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# RHCCC Special Needs Ministry

## **Purpose:**

To welcome families with special needs children to join our church and to share the joy of living a life of purpose in the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Mission:**

1. To help children and youth with special needs to reach their full potential in knowing and experiencing God and in fellowship with their teachers, caregivers and other people in our church.
2. To support these families when they face life challenges in the upbringing of their children by having a close personal relationship with God.
3. To foster a loving environment in our church by increasing the awareness of people with special needs and by providing ministry opportunities for brothers and sisters in Christ to show acceptance and care to these families.

## **Ministries:**

1. Programs and services for Children and Youth with special needs:
  - i. Regular Children's Church / Youth Worship with one-on-one support  
*Sundays, 9:30 - 10:45 am*
  - ii. Special Sunday School with curriculum and activities based on their level of understanding and needs  
*Sundays, 11:15 am - 12:30 pm*
  - iii. Activities concurrent to Parent Support Group meetings
2. Parent Support Group  
*every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 2:00 to 4:00 pm*
  - to provide spiritual nourishment
  - to allow parents to connect and build relationship with other families going through similar challenges
  - sharing of resources
3. Support Groups for Siblings

## Count the Blessings!

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Pastor Irene Cheung

Around 7 years ago, I noticed a few boys in church with strange behavior. They liked to hide underneath the tables. Occasionally when they came near the other children, they would scare them off. It was then when the Lord opened my eyes to see His infinite amazing love for some special families.

**For he has not despised or disdained  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.  
Psalms 22:24**



Let me share about how God answers our prayers and leads us on in the past few years:

- Pray for courage and wisdom to care for those children with special needs?

**God's answer:**

Provision of 3 sisters to start a special Sunday class in September 1998 for a few boys with Down syndrome.

- Having been in the special class for around 6 months with the teachers, these boys started to accept us as their friends, and were comfortable coming to church. We asked God how we could include them in regular classes so that they would not be "isolated", and that our other children would learn to be friends with those who were different from them.

**God's answer:**

Provision of more caregivers so that we could arrange for these children to join regular classes with one-on-one support in April 1999. With every new child God brought to RHCCC, He rarely delays in providing a caregiver.

- By having their children being cared for, parents were able to have a peaceful time to worship God on Sundays. What else could be done to have their burden shared by the body of Christ? We started to pray for the possibility of forming a support group for these parents in May 2000.

## **God's answer:**

A brother, whose son has special needs, had changed from a job that required a lot of traveling to another one based in Toronto. He joyfully agreed to be the Coordinator of the long-awaited Parent Support Group that met for the first time on October 20, 2001. There were a total of 8 families.

- God brought more children with special needs to our church and the Parent Support Group grew to include 17 families by mid-2002. We prayed for God's provision of more helpers to take care of the children while their parents were meeting.

## **God's answer:**

Starting from early 2002, brothers and sisters from Paul and Peter Fellowships take turn to look after the children every third Saturday afternoon of each month. They continue their commitment faithfully till now. A few sisters, who are Music Therapist or Art Therapist, also volunteered to lead the children in music and art activities for a few times.

- The demands in supporting these families were rising. We asked God how to proceed further?

## **God's answer:**

4 families agreed to form a Core Group on November 22, 2002. They would set direction for the development of the Parent Support Group and plan for the monthly programs. One more family was added to the Core Group in August 2003 and two more in early 2005, making a total of 7 families. Starting from January 2005, they even handle the arrangement of childcare helpers with Paul and Peter Fellowships.

- With friendship being developed, network being established in sharing resources, and troubled hearts being lifted up by words of encouragement from each other, the foundation of fellowship in the Lord was strengthened. What else then could be the bridge to connect the members to a close personal relationship with God, the One who is able to lead them on to face life challenges?

**God's answer:**

Those families that did not belong to a fellowship formed a small group to join the 40 Days of Purpose campaign towards the end of 2002. On completion of the 6 Bible studies, this group continues to meet as a LTG (Life Transformation Group) in January 2003. Praise the Lord that one member accepted Christ on August 6, 2003. Within 2004, 6 brothers and sisters from the Parent Support Group were baptized.

- When the children joined the Children Sunday School summer program in the previous years, they were very nervous with the new format. What could we do to maintain a routine for them this coming summer? With the new year term in September approaching, it would not be safe for the older ones to travel to the Bayview School to join the Junior High Sunday School.

**God's answer:**

A team of teachers and caregivers were recruited to start a special Sunday class as from July 2003 during noon service. The curriculum and format were designed at the children's level of understanding. For those parents who join Morning service and prefer to have their child join regular Children and Youth Worship, their child will be cared for by one caregiver. We have over 20 dedicated teachers or caregivers serving with us on Sundays.

- Some of the siblings of these special needs children might be ignored as their parents may have paid more attention to the other child with special needs. How can we offer them support? We started praying for them through our daily email prayer network in August 2002.

**God's answer:**

We invited a few siblings to join a small group, which is a follow up support group for children from divorced or bereaved families after completion of the S.P.R.I.N.G (Single Parent-&-Kids Renewed IN God) program in 2004. With the help of the Group Leaders, children support each other to deal with losses in life and are learning to find new hope in God.

- With over 8 children and youth with special needs in a class, it can be fairly challenging when they are not cooperating. Lord, how can we help our coworkers not to get frustrated and remain committed and excited to serve this group?

### **God's answer:**

We were introduced to one non-profit organization specialized in providing services to people with disability. They are prepared to offer us a series of training.

- The Parent Support Group has grown to 23 families by early 2005. Apart from teachers and caregivers for the children, we also need non-parent members and LTG leaders to help the Parent Support Group. How can we get more people joining us to serve these families and create an environment of love and acceptance in our church?

### **God's answer:**

Some church members did give support, e.g. a small group from Enoch Fellowship invited the families to camping in June 2003. They served them food and other needs so that these families could enjoy their first ever camping. Paul Fellowship volunteered to do the set up, prepare food and look after the children in the 2004 Christmas celebration.

The Lord also put the idea of organizing a Ministry "Open House" to bring awareness of special needs ministry among the church congregation in May.

- While we have not done much to make the availability of our special needs ministry known to the community, it is clearly God's will for us to reach out to other unchurched families raising children with special needs. They should hear the gospel and accept Jesus as the Lord of their lives. What is God's plan for us next?

