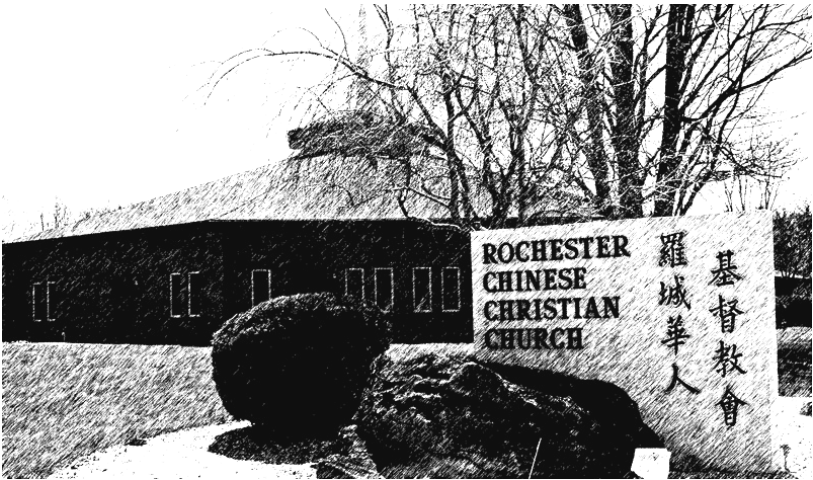


Rochester Chinese Christian Church

ECHO

December 2008 Volume 26 No. 2



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Church Goals (2008-2010)

Glory to God Alone

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)...

- * by **growing** in our understanding of and love for the great doctrines of Scripture and the knowledge of Christ (Ps.119:97);
- * by **honoring** the Word of God and prayer in humility, conviction of sin, and repentance, as the means of grace for the transformation of our lives (Rom.12:2);
- * by **developing** a biblical world and life view, a heavenly-minded outlook, and personal character worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil.1:27);
- * by **encouraging** mutual exhortation toward each other's spiritual welfare, as well as concern for each other's all-around well-being (Heb.10:25); and
- * by **strengthening** our conviction that the gospel of Christ is the only means of salvation, and our proclamation of it locally and worldwide (Acts 4:12).



Rochester Chinese Christian Church
羅城華人基督教會



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(585) 872-6708
www.rochesterccc.org

Pastor 牧師
Mitchell R. Herring 韓澤民
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<p>English Sunday Worship 9:30 am</p> <p>English Sunday School 11:15 am</p> <p>Call the church for other fellowship, bible study & youth group meetings</p>	<p>中文主日學 上午九時三十分</p> <p>中文主日崇拜 上午十一時十五分</p> <p>欲知其他團契聚會 查經班，請電教會</p>
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Rochester Chinese Christian Church West
羅城西區華人基督教會

Located at
Henrietta Wesleyan Church
70 Thompson Road
Rochester, NY 14623

Pastor 牧師
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主日崇拜
Sunday Worship
下午 4:00 - 5:15 pm

主日學
Sunday School
下午 5:20 - 6:15 pm



The Signs of the Times

"Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"

Matthew 16:3b

Pastor Mitchell R. Herring

Finally, for the first time since my son was born and the first time in 28 years, our favorite baseball team, the Philadelphia Phillies, won the World Series. Actually, they are the losingest team in baseball history going back to the late 1800s, with over 10,000 losses. O the heartache! But this year, we just laughed at that. On Friday October 31 there was a parade in Philadelphia, with over a million people lining the streets. Excitement was everywhere. Strangers were hugging each other. Parents kept their children home from school. Many took off from work to be at the festivities. People spoke of how the young ones would tell *their* children, in years to come, about this unforgettable day. Late in the afternoon, after the parade, the players filed into the stadium and onto a platform with their families. Nine players addressed the jubilant crowd. The eighth, one of the most popular, came to the mike and shouted "World Champions!" The crowd roared. Then he shouted it again, but this time, to everyone's shock (and sadly, for many, amusement) he inserted a profanity between the words "World" and "Champions."

I don't have time to spend all day watching parades, but I did log on late in the afternoon for a few minutes to share a bit in the excitement. But when I heard that remark, I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. Did I just hear what I think I heard? We liked this player. We cheered for him. In his first major-league at-bat back in 2003, he hit a grand slam home run, and my son and I just happened to be in the stands that day to see it. So at that remark, I was dazed, and filled with a terrible sick feeling, a melancholy and heaviness of heart that lasted until the next day. To make things worse, by that evening over half of the many who contributed comments on a blog saw nothing wrong with the remark. "The excitement of the moment! Just expressing his emotion! We're the world champions; we have the right!" Now it's not for me to judge one who is not a Christian for how he talks in private with his friends, or in the locker room with his teammates. But this was in a full

stadium in front of over 45,000 people; broadcast live, nation-wide; a family event; many children; and with the players' own wives and children seated on the platform behind him. Where is common sense? Where dignity, respect and consideration? Where discernment, good taste, and good judgment? Where is cool? That was decidedly "uncool!" It is sad that one cannot celebrate without the need to resort to such vulgarity.

