

THE WINEPRESS

O taste and see that God is good



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PRAYER FOCUS FOR JANUARY

What should you pray for in this brand new month?

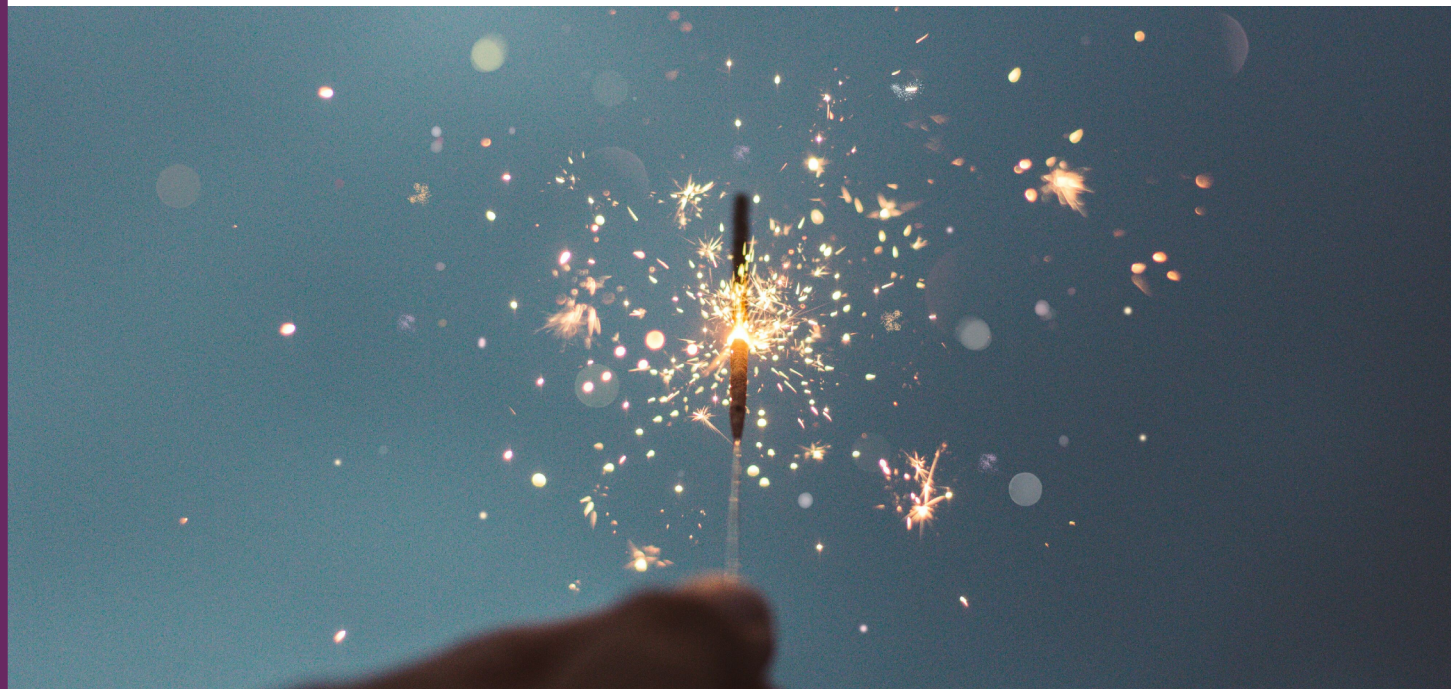
Seek the Lord to empower our ministries, give us renewal of faith in tough times and to move JCC forward through 2022 and beyond.

Prayer pointers can be found on page 4.

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NEW YEAR - WILL 2022 BE AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR FOR YOU?

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

We will soon enter the new year 2022. One expects that at the stroke of midnight, the world will welcome the new year with fireworks shooting off.

Fireworks brighten the sky and are exciting to watch. An ordinary greeting when friends meet would be something like this: "May the light of the fireworks brighten your hope for a better and happier new year!"

With or without the celebratory fireworks, my wish is for an extraordinary new year of blessings after what has become "ordinary" but tough to us for two years – dealing with the vexatious uncertainties of the pandemic.

Question: How can the new year be extraordinary for us in the midst of all the challenges we are facing?

May I suggest 3 considerations:

1. The new year - Be Careful and Be Wise!
2. The new year - Be Filled with the Spirit!
3. The new year - Be Thankful!

I. THE NEW YEAR – Be Careful and Be Wise. Choose God!

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." (Ephesians 5:15-17)

The Bible does warn us of the many challenges that will come to meet us. We are in the "days of evil", the end times with evil forces active in battle against God's children.

