

The Vessel

An official International Church of Shanghai publication

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ICS Family Camp 2015

Charity Golf

Easter Egg Hunt

Outreach: Live Well Shanghai!



From the

Editor's Desk

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Why The Vessel?

Conceived from the verses of 2 Kings 4:1-7: "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbours - empty vessels; do not gather just a few..." the newsletters are to be the vessels of His supernatural blessings and providence. With faith in the Lord, the blessings will not stop, but will instead overflow, so that we can, as vessels, catch and share with others the goodness that God has bestowed upon His people.

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Welcome

to the second blessed edition of *The Vessel* for 2015!

It has certainly been a very blessed second quarter for all of us here at ICS. By His grace, we have been able to do life together and continue to bless the community around us. Thank you Lord!

Inside these pages, you will read of how the Family Camp was a great time of sharing, worship, fellowship, and rest for those of us who went. You will also learn of how the Lord has used us to reach out to the community through events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, and *Live Well SHANGHAI!*, our first ever outreach event targeted at those fresh off the boat.

Every year furnishes a fresh witness to God's faithfulness and providence, and 2015 was never going to be an exception. The ICS Charity Golf Tournament, now in its seventh year, raised a record-breaking CNY 1.085 million for the designated beneficiary, Bless China International, exceeding the expectations of even the most optimistic amongst us. Praise the Lord!

On the same subject of us being a community blessed to bless, this issue also features a write-up on paying the blessings that we have received forward.

In this issue, you will also read Jesus-glorifying testimonies from real people in our midst, and also testimonies by some of our board members on why they are serving. Do keep the testimonies coming, for we overcome the accuser of our brethren by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our designer Jean Seow, and contributor Justin Teo, for their faithfulness through the years, and welcome Nico Huang onboard as our new designer.

We pray you discover God's capacity in you this summer. Be blessed!

Keane

Keane Hoo

ICS

Family Camp 2015

SIANGLIAN KONG, ERIC SOO, BERNARD LEE, MARY GRACE SY

We have just arrived home from camp. Tired, yet inspired, so we just sat there, staring into space, lost in our own thoughts. The next thing we knew, we were singing songs of praise together. Our hearts were full and could only spill out in praise to God.

This year, the camp was held at the *Crowne Plaza Taihu Wuxi*. The staff were attentive, the food was scrumptious, and the hotel rooms spacious and well-appointed. However, whilst a good atmosphere helps, it is external and what matters most was what God had to say to us. It was also an opportunity to show our light as Christians; that people who crossed our paths would leave feeling they have been touched by angels.

The programme kicked off with an extended worship service that was a tremendous blessing. It was simply amazing and God's Spirit could be felt in the room. The song choices were deliberate and the delivery just right without being overly dramatic, thus evoking natural responses from the worshippers. Some were standing, others seated, and a good number were brought to their knees. In the small details like learning the songs by heart, it was obvious that the team was prepared and yet surrendered to the move of the Spirit. The team was truly used to usher the people into the *Throne Room*.

One thing very evident and which I fully appreciate about this year's camp is that it was truly for all.

During one of the sessions, I sat near the translators' table and was struck at how it was not an easy task at all! They had to be constantly alert and on their toes to deliver the message accurately. This care for our Chinese-speaking brethren is incredible and much appreciated indeed.

I was also glad to see Pastor Daniel, who pours out to church members, receiving the word and being recharged just like one of us, another child of God.

The Youth had their own programme and guest speaker. My daughter found it refreshing to have been given a different perspective. Through activities and games, they were challenged to think deeper and she came out of it with a better and clearer picture of Jesus. Worship was also experienced differently as the youth were invited by Pastor Ian Graham to just listen, focus and meditate on God. She also enjoyed getting to know people whom she did not generally hang out with on Sundays. She has declared this year's Family Camp

1

Kids Church in progress.

2

Pastor Carl-Gustav praying over camp participants.

3

A light moment during the main service.

4

Volunteers helping to put up a billboard.



as *the* activity that inspired her and which has put a smile on her face the most. A seed has been planted and she would like to get more involved in church.

The Kids Church was also having their own little party. My son gets all fired up with his regular Sunday worship and often comes home singing and teaching us what he has learnt. In the hotel's close quarters and successive sessions, this was intensified. He shared about "light", that when you have God, you have the light that makes you see. On the second night, his older sister hung out with some friends whilst he and I opted to stay back and order room service. I asked him to say grace and he gave plenty of thanksgiving, including thanking God that his older sister had friends to be with. I was astounded. As a mum, I frankly would not have thought to pray that way!

