



Pastor's Message

Hello Church, first I would like to thank the ladies and gentlemen who produce this church newsletter. You may think this is no big deal as there are many other church magazines (physical or digital) which you can read. But I would like to assure you that this newsletter is different. It tells you about the news from the church you attend.

Why do we need to know the activities and news which happen in our church? Well, if you consider yourself a member of this church and you treat this church as your family church, you will want to know everything happening here. It's not just about the activities or events, but about the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ whom you know and care about. This newsletter is not just an information hub, but your connection to the Chinese Church. If you are a irregular attendee or visitor of this church, it is a must for you to read this newsletter so that you won't miss out on what is happening at church. When you read the newsletter, I hope you can find encouragement, inspiration, love and belonging that God is truly with us and blessing us abundantly.

The year 2020 is a fearful year. But I like to assure you that it will be less fearful if you live your life with us as a church family. This church has been around in Sydney for the last 50 years. Even though some members have left, moved or died God continues to send in new and faithful members. Many new people, mum, dad, kids, students, and senior found friendship, comfort, support, healing and most of all found GOD in this church. I'd like to encourage you with this bible text,

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

This year, I would like the church to put more effort in caring, empathising, loving and in fellowship with one another. Yes, we still need to keep the law of God. Yes, we still need to do the right things. Yes, we need to serve God and His church, to spread the gospel and the three angels' message to the world. Yes, we need to run the church program. But if we do all these things without loving the people, we are just like a sounding cymbal. Loud and empty, with no substance.

Let us start this loving from within our own family member first. Husbands love your wives. Wives, love your husbands. Parents love your children. Children love your parents (and grandparents). After that, love our church's children, our young people, oversea students, mums, dads, elderly, the single person, divorcees, single parents, sick ones, widows, disabled, poor, homeless and our neighbouring community.

Why do we need to love them?

1 John 3:16 (NIV)

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

How to love our brothers and sisters? Be intentional in getting to know them. Get to know their names, background, life stories, faith, hopes and challenges. Pray with them. Help them in whatever way you can without seeking for rewards. Get in touch with them from time to time. Invite them to your house for a meal or give them a card or a gift during festive seasons. Walk with them in their life. Celebrate with them in their successes. Share but not impose your life to them. Then at the right time, invite them to follow Jesus Christ.

Last few Bible texts for you:

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

Our Thailand Mission Trip



The Thailand Mission Trip was finished on December 19th 2019. During the trip, our church's mission team ran a 4 day vacation bible school (VBS) each morning for the primary students while Pastor Daniel ran his evangelistic program for high school students in the school's church each morning and evening. We were also blessed with the opportunity to visit the nearby orphanage twice during our free time, where we were warmly welcomed, and enjoyed several games with the many children there.



A lot of work was done beforehand, from planning to purchasing materials, practising songs and creating material for use for the VBS. We had planning and team meetings spread out for a year before the trip, and many hours of preparation and testing for the activities and videos. You can find the resources, activities and videos that we prepared here: <https://sites.google.com/view/sccvbs>.



Our main group arrived in Chiang Mai, Thailand on the 12th, with a few other members arriving a few days in advance, and a few arriving on the Sunday before the VBS. We were met by the earlier groups and our contacts from Chiang Mai Adventist School who brought us to the resort we would stay in for the duration of the mission trip. The resort was roughly 10 minutes away from the school and we travelled by school bus (a truck with makeshift seats and a cover) to and fro the two locations. In the school itself, the first week was all about preparation – sorting out materials per team and day, decorating the classrooms we would be using and rehearsing what we would do and say. While we were preparing, the students still had classes ongoing, so we had to be careful not to disturb them.



The vacation bible school program we set up for them was simple, we had 6 locations with 6 different activities, and a combined session at the start and end of the program. We started from 8am and finished at 11am with a break at 10:30. Each member of the team had a role to play, from preparation to running each session. From the youngest workshop leaders (Hayley, Charisse, Timothy) who ran the Chadder video station to the oldest (Roddy, Robert, Phillip) who ran the Bible Blast station, everyone had a task to do.



The rotation of activities consisted of: Song Station, WackyWorks Craft, Hyperspeed Games, Test tube treats, Chadder's Science Cinema and Bible Blast. We had 6 groups which were divided by class and led by their class teachers, rather than our team members as many of the children did not understand English and this let us manage the stations. Each station had a translator to translate our speeches into Thai for the students to understand. The students there were very well behaved. At the end of the VBS, each had memorised their group song and were able to perform it well in the Christmas program.

After the VBS, on Friday, the school had their own Christmas program which we also took part in, singing Christmas songs on stage with our ukulele players, and Matthew did a great job playing Hallelujah on his violin.