Our faith and obedience to Christ will be tested, where the values of the world entice us to disobedience. Yet, we are constantly reminded to abide in Christ even if the world hates us. (John 15)

Be careful. Be wise.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." (Galatians 6:9-10)

Let us start the new year right. As Paul says, "now is

continued on the next page

the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."
(2 Corinthians 6:2b)

II. THE NEW YEAR - Be filled with the Spirit of God



"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."
(Ephesians 5:18)

Let the Holy Spirit be the president in our heart, not just another tenant in our lives. He should be the driver of our lives so that we will move according to God's agenda.

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord," (Ephesians 5:19)

As we walk with the Spirit, He will strengthen our fellowship bonding and lead us into heartfelt worship with praises and thanksgiving.

III. THE NEW YEAR - BE THANKFUL

"Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
(Ephesians 5:20)

People who are not aware of their blessings are not thankful. Instead, they are always looking for more, always unsatisfied.

Dr. Dale Robbins writes, "I used to think people complained because they had a lot of problems. But I have come to realize that they have problems because they complain. Complaining doesn't change anything or make situations better. It amplifies frustration, spreads discontent and discord, and can invoke an invitation for the devil to cause havoc with our lives."

Complaining makes us miserable.

Psalm 77:3b (KJV) says, "I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed."

Philippians 2:13 - "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe."

A positive, thankful person is a great witness in this dark world. We only shine when we are thankful.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

I'm convinced that a grateful person, a thankful person, will live a better life and will be able to bless others.

CONCLUSION

Can 2022 be an extraordinary year for every JCCian?

Let us fix our eyes on God! Make the Wise Decision by Choosing God; and Walk with the Spirit daily!



PRAYER FOCUS FOR JANUARY 2022

1) A strong and fresh renewal of faith as we face tough times.

May the Lord make our love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.

May He establish our hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father – at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

2) A strong anointing by the Holy Spirit to empower our Christian ministries.

May the Lord be constantly by our side, guiding and strengthening us to do effective work for a good harvest of souls.

3) Fruitfulness of our Goshen Initiative as we patiently and steadfastly build bridges to the community.

Pray for God's favours in building up our effective collaboration with partner churches for outreach activities, putting to fruitful use individuals' gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

4) As we begin a new year, we thank God for inspiring us to grow the church with our 2022's spiritual theme: Go Deep in Discipleship!

Pray for more JCCians to rise up to be disciples and disciple-makers who hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him wholeheartedly.

5) God to raise visionary and spirit-filled leaders to move JCC forward through 2022 and beyond.

THAILAND MISSIONS UPDATE

Thank you, Friends & Supporters, for your blessings and prayers! Bee and I are now in Thailand.



Thanksgiving

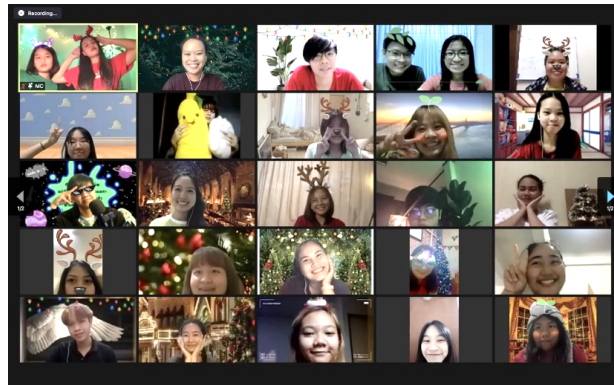
1. We thank God for the welcome pack that we received from TCCC.
2. We thank God for the promotion package of three months free accommodation rental for a 1-year stay.
3. We thank God for our host and team mates who brought us to purchase our housing needs and daily necessities.

Prayer Requests

1. Pray for smooth process of application to convert my Tourist Visa to Student Visa within these 2 months.
2. Pray for our settling-in and adjustment in Nakhon Pathom province where we stay.

On 10th December, we held a Zoom Evangelistic Christmas event with University Students and 24 Thai students attended. Four received Jesus Christ into their lives and seven indicated an interest to find out more about Jesus.

Please continue to pray for the follow-through especially the four new-believers that the Gospel that they received will take root in their hearts.



BAPTISMS, CONFIRMATION & TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

BY MARTIN CHEAH



December 5th 2021 – After a long hiatus from attending the English service in JCC due to the COVID 19 restrictions, I attended to the on-site service once again to witness Fong Sow Leong's baptism and Gabriel Anathan's transfer of membership. Both are members of the Jurong West CG.

Baptisms

There were two infant baptisms.