### **God's answer:**

God has been faithful in leading us to serve these families and since 1998 and has been providing all our needs abundantly. He has been opening doors and leading us all the way. As evidenced in the testimonies in this booklet, everyone involved in this ministry has been blessed to be a blessing. We can all testify God's goodness and greatness in our lives as we witness His turning curses into blessings.

There is no need to worry at all!

We can join these **S**pecial **P**arents  
to **E**xalt **C**hrist's **I**nfinite **A**mazing **L**ove.



## **Dr. Milton Wan (transcript)**

My younger daughter, Aurora, is 24 years old. She suffers from serious mental challenges. Her intelligence is equivalent to a two or three years old child. Besides, she suffers a number of physical illnesses. For instance, she would have seizure for no apparent cause. The most incomprehensible thing is that when she drinks plenty of water, her blood will get diluted and she will lose her consciousness.

While ordinary people take medication when they are sick, and the medication will be gradually drained away from the body, Aurora's body handles medication in an opposite way. The medication stays in her blood and would not be drained away. As a result, she will be intoxicated by the medication. It is a huge challenge to our family to bring Aurora up. Since we cannot give her any medication when she is sick, the only thing we can do is to pray to God for the healing. Having conducted numerous researches and studies on her, even the specialists from Sick Kids Hospital could not find out the cause and the cure for her.

Aurora is always under great stress mentally. Other than autism, she was diagnosed as hyperactive and emotional disorder. She hits people when she is approached. She pushes and throws things around, including food and drinks on the table. As a result, she cannot communicate with others, and let alone of socialization. The biggest pity of all is that she really likes to play with other kids. Unfortunately she would start hitting them when they come close to her. How could it be possible for anybody who would want to play with her? This makes her, my wife and myself very sad. I believe that it is very hard for my brothers and sisters in Christ to understand the challenges we face continuously on even the basic daily routines. It is a very difficult task for families to raise children with special needs. It would have been a blessing from God, if there were one morning when there was no spill of milk from the breakfast table. It would be beyond comprehension for an ordinary family to understand these challenges.

I do not mean to complain when I talk about all these. I look back for the past twenty years after Aurora was diagnosed when she was three. I have so many different experience, thoughts and feelings. Among them, I would like to share two things with you.

Firstly, I believe that a lot of parents with children with special needs would ask a religious question. If it is a blessing from God or a curse to have a child with special needs in a family? This is a realistic question. Honestly I do not want to simply say that it is a blessing. Because if I were asked to start my life all over again with choice would I want such a girl with special needs. I would say "no" and who wouldn't.



However having been through the last twenty years, I feel that it is not a curse but a "special blessing". How could it be? My older girl is very smart. She does well in school. This is a very extreme contrast in our family. Aurora cannot even hold a pencil or a pair of chopsticks steady. I have started to realize that the plan and the blueprint that God designed for each one of us, and the "success" each one of us achieves, is so different from the ones we, ordinary people, would think. We measure success by school report cards, by career and by wealth. However children like Aurora cannot go to school and they are considered "useless". Nonetheless God sees us from the perspective of the eternal horizon and His master plan. When God measures our "usefulness", He really finds no major deviation amongst us. It is because that no matter how well we do, we are so far from His glory and His wisdom anyways. Therefore the way we measure our intelligence humanly really means nothing to God.

On the other hand, God appreciates how thoroughly we live out His plan and how well we use unique opportunities that He gives us to bless others. Perhaps this concept is a bit abstract. Take the pawn and the rook in a chess game as examples. The rook seems very powerful and capable because it can move swiftly and far. On the other hand, the pawn seems slow and dull because it can only move one step at a time. However you know that the pawn is often the determinant of the winner or the loser of the game. God does look at the world as the entire chess game. He does not look at the rook or the pawn individually.

I believe that Aurora brings to our family a tremendous change in our spiritual life. I was told that there are brothers and sisters in Christ who love to listen to my sermons during Services as it helps them to grow spiritually. In fact it is Aurora who gives me tremendous ideas for my sermons because I have experienced a great deal when I bring her up. Without her, I am lack of the experience and I cannot give such messages. The part in the sermons that really touches hearts is not the knowledge, nor the doctoral degrees. What doctoral degrees can do is only for people to brag about themselves and to earn respect from others. People's life will only be influenced by the encouragement brought by the tearful success in the struggle and in the searching for the way out of the pain.

The source of my pain comes from Aurora. Without her, the pawn, I would have no such experience. This is God's grace to let me have Aurora and she is the reason for the good chess game that I have been playing. As such my entire life and my service to God have been blessed. From this perspective, the presence of Aurora is very valuable and a treasure to us. She is a real blessing and not at all a curse. I have learned a lesson here. Do not look at what she cannot do. Rather, it is important to look at the plan that God designed for her life and look at her through the things that God has done through her.

The second thing that I would like to share with you is my life in the Christian community. In the past sixteen years, I have lived in Canada. I have been to several churches. In these communities, the children with special needs have received plenty of encouragement and acceptance. I really appreciate the brothers and sisters who have offered their love to my family. Frankly speaking, Aurora is hardly loveable. Many people have approached her in the past and they got scared because she would suddenly hit people hard for absolutely no reason. However, I am touched by the love and acceptance shown to Aurora by brothers and sisters from different churches, including RHCCC.

There are some godly parents who would ask their children to play with Aurora. These poor innocent children would get hit by her and run to their parents crying. They would explain to their children that Aurora was sick and ask them to understand, to accept and to care for her. I am very touched and very thankful to them. Because they do not see this as a burden. Rather they feel that we are all parts of a body in Christ and we have the duty to help each other out whenever there is a need. As a pastor, I would like to emphasize that the weak ones in our church should always be the ones get care for and it is our responsibility, not our burden. This should be the rule of our church.



