

華倫敦中華基督教會
Chinese Church in London

Autumn Baptism Celebration 2022

Youth & English Ministry



Testimonies

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy universal church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

Romans 6:4–11

⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

ANNA CHENG

Ignite Youth Group Croydon Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

Coming to Christ wasn't a 180° change for me. It was years of seed-planting, doubt, curiosity and feeding. To come to Christ means there should be life before Christ... right? Except for me, it felt like there never really was a before. I grew up in a Christian family – I'd never known life without God or any other way of living. But at the same time, I didn't know God either, and this way of living didn't feel like something I'd chosen. I wasn't sure if it was for me. This was until I had to choose.

In 2021, one of my new year's goals was 'to be closer to God'... which I added at the bottom of all my other goals as an afterthought. Who knew this small afterthought would have been such a catalyst for what was to come? As it was Covid times, the way of life I'd known was gone. So I turned to the one thing that I did know – God. My goal 'to be closer to God', eventually evolved to be 'in pursuit of God'. I didn't know what would happen, but the plan was to pursue Him and hope that it would eventually fall into place.

My pursuit was slow; first, it was attending weekly online Church, then it was attending the extra Christmas or Easter services. When we went back to in-person church, it was the first time I had Christian friends who I could talk to about being a Christian as a youth. I had always found it hard to trust people and make friends, but I found that in church, it was so easy. I didn't even think much about it until I realised. For the first time, I also had a relationship with leaders and I had someone older who I could go to for guidance. I had never had that before. I also joined the worship team and started serving.

In my pursuit of God, I allowed God to pursue me as well. I accepted when I was asked to join bible study, or when I was asked to have weekly one-on-ones with my leader. Admittedly, I'd forgotten about my pursuit of God until recently this summer at the end of PHAT Camp where I had the opportunity to serve as a small group leader. My own youth leader shared with me afterwards that she was encouraged to see how I pursued my small group just like how God pursues me. I think to me, this was confirmation that I had pursued God, and that it was worth it.

I hope then, for those of you who are doubting or unsure, that this will encourage you to also take your own pursuit of God. You will have moments of doubt – as we believers all inevitably do, but you will also have moments of clarity. Clarity that it is a pursuit worth taking.

HANNAH CHEUNG

Ignite Youth Group Croydon Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

There has always been one word that I could never understand in Christianity. I've read about this particular word in so many bible passages, heard it being repeated in so many worship songs, and seen it being referenced in so many talks at Ignite youth group and yet I could never truly understand its meaning. Or in better words, I thought I could never experience what it really meant even though I grew up going to church my whole life. And that word is 'peace' – but more specifically the peace of God.

I used to think that peace was only attainable if I was able to control every aspect of my life. So, I did just that. From staying up revising for meaningless end-of-topic tests, to planning out every hour and minute of my day, I never once thought about talking about the burden of my anxieties to even my closest friends let alone to God who I thought at that time would never listen.

The only times I would pray back then was for selfish reasons and I think some students would relate to this. When it's ten minutes before a big test, you're in the toilets and you're like "God, I know last time I prayed to get 100% and ended up with 60% but this time I really really want to get a good mark" and then you end up getting 50% in that test. This situation kept repeating like an old stand-up comedy routine and there were days when my meticulously crafted timetable fell to pieces, when it was 4am and the printer ran out of ink to print out my homework due first period that day and all hope in myself and God had run dry.

What I didn't know was that the anxiety and worry from these moments kept snowballing over the years without an outlet to be released. I thought that all these moments made me more resilient and by the end of A levels failure and losing to the perfect grades of the rest of my peers became almost like second nature. But losing in academics is only temporary. After getting a 50% you can always tell yourself "it's okay, next time I will do better". Losing in real life, however, most of the time there are no do-overs.

That's what I found out when I encountered the first loss I had no control over. My phone was stolen on the street and I had spent that night sleepless with anxious thoughts taking over my mind. My previous life motto had always been "ignorance is bliss" but I couldn't ignore what I had lost compared to a loss on a piece of paper.

My heart felt like it was being physically crushed from all the worry and unease but these feelings were not unfamiliar. The same anxiety, stress and fear were the same emotions felt by myself in the past when I walked out of that toilet stall to go into that

exam hall, the same person who also banged on that broken printer in desperation. However, I thought to myself, what if I could do something different this time? What if I tried trusting in God just this once?

