NEWSLINK

Volume 1 Number 4 August 2018

Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the United States and Canada

Mailing addresses: Box 1393, Monterey Park, CA. 91754, USA. 10 Waterbridge Lane, Markham, Ontario L3R 8W9, CANADA

"PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH"

Ministers are a special breed. Motivated by their devotion to God, they sensed God's call to them to spend the rest of their lives serving Him in His church. In pursuit of that call, they put aside promising careers and personal ambitions to be equipped and to follow God's leading in ministry. They deserve our love and appreciation. Do something special for them this October — Pastor Appreciation Month!

><>><>><>><>><>><>><>><

APPRECIATE YOUR PASTOR!

Rev. Peter Leong

Several days ago, I came across a piece which described some interesting numbers about pastors:

97% of pastors felt betrayed and hurt by those in the congregation and friends they trusted most.

94% of the families of pastors felt that the pastorate is very stressful.

90% of pastors work 55-75 hour-work-weeks.

80% of pastors are on the verge of giving up.

70% of pastors experienced depression.

30 months is the average tenure of pastors!

As I reflected on those numbers, I asked myself, "Why? Why have we come to this? Have we as pastors lost it?"

The apostle Paul has this to say about the way the church should treat their ministers: "Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other." (I Thessalonians 5:12-13)

... Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work...

The word, "acknowledge" in the NIV in verse 12 (which is translated as "honor" or "recognize" in other versions) means "to know". This word is also used in I Corinthians 16:18, "For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition." Therefore, a loose translation of this verse could be, "Know such persons, and after you have recognized them, honor them appropriately."

The apostle Paul wants us to recognize the three responsibilities of Pastors:

1. **Those who work hard among you**. Consider their lives, their time, their gifts and abities, their painstaking care for our wellbeing. They have sacrificed much for us.

- 2. **Those who care for you**. They are not our employees nor are they servants that we pay to work for us. They are our spiritual leaders.
- 3. Those who admonish you. All shepherds/pastors love their sheep to heed their teachings. We can't be honoring them when we don't listen to them.

How do we honor and love our shepherds?

- 1. **Pray for them**. On the wall of the Prayer Room of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England were these words: "Please Pray for your Pastor". If their Pastor, Charles Spurgeon, regarded as the Prince of Preachers needed his congregation to pray for him, how much more we, for our pastors? The apostle Paul frequently asked the church to pray for him. (Ephesians 6:19-20).
- 2. Use tagible ways to show your love for them:
- A. Appreciate their ministry and say "Thank You" to them often. Send them "Thank You!" cards/notes.
- B. Have a meal together, eating out or cooking their favorite dish, to get to know them better.
- C. Visit them in their homes. You will never know how much your sharing will encourage your pastors as they see the fruits of their labor in you.
- D. Surprise them on their anniversaries with a party. These will do wonders for strengthening the bonds between pastors and their congregations. If financially able, the church may want to present a monetary gift or restaurant gift cards to the pastors on their special days.
- E. Produce a collage of picture slides and video clips and present it to them as a gift for the good times you share together.

I praise God that He not only saved me from my sins, but has equipped me and molded me to be one of His servants the last 50 years, serving in two churches - first in Hong Kong and then in Texas. By the grace of God, I have experienced the bountiful love of brothers and sisters then and even now, as we serve together in the Lord's work. My long tenures as a Pastor can be attributed in part to the love and affirmation those

two congregations have afforded me all those years!

Rev. Peter Leong is a retired Pastor. He had served as the Senior Pastor of Taipo Baptist Church HK and Southwest Chinese Baptist Church in Houston, TX. Currently he serves as an Advisor of the Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the US and Canada among his many other ministries.



MY CALL TO THE MINISTRY: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

by Pastor Larry Tong

I was born the youngest of five children to Christian parents in China but was raised in Hong Kong. My family left China during the war when I was an infant. Like many families in the fifties, our family was poor and we struggled to survive in Hong Kong.

My father was a nominal Christian, while my mother was a devoted Christian woman. Every week, rain or shine, she brought my siblings and me to a Southern Baptist church where she served as a deaconess. Not only did I grow up in the church, I grew up as a Baptist. Many thanks to my mother, who not only relentlessly prayed for us, but left a spiritual legacy that influenced all her children.

Growing up in church does not guarantee close relationships with God. Such was my experience. At eighteen, I left home in search of a better future, which led me to wander away from God. I attended a boarding school on Vancouver Island to complete high school before applying for colleges in the US.

... a life without God is a life chasing bubbles ...