Of course, like sin in general, obscenity is nothing new. What is new is that it could be uttered in such a forum, and worse, with the *approval of so many!* This is indeed a "sign of the times." It tells us that in these times, hearts are becoming more self-obsessed, hardened, insensitive, coarse, and vulgar. There is a decline in the sense for what is proper. Distinctions between what is acceptable and not acceptable, the sacred and the ordinary, the formal and the casual are becoming more blurred and even disregarded. In our thinking, demeanor, and speech, there is less and less regard for context, setting, and occasion.

Here is another venue, and another sign. An Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship staff worker at Washington University in St. Louis was meeting with a group of bright, high-achieving students in a coffee shop one day. Yet after chatting with them for an hour or two, he reflected, "they were without idealism...reluctant to commit themselves...irreverent to anything sacred, and disrespectful of all authority. They were apathetic and bored..." Later, on the streets outside the church office, he was chatting with some gang members who were involved in drugs and all sorts of petty crime. He said that as he talked with them, he realized he could describe them in the same way! This too can be traced back to the de-sensitization and hardening of the heart. Normally when we think of cultural decline, we refer to the more obvious immorality such as the acceptance of abortion and the homosexual lifestyle, the increase in infidelity and divorce, and fragmentation of the family. But this is only surface. The root problem is the heart (Mt. 12:34; Mk. 7:20-22).

The implication for the church today is very serious. Due to this hardening, it is becoming more difficult to reach others with the gospel of Christ. People are less willing to hear, less interested, less responsive, and less inclined to believe. Even for those who profess faith, for many it will be superficial and self-focused. Yet in all of this, the Lord has given us a tremendous opportunity. While we pray for a response to the gospel, our primary concern is faithfulness: "...*It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*" (1 Cor. 4:2). As we recognize the increasing hardness

around us, we ourselves need to become softer, more sensitive, and more open to Christ--commitment to His Word, His righteousness in our lives, and to prayer. These things then translate into faithfulness to His gospel and His church.

Let us seek the Lord to open our eyes to the signs of the times, so that we can respond appropriately and prepare ourselves to meet the challenge. Let us beware, lest we be "blind guides of the blind" (Mt. 15:14). The only way to avoid this trap is to ourselves discern clearly not only the signs of the times, but also Christ before us. Then we can be faithful to see clearly, and point others to the Savior.

"When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). In context, the implied answer is no. But in our midst, by His grace, may it be a resounding "Yes!"



A Gift from God

"I thank my God every time I remember you."

Philippians 1:3

Patrick Ho

Rochester, Sunday late morning July 13, 2008

I flipped open my cell phone. The time was 11:13 am. The Chinese worship service was about to begin. Normally I would turn my cell phone off during worship services. Instead I had an urge to leave it on vibrate. So I did. Sometime in the middle of the service, the cell phone vibrated. I rarely get calls on Sunday mornings. Curiously I peeked at the phone. It was from my sister Elaine in Toronto. Instinctively I knew something must have happened with our parents. I sneaked out the side door of the sanctuary to answer the call. She told me that Dad was taken to emergency and I should come up as soon as possible. Her voice was choked up with emotion. No question asked, Georgina and I embarked on a trip to Toronto with heavy hearts and uncertainties. I had long dreaded and feared the day I would lose my father. I would not know how to handle this loss because I have never lost someone so close to me. I prayed for the Lord's mercy and healing hands but ultimately, His will be done.

Toronto, Sunday early morning, July 13, 2008

Mom looked at the alarmed clock. The green neon-painted hands showed the time was about 8:30. Mom turned around and saw that Dad was still sleeping. He usually gets up around six o'clock. Mom thought it was rather unusual. She nudged him with a couple of gentle pushes. Dad said he was very tired but he wanted to get up. Mom helped him up and he brushed his teeth. After sitting down at the dinner table, he was too weak to get up. Mom did not know what to make of his condition. Dad had no pain, just tired. Mom called my sister who agreed to come right over. A few minutes later, there was a knock on the door. Wondering how my sister could have come over in such a short time, she answered the door anyway. Standing outside the door was the nurse of the senior housing complex. She was just dropping by to see how my Dad was doing. As soon as she saw Dad, she summoned an ambulance immediately. The ambulance staff had to take my father to the nearest Scarborough Grace Hospital instead of the farther Scarborough General Hospital where he had his prior treatments. Only then we realized how close we were of losing him. During the next couple of hours the doctors and nurses were busy hooking Dad

up with all sorts of wires, tubes and drips to try to stabilize his dangerously low blood pressure and blood oxygen level. My sweet sister, wanting me to be at Dad's bedside soon but at the same time worrying that I would drive too fast on that three hour trip to get to the hospital, called repeatedly to find out where we were. It would be safe to say that those few hours must have been the longest few hours in her blessed life.

