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Grace Baptist Church is a
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transforms lives with the gos-
pel and love of Jesus Christ.



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NOT ASHAMED



Pastor Ian Buntain pens his first pastoral column
in this issue, on not being ashamed of our one
true Love, as we persevere in our study and
application of the book of Acts.

“Once my heart was captured, reason was
shown the door, deliberately and with a sort of
frantic joy. I accepted everything, I believed
everything, without struggle, without suffering,
without regret, without false shame. How can
one blush for what one adores?”

~ George Sand

Auore Dupin was a French poet and author who lived and wrote in the middle of the 19th century. Perhaps the most famous quote to come out of her work is, “*There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved.*” Dupin definitely lived out what she wrote. She spent her entire life seeking that one elusive happiness. Uncomfortable in her own skin, she wrote under the pseudonym, ‘George Sand’. Though this was not uncommon for women of that day who hoped for their work to be taken seriously, she further scandalised Victorian culture by pursuing multiple affairs, dressing like a man, and appearing in public smoking fat black cigars. She was unapologetically loud, lewd, shocking and scandalous. And when contemplating what some called her

shameless lifestyle, Dupin wrote, “*Once my heart was captured, reason was shown the door, deliberately and with a sort of frantic joy. I accepted everything, I believed everything, without struggle, without suffering, without regret, without false shame. How can one blush for what one adores?*” Ultimately, though Sand triumphed in literature, Dupin failed to discover the love she most desired. Sometime during June 8, 1876, Dupin died alone, estranged from lovers, friends and family.

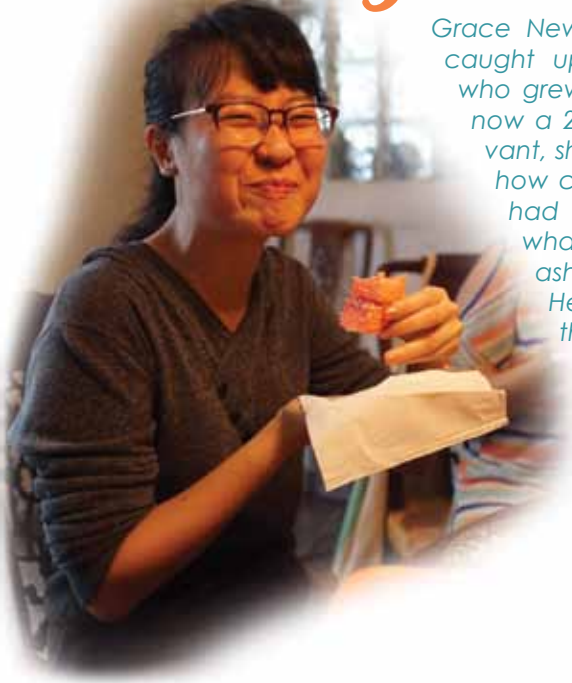
Our world continues to be full of men and women who, just like Dupin, shamelessly pursue a love that ultimately proves unworthy and unsatisfying. But for those of us who have

been found by God, whether we are married or single, whether we know our biological fathers or not, the cross stands as a constant reminder: we have been loved! Believers in Christ have been awakened to the reality that we ourselves are the objects of a Divine love pursuit and yet, the question remains: “**Is there daily indication that our own hearts have been gloriously captured?**”

As we continue to walk through the book of Acts, and as we continue to press into the embrace of Christ, it is my prayer that each of us will boldly and unashamedly live out an authentic alternative to this human pursuit. For indeed, “*How can one blush for what one adores?*”!? Ω

NOT ASHAMED

Living a Transformed Life



Grace News writer **Neo Yi Ling** caught up with **Rachel Chua** who grew up in GBC. Rachel, now a 24-year-old public servant, shared her thoughts on how coming to know Christ had impacted her and what it meant to be unashamed of the gospel. Here are snippets from their conversation over a cup of teh tarik.

How did you become a Christian?

When I was six years old in Sunday school! I remember learning about Jesus saving me, and saying the sinner's prayer. However, it wasn't till I was 11 that I got baptised as a step of obedience through faith in Christ.

How has the gospel affected your life?

At every new phase in life, I have had to ask myself how my faith matters and what it means to be a Christian in each context. For example, while sitting for my 'A' Level examinations, I asked myself what do school grades – good or bad – mean in light of Christ and His salvation? Not very much apparently!