My choice of college was financially driven - the best choice would be the least expensive school. I was accepted by Santa Barbara City College, with a \$200 per semester tuition (this was in the late 60's). With the I-20, I applied for a foreign student visa. Unfortunately, the immigration officer rejected my application because he felt that I had the intention to stay in the States after graduation. Feeling dejected, I wondered what I should do next. Not long after, I received another I-20 from San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California, a tuition-free city college even for foreign students. Not knowing what to expect, I took the I-20 and returned to the immigration office to try my "luck" again. The secretary couldn't find my file. (Thank God that nothing was computerized then!) Feeling embarrassed, she opened a new file for me, and a new immigration officer approved my application in less than ten minutes! Later I found out that my original application was among a stack of files on the desk of the first officer who had interviewed me. He had gone on vacation without turning over the files to the secretary. I was a "lucky" man. I thought I was "lucky" because I didn't realize that God was orchestrating the miraculous situation.

After four years of pharmacy school at Idaho State University, I graduated and moved back to California. I was able to pass the licensing board exam the same year. My life and career began to take shape the way I wanted. Throughout the six years in college, I had no time nor desire for God. I had worked hard to put myself through school, and I began to think all the achievements were self-attained. In my mind, God existed, but I had no need for Him. Six years after I left home, I had completely left God.

But God reminded me that He had never left me, and that He is sovereign. A year after settling down with my career, I married my girlfriend whom I met in college. A judge married us one fine day in May 1976. That very night, news came from Hong Kong that my father had passed away! Bewildered and disappointed at God, I asked Him why He allowed such a dreadful thing to happen to me. Shortly thereafter, my wife and I returned to church, seeking meaning and answers to life. But, throughout the process, God never answered my question why He took my father from me prematurely. I submitted that He doesn't have to, and came to realize that a life without God is a life chasing bubbles that would one day burst. Since then, I have experienced God in ways like never before, and assuredly, God has been everything to me the Bible describes Him to be for those who trust Him.

My wife and I, together with two other couples attended the "Chinese Missions '89" Conference in Washington D.C., where both of us responded to the altar call. I felt God calling me to be a missionary, but not knowing when or where. Little did I know that God had a different plan for me! Three years later, I decided to attend seminary, not to be a pastor (I didn't think of pastoring a church then as it would be too difficult), but to be a better Bible teacher, and at the same time, prepare to fulfill my calling as a missionary after I retired. I enrolled at Western Seminary as a part-time student, while working fulltime as a pharmacy manager. God surprised me once again when I graduated in 1997. He called me to pastor the church I love—the church we had started and built in 1980. I have learned to let God direct my destiny.

Transitioning from having a successful career in pharmacy to pastoring a church took some adjustments. It took me a few years to feel "comfortable" in my role. There were times I was unsure whether the decisions I made were beneficial to the church or to advance my ambition. However, I learned to often ask myself, "Am I kind and faithful?" I believe this is how Jesus would judge me one day, "Are you kind (to people) and faithful (to me)?" Giving up a successful career that I enjoyed was not easy, but it was worth it. The rewards are great, apart from the eternal rewards, rewards in the here and now as well. What great joy it is to see people accept Jesus as Savior, and believers proclaiming Jesus as Lord!

I love God's church. I love His flock entrusted to me to nourish and I love the Kingdom of God. After twenty years, it is time to pass the baton to the next generation of ministers. I have no regrets in the decision I made twenty years ago. I gave up something good in exchange for something greater and better. To God be the Glory!

Rev. Larry Tong was the Senior Pastor of the Southbay Chinese Baptist Church, San Jose, CA. He retired the end of 2017.



美加簡訊 NEWSLINK

Volume 1 Number 4 August 2018

Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the United States and Canada

Mailing addresses: Box 1393, Monterey Park, CA. 91754, USA. 10 Waterbridge Lane, Markham, Ontario L3R 8W9, CANADA

「傳道人讚譽月」

傳道人是一班,在他們對神的愛激勵下,感受到神的呼召,願意放下世上的職業及自己的志向,奉獻自己在神的家終身服侍。為了順服這呼召,他們用數年的時間裝備好自已,等候神的帶領進入工場。 他們值得我們的愛護,尊敬和欣賞。 每年十月份為「讚譽傳道人月」。今年十月份您和您教會可以為他們做一些驚喜的事,表達愛護和尊敬他們。

>>>>>>>>>>

讚譽您的牧師

梁德舜牧師

前些日子,看到一篇論及傳道人的實況,轉錄如下:

97%的牧師都被他們信任的會眾、朋友出賣·誣陷或傷害、 94%的牧師的家庭和家人感覺到牧養教會有很大的壓力、 90%的牧師每週工作約 55-75 個小時、

80%的牧師常感到氣餒、

78% 的牧師沒有親蜜的朋友、

70%的牧師忍受對抗抑鬱症、

牧師牧養教會平均牧齡卅個月!