So, I did just that. All these what-ifs went through my mind when I went to find my iPhone and I thought that if I could do anything differently it would be to change my reaction. Instead of being angry or disappointed, I wanted my message to whoever held my phone at that moment to be from God and so I typed into the message box "to thief, God bless you".

After I did that I experienced the most peaceful sleep. I never understood what peace and especially the peace of God meant but I knew at that moment it was as incomprehensible yet wonderful as all the Bible quotes, worship songs and talks had mentioned. From then on I knew I had to ditch my lifelong motto of "ignorance is bliss" because I couldn't keep ignoring God and his presence in my life any longer.

I realised I had found true bliss that I couldn't find in this temporary world but in having an everlasting relationship with God that is worth more than an infinite amount of iPhones. I finally understood that all those long nights of worry and struggle, when I thought that God couldn't help at all, were all leading to one moment. The moment when I finally realised He is my outlet and that I can 'cast all [my] anxiety on Him' (1 Peter 5:7). So, that's my new motto and I know I will inevitably encounter more situations of loss, anxiety and worry in the future but I also realised that God really did answer my prayer from back then. He gives us all 100% of His love, forgiveness, peace and so much more which is, in my opinion, more worth it than anything else in the world and far better than full marks.

STEPHEN CHEUNG

Youth 4 Christ Soho Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

Hello everybody, my name is Stephen. I'm 21 years old and I love my family. I've always been part of CCiL Soho growing up. From the old building by Leicester Square to the new building by 7 Dials, I've seen my church grow around me. Of course, just like any child who attended church, I went because my parents drove me to church and so I followed them. I went to Kids Church and Youth 4 Christ when I was younger and now I'm in the student fellowship 360, so throughout all the stages of my life I've been taught about God. I was never really interested in the Bible and having a relationship with God back then and didn't pay attention or listen to what the leaders said. I became numb to the teachings and sermons, and nothing really stayed with me. Those who know me, know that I'm immature, inappropriate, dumb, and just annoying. I never had a major stressful event in my life where God's transforming me and found God in my life or experience God's miracle before. But I was able to start and grow a relationship with him and in that, mature as a person and most importantly as a Christian.

Before God entered my life, I wasn't a very loving person. I wasn't very loving to those around me and to myself as well. I was both judgemental and insecure, which looking back on it now, the two corresponded with each other. I was judgemental in the sense that I was very selective in who I wanted to be associated with both outside and inside of church. If I didn't like that person, whether that was based on appearance, personality or even what other people said about them, I would choose to distance myself from them. Almost to the point of looking down on them. It was bad and I am ashamed of it. This was until I read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.' This was during a group daily devotion when I was in Croatia for a short-term mission trip. I have read this verse countless times before, and it's also well known, I'm sure you know it as well. But it hit differently this time because I was also able to see it within the Roma kids who we served, where they loved us indiscriminately. Which was funny because I was supposed to be sharing God's love to them but instead, I experienced God's love through them.

Since then, it changed the way I saw love. I started to put in the effort of loving the people around me just as God has for me, reminding myself and holding myself accountable when I don't. I started to look past my judgements, not letting it dictate who I want to associate with and making sure I'm not just being polite but to

genuinely love them as a person. I got to know God a little bit better and began to seek a relationship with God.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm currently in 360 which is our church's student fellowship, where we do bible study and discuss our faith. Looking back, I can see how God has placed people in my life, and how they were able to influence me. The people around me especially the 360 leaders helped push me to become a better Christian. Whenever unwholesome words came out of my mouth, which happens a lot, the leaders would always make me refer to bible verses, specifically from Ephesians. Back then I never really understood why they were so serious about it and why they were so adamant about me not to repeat my unwholesome remarks. In my mind, the unwholesome comments were just a joke since I've never meant them to be taken seriously so I thought that they were being weird about it all. This happened quite often where they would correct me and challenge me, and I've always thought nothing of it. But as time went on, I began to understand why the leaders were calling me out on the unwholesome things I say. I realised that I wasn't reflecting a Christian way of living, I wasn't showing who God was through my actions and words even if I meant it as a joke. This realisation was very gradual, it took a lot of discussions, bible verses and patience with the leaders for me to finally understand it. Even though it felt like a chore whenever they ask me to do something, in the end it really did help me to build a relationship with God.

