



BGST
BIBLICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

WINDOW TO BGST NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2020



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

To the 29th Cohort and Class of 2020

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of BGST Faculty and staff, we would like to congratulate nine students for graduating this year. This is a unique batch in so many ways:

First of all, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to hold our annual Convocation. Instead, the graduands met over a Zoom Graduation Tea. This, however, allowed Christian Wijaya (CBS), our Indonesian graduate, who is based in Tokyo, to join us.

Secondly, this is also the first time that all five of our graduands in the Certificate in Biblical Studies or Theological Studies took their programme online.

Thirdly, we also celebrate with Goh Toh Sye for being one of our oldest graduands, since he is celebrating his 80th birthday this year.

Fourthly, we rejoice with Peter Fu, who began part time studies with BGST more than 10 years ago, while we were still at our Tanjong Pagar premises. Peter graduated with his Masters of Christian Studies and this was no easy feat for him. This was because this was his first degree in the English Language, having completed his earlier education in Hong Kong.



PRINCIPAL'S EXHORTATION

The New Norm of COVID-19

With the new norm of COVID-19, it is clear that the Church needs to prepare herself for new challenges and uncertainties in the months and years ahead. The ways that we do church, the ways that we minister and the ways we live out our love for Jesus will be different.

While the forms and expressions of our Christianity will change, we also believe that the substance of our faith remains the same. We are still called to love Jesus. We are still called to live out this love in whatever places or situations God calls us to - whether this is in Singapore or Japan (where Christian is located), in the office, or now, more often than not, from our homes.

Need for Discernment & Learning

The juxtaposition of these two, differing forms and substance, calls for two things: (1) an openness to learn, and to keep on learning so that we may be better equipped to handle the challenges ahead; and (2) prayerful discernment as to how God will lead us.

- a. With regards to learning, we have seen how much we had to learn over the last few months - learning to do worship online, hold Zoom meetings and keep our social distance. I expect that much more learning will be required as we navigate the challenges ahead - the economic disruptions, changes at the workplace and evolving ministry needs.

For some of us, the new challenges we encounter will be very uncomfortable. But I would like to invite you to reframe this discomfort as something *unfamiliar* instead, and something that God can help us overcome.

This is only possible if we approach the challenge with an openness and freedom, to allow God to identify the areas or new skills we have to pick up, and to have the patience and humility to learn these skills or knowledge. For some, this



may be picking up a new course online; for others, it is reading up on new disciplines, or interacting with friends. For yet others, it may be picking up a new course from BGST. As a school, we hope that we can continue to support your continual learning and growth, in whatever way we can.

- b. This openness to change, and freedom, to allow God to lead us to unknown places, require a strengthening of our trust in Christ; a deepening of our conviction that He loves us and *will* guide us in our pilgrimage. This is what I want to underscore as I conclude this exhortation.

No matter how much we have learnt, all that we know would be nothing, if it is not guided or informed by our love of Christ and our neighbours. This, of course, calls for wisdom: an ability to discern the Spirit's guidance in our daily lives, work and actions.

This second area is where I want to encourage you to grow. Some of you have undergone some Spiritual Exercises in CS102. You have experienced first-hand how this discernment can operate in our daily prayers with Christ. I encourage you to continue to hone what you have learnt there, so that it may increasingly inform and shape your walk with God.

For those new to this, I want to encourage you to explore this area of spirituality, either on your own, or as you continue your training at BGST. CS102 is a compulsory course for our students nowadays. I pray that you would have an enriching experience as you go through it.

With this, I commend you to our Lord Jesus, trusting that His Spirit will lead you as you navigate the months ahead at home, Church and work.



HIGHLIGHTS FOR AY2019-20

A Year of Change and Innovation

AY2019 has been a year of change and also innovation for the school. It began, of course, with the change of Principal, and also the introduction of a new website as a means of engaging our students. The year also saw BGST working out our vision of training the whole people of God by offering several conferences and public lectures. We recognise that not all Christians have the time for postgraduate training. The aim of these events is to provide 'bite-sized' learning opportunities that can help Christians contextualise our faith at work.

The topics covered were diverse, including how we can engage our LGBT friends and colleagues at the workplace, the historic relationships between Christians and Muslims in Singapore, and how the Church can flourish in the digital age.

COVID-19 brought our physical events to a standstill. Yet, it also enabled us to innovate by using webinars for our training. Many of you have participated in the webinars on COVID-19 and our first online spiritual retreat. There are 2 more webinars being planned, including a book launch by Bishop Solomon, and a forthcoming workshop on Loneliness.