- Luke Gaw, son of Leon and Amanda
- Emmanuel Lee, son of Benedict and Joey

Sandy Tan (lady in yellow) was welcomed back to

JCC through the Manna Bridge (Goshen Initiative).

After demurring a few years because of his parents, Fong Sow Leong has finally made the right decision on receiving baptism.

Confirmation

Jadon R. Jonathan, son of Frank and Preeti was confirmed. He has grown up quite a lot since I last saw him.

Transfer of Membership

Gabriel Anathan was baptized in My Saviour's Church but since he resides in Jurong West, he decided to transfer to JCC.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

OFFICIAL OPENING OF DAVID & GOLIATH PRESCHOOL

BY KYLIE CHIA



On 18 December 2021, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam officially unveiled David & Goliath Preschool (DGP), an affiliate of Jurong Christian Church (JCC).

The official opening ceremony celebrates DGP's conversion from its original Jurong Christian Church Kindergarten into a fully-functioning childcare centre-cum-preschool.

Mr Shanmugaratnam addressed the attendees of DGP's ex-principals, principal, teachers and JCC leaders. Chairman of DGP Mr Justin Tay then presented a coin minted with the word "Love" and also a calligraphy composed by JCC's Chinese Senior Pastor Rev Chung Tze Lu and written by Ms Kong Dejin, a 74th generation descendant of Chinese philosopher Confucius to Mr Shanmugaratnam.



THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

BY JOHN LEE

A BIBLE WORLD STUDY

Upon the birth of Baby Jesus, an angel of the Lord said to the shepherds in the fields nearby:

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great JOY for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Lk 2:10-12 NIV)

WHAT JOY?

When the world is full of problems and people's lives are filled with lots of anxieties, what is the JOY of Christmas that fills the hearts of Christians?

To get a better understanding, I try a brief word study.

The Greek word for the JOY in the passage from Luke—*χαρά* (*chará*)—occurs most of the times that "joy" is mentioned in the NIV translation of the New Testament.

Following the same Greek word, this JOY can be related to:



- Finding a hidden treasure – the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:44)
- The joy of receiving the word of God (Mark 4:16)
- The joy that attends answered prayers (John 16:24)

Note also:

- This JOY *χαρά* (*chará*) is associated with the kingdom of God rather than the worldly pleasures. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and JOY in the Holy Spirit ..." (Romans 14:17)

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THANKSGIVING SERVICE

PSALM 100:4-5

ENTER HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING
AND HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE;

GIVE THANKS TO HIM AND PRAISE HIS NAME.

FOR THE LORD IS GOOD AND HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER;
HIS FAITHFULNESS CONTINUES THROUGH ALL GENERATIONS.

FRIDAY
31 DECEMBER
@ SANCTUARY
8PM

REGISTER VIA EVENTBRITE
- [TINYURL.COM/JCCENG](https://tinyurl.com/jcceng)



JURONG
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

- This **JOY** was what Paul felt after the Corinthian Church's repentance, despite all prior troubles. (2 Corinthians 7:2)
- This **JOY** is a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and is linked to the Christian's faith (Philippians 1:25) and the peace that derives from our trust in Jesus. (Romans 15:13)

The **JOY** of Christmas is not the kind of enjoyment described as the "fleeting pleasures of sin" in Hebrews 11:25 (NIV).

Charles Schulz ("Peanuts" cartoonist) said, "Happiness is a warm puppy."

This description of happiness seems to embrace the idea of enjoying simple comforts aloof from all cares whereby no difficulties or grief assails. Is this realistic when life is invariably a mixture of sunshine and rain?

The **JOY** of Christmas is not simply about happiness without pain (or "light without shadows"). Here is food for thought from Jesus' words:

*You will grieve, but your grief will turn to **JOY**. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her **JOY** that a child is born into the world." (John 16:20b-21)*

The **JOY** ("that a child is born into the world") in the passage from John's gospel is translated from the same Greek word for **JOY** in Luke 2:10 (when Baby Jesus was born into the world).

In Christ, we can live out Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:12 – "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." – where the Greek word $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\omega$ (chairō) for "Be joyful" is morphologically related to the Greek word for the Christmas **JOY**.

CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

We wish one another a **JOY-FUL** Christmas with the **JOY** – $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}$ (chará) – coming from God, not from the world.

We rejoice – $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\omega$ (chairō) – that our names are written in heaven. (Luke 10:20)

BIBLE STUDY TOOLS ONLINE

There are numerous easy-to-use Bible study tools at [BibleGateway](#) suitable for most Christians.

This [biblehub.com](#) site useful for those who wish to compare the Hebrew or Greek roots of similar words in English translations, at least for a minimal grasp of attendant shades of meanings.



