

NAME YOUR NEWSLETTER CONTEST

Our submissions are in; now it's up to you to vote for the vcbc newsletter name. www.vcbc.bc.ca/english



who's who atvcbc

In each issue we will feature two English congregation families.

Edited by Kathy

Henry, Carmen, Christopher, and Gabriel

Henry is a pharmacist and drugstore owner. Thanks to Carmen, Henry got to know Jesus and the Christian Faith by coming to VCBC, 21 years ago. He is very thankful that God provides for his family. When in distress, he remembers that God is always there and will take care of everything. You may see Henry and Carmen serving communion or ushering on Sundays. Henry enjoys Pastor Sharp's Sunday Adult Class. His interests include traveling, hiking, and cycling. Recently, the whole family had a fantastic time in Italy and we are looking forward to their next adventure. Henry was the first Cheung to come to VCBC, followed by his brothers, Simon and Tommy. He hopes that one day their parents will get to know God too.

Hi, I'm **Carmen**, and I have attended VCBC since 1988. Starting off in the Cantonese congregation and being a choir member, I have witnessed how God blesses our church. I enjoy cooking, hiking, attending BSF, playing piano, and listening to a variety of music. I appreciate beauty and nature, as well as getting to know other countries. What really excites me the most is traveling. I am a big fan of travel videos and have been to more places on my couch than in real life. I have been inspired to set goals and fulfill dreams, which at times have seemed impossible, and yet have become realities at different stages of my life. We are one of seven families in Jack and Lisa's Homebuilders group. We have shared, prayed, and grown together for three-and-a-half years. I have experienced trust, joy, care, faith, and growth within our group.

This is **Christopher**. No one casually calls him all three syllables because it inspires excess salivation. Chris spends a lot of time at playgrounds for someone who is sixteen-going-on-seventeen. He goes to Eric Hamber, where photos of young VCBCers cover the hallway walls. He considers the condiments counter at the Oakridge Starbucks one of his homes (and tries to pass off being twelve to get the kids' drinks). Chris attends Gideon Fellowship and helps with its planning team. He doesn't successfully "sport", but you can find him trying his best at volleyball, ultimate, and full-contact ping pong. You will not, however, find Chris anywhere without his handy-dandy camera. He loves storytelling (all kinds), his family (even when they are weird), and having adventures with others.

Hi! I'm **Gabriel**. I'm in Grade 8 at Eric Hamber. I like to win while playing games. Some of my hobbies are watching movies, making objects out of paper, going on the computer, and resting. I am very trustworthy because I keep my promises. Even though I am now a teen, I consider myself a kid. I like to bring snacks with me wherever I go, this saves money. I attend Sunday School and Daniel Fellowship. Fellowship is fun because we get to play games and learn about God. Our family might not agree about everything but we always laugh about it in the end.

Carol & Liam by Wes

The first time you got together, who approached whom and with what pick-up line?

C&L: (Liam approached Carol) "Before you leave here tonight, can you give me your phone number?"

C: I didn't give it to him.

Who usually does the cooking and who's the better cook?

L: Pretty even in terms of cooking... I'm a more experienced cook

C: I cook more, but I think he is a better cook.

What is one thing about Carol that annoys you?

L: She gets mad easily.

What is one thing about Liam that annoys you?

C: Knee-driving.

Name one possession of yours that your spouse would throw out if they had the chance.

L: My black tie-dyed short-sleeves dress shirt.

What is one piece of relationship advice that you would give to an engaged couple?

C&L: Do pre-marital counselling with Pastor Jeff.

L: LOTS of counselling.

What is one piece of relationship advice that you would give someone who is single?

L: Stay single. => If you're looking for love, don't fret too much, just have faith. Good things take time.

C: What you expect to find may be COMPLETELY different than what God has in mind for you, so don't worry about finding someone. Things will happen when they're supposed to.

To L: What's it like being a "Gwai-Lo" in a predominately Chinese church?

L: At first, I felt like an alien (literally). Now... once I got to know some people, it's really not that big of a deal. Besides, I'm colour blind; I didn't even realize you guys were Chinese.

