

Then I said,
"Behold, I have come;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me:
I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."
I have told the glad news of deliverance
in the great congregation;
behold, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.
I have not hidden your deliverance
within my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness
and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love
and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.

Psalm 40:7-10 ESV

FOREWORD

Frances van Alstyne was the kind of woman who saw God even in the darkest moments of life. She even found reason to praise the Lord for congenital blindness. "If perfect sight were offered me I would not accept it," she insisted. "I might not have sung hymns to praise God if I had been distracted by the interesting things about me."

Putting aside the "distractions of interesting things about me", Van Alstyne instead wrote 65,000 songs all focused on the life-changing story of Jesus. In 1879, she wrote these words:

*"Tell of the cross where they nailed him,
Writhing in anguish and pain;
Tell of the grave where they laid Him,
Tell how He liveth again!
Love in that story so tender,
Clearer than ever I see;
Stay; let me weep while you whisper,
'Love paid the ransom for me.'"*

*Tell me the story of Jesus!
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard."*

The testimonies in this little booklet have been written by GBC members who been transformed by the story of Jesus. But more than that, they have been revived by the telling of it!

These men and women put aside the "interesting distractions" about them, and instead poured their hearts and voices out, joyfully proclaiming the sweetest story every heard.

I know that you will be encouraged as you read and realize that this sweet story has the power to change both the teller *and* the listener!

May you be inspired as you read!

Pastor Ian Buntain

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BLESSED BY THE MANY SONGS

LOW POYEN

My faith journey

Let me give a brief account on how I became part of the Concert Choir.

It was on a Sunday afternoon some time in August that I received a phone call from my son, Eugene. Over the phone, he said, "Daddy, as you're so free now after Mum's return to the Lord, why don't you consider joining our church's Reformation Concert Choir? They still need some more choir singers."

My almost-immediate response was, "Gene, you know very well that I can't even sing the right note. Are you sure they want an elderly person like me?"

"Daddy, don't worry, there are many other elderly persons of your age group in the choir, like... I can burn you a CD with all the concert songs in it so that you can listen to it as many times as you want to until you are familiar with the tunes and are confident in singing them."

On hearing these words of encouragement, I was persuaded to be one of the many choir singers of the concert, and played a small part as an elderly singer.

Some of the choir practice sessions were conducted on Sunday afternoons before the church's worship services. God provided the venue for the concert at Calvary Baptist Church. The church prayed for 120 singers and musicians and God provided 120 people to sign up. He also led ten children to come forward so in total, we had a final count of 130 participants. By the night of the first concert on the 28th of October, all the tickets for the two nights were sold out. Praise the Lord for answering our prayers!

The song lyrics themselves

Looking back now, I've no regrets at all in taking part as a participant of the concert. As a matter of fact, I must admit that my soul has truly been blessed in learning the many songs for the concert.

During my own practice sessions as I learnt to sing the songs, the story of Jesus was retold to me in the most vivid of ways, through the lyrics of the songs themselves. In



them I heard of God's amazing creation of the universe, His immense and wondrous love for sinful mankind, His bountiful grace, His majestic work of salvation on the Cross and finally, His miraculous resurrection and Second Coming as a king!

I was truly moved by each and every song that I learnt to sing, and by contemplating their deep and meaningful significance: "Joy has dawned!" God humbled Himself, came down from

heaven to earth, was born in a manger by the virgin Mary, and lived amongst sinful men and in a fallen world.

"All we like sheep have gone astray" reminded me that Jesus is our great and good shepherd from Psalm 23 who guides us in the right way and brings us back when we wander off. He strengthens us when we're weak and carries us when we're too feeble to walk. We're prone to wander, but He is all our wisdom and our guide. He is our all in all. No creature is more dependent upon a good shepherd than a sheep. All these great truths would run through my mind.

"O, Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee... O Cross that lifted my head," these words would hit my soul hard each time I sang them. The lyrics kept reminding me about the sacrificial love of God for us, 'lost sheep'. When we become weary and weak, when we stumble and fall into sin, Jesus remains victorious, and as His precious blood shed on the Cross cleanses us from all unrighteousness, we can admit our sins and ask for His forgiveness.

