

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

信義宗神學院

ITS

NEWS

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Pausing to  
wonder...



# Pausing to wonder . . .

*This spring issue of LTS News has a focus on spirituality. The first three Friday lectures of this year are reserved for topics on spirituality and so we tag along and gladly present Abraham Chan's summary of his Friday-Lecture in January: "Contemplation and Action: An Augustinian Reflection on the Urban Life".*

In the academic world "spirituality" is looked upon with considerable reservation. Too much has been said and written that cannot rise up to scholarly standards. And when it comes to theology, the "Lutherans" are among the most hesitant to tackle this subject. The liturgical traditions of Lutheranism provide beautiful niches for spiritual life, but very often that is it. On the other hand: it seems to be a still growing trend worldwide to pursue some kind of spiritual life – in spite of academic reservations. In the recent couple of decades ancient spiritual traditions have been rediscovered and we at LTS are a little proud that we have been doing, what in the Friday-Lecture of February will be called "theology on two legs": that is, striving for academic excellence and seeing how that can be employed for a vibrant spiritual life. With that, LTS does not follow a recent trend, but stands in the 2000 year old tradition of churches of every denomination, which have always taught and practised what we nowadays

somehow helplessly call "spirituality", as a human way of responding to our living God.

And one way of responding is of course all that, which is associated with the term contemplation; "pausing to wonder...". These two verbs seem to summarize the two basic prerequisites for contemplation: pausing and wondering; the taking time and the ability to meditate, to muse, to be curious....

Many suggestions are available and the bookshelves are bursting with books on how to lead a spiritual life: good ideas and conceptions far less convincing. Yet what unites them all is the prerequisite: the need of time. Attempting to see beyond without the willingness to set aside some time is a totally useless endeavour. Spirituality refuses to obey many notions promoted by our corporate society. There is no short-cut, no time saving way. A meeting that is "effective" (in the 21st century sense of the term) will hardly become spiritual, or visionary, or deep and meaningful. "To pause" might well be a lost art and that again is a reason why masses queue at the monastery-gates in western societies. Making time for contemplation a priority over work (and sometimes even family) often requires a considerably new focus for many. No wondering without pausing.... Further thoughts on this can be found in Wayne Nieminen's article

on the Spirituality of saying "No".

But of course there is also pausing without wondering. Wondering is another thing many need to learn or re-learn. One of our students, Chan Hee Luk (Vincent), kindly shares his views on that in this issue from the perspective of a Hong Kong pastor. And I would like to draw attention to a little verse that has accompanied me for some years now:

earth is crammed with heaven,  
and every common bush afire with God;  
but only he who sees takes off his shoes;  
the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

Elisabeth Barrett Browning

"Seeing" in this context is – of course – grace. But without the willingness on our part, to see deeper becomes an unlikely incident. If we refuse to occasionally question the principles that rule our perception, we will only see what we expect. Being used to explaining the world as we understood it years ago, the blackberries will rarely reveal "the beyond in our midst" (Bonhoeffer about spirituality) and remain what they are: beautiful and delicious, but failing to delight more than our taste buds. And that is of course a pity, considering the bush is on fire and glimpses of heaven ready to nourish our

souls everywhere...

Here at LTS we try to teach pausing and wondering as far as is within human power. Maybe our two visiting students from Norway have experienced that a little and we discover that in their article. One way LTS organises "pausing" is by offering retreats. In this issue we find pictures of the student and faculty retreat in January, where we, among other things, learned about the spiritual dimension of sacred architecture. Speaking of which: the first pictures of the campus-reconstruction-works are not only meant for information. It has been a good tradition to meditate on construction and change as allegories for our transitory existence on this planet.

Last but not least the introducing of Ho Sin Bun (Daniel) fits well into the focus of this issue. Also, we are glad Rebecca Lee has agreed to introduce the English programme to a wider audience from a personal perspective. The programme is one of the treasures of LTS, designed to equip students from SE Asia, Hong Kong and mainland China to take active part in our school. Not only – but also! – in the spiritual life and the classes up here at beautiful To Fung Shan. Have a blessed year of the dragon with lots of time to pause, seeing earth crammed with heaven!

