

Pandemic, Departure, Gap in Age Group Distribution

In Germany, there were fewer than 1,000 pandemic new cases every day since the end of June. Different states began to lift the restrictions in varying degrees. Approximately 55% of the population received the first shot of the vaccine, and about 33% of the population received both shots. The supply of vaccines in Germany has been quite tight. Fortunately, we were placed on the vaccination waiting list with our family doctor, and we actually received our shots earlier. Praise the Lord, our family will receive the second vaccine in early July and will return to Canada by the end of the month. Just in time, the Canadian government amended the entry and pandemic prevention policy; our mandatory hotel quarantine for the first three days can be exempted. During the summer vacation in Toronto, we will spend half of our time continuing to serve the congregations in Germany online, and half the time, we will be on vacation and will prepare Caleb for his university freshman year in Canada.



A day of outdoor fun in Göttingen: hiking, leek picking, picnic and Gospel leaflet distribution training.

The gradual recovery from the pandemic has brought thanksgivings and challenges in our ministry. **On one hand, physical gathering allows for more varieties in program planning. We hope to gradually restore the coherence of believers in physical gathering.** There are in-person gatherings in Göttingen and Kassel, while we must continue to conduct simultaneous online worships and Bible study groups. To share the Gospel during the pandemic, we are still taking the approach of “crossing the river by feeling the stones”. Brothers and sisters in Göttingen resumed their traditional approach on university campuses. They distributed

Gospel leaflets regularly and contacted the university in hope that an evangelist book fair could be set up again. Brothers and sisters in Kassel took the one-on-one approach to follow up with those who have shown interest in the faith. A couple in Christ creatively thought of bringing food and Gospel videos to seekers’ home, and then studied the Alpha-courses together after meal. After several weeks of “Gospel potluck”, we won over two friends for the Lord! Praise the Lord, for the power of the Gospel is not restricted by environment.



Kassel · Prayer Meeting

On the other hand, we are facing the crisis of believers leaving the church and the discontinuation of church members in different age groups. The “turnover” of believers in university towns is not a new challenge. The number of new students last year and this year had dropped dramatically especially during the pandemic. Coupled with social distancing and gathering restrictions, outreach work was greatly restricted. From 2020 to mid-2021, 15 students and 5 families chose to leave or return home due to graduation, internship, and work-related reasons. We had to farewell 3 coworkers within 10 days. Now the number of people serving at church has almost halved! If the pandemic remains unstable, international students will be less willing to participate in our programs. This will make sharing the Gospel even more difficult and the church will have large gaps in age group distribution. May God provide all kinds of channels to bring people to us, so that we can continue forward with the mission of sowing and nurturing.

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Göttingen Joint Worship – the Chinese & the German Baptist Church

In this quarter newsletter, we invited two church members to **share their blessings during the pandemic year in first person narrative.**

① Spiritual Growth during the Pandemic: A Student

Last March, the intensified risk of the pandemic in Germany led the government to implement a lockdown policy and schools were closed. I used to go to the library almost every day but had to stay at home all the time ever since. Apart from continuing to write my graduation thesis, I also thought about finding other things to do. I used to buy many books but I rarely read them. During this time, I insisted on reading every day.

After completing the Bible Study training, I was invited to become a Bible study lead. I was nervous. When I prepared for my first Bible Study, I realized that leading is completely different than participating. I spent a lot of time in preparation by myself and with my Pastor. In fact, I found that I benefited the most from the experience. My understanding of the Bible reached a new level. From that point on, I have found interest in reading the Bible, and have experienced spiritual growth as a result.

After the submission of the thesis, I had a lot more time to spare. Other than shopping and doing mini-job, my time was mostly spent sitting at home. **Since I participated in the rotation to lead Bible Study, I made sure that I read the Bible every day.** First, I read all the books in the New Testament, and discovered the wonder of God's Words. Then, I read the Book of Psalms, Proverbs, the prophetic books, and other books in the Old Testament.

I also found a new daily routine to commit several hours to reading. Other than spiritual books, I also expanded my reading to different subjects, such as: history, fictions, and technology. My reading experience revealed my past naiveness. **The more I read, the more humble I become.** Reading has become a regular habit.

I'm thankful that God allowed me to make good use of my time during the pandemic. Though I was alone, I felt

fulfilled everyday. I'm thankful that I have been given the opportunity to lead Bible Study. It definitely helped to draw me closer to God. **Now, God's Words is a necessity, like daily bread – something that I cannot do without. I recognized that my spiritual being is developing.** I'm thankful for all the books that I was able to read, the reading habit that I was able to develop, and the humility that I learned in the process.

② Spiritual Beneficiary during the Pandemic: A Mother

Over the years, we have approached several families who work in the restaurants. We couldn't regularly minister to their needs, but relied on regular visiting and short term mission team visit to evangelize. Nonetheless, God has always watched over them. We witnessed how He called them one by one, to repent, to commit, and to grow.

I have been a Christian for 20 years, but I was still a spiritual baby. Due to a lack of education, I couldn't quite understand the Bible. When I first believed, I memorized a few Bible verses. I started working in restaurants when I landed in Germany 21 years ago. I have not attended church for more than 10 years. I was in a spiritual valley, and was not living a Christian life.

After the church retreat in 2016, I made a decision to bring my three children to Göttingen Chinese Church. The travel distance was long (approximately 95km). A two-way trip took 4 to 5 hours train ride. Due to the long distance and travel time, I only attended the church once a month. In 2018, I found another Chinese church with teenage worship in German (the distance was the same as going to Göttingen). For the children's benefits, we adjusted to attending church twice a month. However, during the week, I have to work at the restaurant and could not commit to fellowships. My spiritual growth was slow.