Was the trip worth it? Having seen the excitement, the smiles, the students learning the songs and singing them, and the teamwork we had on the trip, I'm sure our team members will all agree that it was. We'll be looking forwards to the next mission trip, which is being planned now, and will likely be in two years. Keep an eye open for it, and be sure to join us then!





AYC 2020

The 3 night 3 days Adventist Youth Conference (AYC) was held in the Arrow on Swanston, where one of the Melbourne gateway church branches worship each week. With an audience of over 200 youths, including those from 12 years to the ripe age of 60, and solid team of speakers, the conference started on a Friday afternoon, with a talk by Pastor Pavel Goia going until past 9pm. The introductory pastoral message was an insightful and humorous talk, bringing in the experiences which strengthened Pastor's life with God and emphasised on how important God is in the life of an Adventist youth. Other speakers included Justin Kim (who talked each morning), Gary Blanchard and Louis Torres.



Workshops started on Saturday, however, we could only attend two of the workshops per person due to time limitations (they were over 3 hours each!) I chose the workshop on “Adventist Identity and Ellen G White” and “Failing your way into success”. Both were much better than I expected, bringing in evidence and justifying their opinions on the topic. The “Adventist Identity..” workshop was held by Justin Torrosian. This workshop explained some of our beliefs (as founded by Ellen White) and explained some proofs of Ellen’s ability to have visions. Many people were sceptical of her visions as it was and is not a common occurrence.



Perhaps the most interesting part was explaining how the proofs used against Ellen White were proven to be false when tested with an unbiased eye. For example, her words were misquoted on many occasions, and taken to mean something it is not. Ellen White once criticised people for buying bicycles, which were at the time a luxury item. Her words were misquoted or cut off to make it seem like she was criticising those who had a bicycle, which is not the case. Instead, she was criticising the expenditure on an unnecessary and impractical luxury item, which was worth a year’s wages at the time. Another ‘proof’ used against her is that her visions were part of a medical condition (seizure). However, a team of neurologists came together to discuss the symptoms of her visions and declared that they do not match those of any mental problem. In addition, her words always make sense and are good words of advice.

“Failing your way into success” was run by Boris Jovinov. He had many interesting experiences to share, such as of how he was assigned as a pastor to a remote area, and spend much time and resources to invite the residents in the area to the church, but only succeeded in getting 18 of them in 3 years. However, he said, failure is part of a learning experience and you can only get better. He also talked at length about Jonah, and how the story of Jonah is actually the most successful evangelistic campaigns of all time. It was interesting to know the details of how he reached success, through a series of failures – running away, trying to die (get thrown overboard), getting swallowed by a fish. And when he did finally obey God out of frustration (that he couldn’t skip this mission!), he

was met with success, which he did not expect. This was also due to God's leading – getting spat out by a fish, which was also one of the 'gods' worshiped by people in Nineveh was a clever plot.

The most memorable part of the event was when teams who went to the streets to outreach (taking surveys and handing out flyers to an evangelistic talk) brought their experiences of the people they met, and how they were successful in bringing one or two interested in God and our Adventist church (in Melbourne). One particular story that stood out to me was of a group of ladies who met another lady on the streets, and as they were talking, they found out that she had left home due to abuse and had nowhere to go. They were able to make a few phone calls and find a safe place for her to stay, while also inviting her to their church. I also liked the story of how another team was explaining to a mom and her son how the church's sabbath and Friday night meetings would not interfere with the son's studies. They talked about another friend's improvement in his studies after he joined their care group, and they instantly had a new member! Overall, it was quite positive to know how willing people were to stop and listen.



If you haven't experienced it before, the AYC is worth going to. The talks are long but insightful and the speakers were quite humorous as well, making the talks a lot better than other conferences I've been to. People of all ages are welcome to attend. In fact, the three 12 year old girls who attended were able to collect 1/5th of the surveys which were collected during the outreach session.

You can see the recordings of the program by going here (link shortened): <https://bit.ly/38fnpWa>

At the end of the program, we were told briefly about the future mission programs which AYC intends to hold later this year. You can find them here: <https://ayc.life/ayc-mission-2020/>



The Secret to Straight A's

by Justin Torossian (from a column in The Sun Gazette 31/1/18)

"Another 'D' on my test...this is the last thing I need!"

Struggling in school had become the norm for Angel, a 10th-grader at Antilles Adventist Academy, and he'd enough. Approaching his teacher after class he asked the million-dollar question, "What can I do to raise my grades?" What Angel was about to Hear he would never forget. "Before studying for any other class, study your Bible." Study His Bible?! As it was, Angel hardly had time for his homework! "But...how can I do that? I'm trying to keep afloat in all my other classes!" Angel answered back incredulously. Little did Angel know, his teacher had just shared the secret he needed!

In Amos 3:7 the Bible says, "Surely the Lord will do nothing unless He reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets." This secret was made clear in 1892 with the publication of a little book called "Steps to Christ." On page 90 it says,

"There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigour to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times."