Pastor Carl-Gustav from Sweden was our main speaker. He was humble, warm-hearted, humorous, and approachable. He shared nuggets of knowledge and profound truths in a funny and engaging manner that drove his message home.

He shared extensively on **God's potential in us**. Amongst the many gems he shared, what stood out for me was his story of bringing four, and later five, kids to church every Sunday and how it wasn't always a walk in the clouds. It was years of struggle but it was an investment in bringing them up in the knowledge of God. We are not perfect and we will fail at some aspect in parenting, but bringing them to church to know God is the best gift parents can ever give to their kids, shared Pastor Carl-Gustav. I can't agree more.

Pastor Carl-Gustav's kids are now all serving in different ministries in their church and I am being blessed by my kids' growth in their own walk with God. Is it worth all the pain and struggle? Absolutely!

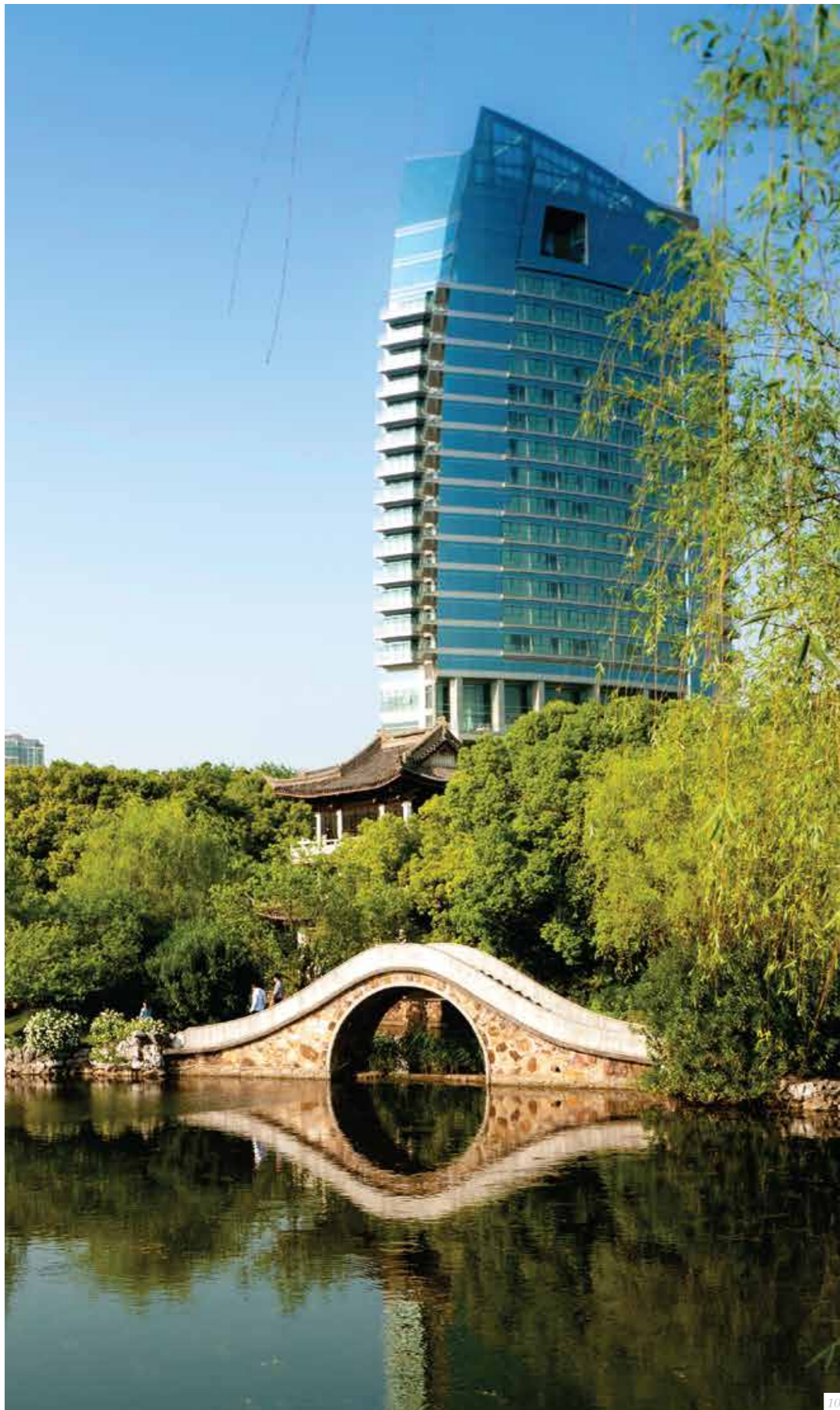
Thinking back, I am still amazed as I know I was actually not supposed to make it to camp this year. My husband had a business trip during that period of time, so that was it. However, there was this niggling feeling at the back of my mind, so I pulled my kids out from school and went for it. I believe that God knows my heart and my yearning to know Him more; He met my kids and me where we were. It was a great experience, a high. It will wear off but I pray that as it does, my continual walk with Him will allow me to stay amazed. Praise the Lord!



