

2 perspectives

seasoned veteran: crystal chu

This new year has been about a renewed trust and faith in what God wants to do with English Well. As a wonderful supporter once said, "God can end English Well if it is not His will." So this is a year of learning to say, Thy will be done.

We started preparing later this year. Teachers have felt burnt out after a busy year. Textbooks are only just arriving. Suffice it to say, God has clearly shown that this is not our ministry—it's His. What a privilege to be a part of it! There's the anticipation of the first day of classes, realizing how much I have missed the students' company. There's the moment when a student grabs your arm and won't let go, profusely saying just how nice and caring it is that we'd take the time out to teach every week. Even when I'm out shopping or at a restaurant, I am greeted warmly by students who recognize me. Ephesians 3:20 reminds us that God can do more than we can ask or imagine. That is what I am looking forward to this coming year at English Well.

We are currently looking for volunteers able to commit from January to June. No experience necessary, and training will be provided. Come and join this community. See what God has called us to do among our neighbours.

English Well offers classes Thursdays, 7:30PM at VCBC.



rookie teacher: sandy chian

Teaching my first class at English Well, I remember that I felt very doubtful of my abilities to teach English. I recall clearly at one point in the lesson all my students looked at me frustrated and confused. I was quite convinced at that moment that I was not qualified to be a teacher and that I should probably focus my energies on finding someone to replace me. However, I knew that God wanted me to help with this ministry and that He does not want me to give up so easily! I had to believe that He would help me and that no matter how inadequate I felt I was, He would use me somehow. I am very grateful that He sent me friends who were so encouraging to me and gave me lots of tips for teaching. As a result, the next class went a lot smoother! My students actually looked like they were having fun! They let me know when they didn't understand, so that I could slow down and tailor to their needs. It also helped that every week I had a co-teacher/assistant; during conversation practice time, the two of us could give the students more individual attention.

It is such a joy and privilege to see the students learn and enjoy each other's company in class. I remember one lesson they were having so much fun making up sentences:

Student A: "I am hungry."

Student B: "I am in the kitchen."

Other students: "You can cook for him since he's hungry!"

They were indeed very simple sentences that we probably don't find funny, but it brought my students a lot of laughter.

I still don't think that I'm a "qualified teacher" but I'm very thankful that God gave me this opportunity to meet my wonderful students and to make a small difference in their lives.

in the eyes of einar: emailing God



Einar Wong

For the longest time, I've treated my relationship with God as if it were conducted solely through email. That sentence probably sounded a little odd, so here's what I mean. I treated prayer as though I was sending God an email. God would then reply, I'd "read" his message, follow it as best as I could, and send back the results ... rinse and repeat.

There are a couple of reasons I used to think like this.

First, it was simple. God tells me what I need to do, I go do it, I tell God I've done it. Done.

Second, it was convenient. I didn't need to spend hours, or even minutes, of "alone time" with God. My prayer/email life was quick and efficient. I was almost proud of it. I didn't need to waste God's time with every little thing. Our conversations were short and to the point.

Third, and probably the most important, I really wasn't comfortable letting God get any closer.

In the back of my mind, I knew that kind of thinking was pointless anyway, because God was and is already right beside me every moment of my life—thank you years of Sunday School lessons. I just tried never to acknowledge that fact. I kept trying to keep God at a distance, because I didn't want him involved in every single aspect of my life. I didn't want to acknowledge that he was there for my failures, my mistakes, my moments of regret ... if I could barely bear them, how was I supposed to share them with God?

Over the past couple of years, I've realized that I needed to change my perspective. My reasons aren't exactly pure—more "well I can't really hide anything from him anyway" than "I really don't want to hide anything from him anymore"—but that's a whole other article. However, one thing I've recognized is that because of how I've treated God in the past, it's majorly affected the way I approach relationships in general, spiritual and earthly. I naturally try to keep people at a distance. Put me in a crowded room and I'll chill on the couch by myself. My friends might know what I think and what I do, but I don't know how many of them would know why I think what I think, or why I do what I do—because I don't tell them. All my relationships reflect the relationship I have with God—and I'm not too impressed with what I see sometimes.

I'll leave with two things. One is Psalm 139, which I came across during Pastor Cindy's Sunday School. If you have time, check it out, it's David writing about how God pretty much already knows everything about you. The second, is the song "By Your Side" by Tenth Avenue North. The title pretty much gives it away, but I've been listening to it all summer long and I can't seem to stop.

That's probably a sign of something.

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PAAARRTTYYY!!!!



By Anthony Pang



That's pretty much what you get when you section off the entire Culloden block with orange barricades, and combine a couple hundred kids and six times as many hamburgers and hot dogs with dozens of game booths and inflatables. Oh, there may have been 500 gallons of freezing water mixed in there as well, so to speak.

When Flora "The Head Honcho" Cheung first approached me about helping to co-ordinate "The Annual VCBC VBS Block Party and/or Free Carnival" this past summer, I hesitated to respond. But the excitement of throwing a giant soirée at the church easily eradicated any reluctance I initially felt, and I agreed to take on the task. Plus, it's really hard to say no to Flora. And so, before I had time to doubt my decision, the planning began. Well, a little bit of it anyway. Honestly, besides booking rentals, sketching out the budget for the carnival, and praying for guidance through this new challenge, the bulk of the work wasn't done until the actual week of VBS.

Having drummed on the worship team, led crews, and run games stations in past years of camp, it was, to say the least, a

change of pace to sit alone in a room drawing and typing stuff that week. At first, I was happy with what I had going for me with my new role; I mean, how often do you get to contribute to the church's largest children's program without having to actually deal with crazy, dirty, whiny kids? Jokes. However, as the week went by, I did realize how much I missed interacting with the children, and I guess it just really added to the stress and made my job that much more difficult.

In retrospect, I feel like there were several times when I lost God amidst the piles of to-do lists that week. Nonetheless, I know He was there with me all the way through despite my failing to acknowledge it, and I'm really glad I got to see His work on display at the carnival that final evening. What a spectacle it was: the children, the adults, the volunteers, and the neighbours—all coming together as a community. Neighbours—more of them than ever before—eating, playing, and laughing in our parking lot. Witnessing that—well, that was better than any inflatable toy you could've won that night. It was a party, and it was great.

So what do you think would happen if we didn't limit ourselves to hosting parties like that just once a year? What if we had one every day? You're thinking, "That's impossible, we don't have that kind of money!" But, you know, I really think we could do it. I think it is possible. Okay, so we can't exactly dunk youth leaders in the parking lot every Sunday afternoon or hand out free burgers on the street every Friday night, but there are so many other ways we can celebrate God's love with our neighbours! For one, we could challenge ourselves to free up the Culloden residents' parking spaces by parking a little further away from the church building! Imagine what a testimony of God's love that would be to our neighbours if they could park outside their own houses for a change! I can honestly tell you it would take a little less effort than it would to coordinate a carnival!

So, what do you say? Are you ready to party?

Many thanks to Flora, Cynthia, Kathy, Rosita and all the volunteers, aunties, and uncles who helped make this year's block bash a success! We couldn't have done it without you!