JMD



# “The Spirituality of Saying NO!”

Dr. Wayne Nieminen  
Pastoral Care and Marriage and Family Counseling



An advertisement for a pastoral position appeared in a national religious magazine in the United States. It read:

The vocation requires a number of important skills, traits and characteristics – such as deep faith, a discerning intelligence, knowledge of the Word of God, patience, love, humility, endurance, and ability to work collegially with others. It has been said that ministry also requires much time and a lot of personal sacrifices.

Wanted: A person to fill a position that involves important but undervalued work: exact job description unclear. Long hours; must work weekend and holidays. Low pay. Master's degree required; doctorate preferred. Must be accomplished at multi-tasking, including running an organization with no clear authority to do so. The successful candidate must be a skilled speaker, manager, politician, and therapist and will devote significant time each week to pastoral visits. The position reports to multiple bosses.

Actually it did not appear in any religious magazine! It's a bogus advertisement I found in a book entitled: "Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Ministry" (by L. Gregory Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong). Even so, the advertisement alludes to the many expectations that pastors and church workers are greeted with when they enter the ministry. A pastoral vocation (as a lay leader or pastor) is a deeply rewarding vocation, but it is also a very demanding one.

It's not easy being a leader in the church. The demands are great. How well do Hong Kong pastors cope with such demands? The results of a recent survey (2009) by the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement state that 41% of Hong Kong pastors left their positions within the last five years. This is a striking statistic. I cannot vouch for the quality or accuracy of the survey, but its findings resemble the research on pastors leaving the ministry in the United States.

What are some of the challenges that leaders face in the ministry? The Barna Group surveyed a number of American pastors who have remained in the ministry. They described a number of challenges – I have listed only five of them:

- 90% of the pastors report working 55 to 75 hours a week.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry has negatively affected their family.

- 90% feel that they were inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.
- 80% of the spouses feel the pastor is overworked.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.

I'm not sure how Hong Kong pastors would respond in such a survey. I do know from conversations with local pastors that they are "very, very busy." I do know that pastors and congregations deal with occasional conflict. I do know that pastors and church leaders spend much time away from their families. I do know that many Hong Kong pastors' calendars are filled with appointments. And I wonder to what extent Hong Kong church leaders' keep pace with or parallel the work life of the local business community who have voiced very similar frustrations with their work [please see Hong Kong University's "Work Life Balance ... Survey Results" at: [http://www.hku.hk/press/news\\_detail\\_5755.html](http://www.hku.hk/press/news_detail_5755.html)].

Recently at a workshop on the "Spirituality of Saying NO!" (at our January Student Faculty Retreat), we briefly discussed some of the above important issues. We were able to see a Nooma DVD entitled, "Shells" which basically asks, "Are we so busy that we miss out on what we are supposed to be doing?" The message continues: "Many of us are running from place to place like life is passing us by. We're doing so many things, a little bit of everything, and yet it doesn't feel like much of a life. But most of us find it hard to say no..."

Rob Bell, the producer of "Shells" has his viewers reflect on a text in Mark (1:35-39).

Jesus has spent the previous day healing many people and driving out demons. He then arises early in the morning and finds a solitary place where he can pray, BUT the disciples find him! They say to Jesus: Look, everyone in the village is looking for you and wants you to stay and do more healings! There are so many people who have strong opinions on what Jesus should be doing and who he should be doing it for!!!

But what does Jesus do? Does he give into / surrender to / submit to other people's expectations. No, he refuses! Jesus says no – he has to go somewhere else – to other nearby villages to preach. His face is set toward Jerusalem. That is to say, Jesus was interested in pursuing the big picture – the one that God the Father had painted for him. Jesus had a compass – an orientation that guided his path and the decisions he made. He could say, in a manner of speaking, NO!