This same Jesus was buried – He was raised from death on the third day! His miraculous resurrection is our most glorious story to tell! He is our Sovereign King!

"The King is coming!" What a joy! The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords is coming again for you and me who truly believe, and who have accepted Him as Saviour and Lord. What an amazing hope! What a day to anticipate and look forward to for all true believers of Jesus! He will come again to receive all who belong to Him!

GOD MAKES THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

TEOH LEE PENG

Hesitating and unsure

It was a great privilege to join the Reformation Concert choir to raise funds for our church building. At first I hesitated because I was not sure if I could commit to attend all the practices. Finally, I signed myself up at the very last minute as the calling to get involved would not go away.

Calls were made to the congregation and choir to help sell tickets. Again, I hesitated as I was not sure if anyone would make time on a Friday or Saturday evening to come to a Christian concert. I could only think of



one or two names, but we were challenged to try and sell at least 5 tickets. Swee Hin and I discussed, and felt that if we assumed that half of the people we asked would not come, then we should invite at least 10 people. All 10 agreed and bought tickets to come.

Our friends came for the second evening of the concert. One of them commented that such a performance must have taken at least six months to prepare. When I told her we had had only eight practices and two full dress rehearsals, she said, "no way!" They were amazed. Praise be to God as only He can make the impossible possible. We didn't have weekly practices, but once every two weeks! Now that our friends had attended the concert, it made it so much easier to talk about Christ.

Giving thanks

I appreciate the conductors, Caleb and Aaron for their patience and gentle spirit in dealing with issues that cropped up during practices, or when we did not sing the right notes or come in at the right time. By being gentle with us, they inspired and motivated us to give of our very best to God. I could see that they really enjoyed conducting from the way their hands and body swayed with the music. Their smiles as they led the choir were also truly encouraging.

In closing, I'd like to share a verse that helped me along this journey. It is taken from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "be joyful always; pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus".

O LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO

CALEB YAP

A special hymn

One of the songs that made a biggest impact on me during the preparation phase of the concert was the hymn “O Love that will not let me go” by the Scottish hymn writer George Matheson.

One reason why it made such a big impact on me was because it was so hard to find the right person to sing this song. At an early stage I was convinced that this was a very important song to have in the concert, and that it had to be an older man who sang these precious words about experiencing God’s sustaining and preserving love. It would be a powerful testimony to hear an older believer sing about the grace of God, showing us what real personal faith looks like in the face of life’s hurts and pains. After all, that is the Christian life. In the context of the



concert, I imagined an old Israelite in exile in Babylon singing this as part of the Old Testament story, wondering when and how God would restore the kingdom to Israel and send the Messiah. If not for the love of God, would any of us make it through?

But try as I might, and for various reasons (all good and valid ones) I could not find the right person for this song until finally, Uncle Shige agreed to sing it.

That difficult experience, and the ongoing struggles I faced at work, in church and personally made the stirring words of the song all the more poignant: "O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow thru the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be."

George Matheson's story

Matheson, who penned these words, understood what pain looked like. A bright young man and pastor, Matheson was born in Glasgow and had a promising future. However, in his youth, he began to go blind, and by twenty he had lost his eyesight entirely. He had been engaged but as his eyesight began to fail, his fiancée called off the engagement, saying that she did not want to be a blind minister's wife. Matheson lived dependent on his dear sister as caregiver, but she too, found love and was soon to be married.

On the night of his sister's wedding, he found himself overcome with sorrow as he thought about his lonely situation.

It was then that he penned this beautiful hymn entirely inspired by God. He completed it in five minutes. Matheson wrote, "The hymn was the fruit of that [mental] suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the

other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high.¹”

Hearing Uncle Shige sing this hymn brought tears to my eyes on both nights of the concert because I know it speaks of how God feels about our church – He loves us so much, and He will never let us go, in spite of all that we do and all that we are.

As people of who have received that kind of grace, let us look forward and see what God has ahead for us.

¹ <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/o/l/t/oltwnlmg.htm>

THE BODY OF CHRIST

SHIGEYUKI MORI

Telling the story of Jesus

It was a great joy and honour that all of my family could participate in the Reformation Concert this year.