Looking back, God's mercy was sufficient for us. He sent the nurse to "drop by" to get Dad to the hospital in the nick of time. Through the hands of the doctors and nurses He stabilized my father, and prompted me to leave my cell phone on vibrate so I would not miss my sister's telephone call. All these events worked together so that I can be at my father's bed side for the last time while he was still conscious. Other people would call these events a coincidence. As a Christian, I believe without a doubt that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.

The smell of a mixture of alcohol, cleaning and antiseptic solutions overwhelmed my senses as I exited the elevator on the third floor of the hospital. My father was in the cardiac ICU section. The sound of an air pump grew as I approached the room. He was connected to a device to force oxygen into his lungs that were filled with fluid. My father's condition was caused by a bladder infection that in turn caused kidney failure resulting in a build up of fluid in his lung and heart. As I whispered in his ear that I arrived, he acknowledged with a smile with his cracked and dried lips. It was painful for me to watch him laboring to breathe with the pressurized mask. I prayed with tearful eyes that the Lord would give him comfort. As I was praying, an embracing peace flowed through me as I recounted the Lord's blessings. At the age of 83, with a body that had been through prostate cancer in 1999, rectum cancer in 2000 and lung cancer 2001, the Lord healed him and granted him additional years in his life. It was only by the grace of God that he lived to see his oldest grandson Jeremy graduated from college, attended his wedding and was proudly promoted to great-grandfather twice. His second grandson Timothy has also just graduated from college and has won the championship of the college bowl in his field of study of which grandpa was thrilled to find out. Amazingly it was only about a week ago that we had a family reunion in Toronto. We had the joy of four generations spending a short vacation together where the great grand-kids running and playing around the smiling great-grandpa. My tears of sorrow turned into comfort as my heart was filled with thanksgiving to our Father in Heaven for this precious memory.

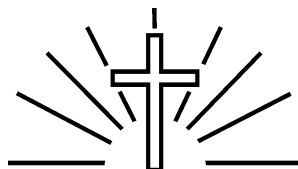
Earlier this year, my Dad was diagnosed with melanoma. Recently, the cancer spread to the lymph nodes. The doctors could only offer us help in determining the best quality of life for my Dad for the remaining eight to nine months. It is beyond what medicine could do at his age. Even if my Dad was healed from this infection, there would only be more pain from the cruel ravaging of the spreading cancer. The word of Moses in Psalm 90:12 came to my mind. "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." We have a Heavenly Father who reigns over life and death and He loves us as His children. The wisdom we need is to acknowledge and surrender to His sovereignty. With that I come to accept that my Dad would be leaving me very soon but with the hope that we will meet again one day in the midst of the glory of our Lord.

Toronto, Monday, July 14, 2008

The day was very windy. The trees outside the windows were bowing and fluttering as if they were pleading for relief. My heart was heavy too, pleading the Lord for healing. As the day went on, my Dad drifted into unconsciousness. Our family stayed at his bedside. We prayed and sang hymns together to reassure him and to comfort one another. The Lord took him away peacefully about 15 minutes before midnight. I remembered that I did not breakdown as I thought I would. Instead, the Lord granted me peace and strength to share the Lord's blessings on the passing of my Dad.

Very often we refer to children as gifts from God but very rarely do we hear people referring to parents as gifts. We have no choice which family we are born into. As a parent myself, I know that I have my flaws. As a son to my parents, I have my flaws. Our Lord accepts our flaws as who we are and sent His son Jesus to redeem us. With that I accept my Dad as who he was. Looking back at his life and the parts he played in my life, he is truly a precious gift to me from God.

May the name of our Heavenly Father be glorified and the blessings of parents as gifts from God be recognized.



Got Plans? How about God's?

"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."

Proverbs 16:9

Mazie Tai

If you were to ask me in the summer of 2000 where I'd be today, I'd probably tell you the following five year plan (abridged):

In four years, I would graduate from Northwestern University's Honors Program in Medical Education – continuing on to complete a MD at the Feinberg School of Medicine. Upon completion of medical school, I would then complete a fellowship – either in the area of Ophthalmology (at Johns Hopkins) or Neonatal Surgery (at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia).