Well, we ran out of time in our workshop, but the discussion will continue to take place at LTS among international and local leaders alike. How do we provide an education which aims for excellence in ministry? How do Christian leaders model a different – less busy, thoughtful - lifestyle to the members of the church and surrounding culture? How can we limit the number of church meetings or at least make them more efficient? How can we rebalance work and family life? How can we answer the question: is the vocation to serve God in ministry more important than the vocation to be a father, mother, daughter, son or spouse in the family [Did not Martin Luther enlarge the church's notion of vocation?]? How can we say "No" because we have already said "yes" to Jesus' big picture for our lives?



# Why I study Spirituality?

Vincent, Chan Hee Luk



Thank God that I can study in LTS as a full time student for ten months. My program is Master of Arts, major in Spirituality.

I study Spirituality because I know little about it. These 20 years, I try my best to have a good spiritual life. I know that this is the most important thing in serving God. However, my spiritual life is not very good during these years. I always study the Bible and pray, and I also encourage my Church members to have a good spiritual life. I know some of them will do it, but at last they will give up. Over the past decade, the Chinese Christian Church and Seminary find that they need to learn and practice more about Spirituality. It is because more leaders find that their church members are weak in their spiritual life, very tired and it really needs to be built up.

These ten months are very precious to me. It is a short period and I try to learn and practice more in spirituality. Every morning as I walk up to the Seminary I have a quiet time with God. Sometimes I use the "Jesus Prayer", which I was introduced to here. Sometimes I use the "Lectio Divina". Also, I enjoy the solitude, which I learned about in one of my courses.

I learned so much in fall semester, but I know that I only learned a little about Spirituality. May God help me to know more and practice more.

*There were two touching moments when I started my study at LTS. One was the healing service on our retreat camp. I am a pastor and always pray for others and in my heart I want someone to pray and care for me. I am a servant but also I need someone to serve, touch, encourage, and heal me. Another touching moment was the first time to take Holy Communion in LTS. When I lined up, walking slowly to the Holy Altar, it seemed that my Lord Jesus Christ opened His arms to hug me. Although I was a sinner, my spiritual life was not very good, but He totally accepted me, loved me, and died for me. I really knew that Spirituality is not only knowledge but a spiritual experience with God.*

I have graduated from Seminary and serve as a Pastor in the Chinese Rhenish Church for nearly 20 years. During these years, I have not had many opportunities for further studies.

## Student & Faculty Retreat on Jan 11





# Contemplation and Action: An Augustinian understanding of Spirituality in the City

Dr. Abraham Chan  
Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, Hong Kong



As Abraham Chan said in the first of the spirituality lectures this term: We like to go up to Sky 100 to enjoy the view over Hong Kong. But that view is an illusion. We need to go back to the people at the street-corners where one sees little sky... we were challenged to reflect about counter-urbanisation.

The Editor



A sacrament is a “sacred sign” or a “visible word” as Augustine wrote in many of his writings. When a sacramental event happened, a reality beyond our senses is perceived by our understanding, judgment and action. Augustine argues that what we perceive is a sign of something more than what is immediately at hand. To perceive human reality as a living sacrament, we are saying that God’s absolute free gift of love and care are present immediately in people’s lives.

Take Jesus Christ washing the disciples’ feet as an example, he was not cleaning dust from the disciples’ feet, instead it is an important sign of the humble nature of his ministry. This sign has important meaning for the ministries of those disciples whose feet were washed and for those followers of coming generations to experience the humility of the Divine love in our present situation. Similarly when Jesus shared bread and wine in the Passover, it was not because the disciples felt hungry and thirsty but a clear sign of a new covenant, a new community found and supported by God’s everlasting love.

To form a living sacrament is what we can learn from Augustine and his theological traditions. In a modern world a city no longer functions as a defense against attack or as a refuge against wild beasts. However, the architect Richard Rogers sharply pinpoints the current situation of a city as he said, “The city has been viewed as an arena for consumerism. Political and commercial expediency has shifted the emphasis of urban development from meeting the broad social needs of the community to meeting the

circumscribed needs of individuals. The pursuit of this narrow objective has sapped the city of its vitality. The complexity of ‘community’ has been untangled and public life has been dissected into individual components. Paradoxically, in this global age of rising democracy, cities are increasingly polarizing society into segregated communities.”