If you asked me if I wanted to serve in church, back then, I would've said no and not even think twice about it. But now I've begun to see myself pray more and wanting to serve more in church, with the intention of God in my heart and not with an empty one like I did before. God really did bless me with great people and leaders around me who pushed me in becoming a Christian who should be serving God with my life.

Honestly, I'm still immature and my flesh still sins. But the foundations of my life are now built around God. As it says in Ephesians 3:17-18: 'so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.'

COCO KWAN

New Soho Congregation, English Ministry

Having grown up in a Christian household, I attended Sunday School weekly, learning about Jesus and the miracles he performed. During my early teens, a youth group leader asked after worship “do you actually understand/believe the lyrics you are singing?”. As I reflected upon his question, I realised that despite attending church for the majority of my life, I attended because it became a routine, rather than because of my belief in God. I simply just accepted as my parents believed but I never experienced God and to me, bible stories were fiction, just like any other book I borrowed from the library.

Throughout my mid-teen years, I was heavily influenced by social media and the internet. Many of my values stemmed from what other people on the internet were saying and it was around this time that I stopped attending church. I would seek validation from strangers on the internet and the amount of engagement on my twitter and tumblr pages boosted my pride to the point where my ego became inflated. Towards the end of year 13, I fell out with my friend group and looking back, I believe that this is when God started to work in me and open my eyes to the lifestyle I had adopted.

University was a fresh start for me. My parents encouraged me to start attending church again and so I tried out student fellowship at church. It was there that I met people who were so loving and they encouraged me to explore Christianity. Slowly, I found myself opening up to God and spending more of my time reading the Bible. I spent a week in the Welsh Countryside as part of an annual retreat for second year students. We were completely disconnected from the outside world with no wifi or signal. Our days were filled with worship, bible study and fellowship. During that week, I found myself exploring who God was for myself and experienced the power of prayer – laying down all my fears and worries to God. It was as if a weight had lifted off my chest and I felt God’s presence fill me in a way I had never imagined possible.

I graduated during the pandemic and went through a tough year of job hunting. My indecisiveness left me not knowing what career I wanted to pursue. I applied for all different kinds of jobs, waiting for God to open a door for me. My mum would always tell me growing up “you do your best and God will do the rest”. I was doing my best – and I started to get frustrated at God. Why were no opportunities coming up despite all the hard work and effort I was putting in? I constantly compared myself to friends who were landing jobs left, right and centre and I struggled to see where God was in all of this.

It is only with hindsight that you really see God's plan and His timing is truly perfect. During my time of unemployment, I served in a ministry called the Hope Mail Initiative which sends out mail to recipients all around the world, reminding them of/introducing them to the hope that we have in Jesus. Through this season of my life, I witnessed God working through our small team, uniting us in our mission and for the first time in a long time, I felt my heart on fire for God. It was incredible to see God use us to reach people in countries across the world and how He would always provide when we were short on funds. God showed me that when we do not try to take control of our own lives, but surrender it all to Him and trust Him, He will provide.

Comparison is still something I struggle with to this day. While preparing for baptism, I wondered if I was being baptised too late compared to others who also grew up in a christian household. But ultimately I am reminded that God has a plan for each and every single one of us and there is no proper timeline for life. If God looks after the birds in the sky, how much more does He love and care for us? God is so good and we are so undeserving of His grace. My identity is in Christ, and it is not defined by my career, wealth or any other worldly measures of success. I will continue to live surrendering my life to God.

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to the ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:11-14).

VICTOR LEE

New Soho Congregation, English Ministry

I used to be a person with a positive mindset. But when I grew up, I realised that hopelessness and stress replaced this part of me. At that time, I couldn't even make jokes or put a smile on my face.

That was the darkest hour in my life and I almost gave up my dream and everything. Those bad tempers almost ruined car design, sports life, and relationship. I was thinking about doing the last dance in my dream, quitting everything and being a nobody, like leaving the whole world.

But God pulled me back to the game and gave me a chance to know him and his word. God worked on me, and he removed every anxiety and destructive emotion. Also, he restored me with hope, joy and power. He arranged for a few mentors to guide me and show me opportunities.

Now he brings me to baptism, and I believe in him and accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I believe he will get me to where he has planned for me to go. Amen!

