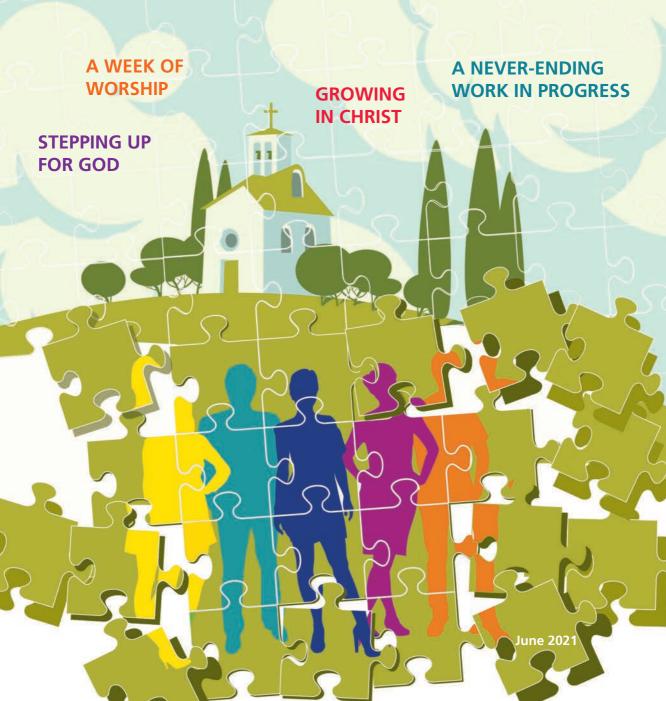


"...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:12)



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# BUILDING UP

You've probably heard this one before. There was a man passing by three bricklayers who were hard at work. He asked them, "What are you doing?" The first said, "I am laying a brick." The second said, "I am building a wall." The third said, "I am building a cathedral."

This story is often used to demonstrate the importance of knowing what we are doing in depth. Beyond the routine task, we are called to have a grander vision of what we are accomplishing with our daily tasks.

But there is another version of this story - an extended one. In it, two of the three bricklayers start squabbling over a brick that one of them laid. The first one said, "You laid this brick wrongly, you must redo the whole wall!" The other denied it and said, "It's a bathroom wall, no one will care!" Noticing them squabbling, the third bricklayer said, "Relax. It's the inside wall of the bathroom and the toilet bowl will be placed right in front of this brick. No one will see it at all."

This version of the story teaches us that when we have a grander perspective of life, we will not sweat the small stuff and spend time fretting over things that will not matter in the end!

My dear friends what are you building in life? Are the things you are doing, of RELEVANCE and IMPORTANCE to achieving the end picture that you have in mind? With me being your pastor, I also urge you to consider if the end picture you have in mind is one that submits to what God your Creator and Saviour has in mind for your life.

The Bible teaches us that, "From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" (Acts 17:26). This means that God has a specific plan and design for every individual. Nothing happens by accident, even the appointed time in history for you and I to exist.

There is a plan and a purpose for our lives! God wants to build our lives towards the end goal that He has in mind for you and me. So, have you been building your spiritual journey, OR have you stagnated in your walk with God? Earlier this year, I said in a sermon, that building our spiritual lives requires that we do so in the midst of a faith community. There are no solitary Christians! After all, it's very easy to claim we are 'holy' when our character is untested by individuals who 'test our patience' in their interactions with us. In addition, a faith community can also speak INTO our lives, and help give us ideas and feedback on how we can be better shaped into Christ's image, as Christians.

So, do you have believers around you who will lovingly speak the truth into your life? We all need those who say things like, "Hey Tom, I really care for you and want you to grow in your journey with God. But your temper is getting in the way of that. Here are some suggestions on how you can, perhaps, be a little less quick to fly off the handle and a little gentler in your responses."

Our vision at HVMC is that we strive for all HVMCers to be "Nourished to Flourish" and we hope to achieve this by "Building Up and Reaching Out". Let's all consider this day, how we can commit to doing one thing at least this year, that involves building up our spiritual journeys with the Lord.

**Pastor Joel Yong** 

## **EVENTEUL**

# A Week Of WORSHIP



Each year, Easter or Resurrection Sunday and the days leading up to it - Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday – are a very sacred time of the year for us Christians, as they commemorate the last days of Jesus's life on earth.