Augustine argued that God’s love and grace are woven into the stories of our cities in which he uses two dialectical concepts, the City of God and the city of earth, to illustrate the dynamism of elevating grace in human society. Christians as disciples of Jesus Christ must learn to open our eyes to see how city life manifests its sacramental dimension at this present time. This sacramental side of city life not only points to the grace of the Triune God but also guides us to receive this gift of God’s life-transforming love. Augustine maintains the idea that spiritual growth must maintain the balance between the notion of contemplation and action in balance. We must hold the figures of Martha and Mary together in our life as he said.





# “Be patient, listen and then act”

Rebecca Lee  
Lecturer of English Program



Fall Seminary Outing in Tai Po

*As one of two teachers here at LTS who teach English, I have experienced many challenges, joys, frustrations, and rewards, as well as gained a lot of knowledge. When I first arrived here in August of 2009 I was overwhelmed by everything: the city, customs, food, people and the job I came to do. The first year I spent just getting accustomed to everything here in Hong Kong and at LTS. During this year I caught myself many times approaching things from a “western” point of view only to realize, most of the time, that this didn’t work or accomplish things well.*

One of the biggest lessons I think anyone learns when they first come into a new culture is to listen. However this is not as easy as it seems, usually requiring a lot of patience. Coming from a Western background I tend to be direct and expect immediate results; however, this is not the Asian way. I found that listening to others, to their verbal and non-verbal communication, and not rushing through things actually works! Yes, it takes more time, but in the end the result is usually much more effective than if I had rushed. I am by no means an expert at this yet, nor do I think I ever will be, but I am learning every day to be patient, listen and then act.

Just as learning and adapting to a new culture

is challenging, add on top of that a new language! I see my job teaching English at LTS as helping students to improve their English in a variety of ways, all with a theological focus. Before I came to Hong Kong this task seemed a bit daunting. I had studied, earned my degree in and taught English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the States, but I had never taught it with a theological focus before. I was to teach Speaking/Listening, Reading and Writing and then Theological English. The three preceding subjects I had no problem teaching and my Bible College background (BA Christian Education) came in handy with focusing them on the Bible and Theology. However, Theological English was a whole other ball of wax, as we say in the States. It was new territory for me. Yes, I had attended a Bible College, but the extent of my theological knowledge was a bit limited...and it was a long time ago too! In the two and a half years I have been teaching at LTS I have grown my knowledge of theology greatly by teaching this class and I have enjoyed the challenge of finding material and explaining it to my students. My students know the theological and biblical terms in their native languages, but in English it is, as we say in the States, ‘a whole other ball of wax!’

In addition to the above four subjects I teach, last year I also started to offer an English class for those students writing their Thesis/Dissertation in English. This class has no homework because their thesis is their homework. We work on writing structure, grammar, sentence structure and editing. I work closely with the students on their theses, helping them to edit and correct them and start to find the mistakes on their own. It has been a joy to teach this class and see the students’ progress and come out with a finalized product.

Summer Orientation for all new International students is the other program I am in charge of and my favorite by far! For the duration of three weeks in August all new International students arrive at LTS and it is my job to show them LTS and Hong Kong and give them tools to adapting to this new lifestyle, new school and

new customs. It is a joy to get to know these students, work intensely with them and build a strong relationship with them from the start. One reason this is such a passionate program for me is because I know how it feels. I know what it is like to come into a new culture and place and have to learn to adapt. The people that guided me through my first few weeks and months in Hong Kong were lifesavers for me and I will be eternally grateful to them for their kindness, compassion and generosity. Even though I have only run the program for one year (this past year we were unable to run it due to late approvals of visas for the students), being able to pass along this service to my students (all while learning English!) has been a great joy for me.

I truly enjoy every aspect of teaching English at LTS. There are always new challenges and opportunities that present themselves every year, new students to get to know, colleagues I have the privilege of working with and a variety of celebrations and activities that keep me motivated and interested in what will come next.