To C: if you had a child of your own, which Gideonite (past or present) would you most want your child to be like/who would make the best babysitter?

C: Awww, there are a lot, but I would probably most like my child to be like Christy Lew. Nicole Ng would probably make the best babysitter. She can win their hearts just by bringing some of her cookies.

To L: Being a fisherman, what's the most interesting thing you've fished out of the ocean?

L: Of all the things recognizable, the most interesting things, I thought, were old war bombs and weather-balloons with their computer still attached. Oh yeah, do people count?

How far will the Canucks make it in the playoffs this year?

C&L: The **parade** is coming right through your living room.



howsharpissharp?

In each issue, Pastor Jeff will answer a question on a different topic in (perhaps) 300 words or less.

Why are most **christian** holidays based on **pagan** festival dates?



Pastor Jeff with one of his three granddaughters

First, Christian “holydays” are not based on pagan holidays if that is taken to mean that they have no connection to the Gospel or to God’s special revelation and saving actions in Jesus. For example, Easter is specifically a Christian holiday celebrating the

resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The time of Christ’s resurrection is clearly shown in the New Testament to be the Sunday following the Jewish Passover. While there are many different types of springtime rituals and celebrations, the fact that they occur somewhere around

Easter is purely coincidental. Easter is not a yearly reenactment of death and new life intended to guarantee the renewal of nature after the cold death of winter as it is in many pagan springtime festivals. Easter is the celebration of a once-for-all historic event.

As for some of the other holidays, such as Christmas, Christians didn’t allow the pagans to keep their celebrations, but rather provided an alternative to the more popular secular festivals. During the Christmas season, for example, many Christians were uncomfortable with the worship of a pagan god, Mithra so the church decided to counter the pagan festival with one of their own, one that celebrates the birth of the true Savior. Since no one knows on just which day Jesus was actually born, December 25 worked as well as any other. The real question is: “What was the church’s intention in choosing December 25 for the celebration of Christmas in the first place?” The answer is that the early church chose this date to point to the triumph that Christ’s birth represented over the pagan traditions of the Roman

Empire. The church was not endorsing a pagan ceremony but establishing a rival celebration. The world has all but forgotten the pagan gods of Rome, but at least a billion people celebrate the Christ of Christmas.

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many Christian holidays occur on the same date as Pagan observances does not prove that the holidays derive from Pagan origins even though there may be an intentional correlation. This correlation is based on the Christian conviction founded on revelation and experience and a desire to show that Jesus is the true light of the world. Also, since God has never left himself without a witness (Acts 14:17; 17:16ff) the allusions/parallels are also reflective of God’s general revelation which is found everywhere at all times for all people and with one end – to point to and glorify God as creator and redeemer (Romans 1:18ff). Having chosen days which already had a significance of their own to many other religions, these choices and connections strengthened the Christian message and made it easier for converts to follow the church year/worship calendar. Perhaps this is the secret behind the successful spread of the Christian faith throughout the world. Christian missionaries and believers were trying to show that the hopes and concerns of their non-Christian neighbors

were pointers to and fulfilled in Jesus and the Gospel.

Ultimately, though, it is important to understand what God’s word says about how we should approach holidays. Paul shows in Romans 14 that things we would normally consider pagan are not in and of themselves evil. It is really the conscience and motivation of the person that has the real significance. Paul writes, “Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their minds” (Romans 14:5). Although sometimes criticized today, the Christian appropriation/reinterpretation of pagan customs would likely be regarded positively by early Christians as Christ’s victory over paganism and a way to lead more people to the truth and salvation. Of course, not all of the events or celebrations associated with the pre-Christian pagan festivals and dates would be accepted or approved since many of them fall short of the divine intention.