#### **Maundy Thursday**

On Maundy Thursday, we re-enact the Last Supper, which Jesus shared with His apostles on the night He was betrayed and arrested. Rev Dr Lorna Khoo's sermon from John 12 and Philippians 2 focused on the qualities of love and humility and on two rather strange requests that Jesus made, "Wash my feet" and "Eat my flesh and drink my blood". The action of Jesus washing His disciples' feet demonstrated great humility and servanthood because no master would wash His servants' feet. Our feet carry us from place to place and need washing to make them clean. In the same way, spiritual dirt, too, accumulates as we go through life, but no amount of soap or water can clean it. Only by humbly accepting Jesus' offer to cleanse us of our sins, can we be spiritually clean.

Then there is Jesus' request for us to eat His flesh and drink His blood, which is what we practise symbolically when we partake of the 'bread and wine' at Holy Communion. It is a reminder of Jesus giving of His body and lifeblood at the cross for the redemption of our sins. Having the confidence that our sins are forgiven and to walk in freedom helps us to walk in His righteousness during this season.

#### **Good Friday**

On Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, traditionally a day of sorrow, penance and fasting, Rev Joel Yong brought 1 Peter 2:24 to our attention, reminding us that Jesus is the hero who came personally to save us from our sins; that God, our Heavenly Father, was gracious to send His only precious son to die for our sins. We do not have the power to open the door of redemption, but God has.

### **Easter Sunday**

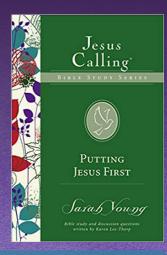
Easter celebrates Christ coming back to life the resurrection. Rev Loretta Lim's sermon reminded us that if it were not for Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:1-7), His birth and death would have all meant nothing. The resurrection is more than an event as it assures us of eternal life and the transformation of our lives as children of God. Though we have received forgiveness in Christ, we often still face the constant struggle with sin, allowing past mistakes, guilt, shame and regrets to tie us down. However, when we celebrate Easter, acknowledging His resurrection, all our sins can be washed away by Jesus our Lord and Saviour (Galatians 2: 20). We can overcome bitterness with forgiveness, pride can give way to humility, self-centredness can be transformed into love and caring, and fear can turn into faith.



# **EVENTFUL**

# **Preparing For LENT**

I had the privilege of going through the Lent series, "Putting Jesus First", with different groups this year. The material provided a timely reminder for us to prioritise Jesus amidst the challenges that we face. I also learnt a lot from the sharing of others, and came away with new insights and practical tips that I have started to incorporate into my own spiritual walk. One of the groups that journeyed with me during this period was a new Life group, made up of young parents and young-at-heart parents. We meet fortnightly on Tuesday evenings over Zoom.



The one word that stands out from this series is, "trust". Putting Jesus first in every aspect of our lives is to trust Him, whatever our circumstances. The study framework of "consider it", "experience it", "study it" and "live it", makes it easy to understand the topics and their application.

- Lum Choong Yin

The bi-monthly sessions during this season of uncertainty gave some structure to my quiet time. The sharing sessions were also meaningful, providing perspectives from different seasons of life. And last but not least, as some members are also young parents, it was fun seeing their little ones randomly pop in and out on Zoom!

- Lisa Teo

The Lent series has helped us to centre our lives on Jesus. We found it useful to explore a variety of topics with which we could identify in our daily lives. The sharing sessions have been insightful and helpful in our walk with Him.

- Eng Seang & Daphne Yeo

It's been a meaningful time with our Life group, to pause and evaluate our relationship with God and others around us. The book is easy to read and helps us re-focus our lives and to keep our eyes on Jesus. With the sharing from the other members, we are reminded that we are not journeying alone – they encourage and motivate us to keep our faith.

- Kenneth & Salome Koh

A thought-provoking set of topics which often are overlooked, or not discussed enough, as we go about our daily lives. The readings and questions certainly gave me pause to re-think and re-discover where I am on my journey, and where I have placed Jesus in all aspects of my life.

- Martin Tay

Even though all our meetings take place via Zoom, it is nice to meet around the Bible. I enjoy sharing our faith with each other and taking away lessons on how we can put Jesus first.

- Wilma Pols

The Lent material challenged me to examine how I have applied the Biblical truth of putting Jesus first in many areas of my life.

- Mun Kwok On

The book was a good help for my private moments with the Lord - my personal spiritual formation.