There have been a lot of brothers and sisters who have helped Aurora. Each one of them has been willing to join our family struggle and to care for her. There are a number of them from RHCCC and they have become our best friends. Now some of their children are in universities or are already doing well in their career. I treasure the memory of those who got hit by Aurora about 10 or more years ago but still stayed on as her friends and played with her. As for Aurora, it is unbelievable that she can also keep the memories of the old days by names when those friends played with her, such as "Rachael", "Ruth", "Terri", "Connie" ... As a matter of fact, children with special needs understand and appreciate those love them dearly and realize those despise them like trash. They are very sensitive to this and remember well the names of those loving ones. It seems that they are holding a mirror to reflect the true love and sincere care from people in the world. I believe that God has given great blessing to my family. Having lived in Toronto for the past twenty years and having been in various churches, I have met very loving brothers and sisters. I sincerely appreciate all of them. I also believe that if we can support these families with children with special needs, God knows and remembers our effort. The effect will be long-lasting.

## **Catherine & Lemuel Lo**

My son Sze Ka is now 18 years old and his diagnosis is PDD NOS (one kind of developmental disability). Under the normal circumstances, he is not difficult to be looked after. But when there are changes in his daily routine or the surroundings, he will not be able to control his behavior and emotions.

Thanks to our church Children's Ministry, especially to the team of teachers and caregivers for the special needs children, Sze Ka can feel the love, patience and acceptance from these dear brothers and sisters in the Lord. My wife and I are able to attend Sunday worship and our support group meetings while Sze Ka learns how to worship God according to his ability.

Recently, I have finished a training program and become one of the LTG group leaders. Through serving, I find myself having a closer relationship with God and that's a really exciting experience.



## **Elaine Lam**

We need to spread God's love and to Witness Him since He loves us so much. We have to embrace those children with special needs with extra love and care.



I am delighted to serve in this special ministry because I can express God's love through actions. This is a way to demonstrate "Blessed to be a Blessing". We need special inspiration in preparing the lessons for this group of children so that they may experience our love within a short period of two hours.

## Emma Wong

I have once heard a sharing from Ms. Bianca Yip on how she experienced God through her autistic child. It allowed her to realize that she could not have everything under her control but to rely on God. She was turned into a humble person, filled with joy and peace.

I joined the ministry for children with special needs through the invitation of my fellowship (Paul Fellowship). Through this service, I notice their pure heart as they do not know how to hide their emotions. In fact, I have to thank them as they have given me a chance to develop my patience and love.

In my daily routine, I can organize my own time freely. How about the parents of these special needs children? I really appreciate their unconditional sacrifice and the long time they put in caring for their children. As compared to the few hours I spent in looking after them, their parents have to be with them for their entire life. They have never complained. The parents themselves have experienced the unconditional love of God who never forsakes them; they also love their children the same way.

Finally, I would like to encourage the parents with special needs children or brother and sisters who are serving them with this Scripture, **“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58)**



## May & Brian Cheung

We have been married for seventeen years and have two sons. When our elder son was at the age of 5 to 7, he was having great difficulties behaving himself at school and home. Naturally, that causes a great deal of stress and tension within the family. We have experienced a hard time both from external pressures and internal conflicts.



Praise the Lord. We finally find strength, courage and hope to carry on when we accepted Christ as our Saviour and follow His teaching on a daily basis. Moreover, we learn and grow with the other families with special needs children through faith and sharing.

## **MY EXPERIENCE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN**

What comes to your mind when someone tells you that he has a child who is autistic or slow in learning? Can the child learn or make progress?

Recently, I was scheduled to substitute for three Sundays in the Special Needs class. There were 6 students attending the class in my first Sunday. As a matter of fact, several of them were quite hyper. I was a bit nervous and concerned. After I got home that day, I prayed for each one of them and also prayed that God would give me the courage to be with them. Then I completely forgot about the whole thing until the following Sunday.

I prayed before the worship, "Lord, please help these children not to be hyper, even if You allow it to happen, please just let one only to be like that?" The Lord did not answer exactly as I asked for. Four of them behaved more or less the same as last time. However, something was different this time. A child similar to my height, who looked unfriendly to me last Sunday, came to me with a smile! How sweet! I was at ease. The taller guy asked for my name and offered me a fish cookie during the snack time. Praise the Lord! He remembered me as a new helper. The energetic young boy ran around and stopped by me, gave me a hug for a few seconds and started his run again. I was thankful to the Lord! My fear was gone! I could feel that there is mutual acceptance between them and me. My anxieties got over me previously just because I did not understand their behavior.

In my third and fourth classes, I found that the two non-verbal children started to imitate the sound that the helpers were trying to say to them. One child even cared to pick up a chair that was pushed upside down by another child. It is a miracle to me because this child was always very absorbed in her own world that she would hardly be distracted by anything. Praise the Lord! There is hope in these kids! I am happy to see their progress, though it is such a small step to many people. In fact, I continue to help this class after the third week. This Special Needs class on every Sunday is arranged also for their parents to have a precious time to worship God without worrying about their children. Although most of us do not have special training in this area, through the love of God, and as we gather help from different sources (publications and help from professionals), I am certain that God will help train these kids because they are His children too.

Would you like to be part of this team to care for these special kids? In Him, our faith and hope will be developed and grow.

## Florence & Donald Wong

Florence and I thought that we had experienced the ultimate disappointment, heartaches, and uncertainties on discovering and raising a special child. But the blessings we received and knowing the renewed direction in our lives because of this special child has overshadowed them all.

Justin was born on May 31<sup>st</sup> 1995. As with any new parents, we were so proud and excited of entering into our new role. As with any new parents, we had dreams and hopes for our son. Those dreams and hopes came crashing down when Justin was diagnosed with Autism/PDD at the age of two and a half.



The news was difficult to accept for the first couple of years following the diagnoses. The dreams that we had were shattered and our life's goals were derailed. At first we did not know what to do except to acquire as much information as we can about this disorder. The more we read, the more we saw the uncertainties that lied ahead. But God is gracious. From hindsight, we see that God was with us all along. Our lives were part of His plan and our situation was part of His teaching.

After we were married in 1991, Florence and I attended the church that I grew up attending Sunday school and fellowship. When Justin was five years old, we heard through an old friend about RHCCC and the wonderful things that this church was doing. Without hesitation, we decided to pay a visit.

At that time through the leadership and guidance from Pastor Irene, and a group of co-workers, a support group was formed with 6 or 7 families. The unique bond central to the support group was the presence of a special child in our families.