Spiritual Thirst Fulfilled During the Pandemic: The pandemic disrupted everyone's lives. Many are fearful and scared. In fact, God's blessing has been upon me during this year. **It was as if the spiritual emptiness of many years has been satisfied fully and lovingly, much beyond what I expected.** Through the Zoom platform, I was able to participate in the weekly worship, prayer meeting, Bible study and a variety of retreats and training. God even prepared a support team for me. Although, we are located in different cities, we meet

daily – a group of 8 to 12 wives gathered online to study the Bible. We encourage, learn, and pray for each other. Praise the Lord, our time during the pandemic was put to a good use. Our sisters love Christ and desire His Words. This has helped to develop me as a Bible Study lead. Other than the sharing of Biblical knowledge, I also appreciate the sharing of lives' challenges. Raising

teenagers can be difficult, one can easily be overcome by negative emotions. Within the past several months, the group was willing to dedicate time every Saturday and pray for our next generation and our families. Using Bible verses, we remind each other not to fall into the temptation of complaints and hypercriticism.

The Pandemic Transformed The Particulars of Family Interaction: In the beginning of the pandemic, one night, my husband came home around 11pm. In my drowsiness, he said, **“I want to become a Christian.”** I jumped out of bed instantly and asked him to re-confirm and clarify his reason to believe. In fact, he has been hearing about the Gospel for several years. God’s timing has come. We prayed and he submitted himself to God! I was overjoy, but worry at the same time. He also works in a restaurant, 11 hours each day. He doesn’t like to read (books nor the Bible). How can he experience growth? He doesn’t understand the importance of reading the Bible or praying. I don’t want him to repeat my mistake of believing but not reflecting the faith in his deeds. Therefore, I decided to wait for him to come home from work each day. After he showered, I would read him a chapter of the Bible then we would pray together. It would take 10 to 15 minutes. In the beginning, I was doubtful about his belief, but gradually, his attitude changed. I am thankful for Pastor Lewis and Felain, as they have been encouraging us with prayers and visits. Their encouragement motivated me to continue my living testimony to my husband. In the 6 months that followed, I read the 15 minutes daily devotion messages from our Pastor to him. I am not sure how much he understands, but I believe the Spirit will guide him directly.

I often have conflicts with my husband and teenaged children. I’ve felt discouraged, powerless, and wanted to give up. However, I grabbed onto God’s promise, **“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit”** (Zechariah 4:6). Once after a family conflict, I learned to obey God, and **took the initiative to apologize to my husband.** God told me not to be self-righteous or to think that I am more spiritual than him. When I humble myself and admit my mistakes, our relationship improved.

Another time, instead of attending their German teenager gathering, the children invited their father to watch an online Chinese Sing-spiration program. On one hand, my husband was touched by their willingness to accompany and accommodate him in attending a Chinese service. On the other hand, **the children are learning to encourage their father’s relationship with God through deeds!**

The restaurant industry was hit the first and hard in the pandemic. I became unemployed. My husband was laid off for a few months. However, unemployment allowed me more time to read the Bible. I have been practising morning prayers and devotion for 10 months, learning to let God be the Head of the family. I am thankful that the Lord taught us to treasure our family time and make peace in our home. This year was also the first year when our family could celebrate Christmas and Chinese New Year together! My three daughters were able to join the weekly worship online, their spiritual lives were nourished. **I’m not sure when we would be able to transform fully into a “Christian Family”, but I’m sure that God’s grace never left us. We have all grown a lot in this pandemic.** Looking back at the past year, I only have thanksgivings, as all the days were filled with grace from above!



Online Workshop during North Germany Joint Retreat in May

Prayer Requests

- **The Believers who are leaving & returning to China:** We give thanks for those who have found employment. May God use them to bless the local churches. In the midst of changes and uncertainties, we pray that the believers will rely on the faithfulness of our Lord. We pray for a smooth transition to a new life chapter and that God will use them in their professions, like the salt and the light of the world.
- **Spiritual Foundation of New Believers:** We are thankful for the newly converted believers. May the Lord give them a desiring hearts for His Words. May they build a strong network of support within the church. May they grow in Christ, and continue to touch the lives of those who have shown interest in our faith.
- **Spiritual Well-being of Families, the Commitment to our 2nd Generation:** May God be the Lord of each family and grant them harmony. May they obey God's teaching and worship with all their hearts and strength. May the Holy Spirit open the eyes of our congregation to the needs of our 2nd generation in Germany. May God bless the parents with wisdom to teach the children in His Words, and build a close relationship with Him.
- **Return to Toronto during the Summer Break:** May God lead and grant our preparation process to return to Toronto, especially in obtaining the vaccination records and related matters. Praying for the Lord to bless our days in Toronto with peace and rest, to enjoy the gathering time with our family.
- **New Milestone for our Child:** Departing from us, entering University and residence, new environment, and new church, etc. This is the time for Caleb to rely on God and develop independence. May the Holy Spirit guide his mind and soul. May he be heedful in his deeds, reverence God in his life, and build an intimate relationship with Christ!

Contact Information

email: lewisfelaincaleb@gmail.com

- * Send cheque to: **Canadian Baptist Ministries,
7185 Millcreek Dr., Mississauga, ON L5N 5R4 Canada**
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