

Rochester Chinese Christian Church

# ECHO

June 2008 Volume 26 No. 1



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## Church Goals (2008-2010)

### ***Glory to God Alone***

*“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)...*

- \* by **growing** in our understanding of and love for the great doctrines of Scripture and the knowledge of Christ (Ps.119:97);
- \* by **honoring** the Word of God and prayer in humility, conviction of sin, and repentance, as the means of grace for the transformation of our lives (Rom.12:2);
- \* by **developing** a biblical world and life view, a heavenly-minded outlook, and personal character worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil.1:27);
- \* by **encouraging** mutual exhortation toward each other's spiritual welfare, as well as concern for each other's all-around well-being (Heb.10:25); and
- \* by **strengthening** our conviction that the gospel of Christ is the only means of salvation, and our proclamation of it locally and worldwide (Acts 4:12).



Rochester Chinese Christian Church  
羅城華人基督教會



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<p><b>English Sunday Worship</b> 9:30 am</p> <p><b>English Sunday School</b> 11:15 am</p> <p>Call the church for other <b>fellowship, bible study</b> &amp; <b>youth group</b> meetings</p>	<p><b>中文主日學</b> 上午九時三十分</p> <p><b>中文主日崇拜</b> 上午十一時十五分</p> <p>欲知其他團契聚會 查經班，請電教會</p>
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Rochester Chinese Christian Church West  
羅城西區華人基督教會

Located at  
*Henrietta Wesleyan Church*  
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<p><b>主日崇拜</b> Sunday Worship 下午 4:00 - 5:15 pm</p> <p><b>主日學</b> Sunday School 下午 5:20 - 6:15 pm</p>	
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## The Word of Life

Pastor Mitchell Herring

“...Holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain...” (Phil. 2:16)

Writing letters is not so fashionable nowadays. Even friends and loved ones overseas are now easily and inexpensively reached by telephone, not to mention email and Skype. But as recently as eighteen years ago it was not this way. My courtship with my wife was almost entirely by letter. Somewhere, in the unopened boxes in the basement, they are all still there. Suppose that when we move we forget to take them, and that they are eventually lost, only to be re-discovered 1000 years from now, should the Lord tarry that long. Three “literary experts” examine one of my letters to Lily (let’s say the five-page one in which I proposed to her) and, working separately, attempt a translation into their language. They each come across this sentence in the letter: “Would you run the heavenly race hand-in-hand with me?” One of the experts says, “He’s asking her to go with him on a day trip to Mars.” The next expert offers a different interpretation of the text. The third expert says, “You’re both wrong. What it really means is...”

Can they all be right? Is it possible that my letter has more than one valid meaning? If so, is there a limit to the number of valid meanings it could have? Assuming I was straightforward and honest when I wrote the letter, with no double meanings intended, it is obvious that there is only one valid meaning---the meaning that I as the writer intended it to have, and as my wife (hopefully) understood it. No one else has the right to take any part of my letter out of context and make it mean what he or she wants it to mean. Since there is a gap of 1000 years, with corresponding differences in historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts, it will undoubtedly take some effort to get at the real meaning of the text. Not only so, but in order to understand the real meaning of any one of my letters or parts thereof, they had better study them *all* in order to see the whole picture and the proper context.

This is the way it is with our approach to God's Word. "The principle of interpretation that underlies orthodox Christian theology is that the meaning of the biblical text is what God, the author, intended it to mean."<sup>1</sup> The Bible is God's special revelation that has come to us as He, through His Spirit, called certain men as prophets and apostles to convey His message to us. They did that through use of the common language of their times, and from within their own historical, cultural, and religious framework. Not only so, but each verse of Scripture is set within the context of a paragraph; each paragraph within the context of the whole book; and each book within the context of the other books that comprise the whole Bible.