Angel decided that he would take his teacher's advise, starting his study period with the Bible and then progressing from the most to least difficult subjects. Soon, Angel's grades began to rise, until he ended the semester with five 'A's and two 'B's! Truly, nothing can strengthen our intellect like the study of the Bible.

Now you may be thinking to yourself, "Great! Now I just need to read the Bible before I start my homework and my grades will automatically go up!" Not so fast! Picking up our Bibles and reading them like a news article can't cut it. We need to study the Bible. Here are two ways you can study your Bible:

Compare scripture with scripture. As you read the Bible, other verses you are more familiar with will come to mind. This method of Bible study that God instructs us to use in Isaiah 28:10 will make you a well-rounded, balanced Bible student. The Holy Spirit will help you make connections between Bible passages. Studying the Bible will stretch, challenge, and grow your intellect like nothing else, because it's the living word of God.

Prayerfully reflect on what you read. Take time to seek God in prayer in asking how what you have learned applies to your life. Reflect upon the principles He is teaching you. Ask the Lord to reveal to you things in your life that are not in harmony with His will, and then ask God for power to live up to His high and holy standard.

As you launch out in the adventure of studying your Bible, don't expect instant straight A's. Healthy growth is steady. But rest assured, as you set aside time in your day to spend time in God's presence reading His word, you will be blessed with great results, just like Angel was. Today Dr. Angel Hernandez is a professor of theology at Pacific Union College, where he lives to teach others the power of the Book that transformed his life, unsealing the secret to both straight A's, and life everlasting!

(Pastor Justin Torossian is the great, great, great grandson of James and Ellen White, co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He and his wife Charissa are currently pastoring at Hamilton SDA Church in the NNSW conference)



Red Lentil Dhal

(from Sanitarium: Healthy Fast Food)

Serves 6

250g red lentils, washed	4 ½ cups hot water
3 teaspoons mild curry powder	1 tablespoon oil
1 teaspoon salt	2 medium onions, finely chopped
¼ teaspoon turmeric	3 small tomatoes, each cut into six pieces

1. Place the lentils, curry powder, salt, turmeric and water in a large saucepan. Bring to the boil, then reduce heat to a fast simmer for approximately 30-40 minutes, or until the lentils are tender and the moisture is reduced.

2. Heat the oil in a large frying pan and stir-fry the onion until tender. Add the tomatoes and cook for a further 2 minutes.

3. Add the lentils and cook for a further 3-4 minutes, until the dhal is heated through.

4. Serve over rice, or with roti or pappadams.



The Bird With the Kindly Heart

(from Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories)

Here is the prettiest bird story I think I have ever heard. It's about a little chaffinch that lived - and may still live, for aught I know - at Saundersfoot in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

Saundersfoot, by the way, is a dear little seaside village, with just a few old-fashioned houses and a delightful stretch of sandy beach. A long lane, running between flower-decked hedgerows, separates it from the nearest railway station. I know, because I went there once in search of a friend - and found he had left two hours before I got there! I also missed the chaffinch, and of that I am more sorry still. One stormy day not very long ago this little bird, wearied perhaps by the wind, flew through an open window into one of the houses in the village.

Now it so happened that in the room was a little invalid girl, Kathleen by name, who was delighted to see her little visitor. She gave it some food and cared for it tenderly all the night till the storm was over. Then in the morning the chaffinch flew away.

But the next day, to Kathleen's surprise and delight, it returned, took some food, and flew away again! The next day it did the same, and for quite a time there was not a morning passed that the chaffinch did not come for breakfast.

Then one day the visits ceased, and poor Kathleen thought the bird must surely have been killed. She waited and waited, keeping some food close to the window, but in vain.

A week later, however, the chaffinch came again, but with a wound in its little breast. Kathleen was very sorry for it and nursed it till it was well again, watching it eat from a tiny tray on her bed. They became fast friends.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. One day Kathleen's aunt came into the room while the little girl was asleep, and saw a strange piece of ribbon lying on her hair. She wondered how it could have got there, and Kathleen, when she woke up, said she knew nothing about it.

But the next day the aunt found a piece of pink gauze lying against the child's cheek. They were now thoroughly puzzled, but as they were talking about it, what do you suppose happened? In through the open window flew the chaffinch with another little gift, this time a piece of blue ribbon, in its beak. It dropped the ribbon on the pillow and flew away.

After that this dear little bird with the kindly heart brought, among other gifts, some lace, a snail's shell, some thistledown, a tiny piece of bracken, some coloured wool, and a small curtain ring.

What a lesson in gratitude! Evidently the chaffinch was trying in its feeble way to say thank you for all the sick girl's kindness. And as I heard the story I thought of the Master's words, "She hath done what she could!"