

“He is the one we proclaim, admonishing & teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”
Colossians 1:28 08/2020

Ministering under the Pandemic

COVID-19 completely changed the routine & format of our lives & ministry. Everything became virtual. It has been more than half a year since the initial adjustment phase in February. Whether we like it or not, we have accepted it as a “new way of life”. Germany began to re-open in May, but social gatherings (including religious worship) are still governed under strict safety protocols. Göttingen had two cases of community outbreak in June. This added to the challenge of coordinating human resources for physical gathering. Most of our ministries are still administered virtually. The only exception is that we’ve offered the option of physical gathering at our home for Bible Study every Friday, while continuing with the option for people to join virtually.

Virtual ministry has its own challenges. It’s much more difficult to outreach; it’s testing believers’ self-discipline. Virtual ministry cannot replace the interactive experience from physical gathering. Nonetheless, brothers & sisters put in effort to gather as 3 to 5 people under one roof, and logged in together as a group to worship. This was an



attempt to fill the void of fellowship life. Unexpectedly, in the virtual gatherings of these few months, we are able to minister to the families of believers in China, to those who have returned to homeland from Germany, and to other German suburban cities where there are no Chinese Christians gathering point. We worship in unity via a different platform, of which we are joyfully amazed!

Under the uncertainties of the pandemic, this year’s Short Term Mission teams’ visits were cancelled. However, there was no stopping of “virtual Short Term Mission work”. In June, we invited Rev. David Lau & his team from RHCCC to lead a workshop of 4 sessions – “Sainthood @ Workplace”. In July, we invited Pastor Chemaine Chan from CCC to host 4 virtual classes on the topic of “Biblical Geo-Cultural Significances”. These topical workshops equipped believers with more knowledge, & helped them live out their faith.

We received support from overseas; and thankfully we had

opportunities to provide support as well. (1) **Internally:** Providing support to other gathering locations of Chinese Christians in Germany through sermons & counselling. There’s a regular shortage of Chinese pastors in Germany. Prior to the Pandemic, the pastoral guest speaker closest to us was still a round trip of 3 hours train ride away. It would take the next closest guest speaker approximately 5 to 6 hours of travel time in total. On the other hand, online preaching furthered our abilities to share resources, and lessened the pressure of ongoing ministry demands for missionaries. (2) **Externally:** In support of a missionary fellowship in China, we will be providing 2 specialized training sessions. Conducting training directly in Mainland China was challenging because of the many complicated factors at the moment. Virtual training became the solution to this challenge. We thank the Lord for giving us the opportunity to participate in different ministries, to broaden our visions, to meet the missionaries who serve in different regions, to listen to their challenges, and to grow together in the Lord.

Lives Turned Upside Down During the Pandemic

Due to the page limit in our last sharing letter, we couldn’t include the details of believers’ enforced isolation time during the pandemic. It was a time when God came to dismantle, heal and rebuild lives. We have invited 2 of them **to share their stories in first person narrative.**

The Spiritual Realization of a Philosopher/Academic

From December of last year to May of this year, I tried to suppress any drastic change in emotions, hiding them from people. Until mid-March this year, the German government took actions in response to the pandemic. In compliance, public places such as schools, restaurants, & churches closed and restricted access. For international students, these measures announced the end of social interactions & the beginning of isolated living. Living alone forced me to reflect on my true well-being: the lonely, pessimistic, inferior, anxious “me”; the “me” that is hidden from others. Meanwhile, living alone gave me enough time & energy to return to Jesus. I knew that Jesus was my only saviour in the battle against the terrible “me”.

A week into Lockdown, I collapsed emotionally. I couldn’t bring myself to take interest in anything. It was as if everything was meaningless. I wanted to sleep but couldn’t fall asleep. I was fearful of interaction - even virtual interactions scared me. The only thing that kept me going was writing thesis. I kept extending my work hours, because it was the only thing that made me felt like I was functioning

normally. However, in the end, I couldn't sustain it anymore. I had to seek help from Pastor Felain. I was very thankful for her counselling, and for brothers & sisters' encouragement & effort to keep me company. I experienced a spiritual awakening during the pandemic – Glory to God!

I was a highly functional person: I had a clear plan for everything & I was good at following the plan. The formation of this personality was related to my family upbringing. My mother was a very disciplined person, and she taught me as such. Highly functional personality had its own advantages, but the disadvantage was that I became very accustomed to doing everything by myself, rather than relying on God. When I encountered life challenges, my first response wasn't to pray, but to find the resolution on my own. Having control made me feel stronger. As life presented more variables, my desire to control intensified – essentially, the stronger the desire, the closer I was to an emotional breakdown.