Within the group, we immediately found solace and support in each other. With tears, we poured out our hearts and confide in each other. With sharing, we have learned many avenues for support. With gratefulness, we thank God that we have each other for support. With purpose, we came to understand our life's journey. With patience, we have learned to rely on God for guidance and strength. With thankfulness, we thank God and the caregivers who looked after our children while we had meetings or attended Sunday worship. With God's grace through our special children, many of the parents came to know Christ.

This year is our fifth anniversary. The group has come a long way and we have grown to over 20 families. Throughout the years, we gathered monthly to support each other concerning various issues, issues such as government funding, Board of Education support, various agency support, and emotional and spiritual support. We are comfortable within the group and are at ease letting Justin freely roam without fear of what other people might say because of his unique behaviour.

God has also taught us to enjoy and appreciate the smallest of things in life. Things that we would not typically notice, we now see as events worth celebrating for. Things that we would typically take for granted, we now count them as blessings. Events such as Justin's ability to draw a deformed circle when he was 6, or his ability to feed himself when he was 7, or the ability to pray whenever he has a canker sore and that he loves Jesus when he was 9. Milestones that a typical child would have reached three or four years in advance, our hearts are filled with joy when our son was able to painfully and clumsily reach as well.

God has also brought together a group of loving, caring, and amazingly patient caregivers to care for our children. During our SPECIAL (Special Parents Exalting Christ's Infinite Amazing Love) group support meetings, these brothers and sisters took care of our children. The time and energy these brothers and sisters have sacrificed, playing with them and communicating with them. Learning what makes the children happy, avoiding what makes them sad.

Also, every Sunday, another group of amazingly patient, loving, and caring Sunday school teachers show our children how much God loves them. They are very creative adjusting to the mood of the children and the current day circumstances. Through singspiration, bible story telling, bible memory verses, craft and prayer, the love of God and the salvation of God are taught to the children. Their kindness, good heartedness, and their good intentions to help the children learn have gained our utmost respect and uplifted us to see God's glory through them.

These God sent brothers and sisters have taught the children as if they were their own. Constantly asking and adjusting to improve the children's experience in Sunday school, experiencing the love of God.

As Justin grows older and more mature, he has gained a better ability to control his misbehaviour. His ability to communicate has also increased as well as his ability to reason. At times, it is still a daily struggle but with the struggles, comes daily blessings. There are many more things to discover about this disorder and no doubt there will be heartaches and uncertainties confronting us. But one thing we are certain is that our life's journey is in God's hands. As we march forward into life journey, we are constantly reminded that God is the source of our comfort, our strength, our love, and our hope.

## **TESTIMONY OF LOVE**

Brothers and sisters, I am Peter Sen. I am the father of two boys with 8 and 13 years of age. My elder son was diagnosed with severe Autism and moderate Developmental Delay while he was between 3 to 6 years old. He needs personal support 24 hours a day. My wife had to go out and try to find doctors and training for my elder son. My wife was therefore under tremendous amount of stress all the while. Five years ago, my wife caught cancer. However she recovered after having surgery, chemotherapy and other treatments.

Two years later and after talking to my wife, I took up a new job and I had to station in China by myself. However after going to China for a year and a half, cancer came back to my wife again. I had to give up my job and returned to Hong Kong to take care of my wife. Within two and a half months time she passed away. With the death of my wife, changes in my career and the immediate responsibility of taking care of the two kids, I was loaded with a heavy burden.

Thank GOD. I found a turning point in such a difficult situation. My wife was a Christian. During the time when she was very ill, she insisted to join the Sunday worship even she had to sit in a wheelchair and carried with an oxygen bottle. I had to accompany her to the church. I was given the chance to hear the gospel one more time and I reviewed my life. That prepared me to be saved in a later date and allowed me to live my life with much more clarity.

I experienced love from GOD in that incident. GOD loved my wife. She did not suffer much pain before she passed away quietly and peacefully. The brothers and sisters from church took care of my family as well. When I was still in China and my wife became seriously ill, the Reverend of my church and a brother who is a medical doctor accompanied my wife to the hospital. Afterwards some sisters came to visit my children at home everyday. They made sure that my children would not be lonely without a mother at home. There is also a mother who had a kid with autism. This mother went to the fish farm far away near the sea to catch fresh fish for preparing soup for my wife. All these love were initiated from the bottom of their heart and they deeply touched my heart.

After my wife passed away, I went to church on every Sunday as usual. The songs that they sang made me cry. The speeches that the Reverend made was just like talking to me. On one Sunday, the Reverend was talking about "Walking with GOD". The Bible verse used



was from **Micah 6: 8**. **“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.”** I suddenly realized that the difference between Christianity and other religions lies in “LOVE” or “Love mercy”. During the days when my wife was seriously ill, I witnessed GOD’s love to my family. Therefore I decided to believe in God and that allows me to have a better confidence to meet the future.

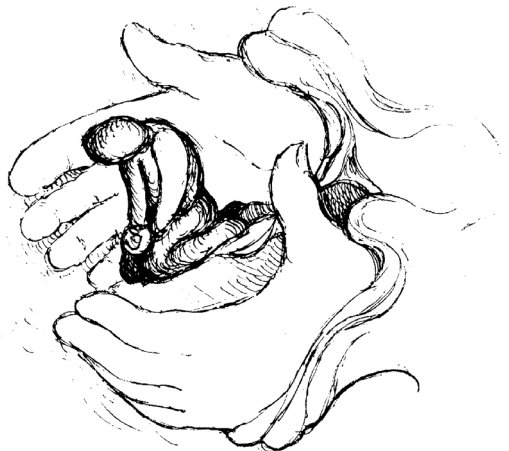
God was leading my way and God gave me encouragement. However I still worried about my elder son and my future career. In addition I heard so much about the importance of money. So I prayed to God and God responded to me in a bible verse.

### **Proverbs 21: 3-6**

**“To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin! The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty. A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare.”**

God wanted me to be just and down to earth. I should not have a proud heart and I have to plan carefully. Wealth is like clouds floating in the sky and we should not be greedy. The intelligence and ways of God are a lot higher than us. Therefore I admire God and His purposes.

I am now giving my full priority in taking care of my kids. With God I wish to use my knowledge to serve and love others. The original meaning of my name is to seek wealth. But now I wish my name could be interpreted as “Glory to God”.



