Ethics, Ministry & Love

Enrolling in Theological Education by Extension (TEE) means different things to different people. Some see it as a journey towards a deeper understanding of their faith, to others it is a spiritual oasis, or the first venture into Christian theology. Students are free to choose their learning modes: in-class lectures to experience life transformation together, or through the Internet to undertake distance learning at their own pace. If we ask what motivates Christians to study in extension courses, we will discover that the answer goes well beyond factors such as personal interest or the availability of time, and it takes us all the way into the realm of ethics and ministry. In fact, the most basic motivation is the love for God's truth ignited by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

"Need" Is a "Driving Force"

Theology needs to make itself available to Christians, for reason that believers are faced with ethical quandaries that have become more complicated than ever. As they engage in the intricate process of making value judgments, Christians need to be sure of their practices being worthy of the gospel they believe. In order to do so, one needs first-hand knowledge of the Bible, and also an understanding of the pattern of biblical themes emerging from the Scriptures in accordance to the framework of doctrinal theology. When religious knowledge is tested in our real-life situations, lessons from the history of the church will definitely be indispensable and beneficial. Hence the various disciplines of theological education (biblical studies, doctrinal theology, church history

and practical studies) should all be made accessible to members of the Christian community, so that the Church can be better prepared to serve her Lord and her neighbors.

Even though pressing ethical issues surround the believers' community, Christians should not overlook two other equally important reasons of study theology. Firstly, the Church is gathered and established by the Holy Spirit to serve the Triune God. Thus, praise and worship, praying and breaking of bread, preaching, teaching and fellowship are important signs of the identity of a Christian community. Confession of the Church together with the action of serving her neighbors are the Church's primary proclamation of faith. The Church needs to humbly and critically reflect on its own practices, to make sure that they do not deviate from the truth of the gospel and the testimony of the apostles. In other words, theological reflection is a prerequisite for the Church to examine its proclamation of faith. This burden should not just fall on the shoulders of pastors and church leaders, but may also be shared by the congregation under the pastoral leadership. TEE equips Christians to engage in this kind of reflection on their faith.

The Holy Spirit IGNITES Man’s Love for God

The Holy Spirit puts a desire in the believer's heart to go into the depths of God. Believers are attracted to the divine truth and goodness. They respond with love and seek the truth of God in faith. This yearning to know God
is the true driving force that inspires the effort
of making theological knowledge accessible
to the Church. God has poured out His love
into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5),
and as Habakkuk (2:14) says, “The Earth will
be filled with the glory of the knowledge of
the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” The
abundance of Christian life is not limited to
being saved from our ethical sense that has
been marred by sin or the renovation of our
values; nor is it just the rectification of the focus
of our religious activities to the one true God
incarnated in the Bible; but also includes a deep
yearning for the Trine God such that our spirit
is being drawn constantly by His goodness and
eternity, a desire that keeps us searching for the
knowledge of the one God who shows mercy to
the humankind. This joyful search in faith is
like Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord listening
to His words, which is a great blessing. It is only
when believers have a deep understanding of
the life and love of God, and how His mercy is
revealed in the person of Christ that the Church
can proclaim the work and grace of the Trine
God toward the world.

Look Forward – Widening the Spectrum
of the Courses

The fact that students love to study the
Bible is evident from the enrolment statistics.
According to these figures, TEE courses on
biblical books, spirituality and growth are
more popular than theological studies and
church history subjects, and courses on the
Christian mission come next. This order of
subject popularity is however not static. One
can envisage that with a widening spectrum of
courses, the interest of the students and their
perception of TEE will evolve. For example,
where traditional doctrinal theology interacts
with life in the contemporary cultural milieu, or
where biblical studies cross paths with matters
of public interest, or where the practical
experience and heritage of the Church comes
into conversation with urban humanistic values,
the interest of our students will be broadened
accordingly.

Widening the spectrum of courses requires
imagination and resources. “Imagination” is
not a theme of theology, but is a constant
companion of theological education. When
Charles E. Raven, Professor of Theology at
Cambridge University, discusses soteriology, he
mentions that it has always been the practice to
use terminology common in our culture when
we discuss the meaning of Christ dying for us,
for example, terminology commonly associated
with economic activities. Today, TEE also
requires imagination to facilitate people to hear
divine grace again and to understand how God
is working amongst man.