*This is why when we read the Bible; the first question we ask is not "what does this mean to me?" but rather, "what does this mean?"* Otherwise, it's a case of the tail wagging the dog (I wonder what some future "literary expert" would do with *that* phrase?) It is only when we have some idea of the meaning and function of a text within its context that we can proceed to "what does this mean *to me*?" If to support a particular point, I quote a verse that within its context does not really address the point I'm trying to make, then I am mishandling the verse, making God's word *not* God's Word, and misleading myself as well as others. Again, if I believe I am blessed by "insight" from a particular verse of Scripture, but which in fact does not correspond with what the verse is actually teaching, then I am moving in dangerous waters. This is not really "life" at all, but rather subjective, superficial, and careless misapplication. It is like eating candy that makes you feel good for a little while but has no long-term benefit in true growth and maturity.

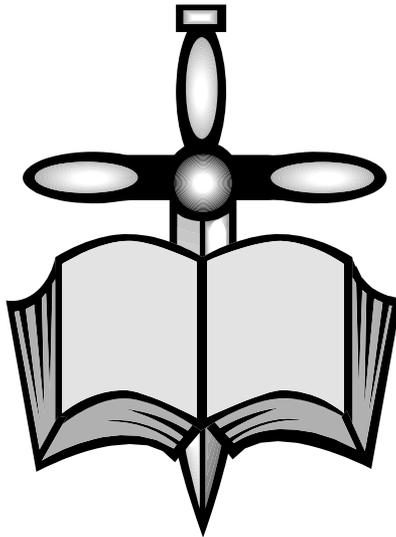
I do not mean to discourage anyone from reading the Bible. It is true that some Scripture is difficult to understand, as Peter said of some of Paul's writings (2 Peter 3:15-16). And parts of Scripture are strange and obscure to us due to their historical or cultural setting, and the use of unfamiliar or rarely used words and idioms. That's why we try to find out what we can about these backgrounds, and do grammatical and word studies. *Yet, for the most part, to be reasonably sure that you have the real meaning of a biblical text, all you have to do is to read it carefully in its context.* Try to follow the author's flow of thought. Seek to grasp his main point and what he is saying about it.

Yet to stop with just this knowledge is not really "life" either. We go

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<sup>1</sup> Virkler, Henry A., *A Christian's Guide to Critical Thinking*, Thomas Nelson, 1993, p. 278. *His imaginary story (p. 20) also inspired the real-life illustration for my opening example.*

on to application. A scripture has only one meaning---that intended by the author---but can have varied applications (i.e. "what does it mean to me?) that are all consistent with its meaning and the principle behind it. We grow when we apply these principles of Scripture seriously in our lives. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to real "life" is our superficial approach to Scripture, and our loss of the discipline of memory, study, meditation, and application. Insight that comes from the real meaning of a passage of Scripture, from taking it to heart and applying it---this is *real* life, the work of the Spirit, the renewing of the mind, solid food that produces true growth. Perhaps slow, but steady; perhaps difficult, but persevering; not always felt, but sure; not always ecstatic, but long-lasting. And as this life in you grows, so will your love for the Lord and for His Word---the Word of life.



## Friendships

Aileen Chow

*“What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies.”* Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)

Through the years, my husband and I made many friends. We had friends from work, from school, from our church in Batavia and from our Grapes Fellowship in Rochester, to name just a few. Some of these friendships lasted a short time in our lives, others have lasted decades.

Recently, my husband went to his high school reunion and he was able to catch up with some of his old buddies. While he was working on putting together an album of old high school pictures, I caught a glimpse of his youth. I also peeked into his yearbooks and read the comments made to him by his friends. I was intrigued by this discovery. Friendship was and continues to be an important part in his life; it was evident from my discovery.

It is a joy to meet with old friends, and it is sad to see friends go. It seems like we had a lot of farewell parties in the last few years. We had friends who moved south, who moved west and as far away as in China.

Although our friends are far from us, a friend in Jesus will never be far. He knows our loneliness, our fears and wants. There will be lonely days and Jesus will be next to us, protecting us, listening to us and watching out for us. He'll guide your footsteps and will warm your heart. Such a friend in Jesus is needed in times like these. To be a friend in Jesus is yearning for spiritual company; the essence is grasping the Word of God and making it a daily prayer.

In desperate times, I need a friend in Jesus. As with Psalmist David, he had a friendship with God alone. He writes in Psalm 25:14: *“Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear him. With them he shares the secrets of his covenant.”* (NLT) That is translated, *“Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence him. With them alone he shares the secrets of his promises.”* Indeed, a relationship in Christ will bind us to know more of his everlasting love and goodness.