I also invited 8 brothers and sisters from the Japanese church and they all said that they were so touched, moved, and inspired by the way we praised the Lord in our songs and how we worshipped Him together in spirit and truth. They said that would surely like to come back again if there was another one next year. They said to me, “Mori-san, how wonderful it would be if we could worship the Lord like that every Sunday!” Therefore, I had every confidence in saying that in our telling of the story of Jesus, the Lord used us in this concert for His glory.



Many parts, one body of Christ

However, I think that there is another side to this. In 1 Cor 12, Paul talks about the church as the *body* of Christ.

During the 3 to 4 months of preparation for the concert, we all put our efforts together to learn, memorize and harmonize songs accompanied with music. We had to make time out of our busy schedules but it was all for the glory of our Lord. Therefore, it is exactly a picture of what it looks like to build up the church together, the body of Christ consisting of many parts, but one body – men and women, young and old, weak and strong – but every part important to the body, indispensable and to be honoured.

Therefore, the weaker parts are especially cared for and honoured so that there is no division in the body. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

During the rehearsals, I often felt like I was the weakest one all the way. I made many mistakes in my solo part due to lack of practice. I would cry out desperately to the Lord many times.

My family prayed for me, helped me, and encouraged me, and there was gradual improvement. But throughout all of this, this is what I experienced: the warm encouragement from brothers and sisters all around me. Some would come up to me and encourage me. Young people around me were concerned too and encouraged me in their own wonderful and beautiful way.

In all this I could very much feel the love of Jesus in the body of Christ and I was reminded that when we do something together for the Lord, the important thing is not just the execution of it, but having a united heart in Christ, and I believe that this is what the church is all about.

As we told the story of Jesus in the concert this year, I received the love of Jesus from the body of Christ most of all. I thank God for this experience and for Grace Baptist Church.

NOT ME, I CAN'T

HSU YAHSIN

With God all things are possible

When the Church Bulletin first announced the choir needed people to join, I thought "Not me. I can't."



It has been 25 years ago since I was last in the church choir. I just wasn't sure if I could contribute to a choir anymore. However, as time went by, God prompted me that the church rebuilding is not some people's business but that it was everyone's. I

shouldn't be passive, and cheering other people on, but I had to take action. Hence, I eventually signed up.

When Caleb mentioned that every choir member had to sell five concert tickets each, again I thought, "Not me. I can't. I'm not a salesman!" At that time, I could only think of two persons who might have been interested in attending the concert. It was really a daunting task to me.

However, over time, through the songs we sang during the choir rehearsals, God prompted me to not be afraid, but reach out to people and invite them to come to the concert. We had a good story to tell through beautiful music and scriptures.

Just as the song inspired by Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray". I needed to take this opportunity to share the good news, and to help lead people back to God.

What happened was beyond my imagination. My family eventually welcomed a total of 24 guests attending the concert including schoolmates, ex-schoolmates, colleagues, ex-colleagues, friends and tennis playmates. Some even came in three generations. I was very touched.

I can only say, "With God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

Many thanks to the faithful servants

I would like to thank those who served in the background quietly and faithfully throughout the concert preparation and on the nights of the performance. They may not have been seen onstage nor in the limelight, but they served cheerfully anyway.

For example, the traffic wardens – they were first to arrive at the concert venue, and were probably the last to leave.

Thank you all for being so inspirational and being such a great testimony. Without your service and sacrifice, the concert would not have gone so smoothly.

Thank you so much!

DESPITE THE FEW PRACTICES

THIO BOON KIAT

Only 6 practices?

I was invited by Bibianna to sing in the concert after the Worship Ministry sent out an invitation to participate. I thought that this was quite an exciting opportunity to not only serve God, but to get to know more people in the church community beyond the young adults. Personally, I enjoy singing, which also made me more inclined to want to participate. It did not take me long to agree.

Initially, I felt worried because there were so few practices. There was a total of 13 songs by the choir and only 6 practices (plus 2 full-dress rehearsals) in total! I was skeptical about whether we would be adequately prepared. For many participants (myself included), it was the first time singing in a choir, so I honestly felt that more practices were needed. However, as I saw how everyone was putting in the effort to practise their parts individually at home and then coming to sing their hearts out for God together, I was really encouraged. The parts blended really well despite the few practices, and there was a clear



improvement week after week. It was like a miracle - God was working in all of us to motivate us, giving us the energy, and sustaining our voices to sing His story.

