

From the Pastor's Desk

December 26/27, 2020

Rev. Dr. Simon Lee

From 2020 "Launch out into the Deep" to 2021 "Crown Him with Many Crowns"

Dear brothers and sisters of RCAC,

Farewell to 2020

2020 is a year to which we are all happy to say good-bye. Need I recount the pain and suffering from the pandemic. The lockdown has affected everyone in the Province since the middle of March. With the number of confirmed cases of positive test of COVID-19 infections at the end of the year still in the hundreds and the death toll is mounting every day, we are all filled with anxiety and for many, despair.

As a Church we have suspended all our worships and other activities held within our Church building and have move all of them online. Our Return-to-Church (RTC) guidelines has followed very closely the orders of our provincial Public Health doctors. After nearly a year of lockdown, we all long for the day when we can all return to worship and fellowship within our Church

When we began the year of 2020, we wanted to use the theme of "Launch out into the Deep" to encourage RCAC to leave our comfort zone and reach out into the community to share the gospel. Little did we know that we will be caught in the sea of Coronavirus So we quickly switched into the theme of "Jesus calms the storms of our lives" to seek to weather the storm. We then learned to "lament" using the "Lamentations of Jeremiah," and were comforted with the teaching of God's faithfulness amidst calamities and devastations. Then we went back to the original plan of studying the history of the early Kings of Israel. In the fall we wrapped up the year with the positive messages of Paul to the Philippians and learned to rejoice amid tension and adversities. We sincerely hope that we have been able to find this joy of living in Christ and serving Him. Christmas this year has come and gone before we even notice it, because it will be remembered as a Christmas like no other. But it is my hope and prayer that it has been a most special Christmas where Christ was not crowded out by any man-made trappings, that we finally see Christ clearly as the One born to be our Saviour and Lord.

Welcome 2021

I have never felt so filled with anticipation and hope for the dawn of a new year than this year. Needless to say, we all without exception hope that the new year will bring new life, new joy and new hope. First and foremost, we are all waiting to be vaccinated so we can build immunity against the Coronavirus that has brought so much destruction and devastation to so many people around the world. We hope this will turn things around so that the economy and the livelihood of people around the world can return to some form of "normalcy" with a new vibrancy that will reenergize our communities in enabling us to live with renewed joy and hope for a better future. Even though it will take months before everyone who wants to be vaccinated will get his or her shot, perhaps way into the summer or even the fall. nevertheless, we are finally seeing the light at the end of the long tunnel.

As a church we look forward to returning to our church building to resume regular worships and other activities within the community, including fellowship gatherings, Sunday school and children ministries.

Will that begin in the summer or the fall? We do not know. We need to wait patiently and return cautiously so that we can ensure that we are all safe. May we learn to wait before the Lord with anticipation and with patience at the same time.

In the first quarter of 2021, as scheduled in 2020, we will resume in our examination of the history of Israel and Judah in the book of the Kings. As I prepared the upcoming series, I was struck by the fact that the chosen people of God were constantly in a vicious cycle of enjoying the blessings of God but started to do evil in the sight of the Lord, and sometimes after being warned and judged by the Lord, would return to the Lord and do that which is right in the sight of the Lord. The fact of the matter is their relationship with God was heavily dependent on whether they had a good king or a bad king. After the kingdom was divided into Judah in the south and Israel in the north, there were all bad kings in Israel, and only a handful of good kings in Judah. We shall see highlights of this messy history and trace it all the way to the end of Israel as the result of the Assyrian captivity, and eventually to the end of Israel with the Babylonian captivity. We are going to study in more details the lives of Hezekiah and Josiah (as examples of good kings). I have entitled this series as "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," and we hope that we can learn from both the success and failure of these kings.

However, in 2021, we hope to stay positive. Having looked at all these mostly bad kings of Israel and Judah, for the rest of the year we are going to turn our eyes to Jesus the Messianic King (in two separate quarters, Spring and Fall), and also the Royal Psalms in the summer. The idea and purpose is summarised in the theme of the year which is "Crown Him with Many Crowns."

The reason for this theme should be obvious. Amidst all the calamities and desperations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated the ecological-socio-economic-political crises that we are experiencing, I sincerely hope to remind all of us that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, Lord and King. Herein lies our ultimate hope. So, let's us worship Him and proclaim His majesty to all the earth.

