



# GRACE *news*

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*illustrations by Michael Wee*

## The Blessings of Praying Together


*by Pastor Arnold Wong*

*"When we pray together, we can experience a powerful unity in Christ as we pray for things we hold in common"*

In our busy everyday lives, all of us are forced into making choices between what to do and what not to do. Everything is "important" and a "priority". For God's people, a casualty of this strong need to prioritise our time is in "praying together". At one time, one of the highlights of the week was for brothers and sisters in Christ to gather for "prayer meeting". The needs were great and so were the answers. But over time all that has changed – so much so that praying together is very rare these days.

All of this raises some important questions for every believer today. For example, "Isn't it enough that one prays individually? Is it really necessary for believers to pray together?" The answer is not either/or, but really both. It is good and needful for God's people to pray individually, as well as corporately. The Bible has many good examples of both practices. For example, the Bible tells us that Christ prayed alone (Lk 5:16), and that the members of the early church were devoted to praying together (Acts 1:14).

While most of us are familiar with the blessings of individual praying, what are the benefits and blessings of praying with others? When we pray together, we can experience a powerful unity in Christ as we pray for things we hold in common (Jn 17:22-23). Also, as we pray for those in need, they are greatly encouraged and strengthened knowing that others love, care, and are deeply committed to their spiritual and physical welfare (1 Thess 5:11).

It is important that when we pray together we understand that we can grow in our own spiritual character, too. As we pray, and hear others pray, we can be drawn into a spirit of repentance and confession (Ps 51). In addition, we can mature in such areas as humility (Jas 4:10), obedience (1 Jn 3:21-22), thanksgiving (Phil 4:6), and confidence (Heb 4:16). When we pray with others we can spur each other on to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24). Praying together can change lives – even our own. 



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## "Let's Pray"



*Rachel Wong talks to Lydia Lee about the importance of prayer in church life.*

Lydia was genuinely puzzled when I approached her to be interviewed about prayer, saying that she felt others would be better 'qualified'. But I know her to be someone who faithfully attends church prayer meetings and whose personal prayer life is vibrant: what better 'qualifications' than these? We spent an hour talking about prayer, and it only served to confirm to me that here is a woman who takes prayer seriously: someone who would rather actually pray for a friend than send them a message saying "I'm praying for you", who is brimming with ideas on how to encourage the prayer life of the church, and who sees prayer as a privilege and a joy.

Lydia has a personal experience to illustrate the importance of corporate prayer. Two years ago she attended a course run by the Methodist Church on how to teach English to foreigners, during which she found out that a promised trip to Nanchang looked like it would not take place because the teachers had pulled out. Lydia said they should pray, whereupon the trainer stopped the lesson and they did indeed pray – they all gathered around Lydia and started praying for her, despite her protestations that she couldn't go to China! Subsequently the Lord confirmed to her that it was His will for her to go, and then because she was going two of the other women on the course said they would go too, so they ended up with a full team to go to Nanchang to bless the missionaries there. Lydia said, "I can't even remember what they prayed for me – all I know is that they did pray, and that's how God moves people to action. If I hadn't gone for the course and hadn't suggested praying then, who knows what would have happened? God uses our corporate prayers in amazing ways."

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Likewise, in church Lydia strongly believes that everything should start with prayer: every idea, plan and suggestion should be prayed over first before any action is taken. "Why is it sometimes hard to get things done in church?" she asked pointedly, and went on to answer her own question, "Because we did not start with prayer. We only pray fervently when the event is almost upon us. Prayer should not be an afterthought."

As for the church prayer meeting, she feels it is a way of blessing others. She pointed out that people like being prayed for, and to pray out loud for someone is a way of showing that you care. "Of course," she added, "God is pleased that we pray and will bless the effort. It is not about the form – whether you use prayers from books, or how long your prayers are, etc – it is about your heart attitude. Many people tell me they don't know how to pray, so come to the prayer meeting, it's the best place to learn!"

At the end of our meeting, as if to confirm all that had been said, we ended in prayer. I was ready to rush off but Lydia stopped me and said, "Let's pray."  
Ω

### GBC Monthly Prayer Meeting

*When:* Last Friday of every month at 8pm

*Where:* GBC

*What goes on during our monthly prayer meeting?*

1. Worship
2. Short message by one of the pastors
3. Sharing
4. Pray in small groups



# The Gospel That Changes Prayers



“ A real encounter with Jesus Christ and His gospel, and the effect of simply being born again ... changes prayers. ”

*In this personal sharing by Tan Yee Kiat, we see how transformation through faith in Jesus directs our prayers.*

My first encounters with prayer probably occurred after the death of my late maternal grandparents. Despite not having a real relationship with them when they were alive, I was taught that I could, and probably should, pray to them for health and success in academics. As part of an annual rite we offered food before a plaque which bore their names, uttered our prayers and left.