God Had Other Plans

To achieve these goals, I tried to do all the right things. I went on as many medical/hospital related internships possible starting as early as freshman year of high school. My first medical/hospital related job was assisting a professor with Alzheimer's research; I sliced and stained rabbit brains for research purposes that summer after freshman year.

Fast forwarding to junior year in high school, it came time to apply for colleges. I applied to three schools (i.e. Northwestern because that's where I wanted to go, U of Illinois because that was my backup, and Loyola because they filled in the application for me!). Devastatingly, I did not get accepted to Northwestern. Disappointment came and went, and Illinois it had to be!

Fast forwarding yet again – this time to freshman year of college – I continued to run the path of getting into medical school. I tested into an honors biology program at the U of I and was ecstatic! The program was tough and everyone that graduated from the program almost always got into medical school. As I got further and further in the program, I realized that I didn't have the same passion that everyone else had in the class. I still got good grades but I felt confused. What was I doing there? Is God calling me to do something else? Long story short, I changed my major sophomore year in college after having completed all of my pre-med classes (...just in case right?) and fortunately still graduated in four years.

Junior year came and I decided to take a student job at a software

company in campus town. I, along with a couple other students, was hired to be a student helper – I later found out that I was hired because the admin who hired me thought that “I must have an interesting personality (just like hers) if I had sliced rabbit brains for a whole summer.” The student helpers were told that every Tuesday, the VP of Operations came to the office and that she hated that the office microwave was dirty. Nobody volunteered to clean it so I did. Every Monday night I would clean it out and supposedly every Tuesday, the VP would come to the office. A month later, I received an email from the admin (who hired me) expressing the VP’s gratitude for the clean microwave. The following week, I was promoted from microwave cleaner to software tester.

Fast forwarding some more, I would graduate from U of I with a degree in healthcare management and start a job with a public company as a business analyst that tested benefits related software.

Somewhere in between all of this, I met my future husband (Lawrence) who would later get a job in Rochester. I wondered how God would reconcile our long distance relationship.

Life at the software company had its ups and downs. Eventually, long hours of repetitive work and unusual team dynamics outweighed meaningful work and free meals. During this period of time, Lawrence had found a job in Rochester that he enjoyed. I was at a crossroads.

I asked my small group at the time to pray for me and eventually felt led by the Lord to apply to grad school here in Rochester. I would later graduate from RIT, and receive an offer from a local company. I later found out that my old company is a business partner of theirs – that is probably one of the reasons they hired me, and the rest, as they say, is history.

“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

1 Peter 2:1-3

Friends, there are still many times that I have doubts about the present and the future. I hope that you will pray for me about this. However, looking back in my short life, God has placed specific events – one after the other – to get me to where I needed to be

today. The high school internship (brain slicing) got me a microwave washing job that got me a software job, which led me to the job I have today. Maybe I'm not the hot shot surgeon I wanted to be but I have no reason to envy. God had planned for me to be where I am today – and I will continue to serve here until told otherwise. I have tasted the Lord – and the Lord is good.

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

James 4:13-14

I don't know what will happen tomorrow but I can look back on my life and see that God has a plan. It is not by my own hands but it is God's hand that is pushing and pulling me where I need to be.



The Battle Is Not Yours, But God's
(2 Chronicles 20:15)
Daphne's Sichuan Trip (Jul. 31 – Aug. 8)

Daphne Wang

Many people often asked, "How do I know God's will?" Well, to me, God put his desire in me which, I know, does not come from me.

In May, right after the earthquake in Sichuan Province, China, Rochester Chinese Christian Church held an urgent prayer meeting dedicated to this event. I felt God wanted me to go and help, and soon it became my desire. Ever since that day, I was actively searching for the opportunity to join a Christian group serving the earthquake area. After several unsuccessful attempts, I gave up the search. One of my best friends, also my mentor, introduced me to Cypress, a Christian organization formed in 2007 by a group of scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs. At the same time, God opened the door for me to travel to Jinan for business so I could save the travel expense between the U.S. and China.

August 1, 1st day with Cypress

I was assigned to translate Cypress's reconstruction plan for the communities affected by the earthquake. Out of everything else I thought I could do, translating documents has never come across my mind. I thought I would be comforting the sick and teaching the children, but not sitting in the office writing synopsis and proposals.

It was quite a challenge to go through the 1st day as a volunteer in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province. I had so many questions in my mind to God:

"Is this what you want me to do Lord? Is there anything else that I should pursue?"

How about people here in Chengdu? Do they still feel the pain?