Interview

The Journey of
Spiritual
Companionship

NG PAN Yi Yung, Annie
Assistant Professor of Practical Studies

Even before I set foot inside Annie’s office,
I could smell a delicate fragrance from behind
the half-open door. Her office was immaculate,
but Annie still felt that it was “a bit messy, and
could be better”. From how she used the space
in her office and from our conversation, it was
evident that she was in the habit of keeping
everything neat and tidy. However, the heavenly
Father’s sense of humor is always beyond our
plans and expectations, and the path that He
has laid down for His children is full of pleasant
surprises.

Love, Family and Personality

“There has not been much order in my
life since marrying [Ng] Wai Hang (MDiv 90).”
Annie’s smile seemed even happier than usual.

Annie left Taiwan, her homeland, in 1993
to study theology. She was originally headed
for the United States but somehow ended up
in Hong Kong. She had intended to use her
time of study to rest and to gain a broader
theological perspective before considering the
next focus of her ministry; but then she met
Wai Hang and was moved by his incomparable
support and care. They started dating in the
first year of her study, got married in her third
year, served together after graduation and then
got together to Heidelberg for Wai Hang’s
further studies, which lasted eight years. Annie
never thought that with her personality, she
could be a missionary; let alone being involved
in evangelism among Chinese intellectuals in
Europe. She also never thought that she would
be studying pastoral theology and Christian
spirituality at the Catholic University of Leuven,
or that she would obtain two Masters and a PhD within a few years.

Even though Annie experienced many shifts in external circumstances, she thinks she has always been on the same path, with the same focus. "After coming to Hong Kong, I began to tread an uncertain path, but my calling was very clear. It really did not matter where I would go; so long as I was serving in discipleship and theological education among Chinese churches, I knew I was on the right path." Her path kept unfolding so that she could continue boldly. "I felt my very self unfolding. God allowed me to experience my own identity so that I could keep on discovering new and surprising things about myself. He helped me to see myself as a person He created, a person with many flaws – but I really enjoyed seeing the change in myself."

Annie's love for quiet reflection is part of her personality and her desire for freedom is another part. "I love freedom! I think there are two dimensions to freedom. There is the freedom you enjoy because you are sure of your calling and know what your focus is at this stage in life, that is, what are the one or two most important things in your life. If a person can truly enjoy her focus, without caring too much about what other people think of her achievements, then she has one kind of freedom. That is why I have seldom been bothered by other people's opinions of myself." Studying spirituality has helped her to grasp better this freedom to live out her calling. It taught her to ask whether she was serving from her heart's desire, or from fear and anxiety. Was she loving willingly or just trying to prove herself? "I started to discern the change in my inner being. I used to serve out of fear, or to please people or satisfy expectations, but with age and experience, there has developed in me a focus on God and a willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to help me become myself. This inner guidance has given me room to reflect upon my actions and my motives, so that I can enjoy the pleasure of God more than worry about the opinions of others."

This personality of Annie can be traced back to her childhood. She was the second born in her family, and her brother was the only male descendant in her extended family while her elder sister was a top student at school. "Both of them shouldered the expectations of our family; I think that kind of pressure is too demanding. The top student is usually an unhappy person, always having to worry about falling from first place. I would rather take second, third or fourth place." Annie's parents were relaxed with her when they saw that she was healthy and did well academically, and they even allowed her to take risks and pursue her interests. Annie could try things that her sister and brother were not allowed to try. "My coming to Hong Kong, going to Germany with Wai Hang and ending up in Belgium are all related to the freedom my father gave me to "take risks courageously, not be afraid of failure and always be ready to start again."

Search, Discern, Unfold

There will always be times of doubt and anxiety when a person searches for his calling. Annie wants to tell students at CGST that the most important thing is for a person to be clear about his calling, by discerning if that calling will allow his life to be shaped by God. "I see calling as a process of unfolding." At first there may only be a vague direction, but a person will gradually learn if he is walking in God's calling as he looks back at the people and things that the Lord has placed in his life, the paths he has walked and the things that have touched and affected him. If he is prepared to give willingly, without grumbling, and if he looks for the signs and confirmations the Lord has given, then he will know. "This calling has to be discerned through passion and devotion, which is what I care most about the spiritual growth of CGST students."