CALEB LIM

ALIVE Youth Group Hammersmith Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

As many people who were lucky enough to grow up in the church, I was attending church pretty much since I was born, but a lot like many kids we don't really grasp the full picture of what we're being taught since we're so young. As a young kid growing up in CCiL Hammersmith I remember being very against coming to church as many are since I viewed it as something I didn't like to do. There was a period where I was being disruptive in worship and had to get pulled out and talked to, I just didn't get it. Eventually I managed to quieten down and just bid my time with friends

Going through my early teen years I think the camps was important to get me thinking more into Christianity as something to be embraced, even when at first getting forced to go I was reluctant. I think God let me see the joy of Christianity through camps and my time at ALIVE Youth Group in Hammersmith. It was around the time of my early teens that I was able to see the works of God in my life through the prayer of getting through secondary school and my friends and leaders in church. It was about here that I started to accept Jesus in my life, but this would only be the start. Not much happened after this point, camp would come round, and I would feel great with nothing much more after I didn't really progress my relationship with Jesus and knowledge as much as I would have liked.

Ending secondary school there was a lot of things on my mind, everyone is concerned about A Levels of course which was something that I prayed for, but more specifically for me I was concerned with the uncertainty of going to serve Singapore National Service, I would be leaving everything in the UK for 2 years and I really needed help. For the months leading up to my departure it's all my prayer requests would be, from everyone all around me I know was praying on it. But before I had even started praying on it, I found out God had already put his blessings on me and set his plan into motion, having a special physical disability I was medically graded PES E9 the lowest possible without being unable to serve. This suited me well as I could have less demanding training, less physically demanding job scope exactly what I was praying and hoping for. I managed to find a church group very quickly and was welcomed in so nicely, the fellowship experience was great to help me get me accustomed to another country, as outside of church I didn't have any friends, so it really was my home in fellowship.

I'm so thankful that my prayers could be answered and more with where I landed after my posting, a 1 in a million National Service experience, I had wanted to be an Admin Specialist which is what the best people doing my course would get but I fell short, however and I was disheartened what I didn't know was God was leading me

somewhere better, I got placed perfectly in my posting that it was really a miracle that I could enjoy National Service so much. Despite all this still yet I gave back nothing to God, I had a good time at fellowship but the teaching at that church didn't touch or challenge me and it would only be when I would return to the UK would be my next step in faith.

Coming to 360 Student Fellowship, I didn't know what to expect but I know it really led me to challenge my faith and think about bible study and fellowship again. I know a massive change occurred within me to really shoot my faith forward to be more developed with purpose and knowledge of scripture. I read the whole New Testament as a promise to my small group leader, and we did bible plans out of group too – a new era for me. The fellowship and blessings experienced while part of this fellowship is immense, I could feel more than ever God's love for me being poured out through the people surrounding me, made me come outside and look at the Bible in new ways I had never done before and saw my relationship with God come up through the year.

When it came to serving God, I had never become a leader before or thought I could be one but I knew that I wanted to give back and with development of my character of my time at 360 I signed up to help during The Next Generation Ministry's Youth Easter Camp 2022 and it was great but more importantly later in the year it would see me serving as a small group leader at PHAT Camp 2022. As a small group leader, I really prayed to be empowered through him and he would prepare me well. I know that my prayers were answered well throughout camp with the training, even though I had been on the edge of not going, I could sense was placed in the right place with the right people all thanks to God's work in the people around me convincing me I should sign up. It really felt good to be able to give back to God and the community I was brought up in that really stirred up my faith all those years ago.

Even though I can't be perfect in life I hope can bring it all back to him in my life as I know he has done it before and will do it again. My story is of someone growing up in church who was lost but managed through God to catch Jesus's love again and again despite not deserving it. I've made many mistakes and but am trying to give back to God who saved me and the community that brought me to where I am now.

CHARLIE LO

Youth 4 Christ, Soho

I grew up in a Christian family and started my journey at Kids Church in Hammersmith. Every week, I'd wake up early to go to church, say the same prayer before eating and I didn't think much of it as expected from a child of that age. As I got older my family joined the church in Soho, however, my routine started to get severely disrupted by Chinese school and swimming club; I could only attend half of youth and could not attend the service after due to swim training. Eventually, youth was more like a social club than a time of worship. My prayers were meaningless, more like phrases I recited due to pure laziness, and worship became optional on my priorities list.

