



# NEW LIFE BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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*"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)*

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**LORD'S DAY 29 JANUARY 2017**

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

	<i>Morning Service – 11am</i>	<i>Evening Service – 4pm</i>
<i>Prelude</i>	<i>The Lord Is in His Holy Temple</i>	
<i>Call to Worship</i>	Psalm 84:9-12	Isaiah 9:6-7
<i>Opening Hymn *</i>	RHC 83 – <i>"This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made"</i>	RHC 556 – <i>"How Sweet the Name of Jesus"</i>
<i>Opening Prayer *</i>	Jonathan Kim	Jonathan Kim
<i>Gloria Patri *</i>	<i>Glory Be to the Father</i>	---
<i>Nicene Creed</i>	Nicene Creed	---
<i>Responsive Reading</i>	Psalm 48	---
<i>Second Hymn *</i>	<i>Psalm 48 verses 10-14</i> (to the tune of Manoaah, RHC 201)	---
<i>Announcements &amp; Memory Verse</i>	Jonathan Kim	Jonathan Kim
<i>Tithes &amp; Offerings &amp; Doxology *</i>	RHC 21 – <i>"O God Our Help in Ages Past"</i>	---
<i>Scriptural Text</i>	Malachi 4:1-3	John 21:23-24
<i>Pastoral Prayer</i>	Dr Carl Martin	Dr Carl Martin
<i>Sermon Message</i>	<i>Mighty Help, Living Hope</i>	<i>Transitions</i>
<i>Closing Hymn *</i>	RHC 406 – <i>"Who Is on the Lord's Side?"</i>	RHC 567 – <i>"Follow Me"</i>
<i>Benediction/3-Fold Amen *</i>	Dr Carl Martin	Dr Carl Martin
<i>Postlude</i>	<i>The Lord Bless You</i>	---

\* Congregation Stands

### THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE

The Lord is in His holy temple,  
The Lord is in His holy temple:  
Let all the earth keep silence,  
Let all the earth keep silence before Him -  
Keep silence, keep silence before Him. Amen.

### DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

### GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world  
without end. Amen, Amen.

### THE LORD BLESS YOU

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord lift His countenance upon you,  
and give you peace, and give you peace;  
The Lord make His face to shine upon you,  
And be gracious unto you, be gracious,  
The Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen.

***"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." - Proverbs 4:23***

# **CHINESE NEW YEAR – A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**Rev Jack Sin - Maranatha BP Church**

## **Introduction**

The symbols, traditions and festivals of the Chinese New Year are deeply rooted in about 5,000 years of human civilisation, culture, mores and beliefs. The Chinese New Year lasts for 15 days and most Chinese households will observe traditional celebrations and practices.

Unfortunately, some of our Chinese New Year celebrations focus too much on our temporal earthly life and tangible success. Chinese Christians, much as they value their culture, must seek to understand its symbolism and be careful to avoid religious elements that do not accord with Holy Scripture.

We must put God first, before our culture, while at the same time honouring God in the enjoyment of some elements of our cultural heritage. We must not contaminate our celebration with materialistic or religious beliefs and practices that are unedifying or displeasing to God.

Let us consider a few of these areas of concern.

## **Chinese Lunar Calendar**

The Chinese generally have adopted the Western calendar since 1911, but the lunar calendar, based on astrology and the cycles of the moon, is still used for festive occasions such as the Chinese New Year. Astrology is one of China's most ancient philosophies - perhaps more than 3,000 years old. It claims to predict what will happen to people, countries, economic trends, conflicts and much more.

Traditionally, Chinese dating methods were cyclical - as in the method of recording years by the twelve animal signs. Every year is assigned an animal name or 'sign' according to a repeating cycle - Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Boar - so that the same animal 'sign' reappears every twelve years.

## **Astrology**

One Chinese legend attributes the animal signs to the semi-mythical Yellow Emperor in 2637 BC. According to another legend, Buddha summoned all the animals before he departed from Earth but only twelve came to bid him farewell. As a reward, he named a year after each one in the order that they arrived.

There is a superstitious belief that the animal ruling a person's birth year exercises a profound influence on his or her life. Horoscopes have developed around the animal signs, much like monthly horoscopes in the West relating to astronomical signs. For example, a Chinese horoscope might predict that a person born in the Year of the Horse would be 'cheerful, popular, and love to compliment others'.