When we chatted about spiritual growth and discipleship, Annie recalled her days at Heidelberg, when her involvement in evangelism and pastoral work enabled her to come across various traditions of spiritual formation. Her initial interest in these grew into a more determined search for understanding. "Heidelberg was interwoven with different Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic traditions of spiritual discipline, which encouraged me to reflect upon the evangelical tradition. Being surrounded by European culture allowed me to see the impact of history and culture on different Christian traditions and expanded the framework within which I examined spirituality, while my personal experience in pastoral ministry made me re-examine my attitude towards spiritual discipleship in church. My simple lifestyle in Germany gave me time to read spiritual classics and to have a regular time for personal reflection, which helped me to savor my new experiences and to gain a deeper understanding of spiritual formation."

Having lived in Europe for nearly ten years, Annie realized that spiritual formation is not just about a person's inner being, nor is it a merely personal search. "We can see the impact of the Christian faith and church tradition in the whole European culture. We can see the beautiful expression of a social spirituality in the Europeans' respect towards human dignity, their protection of the environment and their crisis for justice in politics. This contrasts with the pure focus on evangelism in Chinese churches. During those years, I learned to look at spiritual formation from a cultural and historical perspective, and began to compare the influences of different church traditions on cultivating spirituality. If a community wants to examine and critique its own work, it must do so from the perspective of tradition. This helped me to appreciate the burden of studying theology, because theological reflection requires exactly such knowledge of your own culture and tradition, as well as a sense of responsibility for your church in its particular generation."

When Annie was studying theology of Christian spirituality, she was invited to become faculty-in-preparation at CGST. She returned to CGST after graduation and focused on the development of spiritual formation by lecturing on spiritual classics and on different Christian traditions of spiritual discipline. She also became consulting pastor of Hong Kong Mandarin Bible Church. In the past term, she taught a new course called "Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Companionship". Annie views herself as a companion. "Companionship is a journey of becoming fulfillment. In the process of guiding others in their growth, not only can I contribute my knowledge, experience and technique, but I can also experience growth with the other person. Then I can know myself better, respond more deeply to the Lord's calling and encourage one another to live out the person God created each of us to be. This is an encounter in which each of us is part of the process of the fulfillment of the other. I look forward to more of such encounters, so that I and my community will continue to experience God's abundance and mystery."

"I"

(L) Annie and her husband Wai Hang in Swiss Alps

(II) Annie and her husband Wai Hang with her PhD supervisor Professor Bob Fussler of Catholic University of Louven, Belgium.
Written before the Advent of CGST’s 40th Anniversary

Stepping into the 40th year (1975-2015), we give thanks to the Lord, for His faithfulness that has been exhibited in our experiences.

The Graduate School student population went up to 634 this year. MDiv graduates of the class of 2015 reached 49, a record high. We now have more than 90 faculty and staff. When Mrs Berea Choi retired last July, more than 100 students and alumni joined together to farewell her, a perfect finale for her 30 years of teaching counselling studies at CGST since 1984. This summer, Rev Dr Wallace Louie, Dr Wal Yee Ng and Rev Dr Joseph Kok will all be retiring. May the Lord bless them and grant them extra grace and strength as they turn a new page of their life journey.

We said goodbye to Mrs Ruby Wong, our Director of Administration, at the end of June. Ruby joined the CGST community in 1988 with her husband Dr Kasper Wong, who joined the faculty team after finishing his studies in Belgium. She was invited to become CGST staff in 1995 to take charge of the campus redevelopment project, at the same time shouldering responsibilities on administration and human resources. She had worked closely with three Presidents of CGST over all these years, building up a reliable infrastructure and foundation for the School’s long-term development.

I would also like to pay tribute to Dr Michael Chiu, Chairman of the Board. Having joined the Board of Directors since 1995, Dr Chiu had been elected Vice-Chairman for 5 years and Chairman for 8 years. He also led the Board through two presidential appointments for the School. After the annual general meeting on June 27 this year, he stepped down as Chairman and member of the Board. We would like to express our gratitude to him for his commitment to theological education and for leaving us with a tall example of a servant-leader.