Should I go out to preach the gospel to them?

After rebuilding the communities, are they going to forget you, my Lord? Are they going to go back to worship their idols?

What could we leave them? A mark of you? Should we also build churches in these communities affected by the earthquake?

No, not Buddha temples again!"

Around 4:30 p.m., the earth was shaken again in Qingchuan by a magnitude 6.3 quake. Brother Li-de mentioned the possibility of an earthquake, but we laughed at him for being overly sensitive. Sure enough, another 5 seconds later, all of us felt it. I was quite amazed by this experience. (Forgive me.☺)

Hanwang Visits

Twice I had the opportunity to go to Hanwang Town in Mianzhu City which is about 2.5 hours north of Chengdu, the disaster area that I have prayed and longed to visit for this past 2 months. Finally, I was breathing the air, touching the soil and chatting with the kids and adults whose life had been affected by the earthquake. Although I was excited, but at the same time, I felt the heaviness when I faced thousands of tents housing about 40,000 victims in Hanwang. I was not mentally prepared to see so many people living in tents with a limited supply of water and no sanitation.

We also visited the construction site in Jiulong County where the model house, also called “light steel house” is being built. The plan is to help local residents to rebuild the communities using earthquake safe design and eventually expand to the whole area affected by the earthquake. Through the effort of rebuilding local communities, God’s love would be shown in Sichuan.

We sang worship songs along the way in the mini-van. Passengers from different parts of the country and the world became one through the music and prayer. I had great pleasure sitting next to Pastor Chen’s wife, who was a member of the first counseling team right after the earthquake. She was also trained as a psychologist in the seminary school in California. When I asked her about psychology, she told me that over the years of counseling, she found that psychology doesn’t work. Now, she only uses some of the skills acquired from the psychology training, and eventually she has to tell them about Jesus. This is the only way to resolve the root cause of a problem.

What I Learned

I enjoyed worshipping with brothers and sisters every morning. My spirit was touched in a special way during the worship. Again and again, God reaffirms me that He alone satisfies me. I shall submit to His Lordship.

When brother Li-de asked me to translate Cypress’s vision and their reconstruction plan for the area affected by the earthquake, I was

quite hesitant. It seems that God always uses my weakness to accomplish HIS work. Eventually, I finished the tasks that he assigned to me. Although some of the prepared documents will not be used, I have learned to be obedient and to wait for the Lord. After all, it is not about the result, all has to do with the refining process that God is taking me through.

I was surprised to see the commitment and dedication of the volunteers, especially brother Li-de and sister Wei-min, leaders of the volunteers in Sichuan. They worked day and night. On the contrary, I have not done much in Sichuan, but God sent me many fine Christians to learn from and to share with; Min-xia's intimate relationship with the Lord, Jing's dedication despite her physical weakness, college students from Inner Mongolian who fasted one meal a day for 40 days, boys making drinking water in Beichuan County, Pastor Cheng, a PhD graduate from Beijing University, and his wife both from Houston, and many others. I especially remembered sister Xuelian's understanding of Romans 12:1 -- living sacrifice includes the part that we are not willing to give to God.

In the airport waiting for my departure flight for Shanghai, I was already missing the folks in Chengdu. I might see them again soon. If not, I will definitely join them in heaven.

I am so happy to have met so many young Christian volunteers, our future in China.

God is good, all the time...



“I’m not falling behind...”

Wesley Chan

...I’m just not keeping up.” I distinctly remember saying this to someone after ACF small group on a particularly challenging week right before I was about to head back to studio (clock says 10:00 p.m.). In truth, the transition from high school to college has indeed been difficult at times, but it has also been rewarding. This transition is marked by – as many of you have likewise experienced – a lot of everything. Not so much overwhelming, as just *a lot* -- a lot of freedom; a lot of new faces; a lot of new classes; a lot of new standards; a lot of frustration; a lot of reward; and a whole host of new opportunities.

Coming in as an architecture major, I was required to take Studio which had by far the steepest learning curve. The projects were different, the pace was 10X faster than high school (hence the above quote), and the standard was likewise much higher. It was extremely frustrating at first, but as I have grown used to this environment, that frustration has largely turned into reward. Granted, the work ethic has always been the same, but the understanding has increased exponentially.