Now what about us? Should we celebrate these dates and events knowing their pagan background and associations? Some Christians say no. They won’t even celebrate Christmas because the early church (at least up until the fifth century) didn’t celebrate the birth of Jesus. Others, since they aren’t aware of the connection to pre-Christian festivals and religions, and only know the meaning of these events in the light of the Gospel and the Christian faith have no problem celebrating them, although they do want to distance themselves from the secular high jacking of many “Christian” holydays (e.g. Christmas and Santa Claus; Easter and Easter bunnies; All Saints day and Halloween, etc.) For me, I have no problem with celebrating the Christian Holydays as long as we focus on their spiritual and Christ-centered purpose. They can be a powerful tool God uses to strengthen our faith and move us further towards Christlikeness.

this is not goodbye

by Edith Watt

growing compassion and involvement in missions, your ever-increasing zeal and commitment to Christ, and it has been a privilege to serve you. I am serious when I say that I will miss you...I will. It will definitely take some time to get accustomed to worshipping at a different church.

I am very excited about participating in the vision of *Links International*: "Changing Lives, Transforming Communities". Our primary aim is to empower and exhort nationals to change and, in turn, transform their own communities. When individuals change, communities are transformed, and then nations are redeemed for Christ. I firmly believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is holistic; that is, we are commissioned to care for the whole person. We are given the task of bringing redemption to every aspect of an individual life, from the physical and emotional to the social and spiritual. We are commanded to fight especially for justice for those who have no voice. Remember Jesus inaugurated and embodied the kingdom of God through his teachings and actions; not one without the other. The church exists for no other reason than to be the instrument of God's continual revelation and redeeming activity in the world. This, in essence, is the heartbeat of *Links International*, to mobilize the church to fulfill its divine call.

Even though I will not be at VCBC regularly, I will be around! Our journey is certainly not over by any means! I will be traveling every two to three months internationally and will be 'forced' to come through Vancouver! And when I do, I will be coming to VCBC to worship and share about what God is doing in the world and getting you involved. With a trip to Malawi/Kenya in September and India in November, I will hopefully see you at the summer retreat if the timing works out. If you want to receive my newsletter updates, please email me at edith@linksinternational.org.uk.

You are welcome to my home in Comox. I have a guest room and you would even have your own bathroom! Seriously, come and visit me! I will end with a verse from 1 Peter 2:9, "But we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that we may declare the praises of him who call us out of darkness into his wonderful light." No matter where we are, we are in the same body with one purpose – to declare his praises!

See you later.



There are 31,557,600 seconds in a year. You just lost 4 of those seconds reading this fact... actually 6 seconds now because you're still reading.

There are more kinds of bacteria in your mouth than there are people in the world. Makes you want to go rinse out your mouth, doesn't it?

In Alberta, it is illegal to set the wooden leg of a wooden legged man on fire. Why do Albertans even need this law? Are there actually people going around doing this???

Toronto Law states you cannot drag a dead horse down Yonge St. on a Sunday. Oh darn, now I have to find something else to do after church.

According to British Columbia Provincial Law, it is illegal to kill a sasquatch. Hmmm Sasquatches, eh? Is there something the

amazingwefacts

by Wes



government's not telling us?

Q: What kind of car did Jesus tell us to drive?

A: A Honda. He said we should all be in one Accord

usher greeting challenge

Match the usher's photo with the correct name and greeting



Pearl

Rejoice, this is the day that the Lord has made.



Henry

Hi welcome to VCBC. We are grateful to have you join us.



Matthew

Good morning and welcome to VCBC! Let's worship together!



Eddie

Please read Psalm 100:4, 5



Chris

Welcome to VCBC! We're glad to have you worshipping and celebrating with us this Easter time!



Jim

I look forward to meeting more and more brothers and sisters as time goes on. Thanks for the warm welcome to the VCBC family.



worship

A different English congregation ministry is highlighted in each issue to give you an idea of what we do.

We encourage you to get involved!

An interview with Tommy and Willis
Interview by Wes

Above is a sampling of the Worship team during the All-Members' Open Practice on May 2. There are too many people to fit into this page. See our ushers feature for a few more faces.

How many people are on the worship teams?

If you are referring to the music teams that lead every Sunday, there are currently four with a total of about 28 active members. The entire Worship Ministry Team also encompasses our A/V techies, ushers/greeters and people who serve for the Lord's Supper, that total would probably number more than 50.

Who can play the most instruments, and what are they?