REVELATION AND TODAY: HOW TO READ THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Every Tuesday, 4 January - 22 February 2022, 8-9.30pm via Zoom

Are we living in the End Times? What is 666? What are the Plagues, Tribulation, Millennium and Rapture all about? How are the Letters to the Seven Churches still relevant today? What is the purpose of the Book of Revelation?

This last book of the Bible contains many imageries and symbols. Our course will help you interpret the Book responsibly from a Lutheran perspective, while respecting other views. Various eschatological views of the End Times will also be discussed. Our 7-week study includes an interesting video for each lesson, and a study guide.



Register via this QR code or jcc.sg/revelations

Rev Martin Yee of the LCS Office will be the facilitator of this course.



THE ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG



AΩ

Introduction

Through this series, we hope to bring readers through the history of Christianity using the 26 letters of the English alphabet.

Each letter will feature a person/ place/ event/ item that helps us better understand the Bible, the

history of the Church until today and how our lives have been impacted.

We hope that you will have a better appreciation of the historical context surrounding biblical events and those thereafter, and see how God moves throughout history – His Story.

F

is for...

FRANCIS XAVIER

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47, cf Isaiah 49:6)

Who was Francis Xavier?

Francis Xavier (1506-1552) was a Spanish Jesuit priest who pioneered missionary work in Southeast Asia and Japan. He was later canonised (i.e. made a Saint) by the Catholic Church in 1622.

Background: The Portuguese Empire

Though not a Portuguese, Xavier's life was closely intertwined with that of the Portuguese Empire, which set the stage and served as the network for his missionary work.

The Portuguese Empire started with the conquest of Ceuta (in present-day Morocco) in 1415. Thereafter it grew as Portuguese sailors began to explore the African coast and Atlantic Ocean in search of a sea route to the source of the lucrative spice trade.

They rounded the Cape of Good Hope (in South Africa) in 1488 and reached India ten years later. By 1505 the Portuguese had established a foothold in



Conversion of the Paravars by Francis Xavier in South India (Lithograph, 19th Century)

India and would go on to conquer Malacca in 1511.

In 1543, Portuguese adventurers landed on the island of Tanegashima, off Kyushu in Japan. There they introduced European firearms to the locals. This changed the nature of warfare in Japan and granted the Portuguese much influence there.

The Portuguese Empire would continue to expand, with colonies and outposts around the world. Its end was marked by the transfer of sovereignty of Macau to China in 1999.

Francis Xavier's co-founding of the Jesuits

Xavier was born in Navarre (in present-day Spain) and studied at the University of Paris. He later studied theology and was ordained in 1537, aged 31.

In 1540, together with Ignatius of Loyola and several others, he founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), a Catholic religious order focused on education and evangelism.

Later that year, King John III of Portugal requested for Jesuit missionaries to go to Portugal's territories in India, where he believed Christian values were being eroded among the Portuguese colonisers there. Xavier took up the call and was appointed as Apostolic Nuncio (i.e. Vatican diplomat) to the East.

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God, Gold and Glory?

● Francis Xavier in India and Southeast Asia

Xavier arrived in Goa (the seat of Portuguese power in the East) in 1542 and worked in India for about three years, planting nearly 40 churches in southern India and Sri Lanka. However, he was also setting his sights eastward to the East Indies.

Xavier reached Malacca in 1545 and worked in the region for two years, becoming the first to venture to the Moluccas (present-day Maluku Islands in Indonesia), the epicentre of the spice trade where the Portuguese had also established their presence.

● Francis Xavier's work in Japan

After returning to Malacca in 1547, Xavier met a Japanese man named Anjiro. Anjiro had committed murder in Japan and fled on a Portuguese ship. The ship's captain, who knew Xavier, took the fugitive to Malacca to see Xavier, whom he felt was better suited to hear Anjiro's confession.

Xavier converted Anjiro (who became the first recorded Japanese Christian) and learnt about Japanese customs and culture from him. Xavier would eventually depart for Japan in 1549, bringing Anjiro as a translator.

As a representative of the King of Portugal, Xavier was received in a friendly manner by the local *daimyo* (i.e. feudal lord).

However, he was forbidden from converting the Japanese to Christianity under penalty of death. Xavier also attempted to meet with the Emperor in Kyoto but was unsuccessful.

Xavier sought to adapt Christianity to local Japanese culture and traditions to aid with evangelism. While he struggled with learning the language, he was initially welcomed by Buddhist monks since he had used the term "Dainichi" for the Christian God, to adapt to local traditions.