Being Batak with our Indonesian students



# Greetings from Norway!

Hi everyone! Once again we are back in Norway, the country, temperature and everyday life are quite different from our Hong Kong life. Here in Norway it is full winter these days. The temperature is below zero and the skis are picked up from the basement. Right now all of Oslo is covered in beautiful white snow, so it is a perfect time for skiing and other winter activities. We had a hard time finding a place to live when we returned (there is no dormitory connected to our school), but we both found someone to rent a room from in the end. That means we don't share a room anymore (we are still friends, if anyone is wondering). Our study-life at "Menighetsfakultetet" (MF) has started quite nice and slow. In contrast to LTS we don't have a fixed time-schedule, so we have some days full of classes and most days without any classes. That gives us the perfect time to give you some of our impressions and reflections of our stay.

We arrived at Hong Kong International Airport in the beginning of August, unaware of the immense heat and humidity that awaited us beyond the doors of the air-conditioned airport. Our expectations and hopes for the semester were



high, although we didn't quite know how things would be. Mawi met us with a sign that said "Espen and Martin" at the airport and guided us safely to the LTS campus at Tao Fung Shan.

Since the course for overseas students was cancelled, we suddenly had almost a month of leisure time to spend as tourists in Hong Kong before school started. Deth, a Laotian student and friend, willingly stepped up as a guide and took us to places like the Ten Thousand Buddha Monastery, the Peak, Victoria Harbour, Needle Hill and so on. In these first weeks there weren't so many students at the dorm, so we got to know the other International students quite well and played a lot of table tennis and volleyball.

Eventually school started with a retreat to the small island of Cheng Chau where we got to know more of the students and some of the locals.

The week after the lectures started, and it was a new experience to be in class with other students from China, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Nepal and others. Our teachers were from the USA and Germany, so it was easy to understand their English. It was sometimes more difficult to understand each other with the SE Asian students, but it was normally no problem. It took some time for us getting used to expressing ourselves in a foreign language, even though we count ourselves as good English speakers, but as the weeks passed, we got more and more used to it.

Meals were served three times a day in the dining hall, and when we got tired of the "LTS-food" there was luckily an IKEA that sold Scandinavian food just down the mountain. In reading week we went on a trip to Guilin and Yangshou in mainland China and experienced a China completely different from Hong Kong. Yangshou was a wonderful place, but when we came back to Hong Kong it was almost like



coming home.

Eventually the exams came closer, and we had to spend a little more time in the library, only interrupted by the librarians cry: "Chapel time, library's closing!"

For Christmas our families came down to visit, and we went to the Philippines for the holidays.

They have been 5 very interesting and unforgettable months. Living partly outside the western world, making friends from all over Asia has had a great impact on us both. We are very grateful for what we have learned just from talking and hanging around with you. In some ways the cultural differences have been big and challenging for us, especially when it comes to the language barrier. It has been frustrating sometimes not being able to understand or be understood, but even with different mother tongues we have been able to laugh and have enjoyable evenings together. And once again; for that we are thankful. We really hope you continue to study hard and be good pastors and others representatives for your churches in your countries. It is inspiring to see that God raises up so many competent leaders in Asia. And until we meet again, because we really want to see as many of you as possible some day in the future, may you all have the peace of God with you and to all you meet.

Love Espen and Martin



# About a Saved Sinner :

Sin Pan Daniel Ho

*Favorites: biblical research, watching movies, listening to classical music, playing badminton & discussing social problems resulting from libertinism and abuses of human rights.*

There are gifts given to me by my Heavenly father. First of all, I was born in a Christian family and raised by pious parents in Hong Kong. Although they did not receive much education, they have tried their best to teach me the word of God since I was a baby. Secondly, I thank God for giving me an opportunity to serve Him on a full-time basis since I graduated from University. Thirdly, I thank God for giving me a Chinese identity that became an important orientation of my mission.