- Alan Tay

If you are interested in getting involved in a Life group, do consider joining us! You can contact either Pastor Joel (joel@hvmc.sg) or Alan (alan@hvmc.sg) for more information.

Janine Boon

# **EVENTFUL**

# **REVELATION - A Book for Our Times**



In these troubled times, expressions like "last days" and "end times" trip so readily off our tongues. So it was appropriate that HVMC's Discipleship and Nurture Committee organized a Webinar over four Saturdays in April / May on the Book of Revelation, with Trinity Theological College Professor Tan Kim Huat.

The Book of Revelation is the one book in the Bible that comes with a promise: "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (1:3). By the same token, it is the one book in the Bible that the devil does not want us to read and take instruction from, so beware of spiritual warfare when you do!

But all the more, in order to better understand the times we live in, we have to press on, and Dr Tan's teaching has given us a solid framework around which to plumb Revelation's depths. He did not seek to give us answers to the mysteries that lend themselves to so much debate, but drew our attention to what John, the apostle, said he was writing:

- 1) An Apocalypse (1.1)
- 2) A Prophecy (1:3)
- 3) A Letter (1.4)

From there, Dr Tan presented this structure to help us follow John's flow of thought through the entire book:

Prologue	Christophany (vision of Christ) and Letters to the 7 Churches	Disclosure of God's End Time Plan	Epilogue
Rev. 1:1-8	Rev. 1:9-3:22	Rev. 4:1- 22:5	Rev. 22:6-21

### The Prologue, Christophany and Letters (1-3:22)

Right at the outset, John makes it clear that the book is about God's great gift of the revelation of Jesus Christ to His bondservants, by sending His angel to John to show us all "what must soon take place". His first vision on the island of Patmos was that of Christ - all ablaze and resplendent in glory. He then started writing his messages to the seven churches (2:1-3:22).

Though these messages address the problems faced by the chosen churches then, they are just as relevant to the churches today, the greatest problems being that of conformity to the world and idolatry. Mun Kwok On, one of the Webinar's participants, finds that the rebukes pertaining to forsaken first love, immorality and lukewarm-ness "serve as a powerful reminder to us to take heed and respond wisely". Eugel Yeo concludes that the solution is not to "try to do better", but to look to Christ the Lamb, who alone has the power and authority to help the Church redeem His people.

#### Disclosure of God's End Time Plan (4:1-22:5)

This is where all the drama takes place, as John is transported in his vision to the throne room of God in the pivotal chapters 4 and 5. The first vision John sees in heaven is God enthroned and the unceasing worship taking place from the "heavenly court". This is followed by the glorious investiture of the Lamb who was slain and therefore deemed worthy to take the scroll from God and to break the seals. As the heavenly chorus worship both the enthroned One and the Slain Lamb, they are celebrating God as both Creator and Redeemer.

Through it all, God's sovereignty is pervasive - He is a God whose plans cannot be thwarted - as the subsequent dramatic events unfold from chapters 6-20 in quick succession. It starts with the breaking of the seven seals and on to Christ's second coming in chapter 19, resulting in the destruction of all ungodly powers, the renewal of creation and the rise of the new Jerusalem.

## **Epilogue (22:1-21)**

Revelation is a book with a happy ending, as Dr Tan pointed out. It is not for crystal ball gazing, but a powerful prophetic message for life on earth and preparation for the End. We are given the contours of the future but not the details. It is for us, as His followers, to stand firm and bear witness, to overcome, and to heed the angelic message, "Come out of her, my people" (18:4); her, being Babylon the Great, representing the socio-political-economic systems of the world which seek to seduce with allusions of wealth and power.

And takeaways? For Jenny Bose, it is simply to live, aware of the signs of our times yet focusing on the Lord who watches over His people. For Tye Moo Yin, it is to always remember to return to the heart of worship of the One who is worthy to be praised. And with Eugel, Revelation reminds him that God is in complete control, as Satan and his minions battle it out with Him. God triumphs over Satan, good over evil, New Jerusalem over Babylon the Great. The good news is that we are on the winning side! As for me, the operative word in the concluding verses (22:17-21) is "Come". Jesus says, "I am coming shortly", to which we can only respond "Come, Lord Jesus, come". Maranatha!