Our hearts were full and could only spill out in praise to God.



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Pastor Daniel addressing camp participants at the main service.
- 6
Pastor Carl-Gustav preaching at the main service.
- 7
Pastor Sarah with the kids.
- 8
Pastor Carl-Gustav ministering during an altar call.
- 9
Our Family Camp worship team.



10
*Liyuan Garden, Wuxi, where "Old China" meets
"New China".*
11
Pastor Allan with the youth.
12
*A group of young adults from ICS taking time out
to pose for pictures at Liyuan Garden, Wuxi.*

Testimonies



Grace Chan

But he said to me: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

I believe in the power of faith in Christ, that even faith as small as a mustard seed will bear fruit. Growing up, I was the only Christian in my family. I thank God for keeping me close to Him, even during those times when I had backslidden. I realised while preparing for this testimony that even with the little faith that I have, He still listens and hears my every cry.

You would think obeying God should be easy, but I beg to differ. The decision to obey is easy, but the path of obedience is hard. The enemy will always find ways to cause you to stumble. In fact, one of my biggest trials came when I obeyed Him and decided to come to China.

I started to burn-out and began to stray away from God after serving in the children's ministry for 12 years. The world took over and even though I still prayed, I ignored His calling and did what I wanted to do. However, during one of the lowest points of my life, when I was diagnosed with thyroid papillary carcinoma Stage 1 in 2001 after suffering from stiff neck for a week, I could still feel God calling out to me, and was reminded of what He called me for, to be in China.

The doctor suggested I go for an operation the following day. I went for a second, third, and even a fifth opinion, and all suggested an operation.

Within a week, I had the operation and was told "this is the slowest growing cancer you want to have." So that started my quest to regain my health. I went for two rounds of radiation and the doctor declared me clean in January 2004, or so I thought.

In July 2005, one of the teachers in the ministry asked us to pray for his grandmother who has lung cancer. He mentioned that the cause of the cancer was thyroid papillary carcinoma. I immediately went for a checkup that week because I still had a lump in my neck that has been there since my first operation. Test results indicated there's a possibility that it is cancerous. I had another operation in December 2005. Seven nodes were removed and all tested positive for cancer.

Three weeks before the operation, I was devastated. All my plans for China had to be postponed, if not cancelled as the doctor said I would only recover around April 2006, and I was supposed to be in China by September 2005. Also it meant that I was still not cured of cancer. I mean, I know I have cancer but that was the first time that it really sunk in. I have cancer and I have had it for almost eight years now!

I prayed, and even asked the church for prayers, that God would take away the anxiety because I did not want to go into the operating room scared and anxious. I felt the hand of God leading me through every step. Two weeks before the operation, I was not nervous or scared, and was actually excited to be going for the operation.

I underwent my third radiation therapy in February 2006 and by August 2006, I was in China starting a new job. I was delayed by only 11 months! I went back every year to have my blood-work checked and monitored. On June 2010, my doctor declared me cancer free! Praise God!

I do not know how long I will live on borrowed time but I know that God will be there with me. He has been the footprints in the sand, carrying me through every step I take. I'm not yet done with my journey and I know there are several more obstacles up ahead but I believe that no matter how difficult it may get, God will definitely be there for me. Praise the Lord!



Eric Soo

Almost all the people I've met have asked me why I worship at ICS even though I stay in Pudong, and quite a few have assumed that I've visited a few churches before making my choice. In all honesty, I never did so, and I didn't settle on ICS after shopping in the church supermarket.