Casey can probably play the most instruments - acoustic, electric, bass guitar and drums. He can also sing AND take care of the audio system (but not all at the same time).

Most bizarre/crazy instrument?

I don't know. Although I would not say that it was bizarre, I am aware of a very talented accordion player in our congregation (Trivia: He teaches Sunday School). I would say though that Ray used to experiment with a lot of funky sounds on the keyboard. We have since banned him from doing that.

Would you ever consider having an entire worship set with music only e.g. music without lyrics.

That's a very interesting question. I've never been asked that before. I guess it's possible to have an entire worship set with music only. What do you think, Tommy?

TC: I have considered planning segments of the worship set with only instrumental music and even silence where I thought was appropriate to the theme/message and would allow people to worship with the voices of their hearts and minds. My concern though is that while this may be conducive for some people to worshipping God, it may have a different meaning to someone else, perhaps even negative. I believe we strive to strike a balance of songs and music that we hope would engage the worshippers and give them the opportunity to respond with their offering of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and devotion to God.

Who on the worship team is the most dramatic?

I would probably have to say Casey. Before Casey, I would say Wynsome but in a cheerful way!

Would you ever refrain from leading worship on a Sunday if you felt your heart was not in the right place?

Would you ever ask someone not to play?

Yes and yes. There have been times when my mind is distracted, I am physically not well, or my heart is not at peace right before service starts. Somehow though, as we begin to lead worship, I am gently reminded that our focus is on God alone and that I have the benefit of my teammates to help lead worship even when I am down or out. This to me stresses my belief that we lead as a team, which of course includes our pastors and other people who serve on Sundays. On your second question, I think I would present my views on why someone should not participate but would let them decide for themselves. I hope I don't ever have to do that!

How do you choose the songs in the worship set? How hard is it to find songs that correspond with the week's sermon.

Usually the speaker for the week will send the sermon outline to the lead worshipers by Tuesday or Wednesday. Oftentimes, I'll write down all the song ideas that pop into my head as I am reading through the sermon outline. Once I have compiled a list of song ideas, then I try to narrow down the song choices based on different criteria, such as lyrical content, tempo, keys, etc. Usually it's not too hard to find songs that correspond with the week's sermon. It's usually more difficult to narrow down the choices.

Whenever I find a song that uplifts or convicts me or simply reminds me of Jesus, I learn it by ear and jot it down for future reference. The advance sermon notes we get are so concise and rich that selecting songs to blend with the message is actually not that hard. Moreover, our pastors sometimes relate the lyrics of the songs into their messages, which I think is not only cool but totally helps to reinforce our choice of songs.

Stay tuned: The Worship team is currently working on their vision and mission statement.

exciting
vcbc
news



Wear is your name tag?
There's a rumor going around -- FREE COOKIES...



Congratulations to secondary and post-secondary graduates!
Secondary: You're on your own now.
Post-secondary: With each passing moment your interest free student loans are due.

Gather and Give provides humanitarian outreach to the community. Coordinating volunteers and donations, Gather and Give collects essential items often overlooked when assessing need, such as new or gently used kitchenware, linens, and basic toiletries. These items create the Home Essential Kits, which provide people with some much needed items as they continue their journey to a better quality of life. In March, some from Salt Fellowship went to volunteer at Gather and Give. Below are their reflections on their experience.

Do you ever wonder what happens to the physical items and money that you donate to charities?

When I think about donations or charity, the first thing that usually comes to mind is donating to food banks or donating old clothing. To be honest, I always wonder where my donations end up and if I was even giving to the correct organization. One night at Salt Fellowship, we were asked if we'd like to volunteer at a place called Gather and Give to help sort and pack items for those in need. When I first heard of Gather and Give I thought to myself, "It's just another donation place for People get rid of personal junk" and "What's so special about this place compared to the food bank or another similar place? From the name Gather and Give, you'd think it's easy as gathering and giving away anything anyone could find, but fortunately, that is not the case. Gather and Give works with different agencies to provide essential household goods to those in need. It takes time and care to sort through all the donations that come in and to have the requested items gathered and packed for delivery or pick up. Volunteering at Gather and Give has provided answers to my own questions about non-profit organizations; they are not just another place for people to get rid of personal junk, they are focused on providing essential items to those in need and on expressing Christ's love through these actions, which is something other organizations may lack. Next time, when in doubt, find out more about the organization that you will be donating to. Remember not to just simply give, but gather the required resources your particular organization may be looking for and they will see it delivered to those in need.