This annual rite became the means to how I understood prayer – the idea that the course of the material world could somehow be altered by prayers uttered into the spiritual realm.

People still hold to this concept today. It is not unique to our time and culture. Many times when we read the New Testament, we assume that Paul was ministering to a secular, god-less culture like the 21st century but that is just one example of reading our own time into the Bible's. It was far from secular, and thus far from prayer-less.

We know that Ephesus had a temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:24). If you had a problem with fertility in the 1st century, many well-meaning folks would have advised you to turn to her. Presumably, if one was a merchant, prayers to Poseidon would have been a necessity for safe voyages through the seas.

My annual rite was not unlike the Greco-Romans. And it further influenced the way I prayed as a church attendee (I hesitate to describe myself as a true Christian at that point). Perhaps far more than it should. The content of prayer, however few they

were, had not changed. What had changed was whom I have decided to direct them to.

A real encounter with Jesus Christ and His gospel, and the effect of simply being born again, however changes prayers. The new man replaces the old and the renewed mind has concerns that are now heavenly rather than earthly. Paul, a self-described “Hebrew of Hebrews” (Phil 3:5), could not have been impious in the discipline of prayer before he met the Lord.

Yet the contents of his prayers must have changed.

In the epistle to the Romans, he writes that he prays “unceasingly” that he may have the opportunity to preach the gospel to them (Rom 1:9-15 ESV). In the epistle to the Colossians, a group of people whom he has never met, he writes that from the day he has heard of their faith, he has prayed unceasingly that they “may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col 1:9-10 ESV)

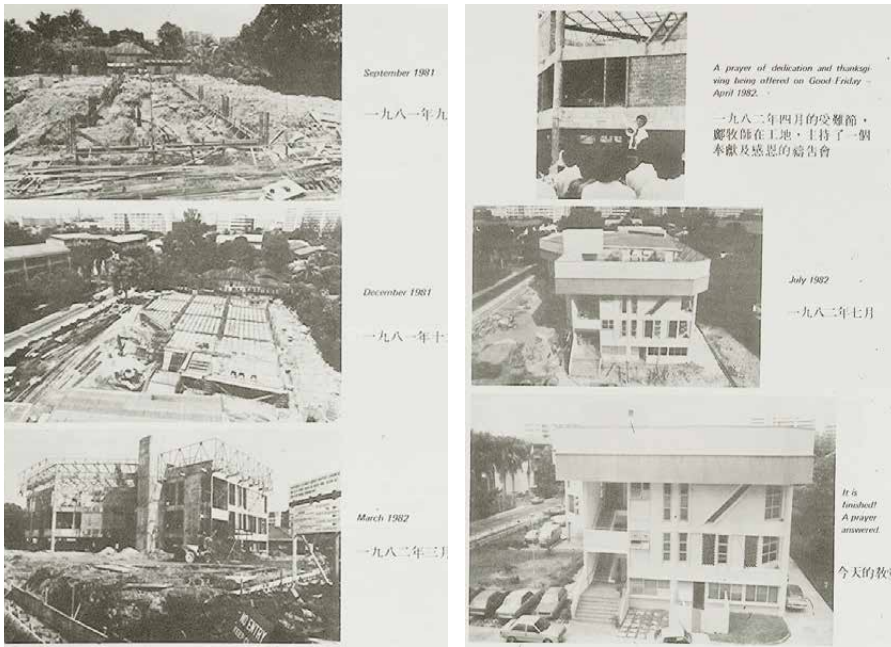
Jesus taught that the Father is seeking those who worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23). By His mercy on me, I have learnt to offer Him very different prayers. I am still learning. Ω

# Our Heritage of Faithfulness

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We prayed and encouraged every member to contribute sacrificially and experience the grace of God, to know Him better and to be strengthened in faith in the whole process.

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*As we prepare to rebuild the church, these testimonies of our spiritual heritage speak loud and clear to a new generation, bringing encouragement and renewed faith.*

## Lee Chung Cheong

In 1978, we had to vacate our place of worship in Kampong Silat for urban redevelopment. The only choice was to look for a suitable piece of land to build a new church. The Board of Deacons eagerly looked for a place and members prayed earnestly asking God to give us the land and lead us in the building programme.