The months before coming to Shanghai were rather tumultuous; among other issues, I was offered an opportunity to join an international management programme in my company after a long application process. Despite it being a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I found myself wrestling with the decision, and debating with God. In the two weeks I was given to deliberate on the offer, I had a barrage of excuses, which were all countered swiftly by God.

One of these excuses surfaced when I was at a conference in Malaysia. I told God and myself that I don't know where to go to church in Shanghai, and because of that, maybe, I shouldn't be going to Shanghai. It sounded like a valid reason.

At the end of the night session, I went for the altar call hoping to get a 'clearer' direction and found myself kneeling at the front, bawling. As I wept, I argued and asked God to show me the direction. One of it went, "If you really want me to go, let me know which church I should be going to."

Then, He answered. In my mind, I saw three letters: ICS. After a while, the letters were put into a vision of a building signboard, and as the vision opened up wider, I saw a spacious white building behind it. My senior pastor did tell me of an international church in Shanghai I could go to, but never told me the name of it. So, I just thanked God for it and swept the thought away, counting it as another argument lost.

After a week, I decided to search for those three letters and the results **left me amazed**. I found that there is a church called the *International Church of Shanghai*, which uses the same initials. So, after more deliberation (I'm stubborn in that way), I decided to go there. On a cold March morning last year, I headed to Changning, and have not looked back since.

...I saw three letters: ICS [and] the results left me amazed.

Now, I believe this will be the only church I will call my home away from home in Shanghai. It is truly a place where I feel safe and comforted in a land where they call me an alien. I came with a heavy heart, running on fumes, and lonely, but now I find comfort in the family that is ICS. It is still not easy, but every week, I am reminded, by the smiles at church, the teaching from the pulpit, the company of my cell members, and the care of brothers and sisters, that I am loved and not alone in this. And, that has been what keeps my faith going. Praise the Lord!



Irene Beh

I accepted Christ when I was 14 during evangelism at school. My parents soon learnt about my faith and started persecuting me. I felt like a black sheep in the family. I did not know what to do and started losing faith. Soon afterwards I stopped attending church altogether, as I did not want to antagonise my parents.

In 2011, my husband was asked to relocate to Shanghai for work. A friend commented that it was God's divine appointment. Back then, I didn't know what it meant exactly.

Besides shopping and luncheons, joining a Bible study group was one of the first things I embarked on in Shanghai. I attended every session because I found so much peace and joy in learning His Word and fellowshiping with sisters in Christ. Through the studies, I have learnt to love, to know God and the true meaning of worship. Our Holy God is not just a Redeemer, but also a Restorer. He has taught me to respect my husband as the head of the family. I am very appreciative of the

church's efforts in facilitating the marriage and parenting courses, and to Pastor Daniel for his dedication and encouraging sermons.

In our four years here in Shanghai, my family and I have been so blessed to experience God's unfailing love, provision, and protection. I am very thankful that He brought us here to Shanghai to draw us closer to Him. "For the Lord your God, He is the One with you. He will not leave nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). All praises and glory to our faithful Lord!

With God's grace and mercy, my husband's work contract ends this summer, I thought it was the ideal time to get baptised to confirm and strengthen my commitment to live a godly life. Essentially, I felt that I have never properly buried my old, sinful nature nor have I dedicated my whole self to the Lord. And what better time to do this than on Easter Sunday? Coming up out of the water to signify my being raised to a new life in Christ! I desire to experience both milestones in my Christian life, and lead a victorious life daily.

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from Him. Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I'll never be shaken.

Psalms 62:1-2



Yumi Ayama

I have been with ICS since January 2014. The fellowship has been a blessing and I have been involved with the *Women of Faith* and the *Huge Grace Orphanage*.

I was born and raised in a non-Christian Japanese family. I first learnt about God as our Creator and Jesus as our Saviour when I accepted an invitation to attend Sunday School at Takatsuki Baptist Church in my third grade.

In 1973, my father was posted to Brazil and my family moved with him. For the next 17 years, I did not have a chance to further know about Jesus. I got married in the 90s and ran into many marital and parenting problems that drove me to seek help everywhere. My mind was so contaminated that I was about to commit suicide with my little daughter.

In 1994, my husband's job brought us to Guangzhou. At

that time, many issues remained. The expat life in China in the early 90s was not easy, but I was convinced that it was God's plan for me to meet Him anew in that city. I kept hoping that my life could be changed in China. I just did not know how or when.