On February 28, 2009, a small group of us from Salt fellowship spent the afternoon volunteering at Gather and Give. Gather and Give is a non-profit organization that provides low-income families with the essentials they need. Families receive packs that are put together from donations (such as bedding, clothing, pots and pans). These packs are then delivered to their homes, or are picked up at Gather and Give's office. The time that we were at Gather and Give consisted of sorting through donations in their warehouse, putting some home essentials kits together, and a few of us even helped place the donations in their van to have them ready for delivery. The time at Gather and Give, for me, was an eye-opening experience. I got to see, first hand, God's love for those that are less fortunate than I am, as well as see how much people in Metro Vancouver care about the less fortunate. One example was when a family came to pick up their kit during the afternoon. That pack was not made yet, so a few of us quickly put it together. When the family arrived to pick up their pack, I could see how happy they were to receive their supplies, as well as how grateful they were to us for putting it together, and putting it in their car for them. I believe that God was using us to reach out to that family that day by showing His love for them. The time I spent at Gather and Give was personally rewarding, as well as spiritually rewarding, and I would encourage anyone who wants to help the less fortunate and who has a little time to spend on the weekends, to go volunteer there.



Lifeline exist to meet the **critical needs** of the **homeless** and **less fortunate** in the downtown core of Vancouver and throughout the Lower Mainland. Below, Journey Fellowship describes their experience volunteering for Lifeline.

by several from
Journey Fellowship

Last year, Journey Fellowship had the amazing experience of working with Lifeline Outreach Society at their transition house in Richmond. The home was run by a live-in, Christian caretaker and housed around 6 individuals who were in the process of getting off the streets. We were able to visit once a month for half a year, helping with cleaning, painting, stocking, donation sorting, yard work, and other activities.

In my Geography courses, they always talked about the problem of homelessness and how we need to find solutions to help those people. But they also said that throwing more money won't really solve the problem. So, it got me thinking... what are you supposed to do? Through this volunteering experience at the transition house, I could see how I was doing something tangible to help some people get off the streets. It certainly wasn't something that was system-changing, but I'm sure it was life-changing for the guys who were living there.

Oftentimes I am guilty of thinking 'Why can't these homeless people just get a job, instead of begging for money or food?' What I have failed to realize is that in order to get a job, you need to have an address. You also need a place to print your cover letter, your resume, etc., many things a lot of us take for granted. Most of us think the way to help the homeless is to just give them food and money. However, we often do not consider helping them with ways that will benefit them in the long run. That is why the volunteering experience at the transition house has provided me with an alternative perspective on how to help the homeless – by providing them with a place to live, a place to have life-changing experiences, and a place to help them get back on their feet.

Einar's Forty-Day Spiritual Journey

Before beginning the 40-day Adventure, my devotional life was very sporadic and very unfocused – I considered it good enough if I could find a few minutes before bed to have a quick conversation with God. Starting a prayer journal since the start of the school year has helped with accountability, but I was starting to feel that my devotional life, and relationship with God, was lacking depth and continuity. It was with this desire to get closer to God that I started my 40-day Adventure.

Each day I was asked four questions, and by far the hardest one was what I saw God do yesterday. It is very hard to see God in a lecture hall at 8:30 in the morning; clarity doesn't improve much as the day drags on at school. Knowing that I would have to answer this at the end of the day (I did my 40-day Adventure each night instead of each morning) forced me to keep my eyes open for God.