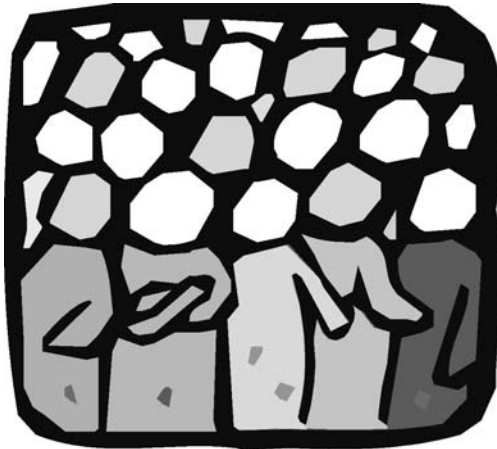
One of my biggest questions coming into college was about finding a fellowship. I knew of a few through some reading that I had done, and on paper Asian Christian Fellowship (under InterVarsity) seemed like the right fit. The only issue was this: I had visited last spring (with Alex) and we attended an ACF large group that weekend. While I do not know his thoughts, I was not actually all that excited to return; something about the atmosphere just did not appeal to me. This actually led to more inconveniences because I decided not to “request more information” when the option was available, which meant I was largely skipped over in ACF’s early outreach days. Only through a couple of God-driven circumstances did I ever make it to ACF’s first large event. And that’s where it got interesting because that first ACF event I went to was awesome. I had visited some other fellowships prior and I basically stopped attending those to join ACF on a more committed basis.

Even so, it has not been a straight shot from there. I am still a freshman and I have stayed largely in the “watch and learn” mode. This likewise has been a transition given my nature of jumping in with both feet. Waiting is not necessarily a bad thing as I have been able to meet some really good Christians and hear their own

experiences. It has also allowed me to take a step back and just re-evaluate where my faith is. However, I cannot always just rely on my “freshman” status as an excuse to not get involved more; at some point I must still search out God’s will and act where he is telling me to act.

With all that said, I still very much consider RCCC to be my home church. The lessons learned through the sermons, Sunday schools, youth groups, and general experiences have been invaluable. These are things that I have consistently gone back to as a foundation, yet I continually try to build on them; moving forward rather than completely dwelling in the past. It can be a fine line, especially as I still feel my way through ACF and such, but at the very least it’s a different background that I add to the mix.

Drawing on my Ecuador experience, I mentioned the idea of stepping out of my comfort zone a lot. Transitioning to college has been a similar experience. Sure, I am again surrounded by many fellow believers and have found a fellowship that I will stick with, but overall I seek his guidance in new ways that I never have before. Maybe this was in God’s plan; just as I was getting comfortable... I get shipped off to St. Louis. That is okay however, we all serve the same God no matter where we are and I am joyful because of that.



Winning the Lottery

Ben Lee

Sifting through the pile of mail that had come in one day this past September, a piece of mail addressed to me caught my eye. It had a bright yellow round sticker with serrated edges with the words, "You Are A Marrow Match!" Yeah, sure...I thought. That's just clever advertising trying to make a piece of mail stand out in the flood of junk mail. I am sure we are all bound to match someone in the world population. Besides, Ed McMahon had previously sent me numerous mailings telling me "I'm a winner!" in the Publishers Clearinghouse Sweepstakes. On closer examination, however, I noticed this envelope was from the National Marrow Donation Program.

The nice letter insider reminds me that I donated blood or cheek cell samples back on September 7, 1997.... Wow, that was a long time ago.... and that "Your stored sample has been selected by a patient's doctor for additional testing." WHOA! A flood of thoughts raced through my mind. What does this mean? What are the implications? If I donate my bone marrow, WILL THIS HURT? What are the possible complications?

I hazily remembered that years ago a family friend of Jack Yu's needed a bone marrow transplant. This spurred a bone marrow donor drive at our church, RCCC. Okay, so what does bone marrow donation really involve? I quickly perused the enclosed pamphlet from the National Marrow Donation Program, NDMP, to educate myself on the process, along with information I found on the web. Hmm...I definitely don't qualify for the umbilical cord donation option. The second option, donating via what looks like a blood donation set-up from both arms, doesn't seem too bad.

I went to find Linda to tell her this exciting news. She calmly pointed out that the most likely donation option in the brochure was one which I must have sub-consciously ignored. In this procedure, "small" incisions are made above the pelvic area, followed by needles into the pelvic bone to extract approximately one quart of marrow. One quart! 32oz.!! That's like a small milk container!!! Bone marrow is in the middle of the bone. That could hurt! Do I really want to do this? The brochure says it should not hurt too much because you are under anesthesia. Full recuperation from the procedure, however could take 2 to 3 weeks. In the interim, you would feel like you had taken a bad fall

"on your rear" and would feel tired until your marrow is rejuvenated.

That night as I contemplated being a marrow donor, I thought to myself that if a house were on fire or if a car crashed nearby and someone was yelling for help, would I rush in to help? Yes, most likely as long as I could assess a reasonable chance of getting in and out. Therefore, shouldn't I help in this case when the situation is so much more controlled and the risks better known? All of the hypothetical scenarios we sometimes play in our mind about helping to save somebody were suddenly reality for me. Was I willing to put my good intentions into action?