Having a friend is a wonderful relationship. Here are my thoughts on friendship:

## A Friend

A friend sticks closer than a brother.

A friend will always give.

A friend enjoys laughter, smiles and sweet care.

A friend will give hugs and will comfort your fears.

A friend will always love and forgive.

But the greatest love from a friend says the Lord...

is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends.

The last thought is pretty deep. That is a relationship of one who will freely or generously give his/her life to others. Nevertheless, a good friend is one who'll just enjoy doing the same hobbies with you or just learning the Bible with you.

I would like to end with C.S. Lewis' writing about friendship. His words show how we really need human companionship. He writes, *"We are born helpless. As soon as we are fully conscious we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually. We need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves."*



## My lesson on Trust

Jessica Kuo

Anyone who has entered my dorm room during undergrad or my apartment in grad school knows that besides the random posters of actors/actresses/musicians on my wall, I always have at least one Bible verse. Now the funny thing about this is the verse(s) that I picked for each stage in life seemed to determine what I was going to face during that time period.

In undergrad the verse that I picked was Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." For grad school, one of the many verses I picked included Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

For the past two years, God was teaching me to trust in Him. By nature I tend to worry about everything. However, during grad school, no matter what went wrong God still pulled me through. In my first year I had very little time to practice the violin. Everyday I felt anxious about failing my jury. Two weeks before the dreaded day, my Paganini still wasn't ready. In fact, my professor, Mr. Kopelman, said "This is a complete disaster." Up until then, Mr. Kopelman had never said anything like that to me before.

Everyday I thought I was definitely going to fail my jury. I prayed and prayed that God would pull me through. When the dreaded day finally arrived, I was a complete basket case. Before I entered the room, Mr. Kopelman hit me with a piece of paper and said, "Don't be nervous!" I walked in and instead of failing miserably; I played what Kopelman called "the best jury I ever played." When I got all the comments back from the other professors, all the comments on Paganini were positive ones.

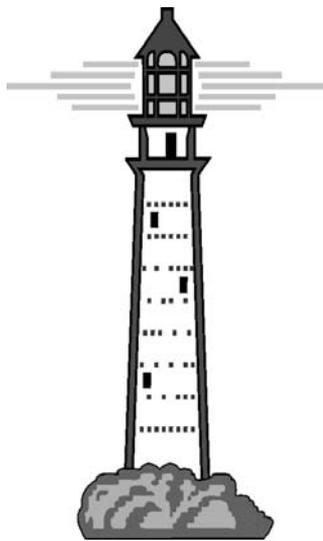
Despite this, I still didn't learn my lesson. In my second year, instead of trusting God more because of everything that happened in the past year, I actually got worse. I worried everyday about my upcoming degree recital. Finally, a few weeks before my recital I had a mental breakdown. My mom decided to come up to Rochester a week early.

On the day of my recital, I had some time to spend with my parents. My dad comforted me by reminding me of the parable of the talents.

Don't try to be like the first servant with 5000 talents when God only gave you 2000. God never expects someone to be the first servant when He only gives the person the amount of talents that the second servant has. He only expects people to do the best they can with what they were given. This helped me relax a lot, and after praying very hard, my recital went quite smoothly. Although I could be picky about all the small mistakes, I can honestly say that I was content with the performance.

After my recital, one more obstacle stood in my way before graduation. My history final was coming up, and I had neglected a lot of the readings because I was so worried about my recital. I crammed a lot for a few days, but by the time exam day arrived, I still hadn't prepared one of the essay questions out of the three. I was required to write two essays, so the chance of having to write the essay question that I hadn't prepared was very high. I would automatically lose 20 points if that question was on the test.

However, this time I decided to leave it up to God. I had tried my best under the circumstances but it still wasn't good enough. I prayed that since God had gotten me into Eastman, He would help me get out. When I entered the examination room and received the test, I checked the essay questions. They were exactly the two that I had prepared.



Now I'm not encouraging people to leave things to the last minute and pray really hard that God will pull them through. What I want to leave with others is to try your best with what you have. God doesn't expect you to compete with the genius next door. Instead, do what you can with your abilities and then leave the rest to God.