When the Lord answered our prayers, we barely had enough funds to purchase the land but the leaders believed that the Lord would see us through and provide for our needs. We prayed and encouraged every member to contribute sacrificially and experience the grace of God, to know Him better and to be strengthened in faith in the whole process.

We shared the status of our Building Fund with members regularly and watched how the Lord provided. And lo, the Lord always provided the amount needed to make the progress payments as the building progressed.

Our worship services from Oct 1978 through Oct 1982 were held at three different locations. Much like the Israelites journeying in the wilderness, we prayed that our members would stay with us during these wandering years. As a church and as individual members, all we could do was to look to Him who promised "...the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (Deut 31:6, NASB)

And He is faithful! That was the time our faith and trust in Him was 'taken to task'. Truly our God is the same yesterday, today and forever!

God also provided us with a devoted servant, Rev (Dr) E N Poulson who was our counsellor at that time. His dedication to teach and equip us with the Word of God helped us to trust God at each step of our journey. It has taught us to continue our walk and dependence on Him all these years.

## Verda Poulson

Before GBC was legally organised and registered as a church, our spiritual leaders taught us that we should seek the Lord concerning all issues of life. We are to begin each new day, and each new task, with a soul-felt cry "Lord, not my will, but Yours be done."

The Lord honoured our dependence upon Him, adding to our church those who were being saved. The Tras Street shophouse could hold no more even with multiple services and we were forced to move from one temporary place to another – there was no other option! So what do you do? You pray!

We learned to pray in faith as individuals and as a body of believers, in worship services, weekly prayer meetings and Care Groups. In answer to our sincere prayers the Lord continued to add to our numbers.

To buy land and erect a building was far beyond our capability. But GOD! We had seen Him work in answer to our prayers. When we had no choice but to move again, we did what we had always done, we looked to the Lord to do the impossible. And He did!

We never asked for loans. In worship services very little was said about money. We were each asked to write down an amount that we believed the Lord would provide, as a stimulus to personal faith. And in that critical hour of decision-making, the Lord burdened us to increase our missionary giving. 'Foolishly' (rather, by faith) we increased our missions budget by about 30%. Stretched far beyond our means, we were given courage to commit ourselves to that 'impossible' purchase of land and erection of a building.

Week after week, testimonies were shared of how the Lord had, in some unexpected way, provided extra money to be donated to the Building Fund. Each testimony was a cause for personal and corporate thanksgiving and stimulated others to believe and watch God do the impossible.

When the task was completed and we moved into the new facility, we could all look back on an adventure of faith that had made the promises of God real and reliable. Ω

*Look out for a more detailed sharing by Mrs P. and CC Lee on the GBC website in February 2015!*

# Church Rebuilding Committee

*Most of us voted "Yes" for rebuilding the church. Here's some background on what has happened since then.*

Leaders of the English and Chinese congregations have felt an increasing urgency and growing conviction, since late 2013, that God is leading GBC into a journey of faith to rebuild the church premises. This was for a two-fold purpose: to enhance the physical building for His glorious purpose, and to embrace spiritual revival for His family at GBC. This unanimous decision came after years of prayerful consultation and careful deliberation among leaders and members.