看了有許多的感觸,我問自己,為什麼呢?我在想,為什麼有這種情況呢?是否我們作為牧師、傳道,不被愛護和尊重呢?

保羅在帖前 5:12-13 提及信徒當如何對待教牧同工:"弟兄們、 我們勸你們敬重那在你們中間勞苦的人、 就是在主裡面治理你們、勸戒你們的 ·又因他們所作的工、用愛心格外尊重他們 · 你們也要彼此和睦 。"

在 12 節中的「敬重」一詞,在原文有「認識」的意思。這個字在林前 16: 18 中也曾用過:「他們叫我和你們心裡都快活,這樣的人,你們務要敬重。」(NIV)將這一節譯為:「這樣的人,你們務要肯定他們」 "Such men deserve recognition",如此看來,這詞的意思是:認識某人,經過肯定之後,就要對他產生合宜的敬重。

保羅要我們敬重的,不是三種人,乃是三類責任:

1/ 在你們中間勞苦的人

他的生命、時間、才能、心血....都為了我們過捨己的生活,這樣愛我們的人,我們豈能不格外尊重他呢?

2/ 在主裹治理你們的人

他不是我們的工人、奴隸、也不是我們用錢請回來的傭人。他乃是我們屬靈的領導者,他在主裏有權 柄治理我們的。我們若不尊重在主裏治理我們的牧 者,我們怎樣尊敬主呢?

3/ 在主裹勸戒的人

凡是牧者都喜歡他的羊聽他的話、他的教導。我們若 違背他的教導去行,我們豈能說是尊重他呢?主耶 穌說:「人若愛我,就必須遵守我的道。」約 14:23

如何讚譽、愛護我們的牧者呢?

1/要恆常為牧者代禱

多年前,曾到過英國倫敦的會幕浸信教會參觀,司布真牧師曾是這教會的牧者,他曾被稱為講道王子。我特別參觀他講台下的祈禱室,在牆壁上,我看見一個句子,寫着:「Please Pray for Your Pastor」(請為你們的牧者禱告)。如果這位講道王子需要他的會眾為他禱告!今日身為牧者的神僕,豈不更要各位好好地為我們的牧者禱告嗎?

保羅在事奉的時候,恆常請教會的弟兄姊妹為他代 禱,使他有膽量、有口才,讓神的道得以自由傳開, 神的名得到榮耀。正如弗 6: 19-20 所說其實,保羅是 一個膽量充足、能言善辯的人,他仍覺得需要別人的 代禱,那我們豈不是更加需要為我們的牧者禱告 嗎?

在這些年日中, 常有認識我的弟兄姊妹,經常對我說:「梁牧師,我每天都為你在神面前代禱。」我聽後十分感動, 我的心就充滿力量和被愛的感覺。

2/ 在行動上表達對牧者的愛護

2.1 欣賞他們的事奉多說「謝謝」送上感謝卡,尤其是從中表達自己,在信仰上的成長。有一個年輕人寫給我一封謝函說:「謝謝你花時間陪伴我,讓我認識許多新朋友,找到歸屬感。感謝有像你一樣的人,時常主動關心我」。

2.2 共進餐點。邀請你的牧師夫婦一起共餐,甚至親自為他預備他們喜歡的餐點。促進相互瞭解 表達感謝。

2.3 找機會去他們的家探訪他們,分享生命見證、彼此分享喜樂分擔憂傷、相互堅固信心,這會讓牧師 感到其服事充滿意義和動力。 2.4 在牧者的生日、就職日或結婚周年,為他舉行一個「驚喜」的茶會,促進會眾/牧者的情誼。記得有一次應邀擔任國際會議的主題講道,教會一對夫婦專誠為我度身定製一套西裝,並告訴我,全教會為你禱告和在後方支援我的事奉,這是何等窩心的關懷哦!若在經濟上許可,給牧師節日獎金或餐廳禮券等,也都是很實質的鼓勵和表達感謝的方式。

2.5 製作活動照片或影片集送給牧師, 這是非常好的留念與感謝。

感謝我的主,拯救我、裝備我、陶造我,讓我在過去 五十年來,分別在香港和德州共牧養兩間教會,承 蒙弟兄姊妹們的厚愛,同心協力拓展主工,在弟兄 姊妹的愛護下,現在還繼續為主擺上, 是主的恩典!