There are also other gifts given by God to which I can make a choice. I am thankful to meet an angel (Portia Ng) who has now become my wife (isn't she lovely). I have learned a lot about love and respect in this school of marriage for 17 years. Moreover, I am thankful to have an opportunity to receive my theological training financially provided by God in Fuller Theological Seminary in the USA and got my first and second degree there. Meanwhile, I was 'converted' from an Anabaptist to a Pietist. My research interest at that time was about the Holy Spirit and mission in the theology of Karl Barth. Furthermore, I thank God for giving me an opportunity to serve as a teaching pastor in Kau Yan Church, Tsung

Tsin Mission of Hong Kong for 11 years. Not only did I witness the edifying power of the Bible in people, Christians as well as non-Christians there, I also experienced the revival power of the Holy Spirit in the church-wide participation of the revival meetings in Korea and in Hong Kong. I learned a lot from the bible-believing charismatic brothers and sisters.

These spiritual experiences deepened my conviction of transforming our surrounding



culture through Christian communities that consistently witness and practice the Word of God in the same mind and pray together in one spirit.

My PhD thesis (University of Sheffield) is entitled "Cleanse out the Old Leaven, that You may be a New Lump": A Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 5--11:1 in the Light of the Social Lives of the Corinthians." It is about re-reading these six chapters from a social identity approach. It involves an investigation into the tradition of Diaspora Judaism inherited by Paul, Paul's rhetorical purpose of echoing the Scripture and the Mediterranean social values adopted by the Corinthians. I hope to re-interpret the whole of 1 Corinthians and other Pauline letters from this perspective in my future projects of biblical interpretation.

# The Change of Campus...

text and photos JMD

Our Campus changes. Old features disappear with considerable noise. Quietly, industrious hands replace wires, new spaces open up. Redecorating, tearing down, rebuilding – it is a noble, creative activity mirroring human beings as made by a very creative God.

LTS News suggests meditating on the photos of change – or of course the actual building site for those readers who happen to be here. Mediaeval Christians have been reported to be doing that on building sites of big cathedrals: Living a transitory existence of change and trying to glorify God by creating new things – construction sites present valuable allegories for pausing and wondering.





## Coming Up . . .

2012

Mar	9	The 33 <sup>rd</sup> Christopher Tang Christian Literature Award
	12	Rev. Daniel Wong Lectures on Pastoralia
April	20	Annual Music Worship
May	11	Commissioning Service for Graduates
Jun	3	Graduation Service
Oct	28	Fundraising Walkathon

## 2013 Centennial Celebration Program of LTS

Jan	14	Commencement of Celebration
Jan	25	Thanksgiving Banquet (Metropol Restaurant, Admiralty)
Mar	15 & 17	Public Lectures on Luther Studies
May	25	Concert by the Windsbach Boy's Choir
Oct	4 & 6	Public Lectures on Biblical Studies
Nov	24	Thanksgiving Service

## Looking Back . . . Recent visits to LTS

14 Jan



Representatives of Zhong Nan Theological Seminary in Hui Bei Province of China visited LTS, greeted by President Dr Simon Chow and Dr Nicholas Tai.

### School activities

Four international students of LTS(Sondang Napitupulu, Saw Shew Gyan, Dethsacda Aphyamath,Lene Birgette Bjolverud)led by Assistan Professor Cheung Po-chu visited Jiangmen from 16 to 18 Dec. 2011, along with representatives of Hong Kong International School and Concordia Welfare and Education Foundation.

### Staff

Coworker Ng Wai-lun, who served as the LTS driver for 17 years, has retired as of 30th Dec 2011. Thanks to Mr Ng for his long-term service.

### Let us pray for...

Mr Ken Ngai Tsz-yan, who started working at LTS as a driver since mid December 2011. May God give him strength and wisdom to serve.

Mrs Janey Zimmerman, as she keeps receiving chemotherapy therapy for breast cancer. May God comfort and heal her.

Student Joanna So (4th year, B.Th.), who keeps receiving diathermy and chemotherapy for stomach cancer. May God comfort and heal her. Please contact her affiliated Tsing Yi Carpenter Lutheran Church (Tel.:852-24970600) for enquiry of financial support.

Student Cozy Wu (4th year, B.Th.) who suffers from stage two breast cancer and is receiving therapy. May God comfort and heal her.

Smooth execution of the School Extension Project that started on 31 October 2011 and will continue until mid 2012.

### News of alumni

Alumna Vincci So Woon-chi, M.Div (2006), was commissioned to work in Thailand by Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong on 15 January 2012.

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