

BLESSED ADOPTION

Testimony by Gabriel Shiu

My husband and I have always wanted to have more than two children, but due to the fact that our son had autism, as well as a family history of autism outside of our immediate family, we decided not to have a third child because of the uncertainty of whether the other children we gave birth to would be autistic as well.

Throughout my teenage years until my early twenties, I spent time volunteering at an orphanage and since then, I have always wanted to adopt a child to give him or her a home. But every time I brought up the idea of adopting a child, my husband was never quite ready to accept it. Whenever I saw people adopt a child from China, I would always tear up and my heart would feel very torn.

Before I reached the age of 50, I asked my family if they would agree to the idea of our family adopting a child. I told myself that if they didn't, then after I turned 50, I would never consider the idea of adoption again.

While on a missions trip in June 2009, we made many trips to multiple places and visiting an orphanage, Mother's Love, was our last stop. I didn't feel personally or emotionally moved while we were there, and I had no intention to adopt at all during our missions trip. Our very good friend, Peter, founder of Rainbow Missions was the one who led us during this missions trip and was with us at Mother's Love. He showed one of the children there, a ten-year old boy named Zhen Shan, an electronic device that he had helped invent. I had the chance to talk to ZS and felt really comfortable doing so. While talking with him, I helped give him an English name. He chose the name "David" because he said that David became a king and loved God. I encouraged him to work hard like Peter so that he could also help many people someday. I used Peter as an example because although Peter is blind, he obtained three masters degrees, founded Rainbow Missions, was a computer engineer at Microsoft, and is now a counselor in Seattle. I was amazed by ZS because I was impressed that someone so young could love God so much. I loved him at that point, and immediately thought, "This is such a wonderful kid; someone needs to adopt him." I asked Kit Ying (the lady director of Mother's Love) a lot about adoption, but I never considered myself. I just wanted to know more so that when I went back to the United States, I could try to find someone to adopt him.

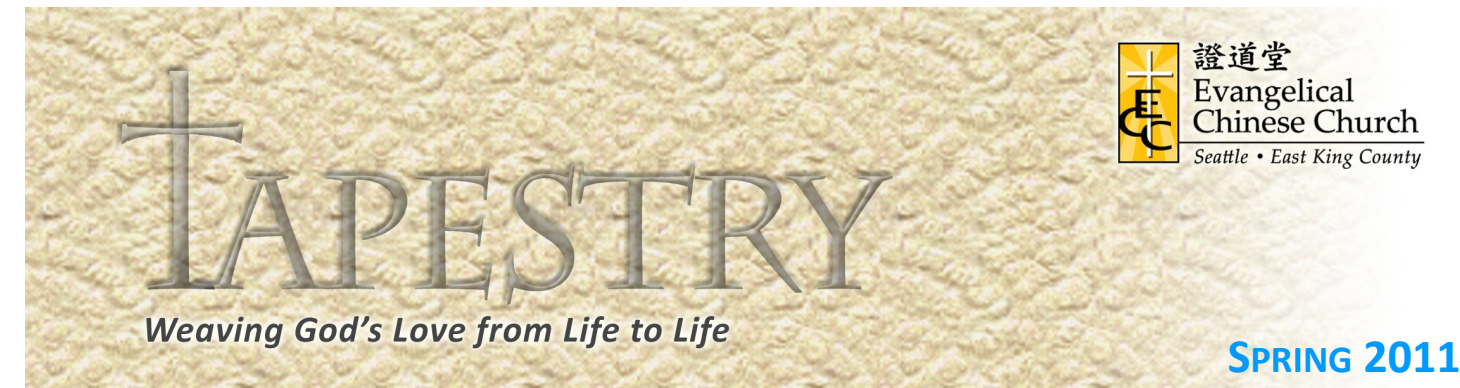
Our journey was short but very meaningful. During our last morning at the hotel, while waiting to go to the airport to fly back home, I debriefed with my husband and son. I shared how I was very impressed by Kit Ying's faithfulness,