Yeoh Chee Koon

## **EVENTFUL**

# One With NATURE

On 13 March 2021, eight seniors and energetic youngsters set off on a nature walk at Labrador Park. We were divided into three teams, each led by veteran trackers, Kwok On, Chin Fong and Fong King.

The outing turned out to be a pleasant and enjoyable 90-minute trek. We basked in the beautiful greenery and the sound of birds as we passed through the nature reserve. The sight of the former World War Two British military battlements, with the huge antique guns pointing south, reminded us of the Japanese invasion of Singapore. We enjoyed the cool sea breeze as we walked along the jetty. From the waterfront boardwalk, we had a glimpse of the life of the rich and famous with their expensive condominiums and luxurious marine craft. The final leg of the trek ended at the food court in Vivocity where we indulged in well-deserved refreshments and had an enjoyable fellowship.

"





A good experience to explore and feel the early morning breeze while walking past historical remains and along the harbourside. I didn't feel tired as the walk was full of fun.

- Cindy

It was a sunny day and rather hot and humid but it was fun meeting new people from HVMC, as we laughed and chatted about our different journeys through life. It was also lovely to see beautiful tropical flora and fauna against the blue sea and sky.

- Yeo He Leng







Lawrence Lau

# GROWING In CHRIST

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "growth" as "the process of growing", "increase or expansion", or "progressive development". As I contemplate this concept in my walk with God, it reminds me that the Christian journey is definitely not one of stagnation, but a continuous quest to keep learning, evolving, adapting and nourishing my relationship with Christ.

This is also true and vital to the relationships that I cherish, as I invest time and energy to strengthen the bonds of love and unity with each individual and as a family. God's Word affirms this as Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:5, 8).

I have seen HVMC go through the infancy stage of a Preaching Point to what it is today. As a Sunday school teacher, the process of preparing the lessons has become the bedrock of my increasing faith as I read the Bible, glean its truth, and use storytelling and crafts to teach the young ones. In turn, they grow in their understanding of God's truth. As Christians, our walk with God should bear fruit just like how a fruit tree produces a good harvest when the farmer puts in time, love and energy to nourish its growth. The hard work of reading God's Word, applying the truth, relating your struggles, sharing testimonies and reflecting on your Christian walk with your growing, maturing faith edifies yourself and others. This bearing of fruit keeps the community of believers thriving and encouraged.

However, I am also mindful that the journey of growth is not without pitfalls. In reality, pains and strains are encountered and when I feel discouraged, God's Word from Psalm 121 soothes and brings renewed hope:

I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

When I focus on heavenly things, God helps me to develop a new perspective on my circumstances as He is the author and perfecter of our faith. My Christian journey is not over as God is always moulding me to be more Christ-like. I take heart from Hebrews 12:10-11, "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it".

May we persevere in our walk with Christ and run towards the goal of hearing Jesus say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21).

Karen Chan



# **MOVING FORWARD**

Our Spiritual Journey starts with the acceptance that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who lives in those who have accepted Him as Lord and Saviour.

### **Spiritual Growth**

Spiritual growth is reaching out and connecting your inner soul to Christ and some of the practical ways this can be achieved are:



Decide to be more passionately committed to Christ and nurture a life of prayer.



Start putting into practice what you learn from God's Word.



Spend time and effort developing areas where the Lord is asking you to grow in.



Respect and obey God's Commandments.



Dedicate time to study the Scriptures and acknowledge the value of the Bible in inculcating the right attitudes in life.



Speak to the Lord in prayer always, as Scripture teaches us.



Do not neglect to count and acknowledge the blessings bestowed upon you.



Remember always that Jesus lives in all of us who have become His children. In John 15:4-5, the Lord stresses the importance of drawing your strength from Him.

### **Spiritual Maturity**

As you proceed on the journey towards spiritual maturity, you will feel an increase in your faith - you will pray about matters that cause you worry and anxiety, but because of your faith in the Lord, you will have the peace of mind that passes all understanding.

Allow me to recount a situation I faced a few years ago. I was suffering from a spinal condition which had deteriorated to the point where the pain in my right leg and back was so severe that I could hardly stand for a few minutes – the pain was excruciating.

I saw an orthopaedic specialist in Singapore and despite all the treatments he administered, there was no improvement in my condition. I then decided to consult a spine specialist in Sydney. (Let me add that my condition was so severe that I had to travel to Sydney in a wheelchair). His recommendation was surgery of the spine.