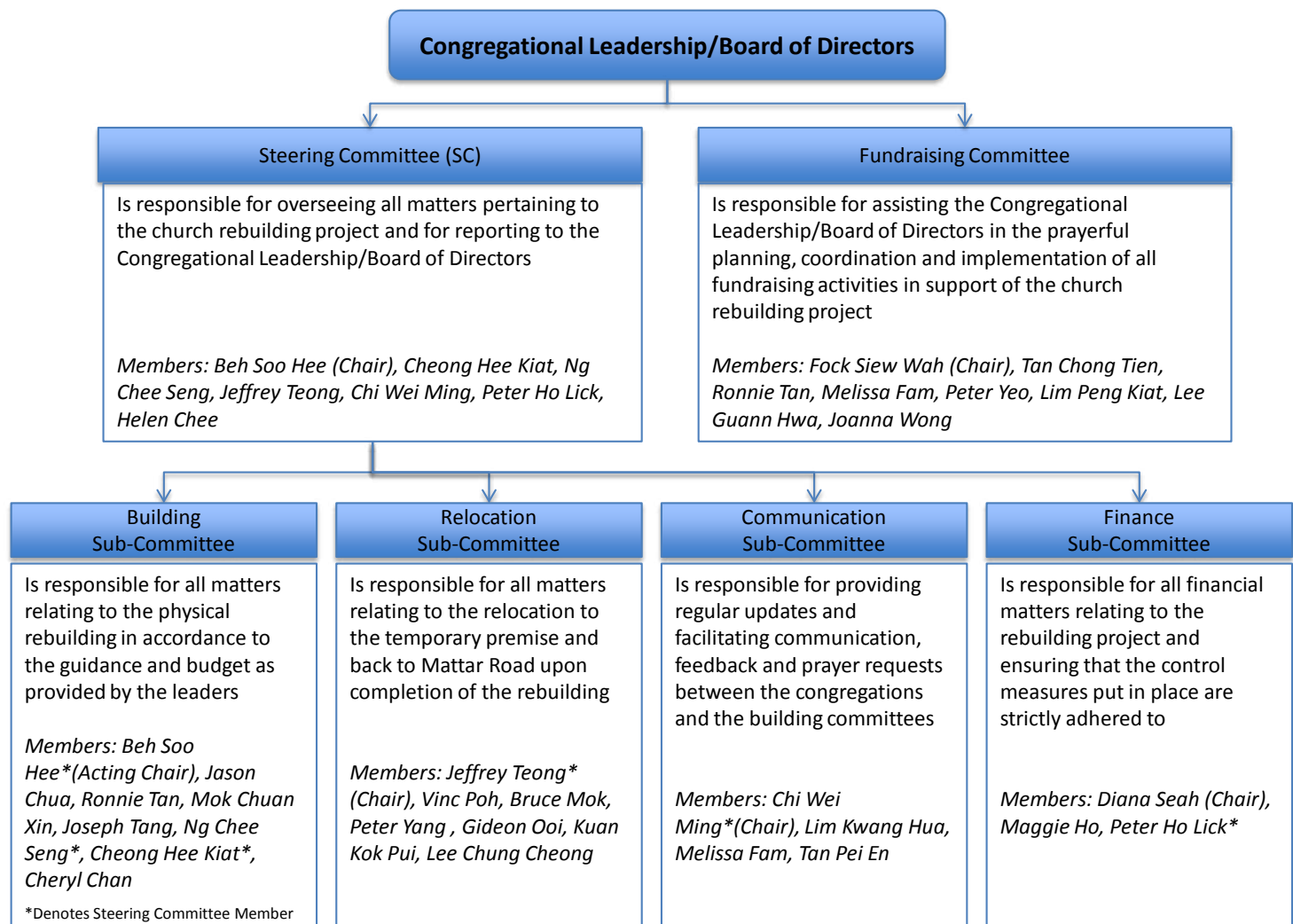
In February 2014, a Rebuilding Steering Committee was set up to investigate the rebuilding proposal and do the necessary due diligence to help GBC members make an informed decision on the matter. Town Hall meetings were conducted with members to share the leaders' deep and unanimous conviction, details of the rebuilding process, preliminary design schematics, and to solicit feedback and suggestions from the congregation. Members were asked to pray earnestly and in humility to discern God's will. On 27 April 2014, during the EGM, 87.6% of our members voted "Yes" for the rebuilding.

With the approval to rebuild, a Fundraising Committee and various sub-committees (Building, Relocation, Communication and Finance) were formed to take on different aspects of the rebuilding programme (see organisation chart below). We praise God that many members stepped forward to volunteer their time and skills, by either joining these committees or volunteering their professional expertise as needed. For example, a member who had his own design firm designed the Fundraising Pledge Card and got it printed in-house; another volunteered her expertise in landscaping.

The committees are made up of volunteers, and anyone in GBC who would like to contribute to this effort is welcome to. If you are so convicted, please approach any of the committee members or contact us at [future@gracebaptistchurch.sg](mailto:future@gracebaptistchurch.sg).

As we prepare to be led by God for what lies ahead, please pray:

1. For the congregational leadership and rebuilding committees to be of one mind throughout the rebuilding process.
2. That God will provide members with willing hearts to come and serve in various ways.
3. For wisdom and a spirit of unity as the church embarks on this journey of faith. Ω



For feedback and suggestions, contact us at [future@gracebaptistchurch.sg](mailto:future@gracebaptistchurch.sg)



## 5 Oct Children's Day

As with past years, we held a special Children's Day service on the first Sunday of October. Isn't it amazing that the gospel is simple enough for our children to understand? Let us as a church also continue to help them grow in the depths and riches of this good news!