Even though I don't know what's going to happen in the future or exactly what I'm going to do with my music career, I've decided to trust God with the unknown. One time I listened to a sermon online on anxiety and trusting in the Lord. As Rev. Lon Solomon put it, "The will of God will never lead you where the Grace of God won't sustain you." Or in the words of Stephanie, God wants you to win!

## The Power of the Gospel

Joyce Pan

Every morning at 9:00am, students of all sorts exited the dining hall into the main gathering space to meet with the Lord for their daily devotions. Though they were up at a time unusual for college students, this was the usual morning schedule at InterVarsity's week-long training event called "Chapter Focus Week." I walked through the main lodge to the staff office every day, passing by clusters of young people sitting quietly and intently, reading through Scripture and writing their thoughts down into their journals. They sat anywhere they could find a spot – on the deck chairs facing the lake, at the tables in the atrium, on the couches next to their friends (who were also quietly seeking the Lord) – even on the small couch outside the staff office that I assumed no one would ever use. This scene is an image that I will vividly remember. It is a picture of students yearning to know the Lord and Creator of the universe. It is a picture of the Lord ministering to every student in a way that only He can – through His Word that is like a sword, revealing and convicting us to turn away from sin and return to Him.

What truly amazed me as I walked through the gathering space was that from the outside, these students were people who seemingly had no reason to belong to Jesus. They were fraternity brothers and sorority sisters, victims of abuse and neglect, self-sufficient perfectionists and workaholics, loud and obnoxious partiers, and former atheists and antagonists to the Gospel. In the book of Luke, we see a similar list of unlikely characters – corrupt tax collectors, a sinful weeping woman, blind men and other outcasts of society – calling out and falling at Jesus' feet. And Jesus saves them, for his purpose for coming into the world was "to seek and to save what was lost." The gracious message of the cross of Christ has somehow been making its way into the hearts that have never deserved it for thousands of years, and we continually witness the power of God when we hear that the Good News has taken root in yet another. And so, as I observed these students growing in the knowledge of the Lord each day, I was continually reminded of the passage in Romans that describes the Gospel as the "power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

The great thing about campus ministry is that I have the opportunity to witness God interjecting Himself into lives on campus, where there are a number of reasons that make it difficult to be a Christian. My generation is one that is curiously paradoxical –we pride

ourselves in our awareness of the world's maladies, but delight in materialistic consumption. We seek community and relationships, but uphold fierce independence and individualism. We claim to be open-minded, but are plagued by skepticism and irreverence. We may even call ourselves "Christian", but never believe in the Truth. These are the types of people that InterVarsity hopes to reach at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Our purpose at the university is to advance witnessing communities of students that follow Jesus and **grow in love for God, God's Word, God's people, and God's purposes in the world.** Though it can sometimes be tiring and frustrating, I sense a calling to work with the students in my fellowship (named "Koinonia") to accomplish this purpose. As an encouragement to you, I have compiled some examples of how God is working through InterVarsity and Koinonia.

### **Students growing in love for...**

#### **...God**

Daniel was one of the first Koinonia students that I met this year. He was starting his 2<sup>nd</sup> year at Case and attended Koinonia irregularly. When one of his friends, who had been investigating Christianity and attending weekly Bible study, decided to attend Chapter Focus Week, Daniel decided to go too. I was excited that he wanted to go, but I also felt a little apprehensive. After all, he had a fairly loud personality. In the beginning of the week, my apprehension proved to be true; he never woke up for devotions and was late for almost everything. However, God was still at work, no matter how it looked. At the end of the week, Daniel shared with his small group about all his past sins and how he felt no regret. Afterwards, he talked to his small group leader and was surprised at himself for saying that. At that point, he confessed his sin and gave his life to Christ! This is what he shared with us that evening: "I used to call myself a Christian, but I realized this week that I never really started my walk with God. I guess you could call me a baby Christian now." The very next day, he did his first quiet time ever. Praise God!

#### **...God's Word**

I have been meeting one-on-one with a freshman named Tori, a Computer Science major. In the beginning of the year, when I asked her to meet for discipleship, I offered to either study a book of the Bible or read a Christian book with her. To my surprise, she chose to study Scripture! Throughout the year, we did an in-depth study of the entire book of Ephesians. It has been a joy to study

God's Word with this insightful student and see His Word sink deeply into her heart. By the second semester of studying Scripture, God had convicted her to share her faith with two of her friends.

