the passion of The Vine going. By the way, they are still going strong serving in their own ways and of course, with The Vine. Let’s continue to pray.

If you are like Alicia and I, whom we have introduced ourselves to you in the first issue of The Vine, there is a message that we are reaching out to you to share your experiences with us.

Has something touched your heart and you are too shy to talk about it? Let your mind run by sharing your story with us. Let our fingers do the walking for you. We can write for you. All you have to do is to share your stories, testimonies and prayers. In these “Stories untold”, we will unfold the episodes and keep it on the scroll i.e. The Vine.

And please remember to pray about it and ask God, “Help me, Jesus! Grant me the wisdom to share and have the courage to bear the dare because I care.”



This is a never-ending story because the Love of God will never end. For those of you who have been writing and telling the story of Jesus through reflections, real life experiences and of course, relying on the Word of God; it will always be the one same message of God’s love for us.

As I quote and borrow Martin’s words in the email, “...I hope together we can make The Vine the NJCC...Newsletter of JCC!

It is The Vine that binds the true hearts together as one. Will you tell the story?

Joyce Tan

Attaining Perfection



Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:4

Did the longing to climb high begin and end there with Babel?

I doubt it.

Today, many people seek the pinnacle of personal perfection and are proud to be self-sufficient. Some became driven with building monuments to mark the landmarks of their journey to success. Others obsessed with the need to conform to some media-driven image. Speaking of this, does anyone remember there was a time when buxom women like Marilyn Monroe were hailed as the ideal beauty? Is



the ideal beauty of the old still valid today? Just last year we had the Belly Button Challenge. Thousands of young people posted self-portraits while trying to reach an arm behind their back and around to touch their belly button to show how much of an hourglass figure they have, taking pride in their slimness. Being skinny seems to be the new beauty.



Even male action stars are not spared, with the directors urging them to lose more weight so as to look better on screen. Donnie Yen of the

popular franchise *Ip Man* revealed that director Wilson Yip asked him to lose 14kg for the role. His response: "I am around 65.7kg right now so it's impossible to lose 14kg. Not only will I go to the hospital, I might die!"

Anyway, I digress. What I am trying to say is we are all guilty of building our own towers. Yes, including myself. Even Lucifer himself said he will raise his throne above God.

You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.

Isaiah 14:13



Food for thoughts

Reading about Genesis 11:4 made me reflect on some questions. Questions like: What are some towers I see others building around me? *What kind of towers I have built around myself? What do I take pride in? Have I forgotten to credit my success to God? Is it keeping me from glorifying God?* I hope readers here will take a moment to pause and reflect on these questions as well.

Whatever that is keeping us from Him, pray about it. Let God be the source of our significance. Know that flawless skin, perfect figure, successful career, cheers from the crowd will not save our souls any more than the mountains of stone that were raised as pyramids over the mummies.

Alicia Wong

DIALECT MINISTRY CNY SHOPPING



The eager beavers gathered in church

The annual CNY shopping trip is a perennial favourite for many shopping enthusiasts among the members of the Dialect Ministry.

It is always a pleasure for the organizer because the dialect-speaking elders are invariably eager and punctual. The eager

beavers usually get themselves ready well ahead of the appointed time. This year's shopping trip on 27th January was no exception, with many of the shoppers equipped for big buys with their multi-purpose bags or trolleys. We thank God for blessing us with fine weather in contrast to the raining days prior to the outing.

Our first stop was at the Fortune Palace Bird's Nest Trading Company at Ubi Crescent, where each person was served a complimentary cup of jelly with bird's nest. It was a good refreshing start to a long day of shopping.



A light medicinal massage on the knee

Our next stop was at the Fei Fah Medical Manufacturing at Kaki Bukit Avenue 1. This was a regular favourite of the elderly folk who, before the visit, had already made up their decision to combine their requirements for a bulk purchase of a certain medicinal ointment which they had used and been pleased with its efficacy.

It was past noon when we adjourned to the Bedok Reservoir Park for lunch and a short rest amidst serene surroundings, to recover our energy to

continue our tour to the following places:

- A few food factory outlets in Woodlands
- Song Fish Dealer at Fishery Port Road

Some of the places visited were the same as in previous years, attesting to their



popularity with our shoppers. In particular, the Song Fish Dealer (a seafood wholesaler at Fishery Port Road) was never a place to be left out in our shopping itinerary year after year. The great variety of seafood at good prices was unquestionably enticing for the shoppers to open their purses and wallets, and surely they did! When we left the place, many of the shoppers were fully loaded with their choice selections.