How does my Christian identity translate into daily life? Having spent most of my life attending church, I didn't question the reality of Christ outside of the usual "Christian" routines very much until I faced people very different from me. In the workplace after graduation, I encountered colleagues who were accustomed to a lifestyle of partying, drinking and casual sexual encounters. When they heard that I am preparing to get married at the age of 24, they were curious about my decision to settle down so early. Their curiosity helped me realise that my romantic relationship is one area where my faith has led me to make very different choices from people around me. Thus, even though it is not my nature to share openly about personal matters, I took the opportunity to share sincerely with my colleagues about my trust in God to bring two imperfect people together in a committed journey of marriage.

As for marriage itself! When I first went out with my now-fiancé, then-boyfriend Jing Ren, I had in mind a mental checklist of the ideal Christian boyfriend. The criteria included: regular church-goer, served in two ministries or more, involved in a community that affirmed him, and so on. However, in the course of the relationship and through conversations with him and other mentors around me, I realised that **it isn't Bible knowledge or outward actions that are indicative of a true follower of Christ, but a transformed heart.**

This has led to open conversations as we both seek to lay the foundations of our faith, and understand together the foundations in preparation for marriage.

Being part of a community of God's people has made a difference. Growing up in GBC, I've had older ladies such as my former Sunday School teachers, come alongside me to mentor and look out for me. For about a year, a few of us would gather with Auntie Nee Kiah once a week to study the Bible over a stretch of 2-3 hours each time. I also did an internship in GBC with Pastor Ollie, and that equipped me with Bible reading skills and – more importantly – better understanding of the faith. All these had been particularly helpful to me in learning to be vulnerable with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and sharing my life with them. More recently, I have been touched by those who approached J and welcomed him when he visited GBC.

What does it mean to you to be unashamed of the gospel?

It means going against my natural inclinations to keep to myself and openly sharing Christ with others wherever, whenever. Sometimes the opportunity comes up during taxi rides – I remember a taxi driver sharing with me his opinion on religion being about doing good deeds. At the end of the conversation, I told him I am a Christian and that I didn't agree with him entirely but respected his opinion. Being unashamed also means having an answer for why I do what I do in obeying what Jesus calls me to, when questioned by my friends who are mostly Buddhists or atheists.

What are your hopes for GBC?

Over the years, many times I have felt like I didn't fit into this community. This has given me a burden for those who left church or those who feel like there is no group they belong to in church. I have also been challenged by older Christians who have asked me, "How are you mentoring others?" This has gotten me thinking about how I spend my time. An intergenerational church community is very, very valuable – it provides a setting where people who don't fit into their age group can still find a group of people to connect with. I anticipate how different and counter-cultural GBC would look if everyone embraces the gospel that crosses all barriers. Ω



Rachel Chua is the second from left. She currently attends the YA CG, and these are her fellow small group members.

NOT ASHAMED



In line with our theme on being Not Ashamed of the Gospel, our youth members, **Caleb Lee** (fifth from left) and **Lianna Chan** (second from left), speak up on what the gospel means to them personally and how they have experienced the power of the gospel in their individual lives. We pray alongside both of them as they strive to continue to be not ashamed of the gospel no matter where they are or who they are with.

1. HOW DID YOU COME TO KNOW THE LORD JESUS?

CALEB: I was brought to GBC by my parents since young. At children's church, I got to hear the many stories of the Bible and there, I got to hear the stories of Jesus. While I prayed the sinner's prayer as a young kid, I don't think I fully understood what it meant. I would say that it was only last year when I really began to have an interest in reading the Bible, and had a genuine desire to learn more about Jesus in God's Word.

LIANNA: I was born into a Christian family, and I've always attended church and Christian schools. However, it was only recently that I realised that the gospel was not an obscure and faraway story, but is relevant and real – it is meant for me, a struggling sinner.

2. WHAT DOES THE GOSPEL MEAN TO YOU?

CALEB: As I hear God's salvation plan for me, it really challenges me in how I should respond to it, ie to live a holy life and proclaim the gospel.

LIANNA: The gospel to me is what God has done for us sinners, and how we should respond to it. It is shown from different perspectives on different aspects, with the sole intent of helping us understand just how great a God He is, and just how merciful and gracious He is to pardon us and send His only Son to die for our sins. It is something for us to hold on to, and proof that God keeps his promises to us and will save us.

3. HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IN YOUR LIFE?

CALEB: I have experienced the power of the gospel when I see God's plan slowly unfolding before me, eg when a brother serves another brother. It reminds me that God is working His plan bit by bit through His people, and I can be confident that God will completely fulfill His plan one day. Therefore, when trials come my way, I have fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (and the truths of the Bible) to support me.

For example, last year was quite a stressful period for me as I was juggling preparation for my O levels and rehearsal

for the reformation concert. An older brother in Christ walked alongside me then, encouraging me and reading the book of Ephesians with me.