## 1 Nov Tea at Tiferet

The ladies had a great time of fellowship at Tiferet Tea Room and one lady reflected, "...high quality tea leaves need the right temperature, (and) right steeping time to be a good cup of tea; so do our lives. We need God's Word to nourish and nurture us, and as we obey, the goodness and beauty of Christ will flow from us."



## 22 Nov Thanksgiving

An intergenerational band of musicians strummed and plucked and tapped and sang deeply moving songs of thanksgiving to God as they led the congregation.



## 19-23 Dec Youth Camp 2014 – The Hungry Games

What are you hungry for? Five days of heart-hitting messages, games, and spending time together and with God led our youths to a greater desire for God and His community. Some also invited non-believer friends to the camp. We pray for the impact of the camp to stay with them and lead them to take the next step of faith.



## 25 Dec Christmas

Led by a choir and worship leaders Kiyoko and Lup Meng, the congregation sang of the Joy that has come to the world, alongside the story of Jesus read out by children from Junior Worship with the use of paper dolls.





28 Dec **Baptism**



Having been brought up in a Christian family and being part of a spiritual Christian family while studying overseas have helped Becky Wong found, strengthened and developed her faith in our Lord Jesus. We warmly welcome her to the GBC family as she publicly declares her faith in our Lord through baptism.



Becky with her mum and her five brothers and sisters in Christ from Cambridge

14 Sep to 8 Nov (over 9 weeks) **Kairos Course**



Participants of the recent Kairos course held at Calvary Baptist Church. Kairos provides an introduction to areas of mission concern, different perspectives of missions, as well as the current state of world missions. GBC will be hosting the Kairos course from 12 April to 6 June 2015, every Sunday, 2:00 to 5:00 pm. Contact Kim Cheng at [kimcheng.tan@gmail.com](mailto:kimcheng.tan@gmail.com) for more information.







*The first-ever Reformation Concert at GBC was a tremendous success. Playing to a packed-out audience of 450, the 60-strong choir and 25-member orchestra presented the precious truths of the Reformation: Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus and Soli Deo Gloria. Caleb Yap shares with us this faith-filled and wonderful journey.*

Feb 2014

Thumbs up from church leaders on the idea mooted by Worship Ministry Team.

“We prayed for 60 singers, 25 musicians and a full sanctuary of audience as faith targets.” **Caleb Yap**

July 2014

A team of volunteers formed to lead in areas of musical arrangements, recruiting singers and orchestra, creative design, publicity, children, costuming, logistics, etc.

Concert concept was designed and the program was drafted.



Aug 2014

Recruitment of soloists, singers and musicians began aggressively.



Five Solae invitation postcards were produced for publicity, with images for download.



Sep 2014

Rehearsals for choir and orchestra were conducted on Tuesdays and Sundays as music was being arranged each week.

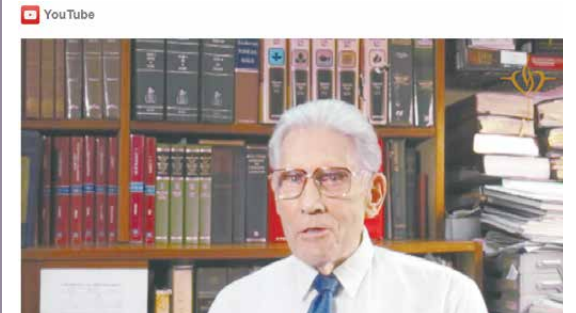


Publicity through the internet. Word of mouth interest spread as more volunteers came on board.

#gbcReformationconcert posts attracted between 300 to 1000 views in Oct 14.



Three publicity videos featuring Grandpa P were produced.



“It’s good for us to take every opportunity to remember these basic truths upon which our faith is based. We dare not forget. This year, Reformation Sunday will not be forgotten.” **Rev (Dr) Poulson**

Oct 2014

14 Oct — At the full dress rehearsal, the sanctuary was transformed.

25 Oct — The day of the concert. The children also presented a segment from the Junior Worship programme – scripture memorisation through songs.



Ps Oliver shed light on the life of Martin Luther and the great Gospel blessing of justification by faith.

26 Oct — The choir and orchestra led the church in two Reformation services – at 8:00 am and 9:30 am.

“I was truly encouraged that the orchestra and choir composed of people of all ages; that when it comes to worship, we sing of one God, despite differences as individuals.” **Ruth Chua**