Apart from webinars, we were also pleased to be able to share free online resources with churches during the Circuit Breaker season. More than 300 people signed up for our free online New Testament courses. Another 300 now have access to a video study series on the Book of Ruth, developed by the Faculty as a means of reflecting on the pandemic. In implementing all these different online initiatives, we are still learning how to deliver our training well. We look forward to feedback and suggestions from you all, as we journey together.

Looking ahead to AY2020 - What's in store for BGST?

Firstly, we are pleased to announce that all BGST postgraduate programmes have been revised so that our training is more aligned to our new vision and mission launched in 2018. Among these programmes, the most significant change is in our Masters of



Christian Studies. From July 2020, it will be renamed 'Masters of Arts in Theology and Interdisciplinary Studies' (MATIS). Two interdisciplinary courses will be introduced to better equip our students for their work of contextualisation faith in society: *Christians in a Digital & Disruptive World* and *Anthropology for Christian Ministry & Practice*.

Secondly, we would be launching a parallel suite of courses under our ENGAGE platform. The goal of ENGAGE is to foster collaboration between theologians and professionals from different disciplines, so as to address contemporary issues. ENGAGE training would, for the most part, be packaged as short 'micro-credential' courses that supplement our existing postgraduate training programmes. The aim here is to provide more options for students to learn at their own pace. What would it look like? For example, one event we are planning for July is to bring Theology of Work into conversation with the challenges of business disruptions and the gig economy, and to explore what following Christ looks like under such circumstances.

Finally, with an economic recession in the horizon, the school will face challenges. To keep theological education affordable, BGST, like most seminaries, has always kept our school fees to about 20-30% of our annual costs. This means we have to raise the remaining 70% through donations. Given the economic downturn, donations are likely to drop. So, we have to be innovative to ride out this financial challenge. On the enrolment front, no one really knows how the recession will affect student interest in theological training - perhaps negatively, or positively. So, for both uncertainties, we seek your prayers and support for the long-term sustainability of the school.

DR LAI PAK WAH

BGST Principal





GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020

Certificate in Biblical Studies

Christian Wijaya
Goh Toh Sye
Ang Sze Wee Erik

Certificate in Theological Studies

Wong Tze Mun, Wayne
Wong Yew Keong

Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies

Paul Yeo Tze Chien (cum laude)
Sim Hong Joo James

Masters in Christian Studies

Fu Hing Man Peter
Clarence Tong Shin Kai

Prize Winners

Principal's Prize (Grad DipCS): Paul Yeo Tze Chien
Christian Spirituality Prize: Tong Shin Kai Clarence
Theology and History Prize: Paul Yeo Tze Chien



Do not be a father, be a friend. Be your children's best friend.

Fatherhood 4.0

BY DR JEREMY GWEE



Father and Friend to his children and their spouses.
Jeremy on the left, and wife Jessie on the right

Why Fatherhood?

Fatherhood is the state of being a father. Some men become fathers intentionally. They want to raise a family after marriage. Some fathers are stepfathers, some are fathers but not married, and some do not know that they are fathers. Women can conceive through artificial insemination and raise children without a father. In same sex marriages, the 'father' could be a woman. So, the father figure may not necessarily be a male. While anyone can say 'I am a father', not everyone can claim to be a wise father.

Fathers, unlike mothers, do not have a biological link to their children; fathers do not have the bond mothers have with their children. "The father-bond has to be nurtured and, in some customs, established through rituals and social mores." (Atkinson, 2013) Fathers have got to get to know their children. As William Shakespeare observed, "It is a wise father that knows his own child."

Fathers Are Responsible for Childrearing

In the Jewish custom based on the first Passover, the father-bond is established through a ritual where the father of a newborn child (son) would present this child to the rabbi, who would ask him, "Will you leave this child at the altar (i.e., let him die) or will you redeem him?" The father naturally answers that he would redeem his child and in doing so he is accepting the responsibility for the life of the child. (Atkinson, 2013) The father now has the responsibility of bringing up his child. This involves educating the child in the Word of God (Torah), helping him develop a trade (to support his family) and helping him find a wife.