During that first year in Guangzhou, I had the chance to fellowship with numerous Christians. I joined a Bible study group and a sister, Kimberly Goh, offered to guide me in a one-on-one study of the Book of John. I still remember how my mind and heart effortlessly absorbed all the Bible verses, as if I were a dry sponge absorbing water.

After a few months of study, in May 1995, Kimberly asked me if I wanted to accept Jesus Christ into my heart. I clearly recall tears of joy filling my eyes as I cried "yes" to accepting Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. I was reborn! Praise the Lord!

Since then, through both the good and rough days, God has always been with me.

My mind was so contaminated that I was about to commit suicide with my little daughter.

A year ago, an accident happened on my side of the family. As an only child, it was a very sad and difficult time. Many important decisions had to be made in a second. Because it was so sudden and unpredictable, everyone thought it was impossible for me to handle and they felt so sorry for me. But God loved me so much and not for a second did He abandon me. I chose to completely humble myself and cede control over to Him. I believe He took care of the problem by providing the strength, patience, knowledge, finances, peace and everything that I needed to overcome the situation. The Word of God became alive for me. One by one, **what seemed impossible was cleared and solved.**

It took me almost 20 years to reach this point in my faith. As I was moving almost every three years, I missed several opportunities to be baptised. Or, I might not have been fully ready for some reason or another. However, I believe the timing is perfect, according to God's timetable for me, for **He knows me better than I know myself.** I have grown in my walk with Him, and rededicated my life to Him.

I am so grateful for this opportunity to be baptised at ICS. As I rose from the water, my sinful nature died and I rose with Christ Jesus as a new creation! Praise the Lord!

Pay it Forward

When I was seven or eight years old (the years get foggy as we get older), I remember riding my bicycle around the housing estate every afternoon together with other young neighbours. We would search for sand-pit playgrounds to play on the swings, visit aquariums to look at fish, or drop by the local provision store to buy snacks.

On one particular occasion, my bicycle chain came off and I had a tough time getting it back on. Since we were near the only petrol station in our estate, I rolled my bicycle over and asked one of the scruffy-looking mechanics if he could help. He took a look, poked his screw driver here and there, tugged the chain and *voilà!* The bicycle chain was back on, good as new.

I looked at the mechanic and thanked him. Then I asked him how much was it going to be for fixing my bicycle. He smiled and told me this repair was free of charge. But he added that in the future if I ever saw a patient alone in the hospital who needed help, I should not forget this day when someone first helped me. Pay it forward.

Wikipedia says "Pay it forward' is an

expression describing the beneficiary of a good deed repaying it to others instead of to the original benefactor".

There was a movie some years back titled "Pay It Forward" which took the concept and scaled it up by asking those who were blessed by one, to continue to bless three others, resulting in a multiplier effect.

In the Bible, we see many acts of kindness. One of the most quoted is in Luke 10:33-35, where Jesus shares the parable of the good Samaritan. The good Samaritan helped a man beaten by robbers and left half dead by the road side. A priest and a Levite had passed by him but offered no assistance. The Samaritan not only rescued him and took him to an inn to dress his wounds, but also paid the inn keeper to care for this injured man while he was away.

We all have received blessings from others with no request to repay them for the good deeds done. But as a community, let us pay it forward by helping others, many others. And request that they do the same. For indeed, we are a community blessed to bless others. Praise the Lord!

The hunt for Easter faith



What a glorious truth it is that He is risen, and that come rain or shine, He lives!

Among my church friends, one question was repeated for days leading up to the big event. Some shook their heads in doubt, pointing to the forecast on their phones, while others simply nudged their chins at the grey sky. The collective prognosis was at best uncertain. When asked, I simply deflected: *"No idea... what do you think?"*

As Sunday drew near, the weather apps grew even more unreliable - the probability of showers seemed to change every few minutes. At times the sky looked as if it were about to burst, but didn't. And at other times, rain fell when you least expected it.

I started to think that this might be a test - to stop searching for answers in my smartphone and tap instead into a higher power.

So I prayed. I asked God for a clear rainless Easter Sunday so that the kids could hunt for eggs without umbrellas or rain boots.

And after I prayed, I checked the forecast... again.