I had heard about how delicate spinal surgery was and the real risk of paralysis if anything went wrong, and was not prepared to expose myself to such a risk. The second opinion I got from another specialist was the same.

There I was in a desperate situation and I began to pray to the Lord to help me find a way out of my predicament. At that time a fellow Christian, a doctor, heard about my situation and in particular, my reluctance to have surgery. We prayed to the Lord for a solution, after which the doctor suggested that I went to a physiotherapist specialising in spine disorders. I consulted him and after two sessions, the Lord's miracle worked to relieve me of all the pain in my leg and back. He gave me complete physical healing!

### **Spiritual Stagnation**

Some of the symptoms of spiritual stagnation are:

- (01) A lack of desire for God, the need to know Him more deeply and to serve Him.
- A failure to allow God's presence to lead, when faced with difficult decisions, particularly in matters which have long lasting effects in one's life.
- A failure to prioritise the study of God's Word and to see the need for reliance on God in matters which influence the path taken in life because of a proud belief in self-sufficiency.

### How to overcome spiritual stagnation?

One has to have a change in mindset. The starting point is an acknowledgement of God's love and His supreme sacrifice by sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins and to grant us eternal life. In gratitude, be reminded that Christ gave us all of Himself and it is only right that we respond in faith and commit ourselves to completely trust and obey God. Observing the steps set out earlier for growth towards spiritual maturity will assist in overcoming spiritual stagnation.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, meet as a Body of Christ to grow discipleship in a faith community. Such coming together of God's children is important as there is a sharing of Christian love and experiences in life, providing each other with emotional comfort and support, when there is a need to appeal to God's grace and guidance.

## Sachi Saurajen

# A Never-Ending WORK IN PROGRESS



Like BTOs (Built-To-Order), building up one's faith seems to be a never-ending work in progress, fraught with unexpected delays, frustrations, but sometimes with blessed Godsent surprises. All of which boils down to the simple fact that, like BTOs, it is definitely a nerve-racking test of patience; a painful yet worthwhile waiting game.

I will always remember my baptism - the emotions, the tears, the relief - that gave me the sweet taste of freedom from all burdens and problems; that closeness to God. It was a moment when everything seemed so simple, when problems seemed insignificant, and all I had to do was put my faith in the Lord and He would lead the way. I felt safe and assured. I felt that life, and my faith, could only go forward from that point.

It has been more than a decade since. And I must say that there were times when I felt as if I had gone back to my old ways, times when holding on to the faith desperately was the only thing I could do and, of course, times when it seemed as if all I got from Him was either mixed signals or radio silence.

Upon reflection, my journey was definitely meant to turn out the way it has because it has shaped who I am today - a work in progress, perfect in all its state of incompletion. Marks and lines from past mistakes, missing pieces that will soon be found, being shaken in times of threat...yet, all in all, still standing, never falling. And that is only possible through His Grace and His work in my life. Even when I may not know it, see or feel it.

When I had felt alone on this path, He set me up with people, and consistently prompted me to find a platform to serve. Through these means, He found me a community of people whom I could pray and journey with. When I had been praying incessantly about my pregnancy, He sent prayer warriors to give me the final boost as I headed into what would be a smooth delivery. When motherhood had seemed overwhelming, He sent angels who would drop messages, or turn up physically to help salvage some sanity for me.

Although I had been distant, there were people whom God placed in my life, who would always keep me in prayer and drop in at exactly the right time when I needed help the most. Sometimes I would sense a prompting to reach out to God, with a quick five-minute conversation with Him, on the way to work or while in the shower. These were short but deliberate attempts to hold on to His Word, and they always worked. Perhaps this was God telling me that He had always been there, that He had been doing work behind the scenes this whole time.

And so, when it comes to building up your faith, no one will be able to do it better than the Builder Himself. Therefore, relinquish the control, hold on to Him, enjoy the process and go with His flow.

## Maybelline Teo



# PHILIPPINES On My Mind





Just when everyone in Singapore seems to think and believe that the COVID situation in Singapore has started to improve and people can expect to have their lives back to normalcy, the next wave of COVID hit fast and hard on the world. Under such challenging times, we want to remember the Filipino Fellowship sisters in our midst, and to find out how they are coping.