### **...God's people**

Koinonia has a strong desire to love others and form tight-knit community. This past semester, we had one men's small group, one women's small group, and one co-ed small group. By the end of the year, the co-ed small group had about 10-12 students attending each week, including some who had never been to a Bible study before! We studied the first section of Romans, and celebrated the end of the year by going bowling together.

### **...God's purposes in the world**

This past year, Koinonia and Case IV (their sister chapter) decided to host an evangelism training seminar. One Saturday morning, close to 40 students gathered to learn how to share their faith. For the weeks following, they boldly shared the Gospel on campus. Many found out that evangelism was not as scary as they had imagined! Several students have gained a huge heart for evangelism. Many are starting to have a heart for world missions too – three students are going on mission trips to Russia, Bolivia, and Mexico this summer.

As you may have gathered from these stories, I am often surprised at the work God is already doing in students' lives. After finishing my first year as an InterVarsity ministry intern, I find myself humbled by the power of the Gospel. I hope that you will join me in feeling encouraged that the Gospel is real and true. Please continue to pray for Daniel, Koinonia students as a whole, and the many unreached students and faculty on the Case campus. I'm excited to continue seeing God do this right in front of my eyes through the work of ministry at Case.



## Unconditional Love

Annie C. Disch

When I was one year old, my father left his whole family of four children, his wife and his mother to come to America. At that time, we were very poor. We lived at a rooftop of a building and we did not have a bathroom or clean running water. We had one bed and seven of us slept on it sideways. My parents were trying desperately to find work to feed the family. Unfortunately either there were few jobs available, or work with very little pay. We were in a very bad living condition. That is why my father decided to leave Hong Kong for America to make a living for his family.

My life started out without a father figure for ten years. Once my father landed in America, he was working at a Chinese Restaurant. He worked hard so that he can make U.S. dollars to send home. According to my mother, he only wrote once a month and sent money. Life improved for the whole family. We were able to go to private schools for our education. In fact, my father demanded it.

When I was eleven, my father came home from America. I still remember the day that we were all lined up at the airport to greet him. We were all so anxious and excited at the same time. I didn't remember what he looked like, and he had never sent any photos of himself. I really didn't know what to expect. There came a man walking slowly and proudly towards us, he was dressed in a tailored dark suit and was looking very sharp. When he came closer, I was noticing he looked very stern. From that moment on, I had a very uneasy feeling about him. I asked myself how can this be; this is my father that I had been longing for a decade and that I didn't feel anything towards him. In fact, he was a total stranger and that he demanded for all of us to call him father (Baba-in Cantonese) immediately. His tone of voice was very authoritative and with a firm demeanor. We did what was told but without any emotion attached.

Life turned upside down for me since he returned home. Once this little girl (me) was sleeping with my mother every night was kicked out from the room without any kind of explanation. He totally took over all the responsibility that my mother once had. My mother was this strong woman who took care of four of us; and suddenly became this meek woman that I didn't even recognize. She was a loving mother with a very little education, but spoke politely and wrote beautifully. I was once her favorite (being the youngest in the

family), now my position was at the roadside. I felt betrayed by her, jealous of her relationship with this strange man. I cried quietly every night outside of their room. I told myself that if I ever had a daughter, I would never treat her the way that they did to me. I hated him, I despised him, and I wished he never came home. He never showed any love or affection for me, but instead everything out of his mouth was criticism and put down. I resented him totally.

Life got worse when one day he took all of us into the living room and told us that we are to move to America. The way that he explained is that being a father doesn't mean that he had to purchase a ticket for us to America; but if we decided to join him; in the future we must to pay him back for the ticket. I couldn't understand his concept. I thought being a father is to provide, cherish and love unconditionally. Well, I was so wrong about that. His philosophy was that everything in life has conditions, and what he did for us has a price.