drive and commitment. Suddenly Zhen Shan's picture popped into my mind. I was very sad about what I had said to ZS: How could I encourage him to become a great person while he lived in an environment that didn't allow him to do so? I knew that Peter is only who he is now because many people were willing to give him the chances and opportunities. Suddenly, I found myself asking my husband, "Can we bring him home?" as tears flowed from my eyes, not believing what I had just said. I even immediately said "No!" to myself, thinking, "How could it be?" This incident is what started the conversations about adoption with my family. My husband was shocked due to our age, also thinking, "How could it be?" but his reaction was different than before; at least this time he was willing to think about it. So, our whole family talked about it, and we also talked as a family with Peter (our good friend and family counselor). I felt like if we adopted, we should have someone who could understand our situation and also experience all this. I wanted a third party to pray about it and reassure us with our decision. Through Peter, we talked to an adoption specialist in Seattle.

One night after we returned to Seattle, I was talking to my husband about our relationship. Somehow we started to count our blessings on how God has been providing for us from the day we met, to how we moved here to the US, until now, when our two children have grown up. For more than two hours, we counted our countless blessings, praising God and being amazed at how much grace God had shown us. The topic of ZS's adoption came up a few times during this time; afterward when we knelt down to pray, my husband thanked God for adopting us through Jesus, and started to cry. Throughout praying, he felt the Holy Spirit move him, and instead of telling me that he was ready to adopt, he told God that he was willing and wanted to adopt ZS. I thought it was odd but was moved too, and during his prayer, the conversation between the angel Gabriel and the virgin Mary came to my mind. I remembered what the angel told Mary and I realized it wasn't that I was providing anything for this child, but that it was a privilege for me to adopt a child and God was telling me that we were blessed to adopt. Another thing I realized was that although Mary had to face many hardships upon agreeing to give birth to Jesus, at that moment, she had a willing heart and was obedient, and I should likewise do the same. After sharing and praying, we decided to proceed with the adoption process.

Gabriel Shiu & Family, August 2009

Epilogue: The Shiu family returned to Nanning, Quangxi to adopt David (Zhen Shan) and they brought him back to Seattle on December 17, 2010. David is now adjusting to American life with the Shius, residing in Bellevue. Samuel, Gabriel, Isaac, Angel and David attend EKC-Chinese and are actively serving the Lord on the EKC campus.



Our God Is In Control: Life Stories from the Heart

As you read this issue of *Tapestry*, we pray that you will be encouraged by these articles written by our members here at ECC.

- ◆ The **Chan family** journeyed through a very difficult yet courageous battle with Mandy's cancer. Ever since their return to Seattle, many brothers and sisters offered assistance with meal preparation, transportation and emotional support which helped sustain the Chan family. On December 19, 2010, after the Christmas Sunday worship, 50+ people showed up to help move the entire household back to their own home in Issaquah. In 3-1/2 hours, this faithful group was able to complete most of the moving without even a truck or moving equipment. It was amazing to see what could be accomplished when a community of caring believers put their minds to unified action! During the final days of Mandy's February 2011 hospital stay, many came to say good-bye, pray and sing for her and Chan. This indeed is the blessing of what true family is all about.
- ◆ Living a debt-free life is not a popular concept in this society. **Brother Kien** was very transparent in sharing his life and spiritual transformation since his lay-off in 2009. In addition, his stay-at-home-dad status gives us new insight into what *significant living* is really all about.
- ◆ Several of four ECC families are in various stages of adopting children from China. We welcome **David**, recently adopted by **Gabriel and Samuel Shiu's family**. His is a very touching and unusual adoption story. Through their sharing, we get a glimpse of God's heart and compassion demonstrated through their personal struggle and journey to bring David home. Two other families have also adopted a child recently, and we can't wait to hear their stories as well. Thanks to Pastor Sam and Esther who started this trend of adoption, we now have quite a few here at ECC.

Happy reading!

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF TRIBULATION

(Chung Chan's acknowledgement during his wife Mandy's 2.19.11 memorial service)

Dear friends, family, brothers and sisters in the Lord:

Thank you all for coming to attend Mandy's memorial service. We are truly blessed by your presence. Some of you came from California, Canada and Wisconsin; several of you just arrived this morning. We are thankful for your love and support.