I called the local Rochester NMDP office the next day to discuss the process, procedure, and time frame. Carolyn of the Rochester office said the person in need was a 10 year old boy in California with chronic leukemia. The boy's doctors were evaluating treatment options for him. Due to patient confidentiality and privacy concerns, that was all she could tell me. Was I willing to help? As I prayed and evaluated my choice the previous night, I contemplated that if one of my children were in a similar need for a suitable donor, I would be praying hard that a willing donor would be found. I said "yes" I would be willing to donate.

Carolyn then asked a series of questions to assess how risky I would be as a donor. After all the questions, she said I would hear back from them in a few weeks, but if things progressed it could be a few months. They would need to talk with the patient's doctors and further assess the match. She said I matched 6 out of 6 antigens of the recipient. Even at that point it was still a 50/50 chance if I would be chosen as a donor.

I talked with Jack that night to let him know that I had been contacted by NMDP and to find out more about his family friend's experience. He said his family friend had since received the bone marrow transplant, got married, and is doing well (no news is good news). I investigated a bit more online about the bone marrow matching process. Doctors look for a match of Human Leukocyte Antibodies, HLA. A 6 out of 6 match, like I've matched, is the best. I wondered if this person was a long lost relative of mine. People have asked me what the odds of matching someone are - I've seen anywhere from 1 in 50,000 for Caucasians to and up to 1 in 12 million for Asian Americans. One in 12 million odds are similar odds of winning the lottery.

As the weeks of wondering and waiting for a response from the NMDP office passed, my major time conflicts with the two to three week recuperation (college visits and a pastoral candidate visit) went by. Finally, at the end of October I received another piece of mail from the NMDP. I read with disappointment that the bone marrow transplant was indefinitely called off. Again, due to patient confidentiality, they could not be specific except to say that either the patient got much better (which would be great), or the patient was not healthy enough at this time to undergo a transplant, or an alternate course of treatment has been chosen at this time. They thanked me for my participation and mentioned my records would be kept active in the database for future marrow matches.

The NMDP tightly restricts communication between the donor and recipient again for privacy of the patient and also to prevent undo pressure being exerted on a potential donor. Having read through different blogs and online journals of people who have undergone the marrow donation process, I had seen some cases where a carefully censored note can be sent between donor and recipient. I had often thought what I might want to say to my potential recipient. I think it would go something similar to the following:

“Dear Friend,

I am sorry to hear of the health difficulties you have had in your young life. Should you ever need a bone marrow donation, however, I would consider it a privilege and honor to be able to donate some of my bone marrow to help you recover and to lead a healthier life.

Please be aware that the marrow I give can only enable you to live a longer life on this earth. I pray that just like this incredible match was “found” between you and me, that you will also find the key to eternal life through Jesus Christ of the Bible. ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.’ (John 3:16)

Your friend,

Ben”

Thanksgiving in 2008

Tracy Tang

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Blessings to you from our Heavenly Father!

The biggest change for our family in 2008 was the "half-empty nest" life style since we sent Boaz to University of Buffalo to start his college life at the end of August. The day that we drove him to Buffalo was just like the many other road trips that we had taken together for the past 17 years. The difference was this time Boaz would not come home with us. He would stay behind in his dorm room with a stranger for the rest of his freshman year. I was not worried that he would be lonely or too homesick. However I was worried about what type of roommate that he might have. My roommate in my freshman year was nice until she started to bring in boys to stay overnight in the room. I ended up sleeping in the lounge of the floor many nights of my freshman year. Plus with the cultural shock that I had, I did not really enjoy my dorm life back then. After hearing about my experiences and also many "horror" stories of dorm life with a "drive you nut" roommate from other "experienced" people, Boaz was urged to pray eagerly for an agreeable roommate. It turned out that his roommate was a very nice young man – an ABI (American-Born-Indian) from the suburban area of New York City and raised in a Christian home. They shared some common interests, like playing guitar and meeting new friends. For that I give thanks to God who answered his prayers.

As parents, we always had some mixed feelings about our children. On the one hand we wanted them to grow up and become mature, but on the other we felt a little uncertain about not knowing how they would walk in their life journey. This feeling got stronger and stronger when Boaz was in his senior year in high school. He was always a people person and he wanted to major in psychology. We all knew that psychology could be very liberal and he would probably face a lot of challenges about his faith. How would he handle that? Could he really withstand all the temptations and trials in college? Would he find a church that he likes as much as he liked RCCC? Would he know how to manage his time and have the discipline to study? Would he know what kind of man God wanted him to be?... Sometimes questions like these would make me feel nervous. Right around that time, Pastor Tang reminded me of a very simple principle with three words - Pray, Pray, Pray. For this

privilege, I give thanks to God who is always available when we need Him.