**HOPE**



Sons are a heritage from our Lord. Naturally, parents have the responsibilities to teach and to care their sons. If your kids are nice and obedient, you will be very happy and satisfied. Otherwise, it will be a nightmare. To teach or to take care a special need child would be a real challenge in your life.

I have two kids. One is a girl 12 years old and the other boy is 7. My daughter, June, was diagnosed as global developmental delay when she was about 2 years old. She had language problem that she was unable to use her language to express herself. She was also hyperactive as she was unable to sit still and concentrate to a task for 3 minutes. She easily fell into temper tantrum and screaming when she was unable to express her feeling. I was a kind of hurry and efficient demanding person. Therefore my daughter was a real big challenge in my life.

When I was aware that I had a second child, I felt very helpless and worrying. I knew that I need double time and effort to take care my special need girl. My new baby would draw the most of my time and effort so that my daughter would be unintentionally ignored. Furthermore I was worrying that my new baby would also have special needs. My husband and I prayed to our Lord. After thorough thinking and discussion with my husband, I admitted that my new baby is the heritage and the reward from Lord, and there is His wonderful will behind it. After then I was very happy to receive my new born baby and his name was Tin Lok. Tin Lok is a Chinese name which means that God rewards us with joy everyday.

After my new baby was born, I mostly took care of Tin Lok and my daughter was unintentionally ignored. We were very sad for we could feel that our daughter was unhappy. During that time, she was always screaming, crying, tempering and even making mistakes deliberately to draw our attention. When her brother was one year old, she could start playing with her brother. She felt better then as she was not alone.

We stayed in Canada for a period of time, during this period, we experienced difficulties, disappointment, suffering and tears, but we also had happiness, hopefulness and joy. Whenever we faced a new problem (for example, complaint from school teacher or embarrassment in social life), we learned how to pray to our Lord, speaking out our problems and burden to Him. Strength filled our heart after praying. Then we had new hope to face a new day. In order to teach my

daughter effectively, I understand that I need to change myself into more patient and work hard without demanding the result. Generally speaking, you will get your reward according to your efforts. But for my daughter, I will be satisfied if my daughter shows a very little tiny progress upon my hard effort. Although the progress was slow, it is better than none. In fact, I was gradually changed during this period of time. I have learned how to effectively communicate to others' need and hope that this would be my daughter's learning model.

The social skills of a special needs child are particularly weak. Hence their social circle is small. They usually do not have close friend or a normal friend except their parents and those persons who work with them. They usually are lonely. In order to help them to extend their social circle, they are encouraged to participate in community activities, church activities and other social activities.

God has been with us and our family is full of His grace. God use my daughter to convert me into a person that has close relationship with Him. We have the same heart and value to teach our kids and tell them our experience. We would like to encourage the other parents who have similar situation to mutually support each other. We also hope that our kids can be used by God and be the kids that please our Heavenly Father.



## **Tania & Alan On**

We have been joining this support group for three years.

Let us review what Derek has learned during this period, as well as its impact on his development. When Derek was six years old, he had difficulties expressing himself verbally, so it was hard to understand his emotions. Similar to other autistic children, Derek could not concentrate and showed no interest to people or things around. We were very worried about his future. Praise the Lord – RHCCC established the Special Needs Support Group at this time. Since then, Derek is under the care and teaching of a group of loving and patient volunteers every Sunday. Gradually, he learns how to cope and communicate with other people. Whenever he is upset, he learns to replace his temper tantrum with prayers because he knows that God is with him. Now, Sunday is what Derek looks forward most among all the other weekdays.

## Edward Chu

### ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

Every Sunday, when I step into the Special Needs Children Class, I can experience God's love and God's miracle work on these children. These children are so lovely for God had made them so special. They sing off tune but it is the most beautiful voice in God's eye because they sing out loud from their heart to worship Him. They worship God just like how King David did:.

**“Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surprising greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.”** (Psalms 150:1-5)

These children play guitar and other instruments to worship God. When they are joyful, they will ask you to dance with them.

They also try very hard to control themselves to participate in the class, listen to Bible stories, responds to the questions, and some of them can even recite Bible verses. Hallelujah, praise the Lord! God's work to all these children is so wonderful!

These children do not just know each other by name; but they care for each other. When they know someone or the family member is sick, the teachers will lead them to pray; or they will ask us to pray for them. It is so amazing how they show God's love!

Teaching and helping in the special needs children class is both challenging and joyful. The challenges are when one child has problem controlling himself, it may turn the whole class into chaos. These challenges; however, give me opportunities to experience God's guidance in weathering the storm. The joy is when I see these children grow and change in God's grace. The joys are when I see them sitting still to sing, listening to Bible stories and reciting Bible verses.

No one knows what God plans for these children, but one thing I am sure is Jesus has a special place in His heart for those with special needs. Jesus reached out to lepers, the blind and those who were shunned by their neighbors.

In a similar way, we are invited to follow Jesus' footsteps and reach out to help those in need. Jesus tells us that whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do for Him. Let us strive to imitate Christ in our life today and to recognize that we are all God's children. Brothers and sisters, please join me to these challenges in the Special Needs Children Ministry. I am sure you will experience the most joy in your life.



### **Mei-Ling Lam**

**"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."**



### **Psalms 139: 14**

It has been a blessing to me working with children with special needs. I am amazed by their talents and potentialities. I am refreshed by their pure hearts, and it always gives me joy to see them growing and developing.

They may think, act or express themselves differently from most people, but same as most people who need help and support to face challenges in lives, they just need a little more help and support with an added touch of patience. Sometimes it may seem hard to communicate with them, but messages do get through. They may seem aloof, but they do show affection and their smiles warm my heart. Times come when human wisdom exhausts, then I remember that the grace of God abounds and I smile instead of frown.



### **Yee Yee**

As I serve in this ministry, it lets me experience the true meaning of love and patience. From these children and their parents, I could have a glimpse of God's love and power. I recall a testimony once shared by a parent - with a successful career and a smooth life, they became increasingly conceited. However, since the birth of their special need child, there has been a dramatic change in their life. They learn to be humble and submissive. They realize that God is the Lord of life that turns people around.