These religious horoscopes, though popular, are dangerous superstitions. The practice of astrology is clearly condemned in the Bible - Isaiah 47:12-13 reads, *'Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries ... Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee'*.

The occultic use of charts, or the worship of celestial bodies like the moon, sun and stars to predict behaviour, businesses, relationships or the future, is strictly forbidden in the Bible (2 Kings 23:5-7). And that includes consulting a geomancer or feng shui master, bomoh or shaman as well (Deuteronomy 18:10-13).

As Christians, let us be careful not to propagate, in the name of culture, superstitious practices that are clearly disallowed or even condemned in the Word of God (Leviticus 19:26-31).

## **Greetings and Ang Pows**

In wishing one another a blessed new year, ang pows - red packets containing money - are given to children, parents, grandparents or others. It is good to show love and filial piety, and giving ang pows is acceptable as long as we understand them as gestures of love and appreciation rather than symbols of an unhealthy preoccupation with wealth.

The colour 'red', which to many people represents gold (while some said it represent the colour of blood) is indifferent for Christians - who should not be enamoured with materialistic prosperity, wealth and worldly success. In our Chinese New Year greetings, it is not appropriate for Christians to wish people Gong Xi Fa Cai, which refers to tangible or financial wealth for that person. Wishes for peace in the new year, or eternal joy from God, are more appropriate.

We have reason to be joyful because we are blessed of God by His saving mercies and pardoning grace. We have Christ as Lord and Saviour of our lives - who died for us, redeemed us and rose from the dead, having destroyed sin and death, and brought us everlasting life. For the Christian, only Christ is the basis of our hopes in the new year.

Some hang paper pineapples in their homes because in Chinese the pineapple is called ong lai, meaning 'prosperity comes to our homes'. Others put the Chinese word for prosperity upside down on the wall 'to bring in the prosperity'.

During Chinese New Year also, some older folks resort to gambling with cards or mah-jong, while pictures of gold bars are displayed to symbolise prosperity and wealth. All such practices should be avoided by Christian families because they reflect an ungodly covetous spirit (Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:6-10) inconsistent with Christian contentment.

Rather, as Deuteronomy 8:18 says, we should *'remember the Lord [our] God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day'*.

## **House Spring Cleaning**

On the first day of Chinese New Year, one superstition demands that we should not sweep the house. Some even hide their brushes because brooms and sweeping are all 'bad luck' - they will sweep out the 'prosperity' and the 'good luck for the year'. Conversely, spring cleaning may signify a

new beginning, the false idea of getting rid of the 'bad luck' of the previous year - an idea which Christians cannot accept. But the proper stewardship of the home is a good concept with the annual cleaning done with no superstition attached.

Some also say that we should only speak sweet words and eat nian gao (sweet cakes, fried with eggs and flour). These are supposed to sweeten the mouth of the 'kitchen god' who returns to heaven at the New Year - according to popular folklore.

Other superstitious Chinese take care not to break anything on the first day of the New Year because it will bring 'bad luck' for the rest of the year.

All such superstitions are meaningless and should be avoided by Christians.

## **Lion Dance and Firecrackers**

Another Chinese New Year tradition is the lion and dragon dance - considered to bring good luck because the prancing lions and dancing dragons chase away the 'bad omen' in businesses or shops. Most, if not all, such practices have their origins in Buddhist temples and martial arts groups which are religious in nature.

The use of noisy fire crackers - which by tradition is intended to ward off the evil monster nian - is a thing of the past for Singapore, but is still widely practised in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

It is banned in Singapore because firecrackers have caused accidents and even fatal fires. But even without these safety considerations the practice has unchristian origins and Christians should avoid it.

## **Family Visitation**

However, we should maintain good Chinese New Year traditions - visiting families and relatives; exchanging oranges and greetings; giving ang pows for the children; and wishing God's blessings and peace to our friends and neighbours. These are meaningful social and family encounters and part of our Chinese culture which is often reciprocal in practice.

When we wish somebody a 'blessed or peaceful Chinese New Year', we need to pray for their salvation too and seek God's help to live in a manner worthy of our calling as Christians.

For us, it is a seasonal celebration of the deeper meaning of Xin Nian (new year), representing as it does a year of new opportunities to serve and glorify God. The God of the Bible is our Redeemer, the reason and foundation of our confidence and joy for the new year - *for 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

## **Biblical Direction**

There are many other relevant Scriptures we can contemplate at this season. For example, Paul advises: *'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God'* (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let us rejoice and offer praise, *'giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ'* (Ephesians 5:20).