Indeed, we have just celebrated the birth of Christ the King, but His kingdom is not of this earth, it is heavenly and spiritual. Just as we have learned in Philippians, Jesus came to take on the form of a man, a servant, and was obedient to God the Father to the point of death, even the death on the cross. "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phi. 2:8-11)

Have a blessed new year!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Simon You Chuen Lee

教牧心聲： 李耀全牧師，
2020年12月26/27日

從 2020 年”開到水深之處” 到 2021 年”擁戴基督為王”

親愛的列宣家弟兄姊妹：

告別 2020 年

2020年不堪回首，是我們所有人都希望告別的一年。我毋須再敘述有關病毒大流行所帶來的痛苦與折磨，因自3月中旬以來，封鎖限令已影響及本省所有的人。直至年底，確診的感染病毒呈陽性的數百病例仍在激增，死亡人數每天也在增加，我們都充滿了焦慮，甚至許多人已感到絕望。

作為教會，我們暫停了在教堂建築物內舉行的所有敬拜活動和聚會，並將所有這些活動移師至網上舉行。我們按照的本省公共衛生醫官的命令，非常嚴格地遵循“重返教會指南”（RTC）。在封鎖了將近一年之後，我們極渴望可以回到教堂內進行崇拜和團契的一天。

自2020年開始時，我們盼望以“開到水深之處”為主題，以鼓勵列宣肢體離開我們的安舒區，並伸展至向社區分享福音。可是我們無法預料會被冠狀病毒浪潮所困，所以我們迅速轉至：“耶穌平靜我們生命中的風浪”的主題，以度過難關。其後，我們學習從“耶利米哀歌”的“哀嘆”中，對神在災難和毀滅當中的信實教導得著安慰。然後我們回到原來的計劃去研讀以色列早期王國的歷史。在秋季，我們以保羅向腓立比人傳達的積極信息去總結這一年的學習系列，並在緊張和逆境中學到喜樂。我們誠摯地盼望所有人也能在基督裡找到生活和事奉的喜樂。今年的聖誕節來了，卻又在我們甚至未加注意中瞬息即逝，因為這是一個最特別的聖誕節。我盼望並禱告，基督沒有被任何人為的陷阱所摒棄，讓我們終能於清楚地看到基督是為我們而降生的救主和生命之主。

迎向 2021 年

送舊迎新，我對未來一年新的曙光從未感到如此充滿期待和希望。毋庸置疑，我們所有人也同樣希望新的一年會帶來新的生活，新的喜悅和新的祈盼。首先最重要的是，我們都在等待著接種疫苗，這樣我們就可以增強針對冠狀病毒的免疫力，這種冠狀病毒已經給世界上許多人帶來了巨大的破壞和損害。我們希望可以扭轉這局面，以能讓全世界的經濟和生計可重新注入活力並能回到某種形式的“常態”，以致能令我們的社區充滿活力，使我們能夠重拾快樂的生活，以迎接更好的未來希望。即使需要幾個月的時間才能使每個想要接種疫苗的人都可以接種疫苗，也許須延至夏季甚至秋季。儘管如此，我們終於在時間的長廊盡頭看到了曙光。

作為教會，我們期待著返回教堂，繼續進行實體敬拜生活以及參與其他的群體活動，包括團契聚會，主日學和兒童事工等。那將會是在夏季還是秋季開始恢復進行？我們實在不曉得。我們需要耐心等待並謹慎地進行重返教會，以確保所有人都安全。願我們能學到，在存著充滿期待的心在主前等候的同時能，存著忍耐。

正如2020年的計劃一樣，在2021年度的第一季，我們將會恢復從列王記中對以色列和猶大歷史的研讀。當我準備未來的研讀系列時，令我震驚的是，神的選民竟然一直處於享受神的祝福並同

時落在行神眼中看為惡事之惡性循環之中，但在受到神的警告和審判之後，他們回轉歸主，行主眼中看為善的事。事實上，他們與神的關係，在很大程度上是取決於他們是否有好的君王還是壞的君王。在王國分裂為南部的猶大和北部以色列之後，以色列的君主全都是壞王，而在猶大方面則偶有好王。我們於可看到這混亂歷史的亮光，這可一直追溯至以色列被亞述人俘虜並猶大終被巴比倫俘虜的窮途末路。我們將更深入地地研讀希西家和約西亞的生平（作為好王的例子）。我把這個系列的標題定為“從君王的好歹和醜惡中學習”，我們希望可以從這些國王的成功和失敗中汲取教訓。

無論如何，我們希望在 2021 年中保持樂觀。在讀完了所有這些以色列和猶大最壞的君王之後，本年度接下來的是分別於春季和秋季，將我們的目光轉向彌賽亞君王耶穌，夏季則研讀君王詩篇(彌賽亞君王詩篇)。本年的主題是：“擁戴基督為王”。

擬定這主題的原因應該很明顯可見。由於冠狀病毒大流行帶來的所有災難和絕望，加劇了我們正在所經歷的生態、社會、經濟、政治危機。我誠懇地提醒各位：耶穌基督是我們的救主，我們的主和君王，祂是我們終極的盼望。因此，讓我們敬拜祂，並向全地宣揚祂的威榮。

確實，我們剛慶祝君王基督的降生，但祂的國度不屬於這世上，而是屬天和屬靈的。就像我們在腓立比書中所學到的一樣，耶穌成了血肉之軀，取了一個奴僕的形象，並且順服父神至死，而且死十字架上。“因此，神把祂升為至高，並賜給他超過萬名之上的名，使天上、地上，和地底下的一切，因著耶穌的，都要屈膝，並且口裡承認耶穌基督為主，使榮耀歸給父神。”（腓 2：8-11）

願您新年蒙福！

主僕，

李耀全牧師