To be the body of Christ

I sang a 'rock' song duet entitled "If we are the body", which I felt was little out of place, given that every other song was either a choral piece or a pop/ballad type of song. However, it was nonetheless a fun and humbling experience for me to sing alongside Toshi, who was encouraging towards me throughout all our practices. It was meaningful because we got to know each other better, but more importantly because I felt that the message of the song stood out very clearly to us. "And if we are the body, why is His love not showing them there is a way" - as we were singing that, I felt that God was reminding us of what it means to be "the body of Christ", that is to love and accept everyone in our church community regardless of age, social status, popularity, et cetera, just as how God loves and accepts us despite our sinful nature because of His Son.

As I heard God's story, from Genesis to Revelation, unfold throughout the concert, I couldn't help but feel touched and deeply moved by God's love for us. Songs such as "All We Like Sheep", "O, Love That Will Not Let Me Go", "And Can it Be", "Joy Has Dawned" and "Were You There", revealed clearly God's love and grace towards sinners like us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. I was especially emotional during Jessica's solo song, "Why", because it painted a vivid picture of how Jesus suffered and died to reconcile undeserving sinners like us to the Father. This reminded me to be thankful for God's grace and to hold on dearly to the message of the gospel because it is so precious. God touched my heart and rekindled my desire to seek Him through my experience in this concert, and I pray that we will constantly remind ourselves about the gospel and be thankful to

God in all circumstances because of the hope He has given us in Jesus.

Seeing the old, middle aged and young people come together as one church body to serve God through this concert was really encouraging. Personally I feel that there are not many opportunities for people of different generations to interact and work with each other closely together in GBC. I hope this concert paves the way for many more multi-generational projects, because I got to know so many older folks after spending so much time rehearsing with them. Moving forward, I hope to see members of GBC, young and old, come together more often to create an inclusive and closely-knitted community of believers.

TELLING THE STORY OF JESUS

CHEONG HEE KIAT

Trusting God to participate

This year's Reformation Concert was the first time I have ever joined a choral presentation. It was a rewarding and blessed experience, and it was wonderful to do this together with brothers and sisters in Christ and to sing about our Lord.



By faith I trusted God when I got involved, and the Lord arranged my schedule such that I missed out on only a few of the practices. God is good.

Not having great vocal skills, I practised frequently while driving to and from my work, and also before my bedtime. I had taped my parts on my handphone so I could rehearse, but I still felt if I were to burst into song in the presence of Caleb or Aaron or Toshi, it would probably have been an affront to their good music sense! I suspect that a few others around me had those thoughts, too! Still, marvellously, God transformed our individual imperfect voices into music that thrilled those who came on both those evenings.

The story of Jesus in point form

I invited a number of my colleagues to the concert. All of them accepted except one. I think they were just indulging me or perhaps were curious to see me in another capacity outside of the office – anything to get them to come! Some of them were non-Christians. But all of them enjoyed the concert.

As the rehearsal proceeded on, I felt that the flow and Scripture readings might be difficult for non-believers who might not catch the full Biblical message. So I wrote an account of the story of Jesus in point form to help them better understand the story in song as it unfolded:

1. God created the heavens and earth - everything on earth, including man.
2. He wanted a lasting relationship with the people He created, in which they can live with Him in perfect harmony.
3. But man disobeyed God. In God's eyes, it is sin and because He is holy, pure and just, man can no longer be with him.
4. Man was on his own.
5. But, God wanted man to return to Him.
6. He chose a nation of people, Israel, through whom the way back to God could be achieved and made known.
7. He instituted a sacrifice ritual that involved the killing of a clean animal and shedding of blood. So, instead of man paying for his sins (by his death), an animal's life was sacrificed. By this sacrifice, God could forgive man.