LIANNA: No matter how many times I had turned away and no matter how far I had gone, God has always been here for me, and I have found peace in this. I have also experienced the power of the gospel through people around me, who remind me to turn to God – this is also my reminder that He is always here for me.

4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL?

CALEB: It means to be confident in proclaiming the faith we profess regardless of the circumstance, environment or outcome, eg being open to sharing my faith in school regardless of how my social status in school may be affected or how my unbelieving friends may respond to it.

LIANNA: To be not ashamed is to live just for God, and not for myself or Man. Ω

MISSIONS

Trusting in the Lord

Doug and Joyce Erdmann update us on their new ministry with The Navigators in Colorado, United States. We pray with them that they will continue to trust in the Lord as they transit to a new place with new roles.



I met Joyce at an afternoon Christmas party, and right then and there I shared with her my commitment to overseas missions. I explained that ninety percent of the full-time Christian workers were ministering to about ten percent of the world's population, yet only ten percent of the workers were reaching out to the other ninety percent. A marriage and five children later, we finally made it overseas in 2010 when The Navigators asked me to lead their work in Singapore. While Singapore was not barren of full-time Christian workers, it was located within 2,000 miles of over half the world's population, most of whom had little contact with believers, let alone full-time Christian workers. Certainly Singapore, "the Antioch of Asia", was strategic for the missionary effort of the church.

Seven and one-half years later, my term as director of The Navigators has come to an end. By God's grace, we leave behind a ministry that is growing both in total numbers and numbers of new staff. We are very pleased that one of GBC's own, Yap Kim Meng, will take my place. For us, however, there is one country that sought us out, a country both spiritually needy and spiritually influential ... our own country of America.

On 12 May 2015, the Washington Post reported that, "Christianity is on the decline in America, not just among younger generations or in certain regions of the country but across race, gender, education and geographic barriers. The percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christians dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years..." In the same article Alan Cooperman, director of religion research for the Pew Research Center added, "It's remarkably widespread. The country is becoming less religious as a whole, and it's happening across the board."

Clearly the U.S. needs labourers, more than ever, to be working in its harvest. Yet the U.S. continues to play a remarkably significant role in the harvest around the world. According to Christianity Today, 25 July 2013, "The United States still tops the chart by far in terms of total missionaries, sending 127,000 in 2010 compared to the 34,000 sent by No. 2-ranked Brazil."

This is why I was excited when the U.S. Navigators asked me to consider a newly-created role, that of "Associate Field Director". The U.S. Navigators have 2,700 field staff, by far the most of any of the 100+ countries in which The Navigators minister. Over 500 of these serve overseas. They are supervised by many people, but three "Field Leaders" are ultimately responsible to recruit, train, shepherd and lead them. The number of staff has grown steadily the last five years, stretching these three beyond their capacity. To help them, this new role was conceived, and I have agreed to take it on. This means that Colorado Springs, Colorado, where our U.S. Headquarters is located, will be our new home. Joyce will serve right alongside me in ministry, especially helping the many women whom God always seems to bring into her life.

Any transition gives many opportunities to trust the Lord. Our apartment in Singapore was on the market for six months; after much prayer we are grateful that it was sold for a reasonable price. We have many friends whom we left behind in Singapore; now we need to start a whole new network of friends and colleagues. Finally, we trust that in this new role, God will "bless the work of our hands." "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain." (Psalm 127:1) Will you join us in praying for these things?

We so appreciate the love and support of GBC. People of the church have shown us many kindnesses. Our great regret is that we are leaving at such an exciting time for GBC – a new pastor, and soon a new church building! We believe that God would continue to bless GBC and make it a light not only to the people of Singapore, but to the many people surrounding this great country who have yet to hear the good news.

Your grateful missionaries,
Doug and Joyce Erdmann

MISSIONS

We receive a heart-warming letter from a dear missionary couple who has been away for many years. We give thanks for what God has been doing in and through them to minister to the Unreached People Groups, and we pray alongside them as they transit to a new assignment and city.

Dear GBC Family,

In some ways, it seems like yesterday when we had just arrived in Singapore with two young children. It was during the SARS outbreak, and we were so impressed with the discipline of the Singaporean society. Over the six years we have served alongside you, we have learned many lessons of loyalty and hard work. Part of our hearts remains with you, even though it has been almost eight years since we moved from Singapore to the country where we have been serving. You have been our partners in our ministry from the very beginning, and we often pray for you as Paul prayed in Philippians 1:3-5.