Most of our plans to take home leave have been halted. At first, I felt upset because I miss my family, but I believe and trust that God's plan and His ways are better than mine. We should cling and rely on His promises that He will never leave nor forsake us. He will take care of us and our loved ones for He is in control.

- Luvie

Though I am sad I won't be able to see my family, and though my mother-in-law has been warded in hospital recently due to a stroke, I am grateful that they are doing well. I try to see things in a positive way, resting in God's promises and assurance that He will always be there for me.

- Precious

The pandemic has caused great stress to me. This is because I am required to wear a mask at all times while doing my work inside the house! Because of the pandemic, I had to cancel my plans to go back home for my break. I am also afraid that I cannot return to Singapore to work again, especially since my husband and daughter have also lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

- Jane

I was supposed to go home this year but now I can't. I am so disappointed that I will not see my daughter because I've promised her that I would be back to celebrate her 7th birthday! I hope that the world will soon be healed and we can have our lives back to normal.

- Joy Mae

My family back home is good and safe despite the pandemic. Our local government there also helps them. We are always in touch via SMS and video call so it's not so sad for us even though we are not able to see each other in person.

- Florence

God has never failed to provide for my family and my employer in this time of suffering. This pandemic really makes me very sad. I miss my family and son. But I'm thankful that we have internet so that we can see each other and I can't wait to be with my family again."

- Jhade

Yes, the pandemic may be far from over, but it's so heartening to know that our sisters remain strong and steadfast in their faith and trust in God.

# **STEPPING UP For God**



The Youth Ministry (YM) crossed a significant milestone when seven youth leaders were commissioned on 10 January this year at the 9 am service. The main goal for this new team is for them to step into their various roles and responsibilities – to fulfil their leadership potential, and at the same time, to serve God and His people wholeheartedly.

Here, these newly-minted youth leaders share their aspirations in building up the YM.



Love the Lord, love your neighbour! I would like YM to become both a place to connect with God and also establish fellowship, so that we can all grow in our faith journeys together.

- Mitchell Chew



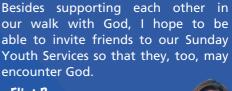
My hope for our YM is that youths can continue to grow deeper in the love of God in an environment that the church leaders have provided for us. And in the coming days ahead, I am confident that we, as youth leaders, will be equipped to run Sunday Youth Services.

- James Zhao



I want to see us becoming a close-knit family because of our desire for Christ and to grow spiritually. Although we have different life stories, we can comfortably support one another in prayer and share more about our lives.

- Hannah Sin



- Eliot Pan



I would like to help YM become a warmer and more inclusive place where everyone would feel welcome to share his or her views, and together, grow closer to God.

- Mark Tay



As a leader, I aim to try to create a safe space and trustworthy community where youths feel encouraged to share their personal journeys in their walk with God.

- Tessa Tan

I pray for YM to blossom as a vibrant community, for us to form longlasting spiritual friendships, and to help and support each other, so that everyone has someone to turn to for prayers and encouragement.

- lan Tham

Benjamin Koh

# MAN To MAN

The Men's Fellowship (MF) rebooted on-site meetings in April 2021, after nearly a year of virtual meetings, from the time the Circuit Breaker was imposed.

MF caters for men, especially those who are new to HVMC, and are in search of a group that helps them to integrate into church life and the study of God's Word. Michael Bailey, a recent visitor, is a good example. He joined the group when MF resumed on-site meetings.



I am relieved that church groups are starting to meet more normally, and I am delighted with the warmth and friendship that brothers and sisters of HVMC have shown me during a time of personal hardship, being forced to separate from family and friends in Malaysia, in order to keep my business in Singapore running smoothly.

- Michael Bailey

Our first on-site MF meeting on 11 April was very refreshing, after such a long time. Meeting in an open classroom atmosphere is more lively, as we can see the gestures and seriousness of our takes on the Scripture discussions."

- Allan Yeong



I was initially drawn to the MF as it gave me the opportunity to renew acquaintances with a number of friends from school and the Boys' Brigade. One year on, I continue to look forward to these meetings because it is such an encouragement to chat and journey with brothers who share a love for God and His Word.

- Jerry Lim

(When the MF met over Zoom, we had friends like Daniel and Jerry from Australia, joining us. Thus, we will continue with Zoom meetings every first Sunday of the month, so as to keep the fellowship with our brothers from Down Under, and also with anyone who cannot join the onsite meetings).