Upon my final year of Chinese school, the lesson time no longer overlapped with youth. Additionally, I stopped county swimming to focus more on my education as a result a space emerged allowing me to attend youth with no distractions. However, when listening to the preaching videos, small group sharings and questions I paid little attention to any of it; now and then I would nod pretending to pay attention but when asked a question 'could you repeat please' became an automatic response. Furthermore, all my school friends are atheists and the church community at school was practically non-existent. Consequently, I only thought of God on Sunday and then forgot for the rest of the week as my school life resumed.

As my GCSE final exams approached, I started to pray more seriously but due to the wrong reasoning. I thought 'what was there to lose if I prayed for a couple of minutes the night before my exam' but I knew I did not put much faith in God. However, Easter camp changed my views drastically, and I felt a turning point in my relationship with God. From my subjects and extra reading over the theory of evolution combined with my atheistic social life, I had contested beliefs between Christianity (which I grew up with) and atheism (a belief my school life had nurtured me in). By dedicating a period of my life to God, it allowed me to truly listen to how God changed others' lives and surround myself with church family, allowing me to identify my flaws which distanced my relationship with God. I particularly like the bible verse Ecclesiastes 3:7 (from Youth Easter Camp 2022) "there is a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak." There is a time for everything and it may require a longer time, but patience pays off.

Now, from experience and reflections, I finally understand a closer truth of being a Christian and I still have a long journey to travel; what better way to start that journey than by being reborn in Christ, hence that's why I want to be baptised. In summary, I did not experience any extreme life-changing experience involving the Lord, but I have re-established the path in Christ and have put all my faith into God. Proverbs 19:21: "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." Ultimately, it doesn't matter where or how far you stray from God. He always has a plan, a blessing for you and me.

BRENDON LUO

Ignite Youth Group Croydon Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

I came to know Jesus through a friend. Before I was saved, before I knew Jesus, I used to call myself Christian, yet I didn't know Jesus, nor why he died on the cross, fun fact I actually studied the Quran a lot more in my Religious studies, than the Bible in secondary school. I really had a false idea of who God is, and I grew up in a "Christian" household that believed in God, yet we never gave glory to God and we didn't practise Christianity, so it wasn't really a part of the family, only to be used as a label for when people would ask me if I was religious.

Believe it or not, I used to mock Christians. One of my closest friends, John, used to talk about Jesus and about his Bible studies, and considering we were in secondary school, I never understood how a relationship with Jesus would be fun or necessary. It was not until around I turned 17, that I truly felt lost in my life, and felt like there was a hole in my heart. I tried to fill it with many things, but in the end it just left me more empty, and I didn't really know who to turn to. And so as a last resort, I cried out to God, and I felt a peace I can't really put into words. After that experience, I remembered my friend John was Christian so we had a lot of conversations about God and the Bible through messenger and WhatsApp. These conversations piqued my interest and I started reading the New Testament through a bunch of screenshots that my friend, John sent me.

I never understood the parables of Jesus still, and I was completely confused about why Jesus died on the cross. However, I was blessed enough to have my friend who guided me through the Scripture. Even though I didn't understand it straight away, he was patient with me, and I wanted to seek God. I remember John kept telling me to pray so that I could understand and he prayed for me. I remember reading Mark chapter 2, where Jesus was sitting with the sinners, the teachers at that time asked him why Jesus spends his time with sinners, and what Jesus had said completely just made everything about the gospels make sense to me, he said "it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick". In my mind I started looking at humans as the sick, and Jesus dying on the cross as the cure, and Jesus' humiliation and death, allowed us humans to be forgiven. Of course my analogy still wasn't perfect but things started to make sense.

I remember I was looking for wisdom, to further understand what I had just learned, and there was this analogy about love, how it is not a feeling, but instead it is something we do despite what we feel – Jesus didn't feel great on the cross, but he still went to the cross despite the pain he had to suffer. Upon understanding these analogies, I truly started feeling so grateful towards Jesus, and made me want to

develop my relationship with him even more.. Slowly afterwards, I found Ignite Youth Group in Croydon and 360 Student Fellowship through my other Christian friend called Jonathan, and the whole Bible slowly started to click with me, and everything started to make sense. Looking back now, I am really grateful for God, for putting so many brothers and sisters on my path which have led me to have so many joyful experiences with newfound friends and also helping me understand God's love for me, as well as being a part of the body of Christ.