Early on Easter morning, a group of volunteers donned invisible bunny ears and began the formidable task of hiding 5,000 candy-filled eggs in the gardens of the hotel. A torrent of water broke from the sky while they were still at it, drenching the clothes (but not the spirits) of the ICS Easter bunnies. The team persevered through the rain, and within an hour, the greenery of the hotel grounds was speckled with pink, blue, and purple dots. Some eggs sat boldly in plain sight, while others slouched near rocks, on pebbled paths and even the underbelly of bushes, as a vain effort was made to blend the eggs into the surroundings.

By the time service began at 10am, the rain had mostly stopped, but I still could not get a clear read on the clouds. Apparently, my test was not over yet.

As we bowed our heads for prayer, heavy rain suddenly pounded on the roof of our pitched tent. The sounds lent an urgency to Pastor Daniel's prayer, and that question inevitably came back to mind: *Will it stop in time?*

And it actually did! Just like it did the year before, and the year before that. The whole time that I was wondering about the rain, the Lord already had an answer.

At the end of the service, I stepped outside with palms to the sky, partly in praise and, I confess, partly to check for scattered sprinkles. Of course, there were none. And before I knew it, my kids were off running toward the trees with a bag of popcorn in one hand and a plastic pouch for Easter eggs in the other.

Thinking back on that week - Holy Week - I wonder which questions may have been on the minds of the disciples during the three days that Christ was entombed. There were no resurrection apps to check. No websites to consult on the probabilities of His ascension. All they had were His words. They were disheartened and struggled to come to terms with what has happened. What a great relief it must have been for them to see Him again. What a glorious truth it is that He is risen, and that come rain or shine, He lives! Praise the Lord!

Live Well Shanghai!



ERIC SOO



The Saltshakers cluster set out to organise *Live Well SHANGHAI!*, ICS' first ever outreach event targeted at foreigners fresh off the boat, in late March.

We have all been there before, feeling lost when we first arrived; not knowing how to navigate life in this pulsating megapolis of more than 20 million people.

It was our hope that we could make a difference, however small, in the lives of these newly arrived expats through this event, and integrate them into our ICS community.

Having prayed and committed the event to the Lord, we went about brainstorming and planning for the event. Flyers were specially designed, testimonies prepared, speakers recruited, and useful information collated.

A week before the event, we went as a group to expat hangouts in town, knocking on the doors of restaurants and cafes, and asking for permission to place promotional materials specifically targeted at foreigners, at their premises.

The task was certainly not easy, and it was truly wonderful to see a group of young adults braving rejection and **placing their faith in the Lord**, that somehow, the flyers would be picked up by those whom He wanted to touch.

Short of setting up the booths at the church office itself, the preparatory work was completed. The group again prayed and committed the event to the Lord, and were in agreement that if this event was to succeed, God has to show up. And He did! Thank you Lord!

1
A cheerful volunteer manning one of the booths.
2
Attendees listening to one of the talks given.

More than 15 people actually turned up, listening to the talks, freely interacting, and visiting the various booths set up to answer queries on issues related to **careers, housing, education, and how to set up a business** in Shanghai.

At last count, three of the guests are now actively plugged into ICS cell groups. Praise the Lord!

It was certainly a commendable start. Many great movements in the annals of Christian history have had small, seemingly insignificant beginnings. In fact, when the Church was first established in Jerusalem, believers met in homes for fellowship and worship. Few back in those days could have imagined the growth of the church in modern times.

Likewise, by the grace of God, ICS has grown from strength to strength from our humble beginnings seven years ago, meeting in a small ballroom at New Garden Hotel.

As we continue to take new ground for the Lord in Shanghai, let this be the first of many impactful outreach initiatives by ICS, for we are a community blessed to bless! Praise the Lord!

Know our Board Members!



Now, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37-39

These were the Scripture verses I meditated on in a hotel room in Stockholm, Sweden, on the morning of September 10 last year. After that, I went down to the restaurant for breakfast and upon returning, discovered that my bag was stolen. Everything I needed for the convenience of this life were in that bag: passport, driving license, credit cards, cash, frequent flyer and loyalty programme cards, glasses, iPad, laptop, and internet banking security tokens.

I was able to call and suspend all my Internet banking and credit card facilities before any damage was done. Thank God for He knew what lay ahead of me and prepared me through the morning devotional before I walked into the situation. The Scripture verses I meditated on immediately came to mind and ministered to me.

As Christians, we don't have to go through a trying time all alone. I messaged my wife and my cell group and asked them to pray for me. I was given a temporary document to travel back to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The process of replacing a lost Malaysian passport takes a minimum of five working days, but due to a series of important meetings that required my attendance, I needed my passport back in three days. This is virtually mission impossible in the natural.