Our budget has been increased annually from HK$35 million to HK$50 million during the past five years. By God’s great mercy, we experienced His timely provision. Donations contribute to more than half of our annual income. Given that we will not anticipate a significant increase in student intake, looking forward we will focus on expanding and sustaining our donor base. Our Development Team has been inviting more local brothers and sisters to make monthly recurring giving. The team also pro-actively seeks our partnership churches to support us regularly. We hope that all these endeavors will help to bring down the less predictable donations to a level below 40%.

Last year, Hong Kong experienced the “umbrella movement”, which has prompted deep reorientation in society, both inside and outside the church community. Rev Dr Carver Yu and Dr Kong Fhee Seng jointly invited pastors and church leaders of different political stands to meet at CGST for a constructive dialogue, recognizing one another’s difference with mutual respect and preserve our unity. We also value the sincerity and openness of the Student Union members themselves when they responded to the calls and requests of various groups, showing their willingness to listen to different voices while encouraging students to formulate their own thoughts and judgment.

CGST has strived to serve the need of theological education in Mainland China for twenty years. We now have more than 330 students and alumni from across China, five of them enrolled in our PhD programs. Early this year, a delegation of seminary representatives from the Mainland visited us. We had a fruitful exchange and sharing.

The 40th anniversary thanksgiving service in Vancouver, Canada in May was our first in a series of four. The book ‘Moulded by His Word: Faculty Seminars Celebrating CGST’s 40th Anniversary’ has been published in both Traditional and Simplified Chinese versions. “Carrying on our mission with a double portion of the Spirit” is our earnest prayer. May the Lord hear our prayer.
The Joy of Learning

Chui Wai Hung
TEE Student

Having served in the church for many years, I started studying in the Certificate Program of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in the autumn of 2011, hoping that studying theology would strengthen my service and enrich my spiritual life.

Looking back, I had an enjoyable time of learning at CGST in the past three years. Situated at a convenient location, the study environment was very good. More important, teachers were rigorous in equipping us, and there was so much I can learn from them. Homework assignment was appropriate and fit the learning. "Church and Ministry" was the first subject that I took. Its homework requirement should be the toughest among others: I was required to read two books, submit two essays on reflection and sharing of my ministry experience, and do a book report. I was glad that I managed to have finished all assignments properly, I felt more at ease to handle other subjects' exams and engagements thereafter.

TEE courses encourage thinking and discussion. Teachers often ask us to discuss in groups and share in class to encourage interaction among students and with teachers. In terms of assignments, students are required to submit an essay of 1200 to 1500 words in most subjects, motivating us to reflect on the theories that we learnt in class, and comparing what we learnt with the actual experience of our faith and of our ministry. We do not need to submit a lengthy essay, it is just a good way for us to reflect and ponder on the subject matter, and allowing teachers and students to dialogue. I have been thinking: it might not be a difficult job for a student to write a 1200-words essay, but it is definitely not an easy task for teachers to mark 30-100 such essays.

The subject “Introduction to Worship” that I studied in Spring 2013 was a fruitful one. I remember by that time I was in charge of the pastoral ministry of my church, responsible for worship, Sunday school and Bible reading. I used to have less involvement in pastoral ministry. Thanks to the Lord, He gave me the opportunity to serve together with a group of devoted brothers and sisters, and pastors. When I knew that this subject was offered, I enrolled at once, hoping that I would gain better understanding about church worship and ministry. I had a rewarding time. The assignment allowed me to discuss and understand in depth with my pastors and brothers and sisters on topics related to worship, deepening my knowledge and confidence in worship ministry.

The benefits of studying subjects on theological studies include enrichment of my spiritual knowledge and appetite. Teacher’s knowledge and sharing in class helped me to gain basic understanding in various areas, even if I found it difficult and was less interested in some areas. Studying theological subjects also challenged my reading interest and habit, as well as my time management, which had always been my weakness. Lastly, spiritual life and spiritual knowledge are intertwined, I found that augmenting my knowledge with theological studies can prompt my spiritual life as well. I am more ready to reflect, re-orient and breakthrough. These are all valuable experiences that I have received from the Theological Education by Extension studies.
We are pleased to have our Faculty-in-Preparation candidate Dr Bernard Wong (MDiv 2005) completed his PhD study in Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. He joined us as Assistant Professor of Theological Studies in August.

Associate Dean Dr Jean Lee was promoted to Associate Professor of Theological Studies beginning August.