We have been in the United States since last June and will remain here until the middle of May. This period has helped us to seek the Lord for physical and spiritual healing. We have found over the course of 14 years of cross-cultural ministry that we had picked up a few battle wounds that God has graciously helped us deal with. We are also realising that we are not as young as we once were, and doctors have assisted us to handle a few health issues that we had been trying to ignore for the past several years. With gratitude, we report that God has us ready, healthy, and excited to return to Southeast Asia for our 15th year of ministry.


When we return to the field, we will be changing assignments. Prayer mobilisation had been the primary thrust of our work for all our previous years, and GBC had graciously partnered us by funding our travels to various Unreached People Groups (UPGs) on our island. After six years of making such trips, we ended up visiting 49 of the 53 UPGs and sharing the Good News with hundreds of people – thank you for being part of this work. Upon returning we will be moving to a new city and our role will be focused on church planting and evangelism. The city we will be working in has over a million people and has several UPGs living there.

Our visa will continue to be sponsored by the Baptist Convention in our host country. We are pleased to announce that it appears that our visa application is progressing well and will be ready for our return in mid-May. This visa will allow us to continue working without having to make periodic trips in and out of the country. Many of you have prayed for our work visa, so this piece of news is an answer to all your prayers.

Our children continue to grow – you wouldn’t even recognise them from the little girl and boy you knew during our time with you. Our girl is a junior and she hopes to attend university in the States after graduating from high school next year. Our boy is in eighth grade, and almost as tall as his father. We are excited that one of the families in our new city has children the same ages as ours.

In our new position, we hope to use more volunteer teams. We also hope that perhaps GBC would be interested in coming to visit and work with us after we settle in. We have a training facility in our city that could host seminars on a variety of topics, and we know that GBC is gifted with professionals from a variety of disciplines. Thank you for continuing to pray for us. We miss you all.

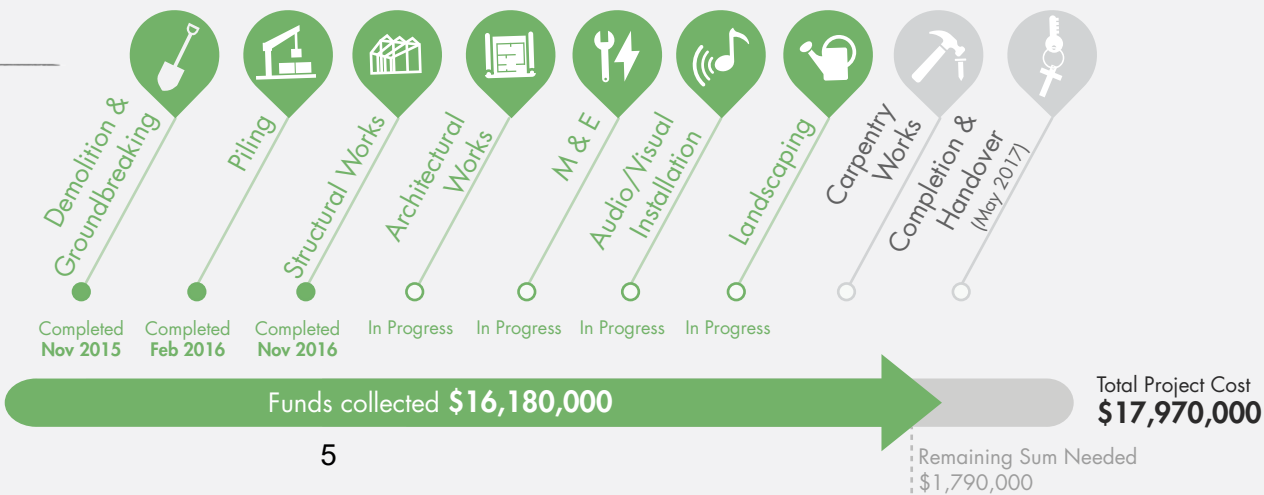
In Him,
T & S



CHURCH REBUILDING

Updated 31 March 2017

We thank God for His protection and provision on this faith journey thus far, and continue praying for perseverance and preparation for the move-in.



MINISTRY FEATURE

Youth Ministry

Ever wonder what our youth does in their weekly care group sessions? Written by youth on youth, we get a glimpse of what goes on at youthgroup on Fridays, as well as the abundance of food – both spiritual and physical!

We come together every Friday as a youthgroup to have dinner and study God's word, before breaking into smaller groups for sharing and prayer. Once a month, we gather for a time of fellowship – think pizza party, Youth Masterchef competition, and one time we had the privilege to hear testimonies and interesting stories from older friends in GBC.