## Peggy Kam

I have two daughters (Mimi and Michelle) and a son (Milton). Their characters and development vary. My two daughters are very obedient and hardworking in their studies, so there is not much burden on me. When my son was an infant, it was easy to take care of him. However, when he turned 2 ½ years old, he often talked loudly without any eye contact with people, especially the strangers. When he was 7 years old, the doctor confirmed that he had “progressive” autism.

We have an “astronaut family” as my husband works on a ship. He could only be with us in Canada when he is off duty. It is very tough for me to look after three children all by myself. The church has given me a lot of help and offers consistent prayer for my family. A few years ago, Pastor Irene has set up a support group for families that have children with learning disabilities. It provides parenting information and resources for us to assist the development of our children. There are also pastoral teachings that give us the spiritual nourishment so that we may have the strength to face the challenge. We would never forsake or stop loving our children. There is also a group of Christians that look after our children so that the parents could enjoy worshipping God. These brothers and sisters put in their best effort, love and patience for accepting and serving these children.

Mimi is in university now. She only comes home twice every week. Michelle is in Grade 8. Even though she is also very busy with her school work, she is my good helper. She always helps Milton with his school work, reads him stories and plays with him. She really loves her brother and devotes a lot of her time to assist his growth. I always want to spend more time with Michelle but I am really too busy. So, I prayed and asked God to give her a companion. One day, Pastor Irene called me and told me about a mentoring program, in which there are big brothers or sisters that are willing to care for children from these special families. Michelle has joined this group. I give thanks to God for answering my prayer. This is a wonderful arrangement. She and her Big Sister have become good friends now. This sister calls her or takes her out for food and movies. They exchange



cards during special occasions. Sometimes they even arrange to meet each other after Sunday service. This is such a marvelous relationship. God's plan and perfect arrangement exceeds my expectation and wish.

My family has received lots of love and care from the church body. This is especially true when a sister in Christ always sends gifts to my children after her visits from Hong Kong. Every night when I put the two lovely and soft blankets from her onto my children, I could feel the warmth and sentiments. This loving relationship is so wonderful. She told me, **“We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19)**. I hope that my children may know how to appreciate and return the love. It is even more important that they know how to spread Christ's love to others.

When I have to attend any church activities, my two daughters take turn to look after their brother, so that I have the time to join the meeting. This allows me to experience the teaching from the Bible, **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8: 28)**

May glory, thanksgiving and praises be given to our Heavenly Father. God's grace is sufficient for us. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the church, pastors and brothers or sisters in Christ for their help and care. God's love is everlasting.



## Jaime Hui

Church is a family of God. Therefore, as God's children, it is our responsibility and blessing to contribute to the family. In serving others, it also provides an opportunity to train and practice our love and faith.



In this family of RHCCC, there are different positions and roles for us to serve each other, for example, the ministry for taking care of children with special needs. When I serve in this ministry, it allows me to realize that God has a different purpose and design in each one's life. These children are often absorbed in their own world. But when they see their parents, they go and hug them while the parents welcome them with a loving smile. What a beautiful picture. Jesus said, “It may not be possible for man, but in God, everything is possible”.

## **Cecily Gee**

My name is Cecily Gee. I joined RHCCC in December 1999. My husband settled in the new church quickly and comfortably. Very soon he started serving at Agape Youth Fellowship, while I was still contemplating what I should do. In my past experience, I always sang in the choir, served as a cell group leader and taught children's Sunday school. I would like to make a change in my ministry so I asked God what He would want me to do. After praying for almost a year, I didn't receive any answer from God. I thought I shouldn't waste any more time in waiting so I decided to go into my familiar ministry - teaching Sunday school.

Since I didn't know much about the RHCCC children's ministry, I decided to apply as an assistant teacher first. At the first teachers' orientation meeting, I was asked to be a caregiver of a 14 years old boy with Down Syndrome. To be honest, I had no previous experience or training on taking care of mentally challenged kids. "Well," I said to God, "perhaps this is how You answered my prayer by putting me into a new ministry."

My first year of serving was full of anxiety. As time goes by, and this is my fourth year in the special needs ministry, I have learnt so much and there are so many things that I have to be thankful for. Let me count my blessings and name them one by one as follows:

1. I thank God for humbling me in serving. As I mentioned before, I had no training whatsoever on special needs children. I always feel inadequate in doing my job but God still wants to use me. This is amazing. I constantly pray to God to give me love & patience to care for the children and wisdom to know their needs. I have to fully rely on God in serving in this ministry.
2. I thank God for letting me experience His grace and mercy because on the job I learn of His power every Sunday in the class. There are many situations during class that I don't know how to handle. But God's grace is always sufficient and His presence is evident to help me and other teachers through each Sunday without incident.
3. I thank God for Pastor Irene. Her capacity of love and care for all the children is exemplary. Every single child is special to Pastor Irene. She constantly thinks of ways to help the class run smoother and the children to attend the class in a better environment. Everything she does is for the benefits of the children. Her good memory and efficiency in getting what our class needs in a timely manner amazes me.



4. I have to say thank you to all the parents who entrust their precious children to our care every Sunday, knowing that we are not professional caregivers. Also, seeing their unconditional love for their children touches my heart deeply. I sometimes find myself exhausted to care for them even for such short period of time. I can't imagine the 24/7 job that these parents are doing every day.
5. I also want to thank all the other teachers in my class. I am not a patient person and I dare say I am the most impatient teacher in the class. Thank God for them who are extremely patient and loving in correcting and guiding our children during a situation. I especially adore and thank the male caregivers. It's poignant to see men who are so gentle and patient with children.
6. Last but not least, I must thank Matthew Leung, my first student who has given me a lot of encouragement and joy. I have to share with you how his progress encourages me. When I first took care of him in grade 5, he was always shy and withdrawn. It took great effort every Sunday to get him into the classroom. And he only sat by the door without even wanting to move one inch closer to the circle where other students were sitting. He didn't listen to any teaching or want to do any work. Every Sunday during lesson he just took time eating his snack and drawing pictures on pieces of paper. We tried to encourage other students to accept him so we asked them to say hello to Matthew when they passed by him. Matthew simply turned his face when his name was called.