I was put into a boarding school from the time I arrived in America at age 15. I felt totally abandoned, without knowing a word of English. My life was being tested with all kinds of hardships dealing with cultural differences and language barriers. I cried until my tears were dry. I didn't understand how my parents would let their little girl struggle like this alone. In fact, they stopped paying for my tuition during my senior year because I had a big fight with my father the summer of my junior year, and he disowned me. The reason was he found out I was talking to an American boy on the phone all summer and he ordered me not to have any contact with him. "Friends with American is fine, except for marriage" was his word for me. I ran back to school and begged the principal to allow me to finish high school. In order for me to stay without paying, I had to make honor roll each semester. I graduated with honors.

I met Bob at college. He is a kind and gentle man. He loves me and cares for me deeply. We have two beautiful daughters, and I asked him to be a good father for our children because that was the most important thing to me. Life had its ups and downs, and we have been married for almost 24 years this coming September. We all became Christians about 10 years ago.

The day that I first found out about God the Father from heaven, who not only created me, but loves me UNCONDITIONALLY, I almost couldn't believe the sermon. All of my life I have been longing for love from my earthy father. I would do anything to please him, but instead he would always tell me that I am not pretty

enough and too fat to be what he wants me to be. To be God's child, I learned that I don't have to do anything to earn HIS love. All I need to do is to invite HIM into my heart, and I will have all I need. It is too easy to be true. Over the years, there weren't any tears coming out of my eyes even though life can be difficult at times. My heart was cold like a stone. I became hardened outside, but inside I was extremely vulnerable. All of the sudden, the bitterness and anguish were removed from my heart, and my heart was opened to receive the Holy Spirit. I just cried and cried and cried, and for the first time in many years, I tasted my own tears. I thank God, the Shepherd, because he had finally found his lost sheep. I had been so lost and blind for 40 years and now I am found. The joy was overwhelming, and I asked for his forgiveness in my heart about my earthy father. I finally have peace in my heart, which I had never felt before. I gave my life to Jesus since then. My life is full of his unconditional love and I am now at peace within myself. I feel so blessed to be loved by HIM, and that I am able to receive and give love freely.



## Looking Back at What God's Done

Stephen Eng

As I have gone through life, and faced numerous new challenges, I realized that God has blessed me with so much, and has guided me through each step. I'm sure many of us get caught up in changes, tragedies, and crises that arise and we wonder how we will ever make it through them. I know I have. And I always end up worrying too much about it, not realizing that God has gotten me through tough times before, and all I need to do is to trust in Him.

I became a Christian during high school and got baptized in my senior year. I remember that year being a very stressful year with all the college applications while balancing schoolwork and after school activities. I prayed to God, "Show me where you want me to go to school!" Well, around the time when acceptance letters came in, I got many rejection letters; ten rejections in all (most of my friends at the time didn't even *apply* to ten schools.) As a matter of fact, I didn't even get into Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) because they never received part of the application. My sister was attending RPI and I was looking forward to getting into the same school. However, at the time I received that letter, I was very depressed and I figured it probably wasn't meant to be. Well, it turns out that my high school counselor got the letter as well and called me into his office to find out whether or not I still wanted to attend RPI. I told him that I did, and he went off to make a few phone calls to RPI, gave them the references they needed over the phone, and got them to make an exception for me. I got an acceptance letter a week later. God had answered my prayer.

RPI was a geek haven. *Almost everyone* was geeky in some form or fashion. I fit in perfectly. I learned a whole lot about engineering, and I made many friends during my time in school. As a matter of fact, I met Karen in my freshman year.☺ I grew a lot spiritually as well. I was part of the Intersivity chapter at RPI where both Karen and I took part in many small groups and large group. A significant portion of my growth was actually due to the encouragement I received from Karen. She had convinced me to go through small group leadership training held by Intersivity, and after completing the training I led bible studies for the rest of the time that I was at RPI.

My next battle with difficulty happened when I was about to graduate from RPI. The job market wasn't great, and trying to balance

schoolwork and job interviews was a pain. I prayed to God, "Show me where you want me to work!" After a good number of interviews, I got one job offer---a software engineering job in Rochester. God had answered my prayer. Unfortunately, Karen didn't get an offer there. In fact, her closest and most appealing offer was a software job in Connecticut. We only got to see each other once every 3 weeks or so, and I only got to see my family about 3 times a year. I wasn't sure why God had split us up, but I realized what God's purpose was later on.