We want to thank you for the support we have received for the last two years, with special appreciation to the brothers and sisters at Contra Costa Gospel Church in California. You have showered us with great care while we were in California. After our return to Seattle, brothers and sisters from ECC (SEA/EKC) have lent us much support and thus, we lacked nothing. Today, many of you offered help to organize this memorial service, be it visible or in the background; we thank you.

Many people were concerned about my welfare these last three weeks—I am ok. I miss Mandy tremendously and it was hard to go through pictures of Mandy in preparation for today's DVD presentation. Tears were plentiful. However, in the midst of the loss, I experienced peace and blessing. Though the road is difficult, I see hope and a future.



CHAN FAMILY L-R: EUGENE, CHAN, EVAN, MANDY, EDWARD

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Mandy and I were married in 1993, and seventeen years have passed. We thank the Lord for our sweet and beautiful marriage. I was blessed to be able to be by her side as she finished her last breath on earth. The day before her last hospitalization, Mandy and I sat next to our bed. She was so very weak and leaned heavily on my shoulder for a considerable length of time. Mandy told me that she treasured these 17 years--not a day was wasted. Her sharing brought me great comfort. Although Mandy is not by my side anymore, I will remember her forever in my heart.

I asked Mandy if she had any last words for our children; she said: none. Only that they do not depart from the Lord...that they stay with the church family. She was so sure that God will care for them, as she knew Who holds the future. Three weeks ago, my father called me and reminded me that no matter how difficult it is on the road ahead, God is in charge; He will take full responsibility for all of us. My father is in his eighties already, and was still able to encourage me in this manner which brought me shame. Last week, our oldest son Eugene showed me the song that he wanted to share in today's celebration. When I read the lyrics, I was so touched. The title of the song is, "Our God Is In Control" (by Steven Curtis Chapman). Mandy, my father and my son, three different generations, reminded me that our Lord oversees all things. When the Great Creator tells me: He will take care, He will take full responsibility though I may not know what the future holds-- why should I worry?

The last words that Mandy said to me were, "See you in heaven". I am so glad that this separation is only temporary. One day we will meet again in heaven. What a glorious hope that is! Because of the Living God, who conquered death and resurrected, Mandy and I have this blessed hope. I know Mandy not only wanted to see me there, she wanted so much for everyone here today to meet her someday in heaven as well. Once again, we thank you all for coming to celebrate Mandy's life. As Mandy said, "See you all in heaven". If we have Christ in our lives, for sure we will meet again!

Editor's note: Mandy and Chan, Eugene (13), Edward (11) and Evan (7) came to ECC while Eugene was still an infant. They relocated to North California in 2008 due to Chan's job situation and returned to Seattle July 2010. Mandy was the choir director in both SEA and EKC while Chan taught adult Sunday school.



"Our God Is In Control"
(by Steven Curtis Chapman, written after his 5-year old daughter was killed in a tragic car accident)

*This is not how it should be
 This is not how it could be
 But this is how it is
 And our God is in control
 This is not how it will be
 When we finally will see
 We'll see with our own eyes
 He was always in control*

*And we'll sing holy, holy, holy is our God
 And we will finally really understand what it means
 So we'll sing holy, holy, holy is our God
 While we're waiting for That Day*

*This is not where we planned to be
 When we started this journey
 But this is where we are
 And our God is in control*

*Though this first taste is bitter
 There will be sweetness forever
 When we finally taste and see
 That our God is in control*

*And we'll sing holy, holy, holy is our God
 And we will finally really understand what it means
 So we'll sing holy, holy, holy is our God
 While we're waiting for That Day
 We're waiting for That Day
 We'll keep on waiting for That Day
 And we will know our God is in control*

*Holy, Holy, Holy
 Holy, Holy, Holy
 Our God is in control, Holy, Holy, Holy*

**REAL LIVING: REBALANCING PRIORITIES
 IN CHALLENGING TIMES**
Testimony by Kien Hoang

Our country has just experienced one of the worst economic recessions since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Millions of people have lost their jobs and thousands of families have lost their homes to foreclosure. Economists continue to debate what really triggered this staggering economic crisis that caused financial hardship for millions of people.