adventure with God

a forty-day spiritual journey

Casey's Forty-Day Spiritual Journey

For the longest time, I had been wondering why we, Christians, choose to give up something during Lent. It may be chocolate, candy, meat, alcohol, or even TV for the brave, but I have never understood how giving them up would help us grow closer to God, which I thought was the whole purpose of Lent. Through Pastor Sharp's sermons on the 40-day Adventure and personal guidance, I later learned that when we deny ourselves of worldly pleasures, we exercise self-control, which plays a big role in our relationship with God. In the Gospels, Jesus told the disciples "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me". This really convicted me at that time because I could see areas of my life where I was not exercising self-control, not denying myself from sin, which hindered me from growing closer to God. After that, I was very motivated to practice and increase my self-control in the areas of my life which were causing me to sin. Through constant struggling and many failures along the way, I learned that the irony of self-control is that it doesn't depend on self, but on God. Without God's strength, I was unable to overcome evil desires and temptations; but by relying on God's strength, I was.

But just as Pastor Sharp said in one of his sermons: "it's easy to be good for a little while; it's hard to be good for a long time", I began to stumble and fall in my journey. That is when we got to the part on "Perseverance" in the 40-day Adventure with God. During this time, God told me that since He has intended for us to endure through the obstacles, He will pick me up when I fall and give me the push that I need to take that next step as long as I rely on Him. Knowing this has really encouraged and refreshed me on my journey with God and has left me with an everlasting hope to continue on this lifelong adventure. The lyrics from a song I have been hearing on the radio lately, called "Wait and See" by Brandon Heath, have been reminding me of this hope. It says: "He's not finished with me yet" – I'm glad He's not.

There were days where, book in one hand, pen in the other, I would literally sit for minutes with nothing to write, thinking through my day, wondering what I saw God do. To be honest, there were days where I left that blank.

That question is still in my mind each day. What did I see God do today? If I believe in a God that is not only omnipresent, but also personal, I should be able to see Him or His presence working in my life at any given time, but I can't. However, that doesn't mean I'm giving up. Besides re-cementing my devotional life into a routine, the 40-day Adventure has planted another desire in me, a desire to find God in each day of my life.

Week 5: Godliness

by Kathy

Who, other than God, is godly? I don't know about you, but no one has ever said to me, "I see an aura of divine qualities radiating out of you." Not yet anyways.

Perhaps this is why Pastor Sharp spoke of an ongoing transformation. We considered David in Psalm 51, where after repenting of his sin, he asked God to "Create in me a pure heart." Inspiration! I had never quite thought of it that way before!

What God said to me today through His word: God is the Creator. He isn't limited to making things from resources that are already there. Even when there is nothing of worth to start with, he can create something new, something pure!

What I saw God do yesterday: I have a special relationship with the word, "pure," because my name means "pure one". As a Sunday School student, I was given a plaque that said just that. As a child, I thought that somehow this was an inherent quality that I possessed. The word "pure," like godliness, isn't something that we associate with being human. Babies are relatively pure. But as we grow up, purity is tainted, never to be regained, or so I assumed. When I was a teenager and mourning my sins, I took my plaque, and with tears, used a permanent ink pen to cross out the word "pure." I shoved it deep into the recesses of my headboard and forgot about it. Months later (for that is how long it took me to clean), I found the plaque and was struck with the thought that God could, and had, already made me clean. It was a God moment that made me smile. I found that the permanent ink came off! Now I was laughing! God has a way of bringing his lessons right to the forefront so that even I can't miss it! As far as God is concerned, because of Jesus, I am "His Pure One."

I had grown up thinking that Christians were stiff-necked. I would be a saved believer, yes, but I wasn't going to lose myself and conform. Even though I have been a Christian for decades, it has only been in recent years that I realized, that if I was going to receive all God's intended blessings for me, I would need to pursue righteousness. I would need to be passionate about becoming godly. It is new for me to realize that I can rely on God, not to just see me as clean, but to make me clean from my innermost being outward. Being thus created anew, I can be all the things God wants me to be. I can truly live my life powered by Christ!

What is my response to God? In this section of my booklet, all I can write is "thank-you God!"

My prayer for today: Who, other than you, O God, is pure, righteous and powerful? Looking back at the immaturity of my previous beliefs, I thank You, that once again your word is teaching me deeper layers of truth. Each time I turn to You, there is another burden I find I was carrying, that now, I can lay down. My response is an ever-intensifying faith in you.