LEO NICHOLLS

Ignite Youth Group, Croydon

I began attending church at a very young age, being brought to CCiL Croydon at the age of 4, where I still worship to this day. Being in one church from such a young age for such a long time definitely brought about complacency where going to church felt less like worshipping and being taught about God; more just something I did simply because I thought I had to, much like school. I, like many others, attended many youth camps before lockdown, where I experienced what a lot of people call spiritual highs, and these made me believe that my lukewarm faith was sufficient, it was a red herring to true faith, bringing me faux satisfaction and in turn a languid complacency.

This complacency persisted throughout my life, consistently taking the 'easy' route, both in life and in faith. I was through and through what some might consider a 'lukewarm Christian'. This finally dawned on me over lockdown, where the lack of regular service made me realise that up until then the only reason I attended church was because of habit and a sense of obligation. Over time I stopped attending online services and grew distant in my faith and from God. This low in my faith coincided with a very low point in my life, seeing little hope and struggling to find motivation in everything I did.

Coming back to church from lockdown I was cynical, my faith had weakened a lot over lockdown, and I had a lot of doubts. But through this fresh start of sorts, I was able to relearn what I had known about christianity and see it through a new lens. Over time, through both attending service and serving in church I found my own reason for faith, and developed my own relationship with God; rather than what I previously had which was a proxy faith, one built on others expectations and my own misunderstanding of my own faith. My cynicism towards Christianity and my own pride no longer got in the way of my relationship with God and for the first time in my life I began 'handing the wheel to God'. Putting God in the lead rather than myself brings its own comfort, further reassuring me in my faith, and giving me the confidence of knowing that whatever is down the line for me, it's all in God's hands.

The most notable turning point for me was definitely the Youth Easter Camp in 2022, where I was able to truly evaluate my faith and in particular the subject of 'identity,' all culminating in a better understanding of faith, and how faith isn't just my knowledge of God, but my personal relationship with God. Since the baptism in summer it has always been my intention to be baptised, as I believe that God is among us, and that through him I am not forsaken, both in life and at the end of my life. That's why I want to be baptised, both to realise that faith and the relationship I have with God, and to take this step in my continuous walk with God.

HANNAH SZETO

360 Student Fellowship

I struggled quite a bit writing this testimony as I didn't think I had an adequately miraculous story to tell. I've heard how people have come to God through immense life-altering struggles, and I am so inspired by these testimonies, but for me, growing up in a Christian family, I have had a relatively easy life in which God has occupied a constant, yet distant, part of my life.

During my middle and high school years spent outside of Hong Kong, I did not have my parents to take me to church every Sunday and I could not attend the church I grew up in. I felt myself drifting from God, and I let myself drift farther and farther away from His love. In the first term of my final year in high school, I was stressed and overwhelmed with anxiety about university applications and, more broadly, my purpose and direction in life. I was restless, constantly upset, could not sleep (and anyone who knows me knows that I can fall asleep at any given moment), and nothing I did seemed to help.

One night, I came across Psalm 23 again and I felt so much peace reading it. I really felt that God was speaking to me through this chapter and drawing me closer to Him, reminding me that He is the source of my strength and that I just have to trust in Him and His plan for me. I started to pray a lot more and read the Bible with intent as opposed to just skimming a chapter before bed and going to sleep. At that point, I still had no clue where I would end up for university and the same uncertainties about my future were still there, but as I prayed more and leaned on God more, these uncertainties did not plague me as they had before because now I knew in my heart that I had God to guide me.

I feel very thankful for the CCiL community and the 360 Student Fellowship for giving me a church family in university, for constantly reflecting God's love to me, and supporting me wherever I am in my spiritual journey. I'm excited to be baptised and declare my faith, continuing to grow in my relationship with God and transforming my life to be more like Jesus.

STEVEN TO

New Soho Congregation, English Ministry

I never grew up in a Christian household, my family aren't Christian so it was difficult knowing who Jesus was growing up. I never experienced what it was like to pray nor worship God until I was in my teenage years. The first time God reached out to me was on Saturday at Chinese school. The school would teach Bible studies as an extra curriculum and I remember being interested on an intellectual level but never on personal one. This carried on for a while and along the way I felt my life was quite empty, as if I am missing something in life. My youth leader at the time, Simon, invited me to come to church.