It was already past 6.00 pm, and we had been out since early morning. Yet, all (including the senior folk) showed no sign of weariness and were asking for more – a request to visit Tai Sun Food Industries. Unfortunately, at that time, the factory outlet for their much-loved nuts was already closed; and so they had to be disappointed.

Finally, we made our way back to church, with some among the shoppers having created for themselves a small problem of a happy kind – lugging home a big load from a rewarding trip. Imagine how they would have been able to visit so many shopping places in a day and

buying to their satisfaction if they were to do so on their own by public transport.

In the end, the shoppers from the Dialect Ministry were happy; the organiser was happy; everyone was happy – all looking forward to a Happy Chinese New Year!

This CNY shopping trip was the first outing for 2016 organised by the Dialect Ministry. With God’s blessings upon the Ministry, more outings are in the pipeline.

John Lee

Methodology of a CNY Visitation

1. Go to the homes with some mandarin oranges (kum) and some standard CNY greetings.
2. Sing 3 CNY songs in dialect.
3. Say a prayer in between the singing.
4. Close with a blessing/benediction.
5. Enjoy fellowship with some CNY delicacies.
6. Finally take a group photo.

Although these 6 steps are so easy to remember, unfortunately, it is only applicable to the Dialect Ministry.

I don’t think it will work with the English Adult or Youth. If you applied these 6 steps, they will find the visit very boring because there is no ice-breaker or party games in the program.

Perhaps that is why only the Dialect Ministry is active during these festive periods because they cater to a group who enjoy the simpler lifestyle of years gone by.

(see page 19 for the story)



WHAT SEASON IS IT?

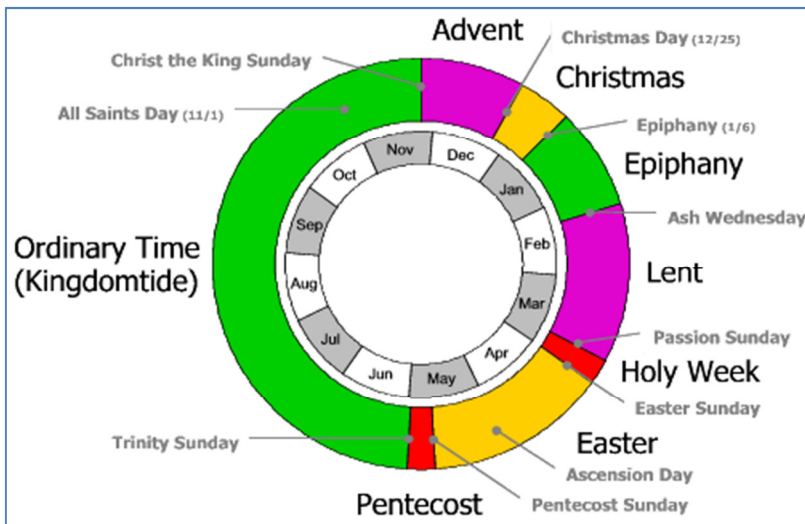
It is common to view the year as divided into four parts, each part being a season - Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. To the Chinese, the dawn of Spring is the start of a new year. Hence, Chinese New Year is traditionally regarded as 春节(Spring Festival).



In 2016, the Indians and Thais will have their New Year on different dates in April while the Islamic and Jewish New Years will begin in early October. Considering that the population of the world is well distributed among varied cultures and religions, this year 2016 as any other year by the Gregorian calendar will see the celebrations of many New Years apart from the date of January the first.

Each New Year is always significant as a time for reflection and refreshing, a time of joy and hope, a time for absolution, a time for celebration ...

Do you know that the Lutheran Church and other liturgical churches also have their own yearly calendar?



Based on our liturgical calendar, we are actually already a few months into a year which was new when it started on Sunday, 29th November (1st day of Advent 2015). We have gone through the “post-New-Year” Christmas season of hope and the excitement of epiphany; and now, we are in the pensive mood of Lent (beginning Wednesday, 10th February) which will lead us to the Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost. Thereafter, the year will enter a phase called “Ordinary Time” before we usher in another New Year on Sunday, 27th November 2016.

When people celebrate their cultural New Years, what do they wrap their minds around?