In the beginning of grade 6, I decided to move his chair to the table with the other students on his first day of class. Surprisingly, he didn't reject. Things started to improve since then. Matthew seemed to be more comfortable in class. He adored the male Sunday teacher, laughed with the other students, raised hand with the others when asked a question, even lined up to recite a Bible verse.

When Matthew was placed in the special needs class two years ago, a miracle has happened. He is very happy and comfortable with the crowd. He behaves like a big brother to other students by always correcting their misbehaviors. He would first call their names and then said, "no hat in the class", "don't run around", or "don't make noise". And it's at this time that we discovered Matthew's talent in music. He plays the guitar so well



that he is now our designated musician during singspiration. He can play any songs we sing at any speed. Matthew loves being praised and encouraged. He is a joy in our class.

I mentioned Matthew because he is the first student assigned for me to take care of and I see God's wonderful work in him. Other students also encourage me, too. Raymond Sen is another example. When he first came to our class last January he could hardly talk. Now he can repeat simple words after us and carry out simple commands. His smile is so sweet that it melts my heart every time I look at him.

God has put such love in me for all these kids that I don't want to miss seeing their faces even for one week. I want to see their progress and grow with them. This is one reason why I never want to take a break though Pastor Irene always encourages us caregivers to do so. It is truly amazing watching the uniqueness in each of the children in this special needs class. I can only say like the Psalmist in Psalm 139: "Thank you God that we are all wonderfully and fearfully made." May God bless them and all those who have contact with them.



**Aline Chan**

My dear son:

I am not sure whether you will understand what I have to say but I sure hope that some day you will...

My boy, I never enjoyed "Mother's Day" before your sister arrived into this world because of my turmoil upbringing. Your vibrant sister brought me joy, and I thought it is such an easy task to be a mother.

There came you into our home almost five years ago. I would never forget the first look at your face in the hospital how you resemble your grandfather whom you also shared his demeanor and his smile. When I came to learn about your challenges three years ago, my first reaction was “you will never be able to understand how long and how deep our Lord’s love is...”

How wrong was I! In the past three years of walking the path along your side, you have taught me how to LOVE your father, your sister, and of course the most daunting task of loving you, my nonverbal son. My weakest link is learning how to express LOVE for those dear to me in an appropriate manner, and my Lord brought me to you in order that I humble myself to learn how to LOVE.

**“If I could speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not LOVE, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal...and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not LOVE, I am nothing.”**

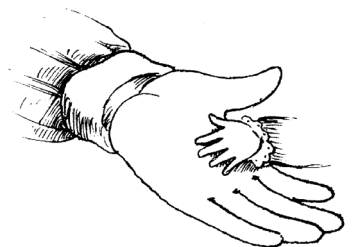
“Mother’s Day” is once again approaching, I thank God for having you in my life in teaching me the areas I need to grow on: **“patience, kindness, not to envy, not to boast, not to be rude, not to be self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs”**. Loving you my son has helped me to understand and trust in our Lord that true **LOVE “does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres...LOVE never fails.”**

My son, your grandfather had a wonderful personality that most of his families and friends enjoyed having him around. I wish the same for you. Your grandfather also came to know our Lord, and his year spent with us before he went with the Lord touched our lives. I also wish that whatever limitations you have will equip you to be bold in HIS name: **“For Your name’s sake. O Lord, preserve my life; in Your righteousness, bring me out of trouble. In Your unfailing LOVE, silence my enemies; destroy my foes, for I am Your servant.”**

Hope that some day; you will serve in HIS name because HIS LOVE compels you.

With His Amazing Love,

Ma Mi



## Stan & Elsa Yip

Four years ago, my wife and I took our son, Ernest, to RHCCC's summer retreat at McMaster University. I received a lot of insights from the event. The part that impressed me most was Dr. Milton Wan's sharing on his disabled daughter Aurora Wan. As a father of a special needs child myself, his story related well to my struggle and emotion. I could not hold back my tears. I realized that this church counselor could actually understand the hurt of parents, like me, as we share the same experience in life. This feeling could hardly be understood by other traditional parents.

As I recall, Dr. Wan used Chinese embroidery as a metaphor to illustrate parents of children with special needs. During our earthly existence, we may only realize the mess at the back of the embroidery, with tangles of different colorful threads all over the work. However, in the eternal plan of God, He is designing a beautiful pattern on the other side of the craftwork. For most people, having a child with special needs in the family seems to be a cursing. But within this short period of our Christian life, we realize that God has given me and my wife a different kind of blessing. If Ernest were a well-developed child, I think we would not have known God even by now.

I remember I had an opportunity to share with Dr. Wan and Renee in the cafeteria during the summer retreat. The encouragement and comforts they gave me are still fresh in my memory. The Scripture says, **“God who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4)**. It enables this group of parents to use their life experience to comfort and encourage other parents with similar needs.

I thank God for saving me from suicidal depression in 1999. With the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I received Christ in the patient room after listening to Dr. Philemon Choi's testimony on a tape. On Canada Day of 2000, my wife, Elsa, also accepted Christ in the marriage enrichment camp led by Pastor John Kwok and his wife, Lilian. God has provided me with a spiritual partner. With God's help, we could support each other during this life journey.

God has been blessing my family these past few years. He led me to join the church family of RHCCC. God must have realized the need of these parents and their desire to attend Sunday service. God inspired the church with a vision and a burden to start a special ministry. It arranges a group of compassionate volunteers to look after the children / youth with special needs during Sunday service so that their

parents may worship God whole-heartedly without distraction. Due to shortage of resources or other issues, many other churches could not afford similar services, so parents could not attend Sunday worship. Praise the Lord for giving our church the resources to deal with the need of this ministry.

Recently, I have an opportunity to join the special Sunday school class for these children. Without any specific reason, most of the special needs children acted up that day, leading to a mess. Regardless of the complication, I noticed a group of volunteers patiently kept the situation under control. I recalled a statement from Pastor Irene, “No matter how limited they can learn, we still have to try our best to help them understand the love of God”. I was deeply touched. I once asked God the reason and value of keeping this group of children on earth. Now, I understand its meaning behind – it is so natural to love the smart and lovely children, but to accept, support and love a group of children that seem not loveable is to echo what Jesus taught us, “love your neighbor as yourself”.