However, as he learnt more about the religious nuances of the term, he switched to using "Deusu" - from the Latin *Deus* (i.e. God). When the monks realised that Xavier was preaching a different religion, they turned against him. Moreover, the Japanese, who were Buddhist / Shinto, could not accept many Christian teachings.

Nonetheless, Xavier was allowed to preach in domains where the *daimyo* were sympathetic. He eventually left Japan in 1551 after two years of work.

His efforts, along with that of other Jesuits and Franciscans (another Catholic religious order) later, allowed Christianity to take root in Japan and survive the centuries of persecution that followed which drove Christians underground until the late 1800s.



A statue of Francis Xavier in St. Francis Xavier Memorial Church in Hirado, Japan. Source: Nippon.com, "Saint Francis Xavier and the Roots of Christianity in Japan"

Death and Canonisation

After returning to India, Xavier set his eyes on China, towards which he departed in 1552.

He stopped at the island of São João (present-day Shangchuan Island) off the Chinese coast, where the Portuguese had established a base. Unfortunately, while awaiting a ship to take him to mainland China, Xavier died of a fever in December 1552.

Xavier was initially buried on Shangchuan Island, but his remains were later moved back to Malacca and then eventually to Goa, where it remains today.

The right forearm (used for blessings) was subsequently detached and displayed in the Jesuit mother church in Rome; another arm bone was brought to Macau.

Pope Gregory XV canonised Xavier as a saint in 1622, together with Ignatius of Loyola. Xavier remains the patron saint of missionaries and multiple places worldwide.

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Francis Xavier and the role of Imperialism in Church History

Francis Xavier's work exemplified the process by which Christian missions followed European trade and colonial expansion – a process that was not always benign. It is popularly summarised that European imperialism was motivated by God, Gold, and Glory.

Xavier travelled on Portuguese maritime networks and operated in areas where the Portuguese had influence, if not outright control, and his work had the support of the Portuguese monarchy in Lisbon. Xavier's missionary success was hence facilitated by preceding imperial efforts.

Similarly, early Protestant missionary work in Singapore was enabled within the context of British colonialism.

All information and images taken from the respective Wikipedia pages unless otherwise stated.

Let's see what you remember!

Click on the painting of St Francis Xavier below to access a short quiz.



Painting of St Francis Xavier, Kobe City Museum, Japan. Source: Wikipedia

For further reading, do check out the following Wikipedia articles:

[Francis Xavier](#)

[Portuguese Empire](#)

[Christianity in Japan](#)

AULD LANG SYNE BY TONY KOH



Anil, Tabitha and their two children, Amy and Jonathan – we couldn't miss them because of their active life faithfully serving and worshipping God in JCC as a family after coming from India.

They are relocating to Canada this month. It is a bittersweet feeling for us. On one hand, we will sadly miss their wonderful fellowship in the Abundance Cell Groups 1 & 2 over the last few years.

On the other hand, we are happy for them to be so blessed by God with their progress in life. We are sure that God will continue to extend to them His provision, protection, grace, mercy and blessings physically and spiritually as they take on fresh vocations in a new environment.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and days of auld lang syne? For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang



syne, we'll take a cup of kindness yet, for auld lang syne.

Five of us (in abidance by the pandemic limitation on household visitors) paid a visit to the Anil family to partake the cup of kindness – with good will, friendship and best wishes.

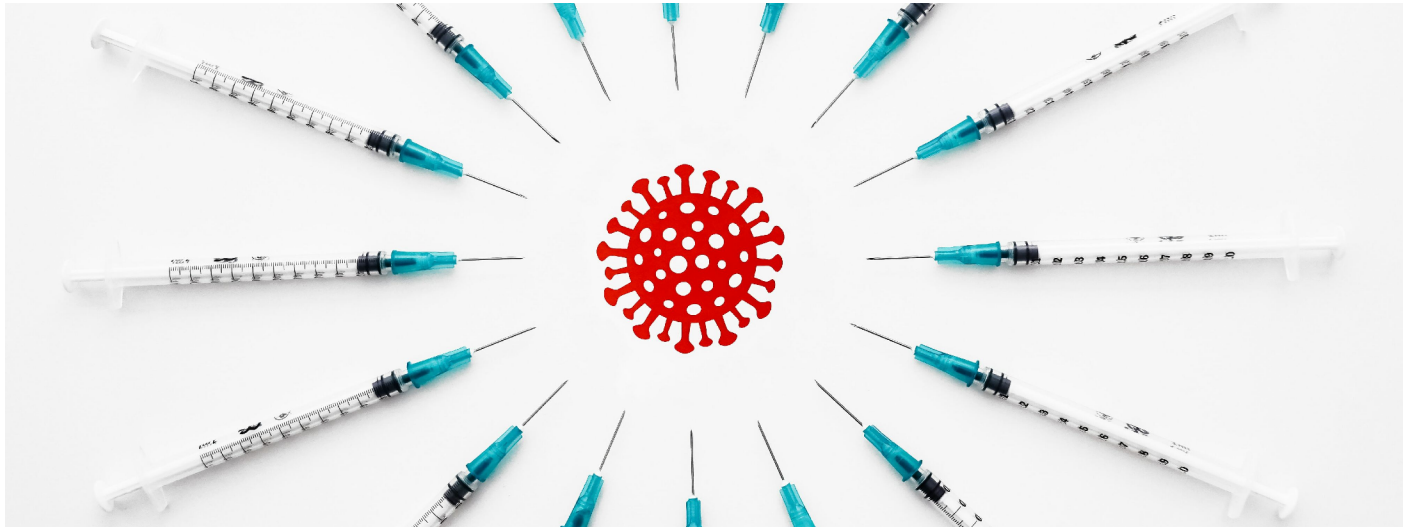
The feelings are reciprocal.