YOUTH MASTERCHEF COMPETITION



We have some really good chefs, but some who need a lot more practice (:

YOUTHGROUP LOHEI



YOUTHGROUP ON FRIDAY NIGHTS



In 2016, we dived into the book of Mark where we learnt about the Kingship of Christ Jesus. This year, we are starting the year with the book of Philippians, before joining the church in studying the book of Acts.



WHAT OUR GIRLS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT YOUTH MINISTRY

"Our group has grown closer as a family, and bonded over the past three years of being together. Being with the girls is having a safe space to talk about our lives and our walks with God. This group has encouraged us in our individual walks, and given us a place in this church."

- Esther & Mercia

HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR US:

- We give thanks for the youth who come faithfully every Friday night after a long week of school/CCAs to study God's word together, and to have fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for the youth to continue to guard this time of growing together as a spiritual family.
- We give thanks that the youth are starting to bring their friends to youthgroup on Fridays. Pray for them to have courage to share the gospel with their friends.
- Pray for the youth who are struggling with the idols of school (examinations, CCAs, friendship). Pray for them to hold fast to Christ, and know that their identities are secured in the One who loves them.
- Pray for God to protect the spiritual walks and time of the youth leaders (Samuel, Jessica, Juslyn, Priscilla, Aaron and Shermaine) that they will be able to serve God and His people with God's strength. Pray for wisdom for the youth leaders to speak God's truths into the lives of the youth.
- We give thanks for the generous support from parents who take time to ferry their children on Friday nights, and for their love gifts that have fed our youth well.

EVENTS

Ps Oliver's Ordination 18 Feb

We celebrated God's setting apart of Brother Ollie for His Kingdom's work, and remember Rev Lim Teck Peng's charge to us as a church to support, encourage, invest in and love Ollie. We pray that the Lord will continue to stir up good things in Ps Ollie for the sake of His gospel, His glory and His namesake. We also want to thank Ps Ollie's family – his mother Juliana and his brother Benjamin – for giving up their best to the Lord.



Pua Mission Trip 24-27 Feb

GBC's Pua Mission team and Sherri Buntain held the quarterly English Camp at Kathy's Home. For more photos, drop by facebook.com/kathyshome1999.



GBC Rebuilding Fundraising – Bless Thy Neighbour Jan-Mar & YA Bake Sale 26 Mar

We thank God for various fundraising activities to rally the GBC community and contribute to the rebuilding fund since we started the rebuilding project. Here, we feature photos from two recent activities.



The "Just Do It" CG started a Talent Station to encourage church members to use their talents and services to bless one another. Before Chinese New Year, the CG cleaned the homes of some of our members who needed help.



The YA CG held their second Bake Sale.

Church Rebuilding Progress Q1 2017

Our building walls have been completed, and are being plastered and painted; landscaping has started; the pantry is taking shape. We thank God for the workers who have been labouring for our church building!



CHILDREN'S CORNER



Not Ashamed

The Story of Perpetua
by Rachel Wong

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..." Romans 1:16

You may have heard about our church's theme for 2017 – it is "Not Ashamed". Not ashamed of what? The clothes you wear, your marks in school, what you said to your brother yesterday? No, we are not to be ashamed of the gospel, which is what Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..." This is another way of saying that we should not be ashamed of Jesus or of being a Christian or of going to church every Sunday. Not only should we not be ashamed, we should be so happy about it that we cannot help showing it and telling everyone that we belong to God!

Maybe that sounds a little scary, but it's not something that we have to do on our own because it is the Holy Spirit who gives us faith and courage in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is like a charging cable that connects us to God, who is our source of energy and power. Just like a mobile phone, we need constant recharging, otherwise we would soon run out of faith and love and joy and all the things that the Holy Spirit gives us, and then we would certainly be ashamed of the gospel.

There are lots of real-life examples of people who believed in Jesus and refused to be ashamed of Him even when they were told they would be killed unless they gave up their faith. One of them was a young lady called Perpetua, who lived in North Africa a long time ago. She was about to be killed by wild animals for believing in Jesus, and her father, who was not a Christian, came to beg her to save her own life. All she had to do to save her life was to say that she was ashamed of Jesus and didn't want to believe in Him any more. But the Holy Spirit gave her strength and she refused. She told her father: "Father, you see this pitcher [jug]. Can we call it by any other name than what it is?" Her father answered, "No." Perpetua answered, "Nor can I call myself by any other name than that of Christian." She was only 22 years old when she died.

You and I probably will not have to face such a terrible test to show that we are not ashamed of the gospel. But there are still times when we have to take a stand for Jesus. In our next Children's Corner we will look at how to show we are not ashamed to glorify God in the things we say. Ω