Also, with the coordination of Pastor Irene, we have set up a parent support group four years ago. The purpose is to encourage and support parents with the same need, as well as to help each other in spiritual growth through studying God’s words. Thank God for providing Pastor Sam Chan, Mrs. Wing-Tin Lee, Mrs. Wing-Huen Maak and Dr. Milton Wan for teaching and encouraging us. At last, I have to extend my gratitude to brothers / sisters in Peter and Paul Fellowship as they are willing to give up their Saturdays to look after our kids during the monthly support group meeting.



Even though my son, Ernest, still cannot talk now at the age of eight, God has been blessing him with a joyful heart. He loves music and keeps singing every day. I remember once I was very depressed and complained to God, then I heard Ernest singing the tune of “He is Lord”. Praise the Lord. Suddenly, I realized that God is with me, so why should I be worrying?

May the glory and praises be to our Heavenly Father.

## Teresa Tong

Four years ago .....

When I first joined the meeting for the parents support group of this special ministry, parents sat in a circle, sharing their burdens, frustrations and tears. Every story touched my heart. As a helper in the group, I could only run around, offering tissues or a cup of hot tea. Four years later, we have another sharing meeting in January. These parents are still facing many challenges in life, especially in caring for their special need child but I noticed a difference.... there is a glow on their face that is filled with hope and peace. They shared how they have experienced God these four years through mountains and valleys in their life... they know God will provide a way for them. Within the group, they could establish mutual supports and love, like a family in Christ. Even though they may still have to struggle with personal and family issues, they trust that Christ is walking with them along this journey. They also learn that brothers and sisters in Christ are willing to accept and love their families. In their recent sharing, I may still have to offer them tissues but this time, it is for tears of joy and thanksgiving – Praise the Lord!



I recall a boy with special needs once sat at the corner of a Sunday school class, feeling isolated and scared.... four years later, he is now the guitarist for the singspiration in the special class. The self-confidence and sweet smile on his face affirm the teachers that their dedication and love for these children are not in vain. In fact, they are commissioned by God to be an angel, touching their life. Another child seems to be in his own world all the time but four years later he could now sit beside his mom and join her long morning prayer. What a lovely picture! A girl used to lie around in the room and now she could sit quietly, enjoying the video “Sunday School Sing Along” during the parent support group meeting. A boy starts learning to play drums while another kid finishes reading a children book “101 questions about God”. There are still many, many wonderful stories with these children. We may not be aware of these minor changes but when we review what God has done on them in these four years, we have to exclaim – Praise the Lord!

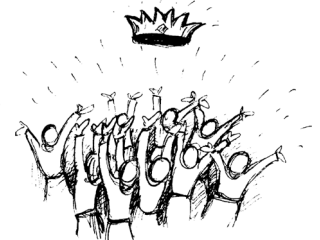
During these four years, I am not sure how much I have helped these families besides passing tissues or hot tea, but I am sure they have helped me a lot in the growth of my faith. Through their witness and the unconditional love for their children, I could understand the enduring love of our Heavenly Father for all mankind. Through their persistence in life, I learn not to give up even when I am facing challenges. Through the pure heart of these children, I understand the meaning of the Scripture, **“Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3)**. Through the dedication and commitment of the teachers and caregivers, I realize how we could love and share the burden of each other as one body in Christ – Praise the Lord!



**Amy Lo**

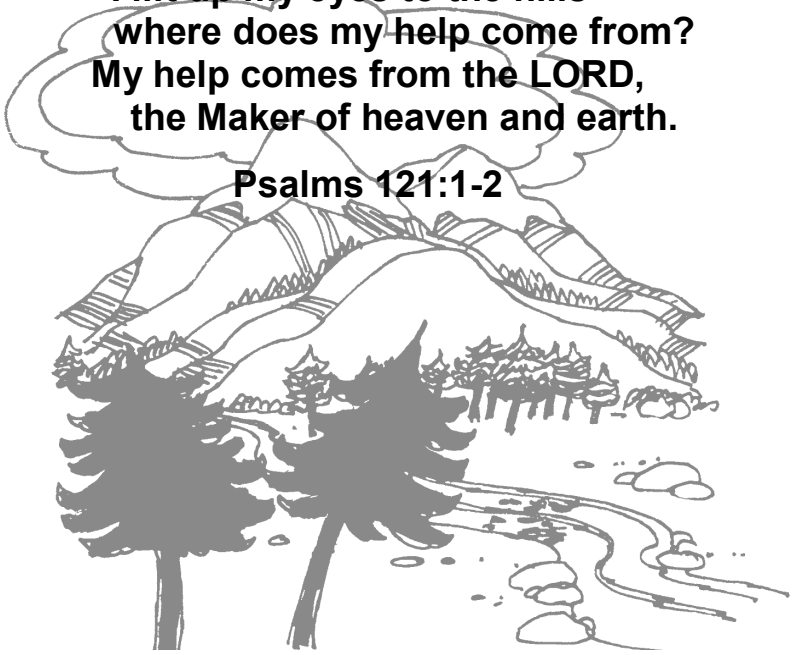
### **BENEFITS& REFLECTION OF ATTENDING THE SPECIAL NEEDS GROUP**

We attended the Special Need Group only for a short period of time; however, we have experienced a great deal in a great depth. As a mother, I learned from other parents the lesson of true dependence on God. It is a practical not theoretical. Furthermore, they have given me enormous comfort and support. To my son, the communion in love has exalted him and makes him understand the true meaning of love in Christ. Quote a real case, we had a BBQ gathering at Miline Park last summer, Matthew accompanied Ryan’s piano with guitar in the singspiration. Matthew played so hard, so musical and so well that James exclaimed that he never knew Matthew could play guitar. I took this opportunity to share with him that God has really given each of us a talent as gift, the gift to everyone is different, we just need to find it out and extend it for God use, he agreed with my view. To conclude the teaching I learned from the Special Need Group are: (1) Be focused on what God has given us, not to calculate what God has not given us. (2) Make the best out of what we have and what we can do to serve God as well as the people around us. I pray that God will use this small unnoticeable group to bless the world. May glory and praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.



I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.

**Psalms 121:1-2**



**城北華人基督教會**

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**May 2005**