As a last farewell, ABCG 1 & 2 held a Zoom session with Anil and Tabitha on December 17. Although we will be separated by distance, we will be close to each other in thoughts and prayers.

From Anil and Tabitha:

Our heartfelt thanks - Tony, Susan, Patrick, Samantha and Alice for your visit. We loved the fellowship and will miss you guys. I thank GOD for this family and for all the love and affection
❤️

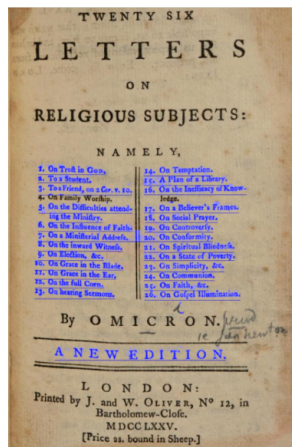
Thanks to be God for this fellowship. May we all proclaim ' as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord ' Joshua 24:15b 🙏



OMICRON

BY JOHN LEE

I thought that Omicron is the 15th letter of the Greek alphabet, often referred to as the little o (o-micron, a short vowel) as contrast the big O (O-mega, Ω, the long vowel).



I also thought about the “Twenty Six Letters on Religious Subjects” by Omicron. John Newton (the composer of the hymn “Amazing Grace”) was the actual author of the letters.

Late last month, the word “Omicron” started rolling off tongues (even of non-Greeks) effortlessly but causing trembles to

governments, and to Singaporeans with their mouths agape like a big O in disappointment that it would spell the death of a budding hope of living with the COVID-19 virus.

Here is a wise counsel from Omicron (John Newton):

“It is indeed natural to us to wish and to plan, and it is merciful in the Lord to disappoint our plans, and to cross our wishes.

“The schemes we form look so plausible and convenient, that when they are broken, we are ready to say, What a pity! We try again, and with no better success; we are grieved, and perhaps angry, and plan out another, and so on; at length, in a course of time, experience and observation begin to convince us, that we are not more

able than we are worthy to choose aright for ourselves.

“Then the Lord's invitation to cast our cares upon Him, and His promise to take care of us, appear valuable; and when we have done planning, His plan in our favour gradually opens, and he does more and better for us than we either ask or think.”

Rationally speaking, it is a tall order for us to be aloof to cares and concerns. While we cannot shirk our responsibilities (be *bochap* – *don't care*) to ameliorate the risks and cope with the stress on the physical side, we too cannot overlook the risks and stress on the spiritual side.

The devious virus is sparing no one (church clergy or laity, adults or youth anywhere) the challenge to stay fit physically, emotionally and spiritually.

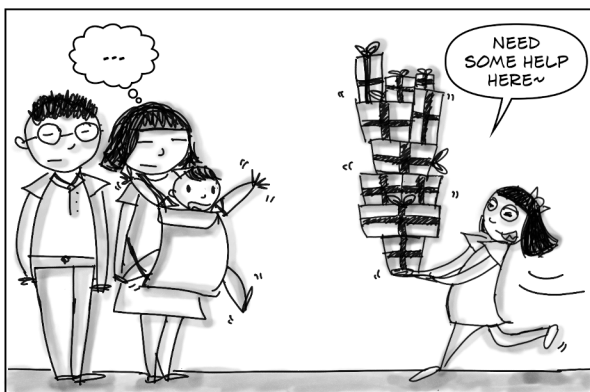
We are all, in common, wearied by the tenacity of the virus. Yet, Omicron reminds us of the tenacity of a man, John Newton, to fight his way through his wretched state by submitting his broken spirit to God's will with a contrite heart – *“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”*

The amazing grace of God can save us from the misery of the pandemic.