When I met Karen, she wasn't a Christian. However after attending church with me and making a lot of friends at intervarsity, she became a Christian and was baptized. It turned out that God's plan was for Karen to find a good group of Christians to fellowship with and to grow spiritually.

One of my visits with Karen was when we attended the wedding of a friend of ours from RPI that first fall. This is when Will comes into the picture. While at the wedding, we randomly met up with Will again. That's when we found out that Will was going to school in Rochester. Will was the one who brought me to RCCC, and introduced me to the College Fellowship. Will and I made it our mission to teach Rochesterians what it means to be a true geek and the rest is history.☺ A year later, my company started hiring a lot of engineers. Karen got a job there and moved to Rochester. When Karen arrived, we got more involved with RCCC, serving the Grapes Fellowship. We developed many good friendships at RCCC. We had fun teasing Alvin, we enjoyed fun summer BBQs and awesome fellowship during bible studies. Karen had started getting involved with JAM where she had lots of fun singing and praying with the kids. And also April last year, Karen and I got married. God had everything planned perfectly!

My latest challenge is the reason why I'm in New Hampshire now. My job in Rochester wasn't progressing very well and I didn't think that my job position would be secure at all. Karen and I had prayed about it for a while, and we decided that it was best that I start looking for other positions. We always had a desire to move closer to family at some point, and that these events may have been God's calling. I only applied to only one company because I had realized that I should finish my current project before actively searching for new positions. The new position in New Hampshire would be much closer to my family, and it was highly recommended by a friend of a friend. After interviewing, I received an offer letter the following business day. Then I realized that we would have to make a very

hard decision. After praying and talking over it, we decided that we would both resign from our current position and I would accept the new offer. We didn't run into any resistance, and everyone was very accepting of our decision. We believe that God has led us here.

We still really miss all our friends from Rochester. Even today as I'm writing this article, I'm not quite sure what God has in store for us. But when I look back, God has taken care of us before even if the situation didn't make sense at the time. I have faith that at some point down the road, I'll be able to look back to this moment and see the wonderful plan God has laid out for our lives. Whenever you face a difficult situation, I'd encourage you to look at all that God has already done in your lives. Look at how you got to where you are now. And have faith that God's still leading you.



## Eric, A Shining Star

*In Memory of my Beloved Husband Eric Smeenck*

Kathryn Smeenck

“As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after Thee. You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship Thee....”  
(*Martin Nystrom*)

A worship song “As the deer” begins our story. Eric and I met in a Christian forum in Fall, 2002. I remember at that time, I was busy at work handling the financial budget for the year of 2003. Work was always busy and stressful that often times I worked until 8 pm before leaving my office. On Dec 31st of 2002, I had a serious stomach problem due to stress. Eric sent me music by email; the music was not the song like “Happy New Year.” It was “As the deer”. He wished this song would bring me peace and joy with him on the other side of the world through God’s love. Since then, we started a close friendship until we became husband and wife. We used this song in our wedding ceremony as we both love this song.

Eric was very hard working; he was working as a pastry chef since he graduated from The Culinary Institute of America (CIA). He was devoted to serving God. He was always needed to work overtime during the holiday seasons. In order to support me going to college, he tried his best to work as much as he can. He never complained about the hard work or the long working hours. He thought he should obey his boss as though one obeys God. He aimed to do hard work to glorify God’s name, to be a good son of God and a good husband. In order for him to attend church worship and Bible study on Sundays, he did his best to work late during the weekdays to finish his job. Eric loved to make cookies and to share them with brothers and sisters.

Eric appreciated Asian culture, especially Chinese culture. He was impressed by the Chinese art work and enjoyed eating traditional Chinese food. He told me that he wished he was born in China so that he could be part of the Chinese society. He was very interested in learning Chinese, but writing the Chinese character was so hard for him, he joked that it would take him 100 years to learn all the characters.

Unfortunately, Eric got cancer and it was found out too late. The Lord brought him home last July. We celebrated our second year anniversary in the hospital room. Eric held my hand and asked me, “Why do you think this would happen to us?” I did not know how to

answer. Tears would just fall down from both of our eyes and we prayed to God every day for his guidance and his will.