Some of you may know that my father's health was in jeopardy this summer. The night we came home from Boaz's graduation ceremony, we were busy packing our belongings to go to a camping trip the next morning with some friends. The phone rang and it was my sister who told me that my father was hospitalized after having a stroke a couple of days ago. He lost control of his left arm and his speech was slurred. The doctor found a blood clot in his right brain about the size of an egg and warned my mother that if my father had a second attack, he would need an operation. My father was almost 75 years old and an operation at that age was no joke. He was not given any medication when he was in the hospital since nothing would help his situation at that time. Miraculously he was discharged from the hospital after a week of observation. Six weeks later he went back for a check up and the doctor found no blood clot from the X-Ray. Since it disappeared, there was no need to do any operation. As of now he lives a normal life without any side effects after the stroke. During those stressful months, a lot of you prayed for my father. Through your prayers God carried out another miracle. For that I give thanks to God who heals.

As I look back in my life, I can see many of God's footprints next to mine. Despite all the mistakes that I had made which not only hurt others and myself but also my Heavenly Father, He has never abandoned me. I had been in situations which were very unpleasant and stressful, and yet God would not delay His deliverance. It would always come at the time that I needed it the most. Sometimes the timing of these happenings was so astonishing to me that I became speechless of His marvelous work. God is in control and everything is in His plan. He knows our needs and gives us guidance in times of need. We just have to pay attention to His guiding hands and follow Him wholeheartedly. For that I praise God for His divine guidance.



Tracy

A Personal Testimony

Michael Lin

Brothers and Sisters,

I thank God for the opportunity to write this letter to each of you, in the full knowledge that I stand before many of whom have been faithful prayer partners to us over these past few months. I rejoice that, despite not knowing us personally, many of you have endeavored to ask the Lord for His mercy upon my mother until the very end. It has not been easy to admit, but things have not turned out the way we desired – for healing or for prolongment of time. However, I am obliged to testify, for God's eternal counsel remains: *"Let God be true though every one were a liar."* (Rom 3:4) Let it be understood that I speak from my knowledge, though I cannot say this reflects that of my father, who is not a Christian. So I will attempt to explain myself, that I may give glory to God and to none other.

I am reminded sometimes of things in the past, as I think about what has happened recently. In freshman year of college, a friend of mine passed away from alcohol poisoning; the two of us were not very close, only partners in work, and consequently the ordeal did not take a serious toll on me, which I am thankful for. Looking back, it amazes me how quickly life moves on as if to say that nothing at all had just occurred! How astonishing, and yet, what would then be the significance of it? As it is, the natural man is constrained to interpreting this by either sighing sorrowfully at the wasted potential or by criticizing the young man for a serious lack of restraint, neither of which seems to satisfy the heart. I myself could not understand why God had allowed this to happen, especially because of the fact that he was not a believer and I had just recently met him.

Now, if you think that I am about to reveal to you what exactly the "answer" to this is or to my mother's passing, then you may be sorely disappointed in what I am about to say. However, if I am right in stating that many of you already know the answer whether or not you know it, then let me say one other thing before I proceed: There is a reason that I write this testimony as I do, and I cannot put this more emphatically - it is that you might perceive that this is a matter not of words but of faith. *"Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."* (Mt. 13:13)

And faith does not disappoint us: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not*

perish but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16) How exceedingly simple it is! But let us come to some understanding of this. Let us, as we usually do, take this statement for granted as Christians, and then recall what exactly this tells us about God's character. We learn that God is exceedingly loving and gracious, as evidenced by His actions. So we take Him by His Word, and the answer is clear. God is God, and God is love. Who then will bring a case before Him? Certainly not the sinner who stands condemned apart from grace. But for the ones who are called sons of God, we are sure of better things, and trust in that what we cannot see nor fully comprehend, God the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, who knows exactly what He is doing. Therefore, I say that through the confusion and pain of these past few months, in the end, we trust that God's purpose stands against all odds. He is not like man who changes His mind one day to the next, nor does He go back on His Word.

So we wish to thank Him and have you know that we are indeed truly grateful for your prayers and support for our family. Though we continue to grieve, God is in our midst showing us love through many friends and through the church, and I pray that He will help us to take Him at His Word, day-by-day.

Michael Lin

Editor's Note: The Author is a student living in Ithaca NY and the grandson of Luke Lin who attends Rochester Chinese Christian Church.