“There is the analogy of faith: it is a master key, which not only opens particular doors, but carries you through the whole house.” – John Newton.

Let us encourage one another to be more tenacious than the enemy. Do what we can and should by our human powers, and trust God for the rest.

The true meaning of Christmas - **BY JUDY OH**



© J.OHX

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:11 (ESV)

Stanza 2 of the hymn "O, Jesus I have promised" by John Ernest Bode:

O let me feel thee near me,
 the world is ever near;
 I see the sights that dazzle,
 the tempting sounds I hear:
 my foes are ever near me,
 around me and within;
 but, Jesus, draw thou nearer,
 and shield my soul from sin.

The hymn speaks about the sights and sounds that dazzle and tempt us to the worldly ways.

Christmas has been hijacked by the world to celebrate Santa Claus, Frosty the snowman, Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer and wild office parties.

As Christians we must know the real reason for celebrating Christmas. The Bible tells us: "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:31-33)

The angel said to the (shepherds), "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2:13-14)

We celebrate Christmas because of Jesus, "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8)

May God bless you this Christmas with true Joy.



WHERE DOES GOD FIT IN?

BY MARTIN CHEAH

Will you be sitting at home this Christmas?

There are many events going on at Christmas. Despite the Coronavirus, here are 10 events happening in Singapore:

1. A Universal Christmas at Universal Studios Singapore
2. Poinsettia Wishes at Gardens by the Bay
3. S.E.A. Aquarium x Pinkfong Baby Shark The Fin-tastic Friends' Jolly Adventure
4. Ride and Dine at Curate Cucina Pisana
5. Festive Afternoon Tea at Lobby Lounge at Conrad Centennial Singapore
6. Big Bus Singapore Christmas Light-Up Tour
7. Night Safari - Evening in the Wild: Christmas Jamboree
8. Meet the World at Jewel this Christmas
9. Nordic Christmas Dream Cruises
10. Snow City Ice Hotel

Many people who are bored being cooped up by the pandemic will see these “Christmas-themed events” as an opportunity for family fun and relaxation.

While they are at it, the so-called “Christmas theme” in these events also presents an inspiration for Christians to raise good conversations on what the real Christmas is all about.

John Lee found an interesting story from the Internet:

A schoolteacher in England tells a charming story. At Christmastime she supervised the construction of a manger scene in a corner of the classroom. The children participated happily in the project. They also enjoyed casting characters for the drama depicting the Nativity.

The teacher noticed one boy was particularly enamored by it all and was forever going back and forth to the scene. At last she asked him if there was anything bothering him. He said, “No.” She said, “Are there any questions you would like to ask?” “Yes,” he said, “what I’d like to know is—where does God fit in?”

It is fine to have healthy gatherings for fun and recreation – in or outside Christmas. As for celebrating an event, let us be true to the meaning of the event we celebrate.

Come, join the celebration of Christmas in a Christian way in church. Bring along your non-Christian friends to share with them the Good News which will be preached. We know that God causes all things to work together for good.



BELIEVE IN GOD'S PROMISES

"Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

Joshua 23:14 (NIV)

The Bible is not a story book. It is God's revelation of His will and character to us. It is His love letter to us, showing us how much He loves us and what He has done for us.

It reveals the inheritance that we have in Him, practical wisdom for purposeful living and the glorious promise of spending eternity with Him.

We can access all these right here on earth the moment we repented of our sins, believed that Jesus died on the cross for us and opened our hearts to receive Him as our Lord and Saviour.

Throughout history, people have tried to prove the Bible false. None succeeded. Every single promise or prophecy in the Bible has come true. When we stand on His promises, we know that we are standing on solid ground.

With His promises, we can live purposefully and victoriously. We can look confidently to the future, knowing that our God reigns supreme and nothing shall prevail against us, simply because God is on our side.

What does God's Word say about this?

- *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:13 (NIV)*
- *Through these he has given us his very great*

and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1:4 (NIV)

- *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)*

What does this mean for practical living?

Our earthly parents desire our good as their beloved children. When they make promises to us, do we try to understand what they say and figure out who they are before we believe what they say?

Surely not! We believe them, then we try to figure out and understand what they have promised and expect to enjoy the fulfillment of those promises.

Now consider God. He is our Father and has given us many precious promises in His Word. It would take us many lifetimes to enjoy them. We simply need to first believe Him for who He is and the unconditional love that He has for us. Only then can we understand the purpose and meaning of all His promises.