He introduced me to everyone and I met many friendly people, not just from one church but from all sorts of congregations sharing their own experience. I wasn't exactly sure where I stand since I wasn't a Christian but I did gain a sense of comfort and peace going to church learning more about God. As time went on, I felt an overwhelming desire to read the Bible and seek God. I wanted to be more like Jesus, I wanted to be good and do good.

Every Sunday I would study the Bible to learn about God and try to understand why He does so much for us. I wanted to develop a strong relationship with God and connect with Him on a deeper level. However, the closer I was to God, the more guilty I felt because of how sinful we are as humans. I am not a holy person and most of my actions would displease God, I have been battling with sin over the years and have struggled to overcome it at times. The guilty pleasures would be around the corner pulling me down, tempting me. I would pray to God for help to overcome it but I felt ignored. I was frustrated and alone but I learnt that it wasn't God ignoring me, it was me ignoring what God was actually doing. He was transforming me slowly in a way I could never comprehend.

I once distanced myself from God and stopped going to church. Indirectly I blamed God for all my failures. I was guilty to the point where I couldn't face Him. For instance, when I didn't get into the university I wanted, I was frustrated because I thought God was being unfair. When I didn't get the job that I wanted after I graduated, I felt so hopeless and abandoned. I ended up praying to Him, and opened my Bible. The verse that stood out to me was Philippians 4:6-7: 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

All my worries were for nothing because God's plan is far greater than I could understand. He knows my cry and how I feel. No matter how distant I am, He continues to reach out and lead me back to Him. He already demonstrated that he has the power to not only change us but to also purify our hearts. No matter how rooted our sins are, the chains of sin have been broken as we continue to seek His Kingdom.

I was being pessimistic about my outlook in life but God has been working miracles all along, He never stopped believing in me and loves me even though I am sinner. I don't deserve any of this yet He continues to pour out his love by sacrificing his only Son Jesus so that we have another opportunity to be with Him in Heaven.

I am eternally thankful and want to continue to praise, worship and follow Him. Therefore I surrender myself to God to be baptised, overcome death and be resurrected in union with Jesus for the rest of my life.

SOPHIA WANG

ALIVE Youth Group Hammersmith Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

“I will build my life upon Your love, it is a firm foundation” – Build My Life by Housefires

These are the lyrics to my favourite worship song, which I first heard at Youth Easter Camp last year. I didn’t think a Christian song could ever move me like that, but it did, and I find that the lyrics bear such truth to the way Christians should live their lives.

I grew up in a Christian family but I don’t think I knew what it actually meant to be a Christian. I think the Bible was mostly drilled into me as a kid and by the time I was a teenager, although there were ups and downs, I largely felt that I did not resonate with Christianity and was very cynical of it. I disliked going to church and when I was praying or singing worship songs, my mind was always very far away. It felt forced and unnatural to me. I did not see myself having a relationship with God at all. Not only this, but I did not want one. It seemed like I had to obey so many rules, and it was not worth the effort at all. I felt I could rely on myself for happiness and so, I looked for different ways to fulfil myself. Ultimately, this did not turn out well and I did things for the wrong reasons, and made decisions that felt good only for a fleeting moment.

I would say the turning point was Easter of last year. My mum urged me to go to Youth Easter Camp, and I reluctantly signed up. I couldn’t believe that I was spending the holidays before my A-Levels going to a camp that I had no interest in. I consoled myself by arguing that I could get something out of it by meeting new people and practising my social skills before university. My expectations of it were essentially non-existent. However, I can see that God was always working, even when I pushed him away.

During the camp, I had conversations with people who I could tell truly loved God. One that stands out in particular is the one I had with a friend one night in our dorm room. She shared a couple verses from 1 Corinthians with me, which reads “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy... It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” The poetical and instructive nature of the verse stood out to me, and it felt like for the first time that Christianity could actually be applicable to my life, because no one had ever explained how the Bible could be a guide in depth like this before. She told me the power of prayer, and how relieving it was to speak to God about our worries. I knew all of this before, but having it explained by someone like this just really resonated with me. After that conversation, I allowed myself to let go of the stubbornness I felt towards Christianity, and to be more open-minded.