This ritual shows that fathers have always been responsible for bringing up their children, both sons and daughters. Morantz-Sanchez, an American historian, points out that before the Industrial Revolution, fathers were solely responsible for their children's upbringing. The father was to blame if the children 'went bad'. Fathers therefore played a highly active role in their children's development, since their job was to create good citizens. It was the Industrial Revolution that separated the home and the workplace. In doing so, child-rearing was taken out of the traditional male role. (Siegelbaum, 2000) And this belief that fathers do not have a role in childrearing continued till about fifty years ago where scientists who studied children's early development still looked exclusively at mothers as the only [primary] person with whom kids could form a meaningful relationship with. (Ksrich, 2020)

History is making a U turn and we will witness fathers becoming mainly responsible for their children's upbringing again. More importantly, they will now need to get to know their children! This is because the home and the workplace are again converging. With advances in office automation technology, people have been working from home for some time. The recent lock downs because of Covid-19 will accelerate this trend. Both father and mother now work from home. Some fathers are also taking on more household responsibilities as it is now becoming more common for wives to be the main breadwinner. Fathers will need to learn to become fathers because "it is easier for a father to have children than for children to have a real father." (Pope John XXIII) Becoming a real father is a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of the man.

Real Father

The Washington Post, last June, asked fathers to describe the moment they truly felt like a father. One father said that when his newborn child first smiled at him, he felt "the connection was a loose-hanging thread" and he realised that he had not come to terms with who he was. (Joyce, 2019) He was fathered by his stepfather who never insisted that he called him father. However, Joyce insisted, "I want to call you Pops" because his stepfather had a father-bond with him. Looking at his child, this man experienced a wakeup call that being father means having to nurture a relationship with his child.

Through such relationships, children learn not just about life but how to live life. And they learn to live life when they learn from their father's life. Umberto Eco, an Italian novelist said, "I believe that what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments, when they aren't trying to teach us. We are formed by little scraps of wisdom." Inventor Charles Kettering said, "Every father should remember one day his son will follow his example, not his advice." And American author Clarence B Kelland wrote, "My father didn't tell me how to live. He lived and let me watch him do it." So, watch how you live! Your child is watching!

Fatherhood 4.0

Industrial Revolution 4.0 is also Fatherhood 4.0.

Technology is available to bring you and your children closer. They are just one WhatsApp message away. And you can know how they live through their social media. You may have to

compete for your children's airtime because they are always distracted by other things. Technology can also cause you and your children to drift apart, but they still can be quietly observing your life. Robert Fulghum, an American author, said, "Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you." They could be comparing you with people whom they think are better role models than you, as a father. And when this happens you must examine your values. How you live mirrors your values.

It is never too late to get your act together and be a father to your children. Viktor Frankl, a psychologist, and Holocaust survivor, said, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." So where do you begin?

Based on Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Habit #2, you should "begin with the end in mind". When your children speak about you at your funeral, what character would you like them to have seen in you? What contributions, what achievements would you want them to remember? Look carefully at the people around you. What difference would you like to have made in their lives?

Just as Jesus called His disciples friends, we should also call our children our friends. And what do good friends do for each other? They are there for you, no matter what; they don't judge you, they don't put you down, they are kind and respectful, they are loyal, trustworthy, willing to tell you the truth, even when it is hard for you to hear; they laugh with you, stick around when things get tough, make you smile, they are there to listen, comfort you when you cry ... the list goes on.

On this Father's Day, I wish you a journey of love and friendship with your children!"

Atkinson, J. (2013, February 27). Fathers and Bonding. <http://www.theologyofthefamily.com/2013/02/27/fathers-and-bonding/>

Dale, C. (2018, June 13). 6 things dads should know about the first year of fatherhood—From a guy who's been there. Motherly. <https://www.mother.ly/life/first-year-of-fatherhood-lessons>

Joyce, A. (2019, 13June). Perspective | This is fatherhood: 7 dads describe the moment it got real. Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/06/13/this-is-fatherhood-dads-describe-moment-it-felt-real/>

Ksrich, J. A. (2020, February 10). The Science of How Dads and Father Figures Help Kids | Fatherly. <https://www.fatherly.com/health-science/science-benefits-of-fatherhood-dads-father-effect/>

Siegelbaum, J. (2000, June 14). The role of the father: Past, present, and future. University of Michigan News. <https://news.umich.edu/the-role-of-the-father-past-present-and-future/>

Toub, M. (2019, June 8). The science of how fatherhood transforms men. <https://www.todayparent.com/family/parenting/the-science-of-how-fatherhood-transforms-you/>

Dr Jeremy Gwee

Jeremy is now an adjunct lecturer in several institutions of higher learning where he teaches leadership, corporate social responsibility, business ethics and corporate governance in. He is also Bakke Graduate University's representative in Asia. Prior to his semi-retirement a year ago he was Chief Operating Officer for HSBC (Singapore). Jeremy is also a BGST council member.