8. Each time they sinned against God, and then said sorry, He forgave them. But the Jews kept disobeying God even when God kept forgiving them. Finally, God allowed Israel to be taken into captivity by other nations like the Babylonians and the Persians
9. God provided a permanent way for man to have his sins forgiven. It is the only way back to God.
10. God sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to live in our world and then to be killed (crucified) as the pure and permanent sacrifice to secure God's forgiveness for sins. Jesus died a horrible death on the cross.
11. Jesus didn't just die; after He was buried, He rose up from the dead and ascended into heaven to be by God's side. He then became the living advocate for man, so that if any person believes and accepts what Jesus had done through dying on the cross, and repents of his sins, he will have forgiveness from God. It is freely given by God (called grace) and needs no effort/work from man other than faith in Jesus. And, it is available to all humanity, including Israel and the rest of the world.
12. It is that simple to become a Christian – repenting of sin, believing in Jesus, that God will forgive and receive because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and following Him. A Christian will gain eternal life, i.e., live forever with God and enjoy everything God has.
13. Our time on earth is short by comparison, and the Bible says that Jesus will come again sometime in the future as the King of all creation, to claim all authority over creation and bring those who believe in Him to live with Him.

SICKNESS - FELT AND FEARED NOT MORE

SOH SWEE KIAT

God's timely intervention

I thank God for His timely intervention on the first night of the Reformation Concert. I could have been a sore thumb sticking out to an otherwise smooth singing and well-conducted choir.



I was also a Scripture reader for the concert, and after I had read the assigned Scripture, something unexpected happened to me. My throat suddenly became as dry as a desert. It was so dry that I wanted to cough. There was a struggle within me – to cough or not to cough. If I coughed, then I would affect the whole choir and it would be an embarrassment. I prayed that God would sustain me and replenish my throat with saliva. When the choir began singing “All we like sheep have gone astray”, I could only mouth the words for most of the song. I continued praying.

After the song, three other Scripture readers read from the Bible and it was a further relief for me. During the next song, appropriately titled “How Long?” I wondered in my heart how long it would be before my voice could be restored! But I knew it would not be too long for God is my Creator and He knew the

solution. Wonderfully, I was soon able to continue singing, like a stray sheep coming back to the flock, the choir!

Looking to our Promised Land

Of the whole concert, my favourite song is "On Jordan's stormy banks". Since I learnt of the song, I have not stopped humming the tune or singing the words. My eyes well up each time I think over the lines, "where sickness, sorrow, pain and death, are felt and feared no more," because I think of my family members, brethren in church, friends, and many others who are in poor health. We, who know Him, can look forward to that glorious land which our Lord has promised us and the experience of perfect health.

GOD MULTIPLIES WHAT WE HAVE

HARRIET LEE

My five loaves and two fishes

I'm very happy to share some of my thoughts.

Initially, I wanted to help with behind-the-scenes work and not be involved in performing because I've never had any experience with singing in a choir before, or any singing for that matter. But I became slowly persuaded that singing in the choir was how I could worship God and serve Him as well. When I first heard about the concert I thought it be very similar to the previous concert in 2014, and I expected it to be very much the same.

But during the process of the rehearsals, I found juggling my various school and extracurricular activities very difficult. I was



really afraid I would hand up slipshod assignments in school or my other commitments because I was so busy.

However, leading up to the performance, I was so encouraged by how Auntie Carrie, Caleb and everyone else were working hard to prepare for the concert and I could see it in every concert

practice. Seeing how they gave of their best also spurred me to do the same in both my school assignments and singing for the Lord during the rehearsals.

Throughout the rehearsals I experienced God's joy in tiredness, and His peace in service. The song "Five Loaves and Two Fishes" sung by Elvira on the second concert night really spoke to me as I was encouraged to give Him all that I have. No matter how lacking or how insufficient I am, I can trust that God will multiply what I have and use it for His glory.

New church friendships

I had never known Auntie Jan Lai or even known her name until this concert, and my impression of her from my younger days was that she was scary, unapproachable and tall. I discovered that only one of those three things is true! I have been very grateful to get to know Auntie Jan better, what her personality is like, and to share in her laughter and talk to about our problems.

Little conversations and jokes shared during concert practices with the aunties around definitely started some new friendships between us. And they are very cute people.

I hope that GBC members will continue to give each other the support and love we really need in our various ministries. As one body in Christ, let us work towards glorifying God and making Him known.