I think what was so great about that camp was that I was able to focus solely on seeking God because all other distractions were limited. I felt His love for me so strongly during that time as I spoke to many Christians who, although I barely knew, encouraged and prayed for me so unconditionally. I learnt what it meant to “build my life” upon God’s love, because it truly is a firm foundation – that if I went through life rooted in Christ, everything would be so much better. I think all of my worries were and are linked to the materialism of this world, and when I offer them all up to God, I feel so much peace.

However, being immersed in a Christian community where you are entirely able to be God-focused without any distractions is a luxury. Going about my day-to-day life definitely sometimes pushes God to the back of my priority list, but I find I always go back to him as I have experienced what it means to be free in Christ and I never want to give that up. I think me a year ago would be very shocked to hear of how strongly I feel for God now. I see him working in every aspect of my life and I am constantly rejoicing in his name. Although It can be really difficult sometimes to stay rooted in Christ as Christian values just do not align with those of this world, I see clearly that a relationship with God is what I want. I feel blessed that God has placed people in my life to help me on this journey.

ADAYA WILKIE

Ignite Youth Group, Croydon

I've grown up in a Christian family my whole life, and honestly, I can't remember a time when I didn't know who Jesus was and how much he loved me. Ever since I can remember I've loved going to church every Sunday, doing Bible Studies with my friends, and screaming worship music in the living room with my sister. Loudly.

So I guess what I'm trying to get at here is that I've always BELIEVED in God. Like, there's never really been any doubt in my mind that God DOES exist, and that he loves me, but looking back on the early stages of my life, I've begun to realise that I haven't always TRUSTED him. I mean, for ages my life was super simple and easy and everything so I guess I was just never faced with any circumstances in which I had to be like, "okay, I am choosing to put my trust in God at this moment because I know he knows what's best for me etc."

In the past two years however, me and my family have gone through some pretty difficult things, and there have been long stretches of times where I had no idea what was going to happen next, or what continent I would be on a week from now. It was during these times that I realised how important trusting God actually is. I really began to notice a change in my attitude towards God and my future. Instead of worrying about what I could be doing to change my current circumstances (when really, there was nothing I could have done anyways), I just simply decided to leave it in God's hands.

Some people may wonder why on earth someone would WANT to trust God, and honestly, the best answer I can come up with is why not? Why wouldn't you want to entrust your heart and soul to a God who loves you more than anyone else ever will and who only wants the best for you?

Today, as I get baptized, I pray that God will reveal even more of his character and plan for me, so that I may continue to strive to live in accordance with his purpose.

JONATHAN ZHONG

Ignite Youth Group Croydon Graduate – 360 Student Fellowship

Hi, I am Jonathan, and this is my testimony!

So first let me share a little background information about me. I was born and raised in China and moved to the UK with my family at the age of 12. Growing up in China I never really got the chance to know or learn about God until I moved to the UK, so I guess since when I was young, I didn't really have much knowledge about God or who God is. After I moved to the UK my family and I were eventually invited to go to a CCiL in Croydon. Subsequently, I started to attend the youth service and from there my knowledge of God and understanding of who God really is has slowly been built up day by day. However, my relationship with God back then was not intimate because I wasn't a Christian, or should I say I hadn't experienced God at that time.

As time has flown by, many things have happened that have led me into seeking God more and God has really shown me his love through those experiences which I am very thankful for until the present day. I remember there were times back in secondary school where I felt lonely because I couldn't understand or speak English fluently, so it was hard for me to make friends throughout my early stage of my secondary school life. But it was just at the times when I feel much left out or outcasted, I prayed to God and uplifted my stress and loneliness to him, then soon after, God really shined his grace and love into my life, he provided me with the opportunities to meet a very nice group of people at school through sports whom I am still in contact with even after these many years of graduation and being able to grow up with them was just such a delightful and blessed experience.

Other than my best friends from school, I'm also very thankful for everyone that God has put into my life like people from 360 fellowship, church, and university. The recent short term mission trip to Croatia has really strengthened and grown my faith and spirit in God through journeying with God and his people. From the Croatia mission trip, we as a team have really experienced God's grace and love once again from the interactions with the Roma people and his help for the team during our preparation as everything wouldn't have been smooth running without God's amazing work.