However, **I knew my God was and is still bigger than the bureaucratic process** in front of me. I prayed and asked God to grant me His favour in the process of

applying for a new passport. During the five-day process, the computer at the immigration office crashed, and as a result, they lost my digital photo and I had to start the five-day process all over again.

I started to think of all the hassle I am going through. I asked why of all days did the computer choose to crash on this day, and why of all the people in the hotel, the thieves chose to steal my bag. A sense of anger and frustration bubbled up.

The Holy Spirit reminded me of the Scripture verses I meditated on earlier in the week. He also reminded me that He also loves the people who stole my bag and asked me to pray for them which I then proceeded to do.

It was not easy to wake up in the morning of the third day and go to the immigration office as if my passport was already ready for collection. My mind was constantly asking, "What if they don't issue the passport to me?" A small little voice in my heart reminded me that **I cannot pray and then doubt what I have prayed.**

The process of showing up on the third day, asking for my passport, waiting, and then persistently following up for the passport was like The Parable of the Persistent Widow as told by Jesus in Luke 18.

God is so good. He is able to move hearts and hands to work in our favour. I received my passport in three days, or if you start counting from the day after the computer crashed, in less than 24 hours. Praise the Lord!

We serve an almighty God. He is bigger than the seemingly hopeless situation we may find ourselves in. We must take heart like Caleb and Joshua. Rather than seeing the enemies like giants and themselves as grasshoppers, they saw the goodness and faithfulness of God. For He says in Jeremiah 32:27: "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" Glory be to God!

Why serve?



Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2:5-7

I had been a lukewarm Christian for many years. Through the years, I read the Bible sometimes and most certainly did not put His word into practice. However, I did open up my home to host cell group in Singapore as I respected my CG leader. Once my wife and I moved to the US in 2003 for work and subsequently to Shanghai in 2006, joining a CG or serving God in any capacity never crossed my mind. So what changed?

It started with obedience. I began to know more about God in 2008-2009 through attending ICS and listening to Pastor Daniel. I heard God telling me to serve, to open up my home to host CG. I was very reluctant but chose to obey. Before each CG meeting, as I prepared our house with my wife, and after each CG meeting as we went about tidying up the house, I would be praying. Praying to die to myself and serve, to humble myself, to obey God.

From 2010, as we started to host and serve in CG, I began to experience God in my life, and also in the lives of many other CG members. I see lives transformed by God. That brought tremendous joy and satisfaction. In our CG, we learn about God, pray and journey with each other, have fun and experience God in our lives. Love God, love people (Matthew 22:37-39).

I also realised that as I serve Him, He helps to multiply my time. I am more efficient at work and still have quality time with family. It is a miracle as I not only travel for business on most weekdays, up to 75% of the year, but also my job scope expanded and I face many challenges at work. Despite all these, He has led me to

serve in the Missions Ministry, go for a G1 trip, serve in CG, cluster, and on the church board.

As I serve Him in church and work hard in my business, I learnt the importance of surrendering the outcome to Him (Colossians 3:23 and Matthew 11:28-30). I learnt to draw strength from Him, and have joy in serving. Indeed when I was weak, He became my strength. It's always when I come to the end of myself, I find the beginning of God. Now, instead of relying on my own strength, I am learning to surrender to Him upfront.

God's rest is found in obedience and surrender. Serving and working hard but not striving for personal gain. It is for His glory and credit and not for my own.

God opened my eyes to see His goodness and love for me and my family. As I became consistent in my quiet time, this allowed Him to speak to me through His word. As I know Him more, He speaks to me more, and in turn, I love Him more and enjoy serving Him. God then becomes my top priority.

Reflecting back, I used to serve God when I first became a Christian in 1986. But I relied on my strength and my relationship with God was inconsistent. I was inconsistent in my daily quiet time with Him. I now realize it is most important to know God, to be consistent in my daily quiet time with Him, reading His word and praying. I encourage those who are serving to spend time with Him daily to draw on His love and strength. For those who are thinking to serve in church, don't hesitate. You will benefit more than you give. You can never out-give God.

Finally, the example that Jesus gave us by washing His disciples' feet inspires me. He who is God, took the nature of a servant because He loves us. Jesus also gave us the parable of the talents. We are accountable to Him. (Matthew 25:14-30). I want to hear Jesus say: "Well done good and faithful servant."