I abide by a strict daily routine: from waking up to sleeping; from work to entertainment. I even curved out particular time for social interactions. My adherence to the highly rigid timetable led to some atypical behaviours. I could not communicate with anyone outside of my committed social interaction time. Otherwise, I would experience anxiety. When people invited me out for coffee; I declined because it wasn't my coffee hour. When people invited me to dine out; I declined because it wasn't my dinner time. When people called me up for a chat; I declined because it was my sleeping time.

The self-isolation period at home was the last straw that broke the camel's back. In the past few months, I did not take care of myself as a human being. Needless to say, I had forgotten that I am one of God's beautiful creation, His beloved daughter. I was treating myself more **like a robotic machine**. My being had values because I functioned as per programmed routines. This made me felt accomplished in the beginning. However, I later realized that this was what led to a series of problems down the road: **I lost the joy of living**. I misinterpreted the meaning of work. I no longer worked to glorify God. Merely, I was completing tasks mechanically.

For instance, I studied for the sole purpose of completing a thesis. Though I completed the task with high efficiency, I had episodes of self-doubt & self-denial. "This thesis has no value. It's garbage!"; "How can I expect to excel in academic contributing such low-value research?"; "What is the value of academic research?"... I, used to love reading; used to enjoy discovering new knowledge from research. However, gradually, I lost all interest in doing research. Losing interest in my academic learning was only the beginning. Later, I realized I began to lose interest in almost all things in life. It was as if life doesn't have any meaning anymore.

Looking back, I realized the way I addressed my problems was wrong. When I experienced challenges in life, I didn't turn to God; instead, I tried to take control & resolve the situation myself. It was as if I was drinking poison to quench an immediate sense of thirst. When I finally realized that I've stretched myself too thin, I cried uncontrollably upon reflecting on the Words of God, "*Trust in the Lord with all your*

heart & lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, & he will make your paths straight." (Prov 3: 5-6)

The Shattering & Renewal of an Artist/Mom

I've always been curious about life & spiritual beings. I want to know & understand more about the world through inner-spiritual discoveries. At a young age, I attended temples of different gods & buddhas. I felt oppressed & insecure during my temple visits. I was fearful of offending them & receiving punishment. Nonetheless, when I was faced with the pressure of exams & an unknown future, I went to the temples & prayed for help. I realized the limit of human being. It made me want to find a true power who can grant me peace & protection.



Illustration of Prov 12:11 by the Artist/ Mom

Later, I was admitted to an Art School to study Oil Paintings. I spent a lot of time in reading books of philosophy & arts. I was chasing after a feeling; but the feeling was illusional. As a result, my mental health began to drift away from the normal state of being. Upon graduation from University, I went to Germany for further studies. I obtained the highest possible academic recognition in German arts school. I continued my illusional search in the artistic world. At times, it brought upon comfort & temporarily fulfilled my inner void. **Art became the idol of my life**. I was addicted to the feeling of art creation & depended on it for validation of my accomplishment & my being in life. I was locked in a cycle of emptiness & instant gratification. Even during the high points in life, **I had pride & spiraled into depression**. I have walked past too many wonderful things in life because I was distant from God. I have complained, but I knew the root cause of my problems was that I chose to walk my own path.

During the pandemic, I earnestly re-read the Bible. Every Word of God came with wisdom & power. **His Words released me from sufferings, and comforted my broken heart. They gave me strength & joy. Most importantly, they re-gifted me with the everlasting, unchanging love & peace.** Art was surreal. Chasing after accomplishment in Arts would only leave one feeling empty & insecure. Praise the Lord for an everlasting, unchanging purpose in Him. He surrounded me with blessings every step of the way.

I may be small, but I felt safe in God's arms! I reflected upon my past artwork. God did not deny them. Instead, He reminded me, "Child, do you have peace and joy in what you do?" Under the guidance of our Pastors, I began devotion with the Book of Proverbs. Every verse impacted me directly. I wanted to capture them in my paintings. Now, I have truly **submitted my profession & spiritual gifts as offerings to God**. Beside boldly testifying God in my artwork, I've also told

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others about my spiritual experience in God during my virtual painting classes.

I used to question why God need praises from people? Now that I have experienced the overflowing love from God; I



聰明人的心得知識，智慧人的耳手知識。（箴言18：15）

have realized that praises is a way for us to respond to His love. **Art is one way to praise our God. It can uplift one's life with love & eager!** “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even

Illustration of Prov 18:15 by the Artist/ Mom when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” (Eph 2:4-5)

Prayer Requests

- **COVID-19 in Germany:** Elementary & secondary schools are closed for summer break in August. People began to travel for vacation. As the flow of traffic increased, we also saw a hike in new COVID-19 cases in each state. May the public continues to follow safety protocols to minimize the risk of another community outbreak.
- **Spiritual Well-Being of Believers:** May the Lord encourages members of our church, strengthens their faith. May our members remain persistent with their devotion & fellowship gatherings, so their faith can be rooted & seen through their daily living.

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