SOMETHING PLEASING TO THE LORD

AMANDA CHIAM

Getting involved, getting busy

I was first invited by one of the girls from my caregroup who told me about it and asked me to join the choir. Although I didn't really have a clear idea of what it would be like, I decided to get involved because hey why not, I do enjoy singing (in the shower) and I also thought it would be a good chance to get to know people and worship God together. I hadn't been around for the previous concert in 2014 so I didn't know how it would turn out, I was just encouraged when I heard that so many people across different backgrounds and across the ages were getting involved.

During the course of rehearsals, I found it a challenge to keep to the commitment and attend all the practices, especially when practices became more frequent and the hours got longer nearing the concert. On weeks when work piled up, it was tempting to skip the practices and have the mindset that "I know the songs already so it's okay if I don't turn up this time". But I overcame it when I saw how much effort everyone else was putting into it, for example the people behind the scenes who were in charge of arranging the songs, doing up the visuals, handling the marketing et cetera.

God spoke to my heart

I saw how the church body, in spite of our differences and imperfections, could come together and produce something

pleasing to the Lord. One song that spoke to me was "Five Loaves and Two Fishes", especially the chorus which said, "Take my fears and my inhibitions / All my burdens, my ambitions / You can use it all to feed them all". Sometimes I doubt my ability and I wonder if I have any gifts that will be useful in doing God's work, and I think this song spoke my heart at that moment.

Through participating, I am also glad I got to know Aunty Poh Hong! She was a fellow alto and we stood side by side, so I got to know her better through the rehearsals. I am grateful for her



friendliness and generosity, and for showing so much love despite not knowing me! Not only did she make the effort to get to know me, she even gave us food, and offered to give me a lift out when rehearsals ended late. I'm glad that we had this opportunity to share more about our families and our lives.

I hope that the church will continue to worship with the same enthusiasm and fervor as we did for the concert, and that we will not hesitate to volunteer again the next time there is a church-wide initiative. I also hope that we will continue to reach out to the guests that we invited for the concert, to keep them in our prayers and to persevere in sharing the gospel with them (if they are not believers).

ENCOURAGED AND ENERGISED

BOBBY LEE

Two E's summarize how I feel after the Reformation Concert: I am Encouraged and Energized.

Encouraged by the church

I'm very encouraged, firstly by the young adults who took the initiative and leadership in organizing the concert.



Secondly, I'm encouraged by the strong message of support shown in the elders' involvement and the personal participation of the congregational leadership.

Thirdly, I was a part of the 120-odd choir and musicians, as well as the unsung heroes and heroines who worked behind the scenes such as ushers, publicity volunteers, carpark stewards, and the many who brought refreshments amongst others.

Energized by unity

I am energized – the concert galvanized GBC despite the lack of our own venue at Mattar Road. There was a sweet unity in Spirit and a harmony of voices in singing and telling the story of Jesus.

I look forward to our return to Mattar Road, and how we will continue to tell others the story of Jesus every day of our lives.

That's what we must do on Sundays in church and out, and also on the weekdays in the neighborhood and community.

DISCOVERING, DEVELOPING & DISPLAYING GOD-GIVEN

THE MIAUW SUANG

'How' and 'why' did I get myself involved in this project (other than the fact that it is an honour and privilege to tell the story of Jesus)?

How?

It was through a long invitation email (which someone bothered to write) that made me feel responsible and answerable to God if I brushed it aside. In the email, it spelled out clearly the aim and purpose of doing



this together as a church, and I felt drawn to it as there was a direction to do something for the Lord together. I couldn't see why anyone would be opposed to it – it was clearly God's project, and His people had united with one heart and were building a physical building for His glory. So my reply to his very long email was an extremely short one: 'OK'. (It really was not something I needed to pray hard about before replying.)

Why?

I once spoke to someone about the music in the church (I said in the past, which means my perspective has changed) and person who heard me tried to shut me up by saying "If you are so good then you go and sing la". I said "I never say I am good," and she said "Then?" which actually meant "Then shut up la!" She was saying, "Don't just be an OCT: Only Can Talk". So this time, I decided to respond to the invitation with a NOV: Now Obey and be Victorious in Christ! I felt strongly that I should not hesitate and just join the church to give God the glory. Truly, I enjoyed all the rehearsals and the two days of concert, and I was blessed thoroughly!

So what did I gain from being involved and obeying God?