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HOANG FAMILY L-R: BENJAMIN, CHARMAINE, KIEN, HANNAH

We can blame it on the lack of oversight by the government on banking institutions, the explosion of the housing bubble, politicians overspending our tax dollars on bailout packages, excessive consumerism that led to unmanageable household debts, or just pure human greed. No matter what the causes, we Christians are not exempt from society's collective blunders because we also live in this world and often subscribe to its values without knowing it. Just as Jesus Christ said in *John 16:33b (NIV ©2011)*, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." This promise gives Christians comfort in knowing that God is still in control of all circumstances no matter how bad things may be.

For the past decade, I felt like a human robot running on a treadmill that never seemed to stop. I devoted much of my precious time toward building my career. I was particularly proud of my accomplishments and the position that I held in my corporate job. All this came to a halt when I lost my job at the end of 2009. This sudden change was emotionally disturbing especially for a single income family. I remember many sleepless nights worrying over matters that were out of my control. I was extremely disappointed over the fact that even though I had given my employer total devotion, in the end, all my dedication and hard work felt empty. I spent much time in prayer seeking God's guidance and direction. Brothers and sisters from our fellowship group prayed for my situation and provided emotional and spiritual support. It was during this period of reflection that God reminded me in *Jeremiah 29:11*, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." Even though life was not going the way I wanted, I was reminded by *Proverbs 3:5-6* to, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." I slowly began to see how God had used this tribulation in my life to redirect my path and draw me closer to Him.

It has been a challenging time this past year searching for the type of work I want in a slow economy. However, I am thankful that God has prepared me for the challenge and

provided sufficient resources to sustain my household during this difficult ordeal. Because my family had followed important biblical principles regarding good financial stewardship for many years, we are able to weather the current economic storm. We have lived a debt-free and contented lifestyle for years; as a result, it has protected us during this tough economic time. This kind of lifestyle has provided my family the financial peace and options we would not have had otherwise, and the flexibility to prioritize things that are important to us. It has also allowed me more time to seek work that aligns with my passion. Overall, this wonderful blessing has provided me the opportunity to re-examine what I want to do for the rest of my life. Realizing that I had been chasing worldly success all these years and not building a life of significance has caused a complete shift in my thinking as well as in my attitude toward life.

My quest to reprioritize my life has helped me to understand that what God wants me to do is to invest time in building quality relationships. The best place to start is with my family. He has given me two wonderful children for a reason. God wants me to enjoy them and nurture their character so they can grow into godly people. This would be the best investment of time and resources I could ever make. While I continue my job search, I am also enjoying my children every day as a stay-at-home dad, watching my six-year-old son Benjamin and two-year-old daughter Hannah grow. Despite their tantrums and silly behaviors, I am learning to be patient with them just as God is patient with me. I am grateful for the privilege to be involved in my son's daily life. It is a joy to take my son to school in the morning, pick him up from school in the afternoon and to be one of the few fathers to volunteer in his class. It is also a joy to spend time with my daughter every day, watching her play and enjoying the moments with her.

The pursuit for a balanced life has led me to understand that all my striving of the past decade was merely an effort to make an existence but not really living. I was too busy to notice all the wonders that God has placed around me. I had been in a state of constant striving but never arriving. This is because I could never sit still or be at peace to enjoy even a simple present moment. My mind kept on thinking about the past and planning for the future. It had to take losing a job to realize that the abundant life is truly in the present.

For the first time, I understand what it means to be a human "being" as opposed to a human "doing." As I am learning to put more attention on the present, everything I do now is taking on more meaning. This new way of living has allowed me to be a better husband, father, and servant to our spiritual community. Most of all, living life in the present has allowed me to experience God in everything I do. This new spiritual awareness allows me to take my daily ordinary life – sleeping, eating, caring for my family – and place it before God as an offering. I am embracing all that God has given to me each day and I am ready to respond when He calls.