When Christians celebrate Advent, it is traditionally also a period of feast days; but more than that, our minds are wrapped around the life of Christ. As our moods follow the changing moods of the ongoing Church services, we are blessed with the continuing opportunities for meditation on the Word of God and self-introspection. Our attention is not just on “a few days of cultural New Year festivity”.



Every Springtime (Lunar New Year), the beautiful and inspiring words of particular hymn never fails to ring in my ears. Here is a stanza:

*“What a wondrous time is spring
When all the trees are budding
The birds begin to sing
The flowers start their blooming
That’s how it is with God’s love
Once you’ve experienced it
You’ll want to sing
It’s fresh like spring
You’ll want to pass it on”*

The beauty of Springtime is also well-captured by the Song of Solomon 2:11–13.

It is a great time to celebrate the arrival of Spring, the “season of singing” (*Song v. 12*) as our eyes behold the beauty of God’s creations and we bask in the pleasures that the season brings to our senses. Every season must pass and come around again, and the cycle of seasons spins ceaselessly. Yet, our lives move on beyond each season that turns up in the cycle.

All seasons have something to offer.
Jeannette Walls

The seasons of the Church by the liturgical calendar also follow a continual cycle. However, they are dissimilar to the astronomical seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. While we bring to a close our celebration of Spring after a number of days, each successive season in the

Church calendar tells an ongoing account of Jesus Christ and progressively leads us into deeper reflections week after week.

On Ash Wednesday, one of the lectionary passages is from Isa. 58:1-12, which begins on a negative note and ends on a positive note:



Verse 1 *Shout it aloud, do not hold back.*

Raise your voice like a trumpet.

Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.

... ..

Verse 11 *The LORD will guide you always;*

he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Verse 12 *Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.*

In the period before Easter, there was a sombre mood in the air over the Passion of our Lord.

When you do anything wrong, do you shout it aloud for everyone to hear for your self-embarrassment? Yet, as a Chinese saying goes, 纸包不住火 – If paper can't wrap fire, the truth will be out. What then is the truth about the people's shame?

God made His righteous demand through His servant, Isaiah, for the truth (about the people's phoney declarations of their faith and contrition) to be shouted out loud without holding back. What the Prophet spoke in his time was a warning against sin and an exhortation to repent. The time rolled forward hundreds of years to the upcoming Passion of Christ. Do we not recognize in us the same shame as the people in that time with their hypocrisy, their iniquitousness and viciousness that put Christ on the Cross? The season of Lent is a time for us to reflect on our hypocrisy. Think of how *paiseh*¹ it would be for us if this hypocrisy were to be shouted out loud, with a trumpet for added assistance in case others would be so deaf as to have a problem hearing!

Actually, God's demand for the people's rebellion to be shouted out loud was not intended to shame but to draw their attention and it was less about His eagerness to let the people know of the painful consequence than of the fact that if only they were ready to turn from their sinfulness, the Lord would be there ready to be their guide to help restore their land. Despite the rebelliousness of His people, this was a generous promise.

In the hymn "How Deep The Father's Love for us," there is this stanza worthy of our contrite reflection in this Lenten season:

*"Behold the Man upon a cross
My guilt upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers*

*"It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished"*

¹ Hokkien for "shameful"



Albeit the season of Lent is a time of penitence for us to reflect on our sins that would crucify our Lord with no turning back, we have the greatest consolation that God has not abandoned us. Remember that Jesus, before going away, promised to send the Holy Spirit to be our guide who will be with us forever

(John 14:16), and the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and remind us of everything He had said to us. (John 14:26)

Great thanks never enough for God's supreme grace! We don't deserve on our own account!

In our contriteness, we can also look at the brighter side – the Holy Spirit with us, a guide to us forever who will teach us all things and remind us of everything we need to remember from our Lord's teachings. Another hymn worthy of Lenten reflection, of which I reproduce a portion here:

*Spirit, touch your Church
Stir the hearts of men
Revive us, Lord
With your passion once again*

*Lord, we humbly come before you
We don't deserve of you what we ask
But we yearn to see your glory
Restore this dying land*