Consider also 1 Thessalonians 5:22: *'Abstain from all appearance of evil'*. Let us avoid worshipping idols by burning incense, visiting temples, worshipping ancestors, or any other form of religious or moral compromise.

However, *'Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way'* (Romans 14:13). *'For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another'* (Galatians 5:13).

We are to remember our accountability to God and to show genuine love and concern for one another during the festive season.

## **Conclusion**

*"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness." Psalm 65:11*

Our cultural practices after we are saved must be subject to biblical injunction and divine precepts.

May our gracious Lord grant us true joy, peace, grace and hope in this Chinese New Year season, as we pray and witness for Christ to our relatives and friends with the gospel of salvation.

## ***The Nicene Creed***

We believe in one God,  
the Father Almighty,  
Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Son of God,  
begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence  
of the Father, God of God,]  
Light of Light,  
very God of very God,  
begotten, not made,  
being of one substance with the Father;  
By whom all things were made  
[both in heaven and on earth];

Who for us men, and for our salvation,  
came down and was incarnate  
and was made man;  
He suffered,  
and the third day he rose again,  
ascended into heaven;  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

Amen.

The *Nicene Creed* is a Christian statement of faith, It gets its name from the First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.), where it was initially adopted.

# WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our worship services begin promptly at 11.00 am and 4.00 pm.

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

APPOINTMENTS FOR THE WEEK			WELCOME
Weds 1st Feb	7pm	Mid-Week Outreach Bible Study	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We do hope that you have a blessed time of worship on this day.
Sat 4th Feb	4pm	Bible Study & Prayer Meeting	
Next Lord's Day	Morning Service	Evening Service	LORD'S DAY DUTIES
<b>Preacher</b>	Dr Carl Martin	Dr Carl Martin	<b><u>TODAY: 29/01/2017</u></b>
<b>Message</b>	Aren't we Forgetting Something?	His Testimony is True	<b>Chairman:</b> Jonathan
<b>Text</b>	Malachi 4:4	John 21:24	<b>Organist:</b> Anthony
NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS			<b>Pianist:</b> Joel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pre-lunch Bible Study:</b> This week, Dr Martin will continue with the study on "Building Firm Foundations".</li> <li>• <b>Pulpit Ministry:</b> Pray for Dr Martin as he serves as the minister and for the continuation of his PhD studies.</li> <li>• <b>Study of the Book of Psalms:</b> at 3pm, Dr Martin will lead a Bible Study on the book of Psalms, using the book "<i>The Flow of the Psalms</i>" by Palmer Robertson.</li> <li>• <b>Sunday Evening Video Series:</b> After Evening Service today there will be a Video Series on "<i>Mastering Your Money</i>".</li> <li>• <b>Church Maintenance Fund:</b> The Church needs to undergo some significant repairs in the coming months; a Maintenance Fund has been set up for anyone wishing to offer a love gift to assist with the costs.</li> </ul>			<b>Ushers:</b> Tom / Keene
			<b>Sunday School:</b> Hannah / Rachael
			<b>Lunch:</b> CNY Carry-In
			<b>Washing Up:</b> Volunteers
			<b>PA Crew:</b> Scott / Anthony
			<b><u>NEXT WEEK: 05/02/2017</u></b>
			<b>Chairman:</b> John / Keene
			<b>Organist:</b> Anthony
			<b>Pianist:</b> Matthew
			<b>Ushers:</b> Tom / Evelyn
			<b>Sunday School:</b> Hannah / Rachael
			<b>Lunch:</b> Hannah
			<b>Washing Up:</b> Volunteers
			<b>PA Crew:</b> Scott / Joel
<b>Worship Service Collections – Last Sunday: £644.30; Lunch: £50.00</b> <b>Church Maintenance Fund: £60</b>			<b>Church Maintenance Fund Total:</b> <b>£2,070</b>

## SHORTER CATECHISM QUESTION 51

**Q: What is forbidden in the Second Commandment?**

**A: The Second Commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images – or any other way not appointed in his Word.**

Comments:

This command forbids us: 1. To make use of images in worship; 2. To make use of any other means than those God has appointed.

Scriptural Reference:

Deuteronomy 4:15, Matthew 15:9

## MEMORY VERSE

Last Week	This Week	Next Week
"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." <b>Proverbs 16:3</b>	"He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace." <b>Proverbs 11:12</b>	"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." <b>Proverbs 19:21</b>