Dr Raymond Au completed his appointment as the School’s Chaplain in July. Beginning August, Rev Timothy Au was appointed as the Chaplain.

Rev Dr Kin Yip Louie was on leave for research writing from August 2016 to January 2016.

Congratulations

President Emeritus Rev Dr Calvin Yu was recognized for his lifelong ministry by being awarded at the 11th Christian Soldiers Award organized by Hong Kong Association of Christian Organizations. The ceremony was held on June 1.

Staff News

Mr Kwok Kuen Leung visited Dallas and Houston of the US, Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto of Canada between May 2 and 22 to promote Word of Life Bible Study Ministry.

Mr Daniel Law (DipCS 2014), Associate Director of Development, has been promoted to Director of Development since April.

We are thankful to Mrs Ruby Wong, Director of Administration, who retired at the end of June.

Rev Dr Song Jun (MDiv 2010), Director of Chinese Culture Research Center, attended and presented a paper at the 9th International Symposium on the History of Christianity in Modern China organized by Hong Kong Baptist University and Alliance Bible Seminary between June 12 and 13. “Chinese Christianity after 1949” was the theme of the symposium.

We welcome Miss Christina Kan on board as our appointed Director of Administration effective from July.

As from August, Mrs Rebecca Lai was appointed Director of Education Initiatives of the President Office. Mr Raymond Fung was promoted to Registrar and Student Affairs Officer.

Theological Training Programs (Putonghua)

We welcomed over 120 mainland Chinese students to study at the two-week summer term between July 13 and 26. Five courses were offered: “A Doctrinal Theology (II)” by Rev Dr Jason Yeung; “Introduction to Apologetics” by Rev Dr Kin Yip Louie; “Pastoral Ministry and Church Polity” by Rev Dr Joseph Kok; “Pauline Letters” by Dr Esther Xue; and “The Gospel and Encountering different Religions” by Dr Wing Yan Chan Mok and Rev Dr Song Jun.

New School Year

129 new students enrolled in the 2015-2016 academic year, bringing our student body to a total of 826 students. Activities held prior to term starting were Orientation Day for new part-time students on the evening of August 28, and new full-time students on the morning of August 31, Orientation Camp for part-time students on August 28 and for full-time students from August 31 to September 3, and the 44th Anniversary Thanksgiving and Commencement Service on September 6, during which President Emeritus Calvin Yu addressed our community.

General Fund Financial Report

May to Jul., 2015

General Fund

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Outstanding mortgage loan as at Jul. 2015: US$ 1,370,461

Prayer Requests

1. We thank God for the graduation of our 38th class in June. Pray for our 119 graduates, that they may be faithful and obedient to God’s call, and that God will bless their ministries.

2. Pray for the 128 new students who have been accepted by our School. May God strengthen their hearts for service, and help them focus on preparing for their study starting in September.

3. Pray for our new school year. May God lead our School’s ministry through His grace and faithfulness, to serve believers local and overseas through theological education, and help to equip them to serve God. Pray for the faculty, that God will give them extra strength and wisdom in their teaching work.

Save trees

Thank you for subscribing to our print edition of English Bulletin. More trees are being torn down when we continue to print the quarterly Bulletin. We now would like to invite you to take part in protecting the environment, by subscribing to our electronic version.

You can simply visit https://www.cgst.edu/englishbulletin.org and fill in the information as requested. From next issue onwards, you will receive an email notification to view the electronic version of the English Bulletin. Thank you for making an effort to save the earth!

Response

☐ Please send me the CGST Chinese Bulletin
☐ Please send me the CGST Quarterly English Bulletin
☐ I would like to donate to CGST $ __________________ (specify currency)

Please use it for:

General Fund
☐ Graduate Programs
☐ Word of Life Ministry
☐ Ministry Support
☐ Others

Restricted Fund
☐ China Mainland Theological Education Development Fund
☐ Student Scholarships

Rev Dr [Name of Adm]

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Bank: ________________________________

Please make cheque payable to:
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1. For electronic donations, please send to Hong Kong and Geneva credit card donations.
2. For US credit card donation, please contact us by U.S. please go to http://www.cgsusa.org/donation.php

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The School will only collect information that is necessary for us to support our counseling and school administrative activities. The personal data being collected will not be used, traded or rented to any third parties through any means to any other parties.