梁德舜牧師是一位退休牧師。 他曾在香港大埔 浸信會和德州休斯頓西南華人浸信會擔任主任 牧師。 目前,他在其他許多事舉當中擔任美加 華人浸信會聯會顧問。

><>><>><>><>><>><>><>><>><>><

向問天,任我行 (中集)* 左達明牧師

武俠小說迷,必然知道向問天,任我行是金庸小說中,"笑傲江湖"的經典人物。他倆的名字,讓我想起信徒在世的生活態度,也許是我們生活的寫照,亦是我蒙召的經歷。

很多人都希望掌握生命的方向,而信徒希望知道上帝的旨意。可惜我們很多時候都不知道,因為我們沒有問,問也不知道,因為沒有認真問,只不過是問問而已。我相信神希望我們問,更希望我們知道,更更希望我們承擔,正如以賽亞所說,"我在這裡,請差遣我!"

二十多年前,就決定移居美國,與妻的家人相聚,一 盡孝道,亦是聖經的教訓。以往在金融行業工作,故 打算來美的首數年,攻讀工商管理碩士(MBA)。讀 MBA 是策略上的決定,一可在攻讀時,陪伴至親, 二可在完成後,更上一層樓。及後神大施慈愛, 賜下管教 '雷霆一擊 '導我走回正路 '決定從新做人 ' 事奉上帝。悔悟後,決定棄商從醫,選的是中醫,也 是策略,因九十年代中醫掘起,亦是我的興趣。用醫 生的位置傳福音,更具成效,醫心醫身,一舉兩得。 故朝此方向進發,先在香港預備一年, 然後到三藩 市攻讀,完成中醫學位。在一九九九年前往三藩市, 處理入學事情;因著朋帶關係·宴請中醫院的教授。 正所謂朝中有人好辦事,希望順利入讀。 就在停車 場等候的時候,與神一席話。放棄 MBA 是真的,棄 商從醫也是真,福音心志亦沒忘,卻全是策略。人所 謀!神回我一句,感召一下 "攻讀神學!"當然沒 有選擇,沒得選擇,亦不選擇,因為最好選擇,就在 神。二話不說,轉頭與內人說一句,齊齊讀神學。

神的一句,就是一句,只是一句,絕不含糊:"攻讀神學"。順服前行。本打算在香港進修神學,以為理所當然,因為言語,文化背景至為配合,更以為比入讀 MBA,或中醫更為暢順,但卻處處碰壁,因為神只有一句:"攻讀神學",卻沒有給我另一句:"牧養教會"。當然事情就不好辦了,因為神學院以為浪費資源。故打消了在香港修讀神學的念頭。還記起年青時,對蒙召的心態,就是:"我在這裡,請差遣佢,不要找我!"因著高薪厚職,策略上認為我是養"家"的人一可支持教會,二可優哉游哉,一舉兩得。這也可能是很多信徒的心態。但神就是神,出人意外,幽默非常,祂要找我!

本地不成,唯有別井,遠走美國,選址加州。從南到北,一路訪尋,先到 Talbot,後到 Fuller,再到 San Anselmo Presbyterian,路經 Pacific Lutheran,最後落腳金門浸信會神學院。後與教授共話,毫不忌諱,蒙召經歷,暢談完畢,授回句:神學畢業,選擇甚多,宣教教育,機構出版,比比皆是,牧養教會,絕非唯一。

選定金門神學院,與妻同心同時同攻讀,可謂共渡時" 艱",潛修聖經,如魚得水,快樂非常。其間選讀課程有 三,蒙神賜給兒女也有三, 同學來自五湖四海, 交流切 磋,好的壞的,無所不談,獲益良多,時光荏苒,一 "浸 "六載,終於"浸"完,原本打算回歸故土,重操故業, 但愛兒有病,滯留美國。神有旨意,另有安排。暫不詳述。

...放棄 MBA 是真的,棄商從醫也是真,福音心志 亦沒忘,卻全是策略...神回我一句"攻讀神學!"

在美攻讀其間,教會生活,並非坦途,只因欠奉,黃金一句: "牧養教會",至使教會,長執牧者,不以為然,多有意見。重則信仰偏差,神學有誤,甚或有要前往神學院理論收生規範,輕則詬病浪費資源。凡此種種,險些不能畢業,當年亦有牧者,體諒支持,鼓勵有加,唯有勇往直前!

也曾掙扎,要否改變,投人所好。從小學習,教會長大,參與教會,多有事奉,經歷人事,二十餘載,深明教會文化,再加商場歷煉,明白人心種種,所謂大勢所趨。雖然有時百詞莫辯,卻心裡明白,神仍是神。只是一句,其他暫不奉告。唯有等待再等待。

等待是恩典,恩典讓你再等待。堅定心志,跟隨在後,磨練心志,神蹟處處。只有感恩,還是感恩。到了時候,神就顯明,終於明白,向問天時,我願意,任我行時,跟主行!

附:為何是中集,因上集是"任我行時,要問天"。下集是"向問天時,跟主行"。

左達明牧師現任加州三藩市十九街華人浸信會 主任牧師