To believe in God's promises means to take Him at His word. If He has said it, He will do it. We may not see the result immediately, but His promise will be made good in His perfect timing.

If we believe His promises, we should also be bold and courageous to declare and confess them daily with our mouths. When we believe and claim His promises in faith, we set the stage for God to move and act upon them.

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Reflect and respond to God's Word

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of a Promisor and a Promisee?
2. Why do you still doubt God's promises? Lay them before God and confess your unbelief.
3. Claim and believe one promise from God's Word that speaks to your current life situation and see Him act.

OPEN TALK WITH GOD



By Bryan Tay

Dear Lord,

It's the time of the year again... Christmas!

Many people in the world celebrate Christmas with bright lights, partying, giving and receiving presents.

Adults and children are probably more acquainted with Santa Claus and prefer to welcome his visit to their homes. On Christmas cards and festive buntings, some have even substituted the word "Christmas" with "X'mas"!

I feel angry and sad that Your Name has been conveniently axed. Your greatest act of love in reaching out to save us from hell's fury and offering eternal life with You in heaven is totally unappreciated. In fact, people don't even think You matter!

What saddens me more is that even Christians are not taking the message of Christmas seriously.

It is still pretty much about taking a break, enjoying the partying or just "marking attendance" by going for a Christmas church service. Please forgive me if I had thought or behaved like that.

Give me a fresh revelation of what Christmas means to me, my loved ones and the world. Help me to do my part in celebrating and sharing the true meaning and message of Christmas with others.

Will you do something about it, Lord?

My precious child,

My child, I am glad that you searched your heart and reflected on your own attitude and behaviour towards the meaning of Christmas.

My Word says:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

I need My people to reach out to the unbelievers and share the Good News that My Son, Jesus, has delivered to mankind two thousand years ago.

Christmas is not just a time to tell of My love, it is also a time to share the hope and anticipation of My return to earth once again to take all My people with me to live in the new heaven and new earth. I will come at a time when they least expect. My Word says:

For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24: 38,39)

Now that you know the truth, start sharing the Good News of Christmas!

I will come when you least expect me.



CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Read Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2

1. Name the prophet who said this: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."
 - a. Isaiah
 - b. Jeremiah
 - c. Micah
 - d. Zechariah
2. Which prophet foretold that a virgin shall give birth to a son called Immanuel?
 - a. Isaiah
 - b. Jeremiah
 - c. Micah
 - d. Zechariah
3. Which angel/s announced to Mary and Joseph that the baby was conceived from the Holy Spirit?
 - a. Gabriel
 - b. Michael
 - c. Gabriel and Michael
 - d. An unnamed angel
4. Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem:
 - a. They wanted to deliver baby Jesus in Bethlehem.
 - b. To avoid shame because both were not married.
 - c. They followed the instruction of an angel.
 - d. The trip was necessitated by a census decree from the Roman Emperor.
5. Who decided the baby's name as JESUS?
 - a. Joseph
 - b. Mary
 - c. An angel
 - d. Three wise men
6. The name JESUS means:
 - a. Prince of Peace
 - b. Saviour
 - c. Son of David
 - d. Anointed One
7. When King Herod heard about the new-born baby:
 - a. He wanted to worship the child "King of the Jews".
 - b. He instructed a group of Magi to send his gifts and blessings.
 - c. He wanted to have the baby killed.
 - d. He was unconcerned about it.
8. How did the shepherds find baby Jesus?
 - a. They followed a star.
 - b. They were told in a dream.
 - c. They inquired with villagers in the vicinity.
 - d. An angel apprised them of the baby in a manger.
9. How did the Magi from the East find baby Jesus?
 - a. They followed a star.
 - b. An angel led them.
 - c. They were told in a dream.
 - d. They inquired with the shepherds.
10. Which of the following items did the Magi not bring to Jesus?
 - a. Gold
 - b. Silver
 - c. Frankincense
 - d. Myrrh

The significance of the birth of Jesus Christ is deeply expressed by Charles Wesley's famous hymn "HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING." Here is a portion of the hymn:

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
 "Glory to the new-born King;
 Peace on earth and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled."
 Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
 Join the triumph of the skies;
 With the angelic host proclaim,*

*"Christ is born in Bethlehem.
 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord!
 Late in time behold Him come,
 Offspring of the virgin's womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
 Hail the incarnate Deity!
 Pleased as Man with men to dwell,
 Jesus, our Emmanuel!*

As we celebrate Christmas, we remind ourselves of the important foundation of the Christian faith.