FREE

RESOURCES



UNDER THE WINGS OF GOD: LESSONS FROM RUTH IN TROUBLED TIMES

BGST'S FREE TEACHING SERIES ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

[ACCESS HERE](#)



BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT160) 1.5 CREDIT

FREE AUDIT COURSE TILL 30 JUNE ONLY.
HURRY - SIGN UP NOW!

[ACCESS HERE](#)



THE RELIABILITY OF THE GOSPELS (NT220) 1.5 CREDIT

FREE AUDIT COURSE TILL 30 JUNE ONLY.
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Contemplating Covid-19 Resources



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WHITHER THE CHURCH, POST COVID-19?



[WATCH THE WEBINAR](#)

2020

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ONLINE SEMINAR (PART 1) (SAT)

6
JUNE

"THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE"

Speaker: Bishop Emeritus Robert M Solomon
10:00am-12:00pm

LIVE VIA ZOOM!

bit.ly/thesovereigngod (OVER-SUBSCRIBED!)
Please access through YouTube below)

LIVE STREAMING ON YOUTUBE Tune in to
bit.ly/BGSTYouTube

ONLINE SEMINAR (PART 2) (SAT)

13
JUNE

"THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE"

Speaker: Bishop Emeritus Robert M Solomon
10:00am-12:00pm

LIVE VIA ZOOM!

bit.ly/thesovereigngod (OVER-SUBSCRIBED!)
Please access through YouTube below)

LIVE STREAMING ON YOUTUBE Tune in to
bit.ly/BGSTYouTube

WEBINAR (SAT)

27
JUNE

"LONELINESS @ WORK"

Speakers: Dr Jeremy Gwee, Dr Lai Pak Wah &
Mr Anthony Siow.
9:00am-12:00pm

Registration details coming soon! Look out for
our posters on FB and social media on how to
register for the webinar.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

BGST WORKS FROM HOME

BGST will not be fully operational as of 2 June 2020, and office hours will be curtailed. Do call before you drop by. We will be phasing in our return to the premises.

If you need to use the reference section, please contact Daisy at simd@bgst.edu.sg. For normal loans, please arrange for items to be placed at the Book Drop Cabinet.

If you need to contact us, you can now use the BGST office number (62276815) or you can continue to use the hotline (85253289). Emailing us at inquiry@bgst.edu.sg is always an option.

LIBRARY CHARGES FOR NEW AY2020/21

Library charges for the new Academic Year 2020/21 will be priced at \$130. This will allow access to the physical collection, OverDrive and DTL. This charge is compulsory for all Programme Students but is optional for all other students. For inquiries, please contact Daisy at simd@bgst.edu.sg

ATTENTION - LIBRARY MEMBERS!

We will now be charging \$50 per annum for the use of the Library (physical collection only). This will apply when the new AY2020/21 starts. Regarding your deposit of \$100 currently held with us, please choose one option from the following and inform Daisy at simd@bgst.edu.sg:

1. State if you would prefer to have the \$100 deposit returned to you via Cheque or PayNow
2. Convert the \$100 deposit into 2 years' Library Membership
3. Donate the \$100 deposit to BGST.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you!



THE DTL

For current DTL users who want to have access to DTL after 30th June, you will need to pay \$130 for a 1 year subscription as the current password will be changed. A new password will be given upon receipt of payment.

PayNow is the most preferred mode of payment. Send payment details to Daisy at simd@bgst.edu.sg.



THE BOOK CORNER IS CLOSED

If you would like any of the books, you can, for a minimum of \$50 donation. We will provide a bag and you can fill it up with any of the items we have available.

**All brand new!
Hurry! While stocks last!**



FACULTY SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (JUN-JULY)



DR LAI PAK WAH 5 Jul

Jesus: "Who do you say that I am?" Mark 8:27-38

Mt Carmel B-P Church



DR TAN SENG KONG 25-26 July

John, a Commendable Servant (Matthew 11:1-19; 14:1-12)

Bethel Assembly of God



DR KWA KIEM KIOK 12 July

Missions Sunday

Yishun Methodist Church



MR QUEK TZE-MING 21 June

TBC

Grace Singapore Chinese Christian Church



MR LEOW WEN PIN 7, 14, 21 June

TBC

Chapel of Christ our Hope

28 June Disability and Inclusion

Seng Kang Methodist Church (Sunday Services)

5 July God's Gift of Love (1 Cor 13)

Singapore Life Church English Service

19 July Teaching Faith to Children with Special Needs

Adam Road Presbyterian Church Special Needs Network



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