1

For me, life is about making a contribution. I try to follow Christ's example. **He came to serve, and not to be served.** I want to become more like Jesus each day. To do that, I must serve. It has become part of who I am in Christ.

2

In response to Christ's love for me. He loved me enough to die for me. I want to serve Him in response to that love.

3

As part of my tithe. All that I am, and all that I have, have been given to me by Christ to be used for His glory. Serving is a way to bring my first fruits into the storehouse.

4

As a spiritual discipline. Donating money to the church is a sacrifice, giving up something of value. It is a way of acknowledging that the money is not really mine, but that I am only a steward of it. Time is more precious to me than money. I need to give it away to acknowledge that it is not really mine, but that I am only a steward of it.

5

To practice humility and to guard against selfishness. Serving others is a great antidote to both pride and self-centredness.

6

Because ICS means so much to me. My time at ICS has helped me to grow spiritually. My life in Shanghai has been made infinitely more enjoyable because of my involvement with ICS. I serve in grateful response out of a sense of profound gratitude.

7

In recognition that I have been given much in the way of intellect, talent, and abilities. To whom much is given, much is expected. I want to be a faithful servant.

8

Because it is fun and exciting to be part of something alive and growing. How can anyone sit on the sidelines when they can be part of a winning team! I want to be in the game!

9

The rewards of service – meeting new people, developing friendships, feeling part of a community, **having a feeling that my life has purpose.**

10

Being around other people who are committed to Christ, who are servants, who are leaders; it is inspiring and helps me to grow.

2015 ICS

Charity Golf

DEMI CHEN

CNY 445,133 in 2013, CNY 625,167 in 2014, and... CNY 1.085 million in 2015! No, we're not talking about the rising home prices, or that of other worldly material possessions, but rather, what ICS, as a church, has raised through our annual Charity Golf Tournament to aid designated beneficiaries. In the last seven years, we had raised a total of CNY 3.33 million. All glory to God!

There were gasps and loud cheers when Pastor Daniel announced the staggering net sum we raised for *Bless China International* this year. It not only dwarfed the targeted amount (CNY 600,000) and exceeded the expectations of even the most optimistic amongst us, it also validated what Pastor has been preaching all along: if it is God's idea, He will bless it, pay for it, and it will come to pass. Hallelujah!

The hand of God was very evident throughout this record-breaking endeavour. It was a feat that was certainly not accomplished by human will and effort alone, but by the grace of God. There were rainy days leading up to the tournament on June 5 and rain was also forecasted for the day itself. However, for the second consecutive year, the 113 golfers who turned out and played were blessed with perfect playing conditions, with balmy temperatures and calm winds.

The great day of golf and fellowship wound down with an auction of items provided by our generous sponsors. The items included an original autographed Lewis Hamilton cap, Ferragamo ties, a Philips Air-Fryer, BH exercise machines, TaylorMade golf sets with bags, Bohemian crystal glassware, to name just a few.

What was especially noteworthy about this year's event was how we as a community rallied around the cause.





Donors could identify the act of giving CNY 1,000 with directly helping to give someone an artificial limb. We managed to get close to 20 corporate sponsors, some of which have been supporting this event faithfully through the years. There were also many individual donors (nearly 70), some anonymous, and some from overseas through personal contacts.

In the last seven years, we had raised a total of CNY 3.33 million.

A company even encouraged staff to participate as part of their corporate social responsibility agenda. To top it all, someone from ICS **bought all the remaining unsold sponsor tickets**, ensuring that for the first time, all the sponsor tickets were sold, raising CNY 200,000 just from the sale of these tickets.

The organising committee would like to thank God, and all sponsors, donors, and golfers for their generosity!

Nobody won this year's hole-in-one prize sponsored once again by *ITAL Maserati* – a *Maserati Quattroporte V6*. But the real winners were the many amputees in rural parts of China who were blessed with artificial limbs, and those of us privileged enough to partner with the Lord to be a blessing to them. Praise the Lord!

1
Cheerful golfers striking a pose.
2
The Maserati Quattroporte V6 sponsored
by ITAL Maserati.
3
A golfer preparing to strike the ball.



Bible trivia

There are
30
books of the
Bible in this paragraph.

Can you find them?

This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much he passed it on to some friends.

One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves.

There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new sales record. The local paper, The Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "the books are all right there in the plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus, there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in the paragraph waiting to be found. All the best!