Firstly, I was encouraged by God's people who came together with one heart and purpose to glorify the One Almighty God. I had never experienced this in GBC before.

Secondly, I got to know a few more brothers and sisters by name (so it may be good for everyone to wear name tags on Sundays so we know each other's names), and not just by sight only.

Thirdly, it was a humbling experience for me because I had to go before God to confess that I was wrong in judging that GBC people can't sing, because after the first rehearsal I discovered that many people have God-given talent. I think many have buried their God-given talent probably because they have not been guided to discover it or because they have misunderstandings about God's gifts and our responsibility.

Stewardship mindset

In conclusion, let me share something I learnt in our care group a few weeks ago. In 1 Cor 4:1-2, it says "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and as stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."

What should really be highlighted here is the 'stewardship mindset'. If I acknowledge God as the source of all things and that Christ is Lord, I will know that all that I am (I am bought) and all I have (I have received) belongs to Him. I have to be grateful and faithful to use what's been given to me for His glory. If I acknowledge that He owns me and that He is the Master of my life, I will do things according to His desire and His will, not my own.

We all need to answer the 3-D question: have you Discovered, Developed and Displayed your God's given talent for His glory? If you have not, shouldn't you use your buried talent for His use today? Let us move on with the same spirit of oneness as a church from now on. To God be the glory!

A VISITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

JOSEPH TAY

Joseph Tay is Gideon Yap's friend from university and attends Church of Our Savior. He attended the concert on both nights despite his gastric flu, and wrote this on his blog in response. It has been reformatted and reproduced with his permission.

Before the concert

The gastric flu has subsided – all that remains is a stubborn bloatedness, and a sensitivity to food that is oily, or fried, or spicy. Lunch today was the plainest of fishball noodles. I helped myself to fishcakes, fishballs and meatballs, and a small sampling of kway teow.

The afternoon flew by, and at the appropriate time I set off for Calvary Baptist at Potong Pasir to enjoy a concert put up by Gideon's church.

I haven't been very well this week, and so from the moment that I sat down (at 750pm) till the conclusion of the concert (at 1015pm), there were bouts of gassiness and nausea, and a persistent splitting head-ache. I had brought a sweater for this precise situation, but I was somehow still really cold, and the bloatedness was making things real uncomfortable, and mid-way through I began to feel like I was running a fever. So that was happening throughout the concert, which made it quite a sad night.

The concert itself

Yet at the very same time, from the moment that the choir struck up a song that I had last heard in Sunday School:

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*

I was so full of joy and delighted, and despite the ongoing discomforts, I could not help but stand and sing along when the conductor motioned for us to join in as an audience, to wave and gesture my hands in time with the song and the rise and fall of the music, to see the story of Jesus unfold itself anew.

And it was just very beautiful and true to see the choir be made up of all sorts of funny and happy and involved people! There was a very tiny boy playing the violin and an even tinier girl singing on stage (there was a whole segment where it was just kids singing songs that ended in the actual chapter and verse which is a 'blast to the past' when we used songs to help us learn memory verses,) and a super old man with a gentle Japanese accent and singers with BIG voices and young adults like me and whole families spaced out in the choir.

And there was a lady in the crowd who was signing the entire concert and it made some of the singers in the choir cry, and at moments when I sang and the song lifted me the headache and the chills would go away and I just had such a wonderful, wonderful time, when they sang "**Joy Has Dawned**" I was entirely swept up in the joy of the choir and the joy that they sang of, and when they did "**Come Behold**" (and at many other moments) I thought of all the people that I would have loved to have there, dear friends and family to listen to these treasured truths with me.

After the concert

After the concert had ended people came to tell me that they saw me swaying and singing with gusto, and they asked me what my favorite song/moment was, and I found it so hard to give an answer because I felt like death (but to them I was clearly full of life), but also because some songs were intricate layers of harmony and other songs were bundles of nerves and the ever-present struggle to be on a stage with a big crowd down below, but each and every song was honest, and sincere.

It is now 12:57am. The chills are better, the head is less achey but will likely start itself up again if I do not sleep. But I thought it essential that I pen this down, to remind my soul that this is what it is all about: a patient and abiding love that will one day birth fullness of joy.

*O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*