Although Eric became weaker and weaker during the chemotherapy, his spirit became stronger and stronger. His faith in God was building up day-by-day. At the hospital, he read the Bible and other books. He tried to read and study the Bible as much as he can. I saw that Eric was very joyful and peaceful even though no one knew if the chemo would work in treating his cancer. He put all his faith in God and he trusted that God would take control of his life. He was brave to tell everyone who came to visit him that he was in good hands. When the doctor told us his cancer had relapsed in the bone marrow and that his cancer would be more difficult to treat, I asked Eric, "If God wants to bring you home, can you tell Him that you love me very much? Ask God to heal your cancer so that you can come back to have a normal life with me?" Eric told me, "No. If this is God's plan for me, I have to obey. I cannot argue with God or ask for 20 more years of life. If this is my time then I have to go." I said, "No! I want a miracle." Eric said, "So, let's pray for a miracle. God's grace is sufficient for us!"

A week before he passed away, he had written down the names of 12 disciples and showed it to me. He told me he wanted to learn more from them and he wanted to become a part of them as God's missionary and disciple. When Eric passed away, his mom saw a very shining light reflecting in the door knob. It sparkled like a shining star and she could barely open her eyes to look at directly. It seemed as though Eric wanted to say good-bye to us and told us that he was on his way home with God's angel.

Eric will always be in our hearts. He was a thoughtful and caring brother who had a child like heart. He was a faithful son in God and a wonderful husband! He was brave until the last moment in his life and he did his best to fight the cancer that took his life. I wish his story can be a testimony and an encouragement for people who are undergoing trials and difficulties. Remember, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Corinthians 12:9) God's Love will always be with us no matter what circumstances we are in.



## My Freshman Year

Eunice Leung

My freshman year flew by in a blink of an eye. Living away from home for the very first time, I, like most college freshmen, felt I had matured a lot. For me, it was more about experiencing God more and more each day.

I grew up in an incredibly tight family and was loved and supported by my close friends in Hong Kong. At the beginning of each semester, loneliness overwhelmed me when I was sitting alone in my dorm trying to focus on schoolwork. Without my family and friends back home being physically with me, I felt lost and disconnected with the world. Although I have been a Christian for as long as I can remember, I sometimes found it hard to prioritize the intangible God above all earthly things. Living alone in the U.S., I came to realize that only God is omnipresent, walking with me in every move I make. Even my family and friends cannot be so close. It then became clear that my source of strength has always been from the Lord. Without Him, my life would lose all direction and meaning.

RCCCF is the first fellowship I have ever joined. I am glad that in one year I could build friendships with people in the fellowship who share similar life and unworldly values that are sadly rare in today's generation. Also, as the year progressed, I have bonded with some of them quite well on a deeper spiritual level. I remember once a sister shared with me about Christianity and her related struggles. After talking with her, I began questioning my faith for the first time. In fact, I was so deeply troubled and afraid that I cried out to God and yearned for His presence. God is merciful. He cleared away my doubts and taught me to humble myself before the Almighty, through the words of Pastor Herring on that Wednesday preparation for the lilac festival outreach. For who am I to demand to know everything about God and the truth; I would never come to believe if I do so.

It is a blessing that I could serve in various ways in RCCC, being the pianist for the children's choir and the English worship service. In my home church in Hong Kong, I serve as a violinist for the worship service, but I have always wanted to serve as a pianist. I always find true joy in serving and I thank God for letting me do so through the talents and opportunities He has given me.

I will be attending the University of Pennsylvania this coming fall as a sophomore transfer. Deep down in my heart, I know I will miss RCCC/RCCCF the most, which is truly my home away from home. My dad always tells me RCCC is a special community. It is not easy to find another church where members are so caring, selfless, and readily offer themselves to serve God. Despite this, I pray that I will be able to find a suitable church in Philadelphia and continue to grow in Christ.

Lastly, I would really want to give my sincerest gratitude to all the Aunties and Uncles who have shown me so much hospitality and generosity this past year, such as treating me to a meal, giving me a ride, or just sending a simple regard like “how are you” or “how is your family doing.” RCCC is indeed full of God’s love.

Glory be to God.