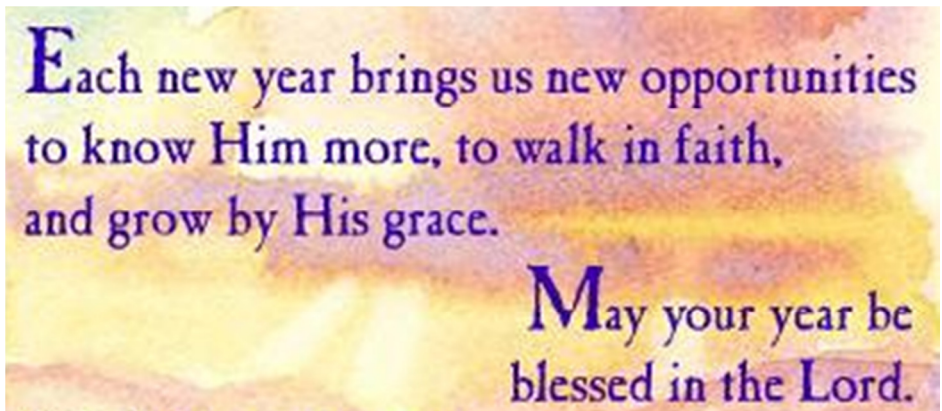
God is able and willing to forgive and restore His people. He wants the people's shame to be shouted out for them to repent. He has not left His people alone to their own devices. He has provided a Counsellor (the Holy Spirit). The big question is: Do the people reach out their hands to God?

As we chew on the wonders of the seasons, do we give due attention to the season of the Church or leave it lost in the heap of the new year festivities of the more pervasive kind in the world? **When we pass through a year week**

by week and come before God in liturgical worship, do we really pay attention to the purpose of the liturgy to guide our spiritual preparation?

From the discussion above, you can see that our Ash Wednesday lection from the Old Testament does carry a potent message relevant to the season in the present time. The reading passages are all specially selected to fit the message of the season. They are not just for show or to fill up empty space in the bulletin pages. **If we use the lections as our personal Bible Study guides with a seriousness to probe the embedded messages, we will be very much spiritually enriched as we walk through every season every Church Year.** Every liturgical service will be an occasion for abundant spiritual awakening instead of being a meaningless experience: “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the worshipper who is unaccustomed to liturgical worship. “Utterly meaningless! Every part of worship is just meaningless recitation ...”

Adopting liturgical worship with the right attitude, Lutherans can pass through the seasons in a year with consistency of worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23) with focus on God with our Praise, Confession and Prayer; and not missing out on hearing God’s Word directly from the Bible.



My parting question: When is our next New Year in the Church? (Clue: You can find the answer in this article.)

John Lee

CNY Visitations

It is the 3rd day of CNY and the Dialect Team is already up and about by 9:30 am to visit as many homes as possible. Not every team member was available as this was a working day for most of us. Another problem was transport, as not all team members with cars were there.

I joined the Dialect Team in visiting homes on the 6th day of CNY. I marvel at the energy they have to traverse the whole of Singapore from west to east.



The Dialect Team has an average age of 50 plus so their energy must come from this verse:

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary

Isaiah 40:30,31



Church Treasurer, 2 years Term (with extension to max 6 years)

Job Summary

- **Salary:** Out of this world
- **Location:** Singapore – West
- **Work Type:** Terms of 2 years each
- **Min. Education Level:** Diploma
- **Field of Study:** Accountancy & Business
- **Skills:** Interpersonal skills, Communication skills, MS Office

Job Descriptions

- Present monthly reports to council.
- Attend council meetings.
- Verify payments and sign cheques.
- Monitor collections and tithes.
- Assist in monthly GST filing

Required Experience and Qualifications

- Diploma in Accountancy or Equivalent
- Pleasant personality
- Proficient in Excel
- Ability to work with tight deadlines

HOM, Missions

Job Summary

- **Salary:** Out of this world
- **Location:** Singapore – West
- **Min. Education Level:** Diploma
- **Field of Study:** Social Work
- **Skills:** Interpersonal skills, Communication skills, MS Office

Job Descriptions

- Reports to council.
- Plan for mission trips
- Looks after missionary's needs
- Attend mission meetings

Required Experience and Qualifications

- Diploma in Social Work or Equivalent
- Pleasant personality
- Ability to work overseas

If the church were like any worldly organization, it would post ads for vacancies so that suitable people would apply for the position. As an example, I have posted 2 job ads above in the “worldly” style.

However the church does not search for people this way. Instead they pray for the right person (see Acts 1:24) and his qualifications should be according to 1Timothy 3:

... be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.