In Colossians 3:12-13, we discover that we are to put on forgiveness. We’ve put off the old “stuff,” and now we are ready to put on forgiveness. The text says,

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.”

We are chosen by God. We are holy. We are dearly loved. Therefore, we are to put on the sorts of things that fit our new status, our new position – the new us. There is something about this section that I want you to notice. It doesn’t say we are supposed to be like Christ. It says we are like Him.

It’s not about what you’re supposed to be; it’s about who you are. This is not a “do better,” “try harder,” “do more” thing. This is saying, “Here’s what you are like.” This is what’s congruent with what God says He wants you to be, what He’s attempting to make you, and what you are to live out. If the compassion and humility, the kindness, gentleness, and patience are to fit, then the old “stuff” cannot be part of your life anymore.
Put off the sins of the flesh and the sins of the tongue, and then put on all of this. Now the big picture is more complete. Your life here in this world is looking more and more like the portrait of you seated at the right hand of God in Christ that Paul described earlier. This is what your life is like. This is who you are. While it does take and exercise of the will to come to this point, we are simply appropriating what God has given us already. You see, it is God’s Spirit within us that does all of these things. He enables us to bear with one another, to “hang in there” with each other, and to forgive one another.

In general, we in the Church have a lot to learn about forgiveness, especially as it relates to the deeper issues of new life. Forgiveness is often given to us in far greater proportions than we allow ourselves to enjoy. Observing this, I have come to the conclusion that the primary theme for the Church to declare across the nation today is God’s forgiveness.

People everywhere, both inside and outside the Church, are longing for this message. Every place I go, I find people who cognitively know they’re forgiven, but who don’t experience real forgiveness. They’re somehow still trying to work at it. That’s not the way to get forgiveness. Simply come to your Father and accept His forgiveness. Accept His approval, and move on in the fullness of what He’s given you.

“Moving on” involves extending the kind of forgiveness you yourself have experienced from God to those who have wronged you. Often we withhold forgiveness from others, and that keeps the Spirit from having control in our lives. It blocks the flow of love and peace. The text implies that God forgives us in the same measure that we are forgiving to other people. The message is clear: put on forgiveness.

How do we actually do this? The traditional view of faith has emphasized the exercise of the will – how much we discipline ourselves, how much we make ourselves do whatever it is that well-intentioned people have always told us we need to do in order to be “spiritual.”

A question I’m asked all the time is, “What if you don’t feel like having devotions? Should you still do them anyway?” What kind of question is that? How much of being conformed into the image of Christ is discipline – just doing “spiritual things” even though you don’t want to – and how much of it is just kind of enjoying life? How much emphasis should be placed on discipline is the wrong question. The right question concentrates on how to appropriate true forgiveness and the power that is yours in Christ. That is the key to living out faith. When we are truly forgiven and are walking in wholeness and holiness – when we have the power of the Spirit within to forgive and to give – then the Christian life begins to become not only what we dream of it being, but what God dreams of it being for us.

In Colossians 3:14-17, Paul describes one more key component for moving forward into the next phase in our journey of faith: Put on love. Note that this “putting on” of love is done in relationship to others. Much of this passage deals with how faith is to be lived out among a whole group of believers. Putting on love has to be done in the context of community.

“And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

Colossians 3:14

Love is the thing that binds
us together in Christ. Some Christians have felt love themselves, but they never express it. Some express more than they really experience. The key is to experience God’s true love and to pass it on.

I’ve discovered that the closer my walk with God is, the more I love His people. The more distance there is in my relationship with God, however, the more you all resemble jerks instead of saints. At first I thought this was just an oddity in me, but I’ve realized this is reality. The deeper your love for God, the easier it is to see Christ in one another and to affirm and nurture what you recognize there. On the other hand, the greater the distance between you and God, the less your Christian brothers and sisters will seem to resemble Christ when you look at them.

I’ve noticed something about holiness. Holiness is one of those things that is hard to gauge in yourself. One of the questions I enjoy asking people is, “Tell me. Are you holy?” People don’t know quite how to respond. The response that I get most often is, “Not as much as I should be.”

Holiness. If we think we’re too holy, then we probably have a character flaw – something about pride. Most of us, however, have a hard time gauging how holy we are, because we don’t know what to gauge our own holiness against. Besides that, we only have our own self-perspective to guide us in our assessment. If a church is to become the church God dreams for it to be, it will be because – as the people in that church talk together, pray together, live out their lives together – the believers are both affirming and corrective in their nurture of each other.

It does incredible things for your soul when someone says, “You know, I’ve seen Christ in you this week,” and then names a specific situation when that has been true. It’s also extremely useful when someone says in a very caring nurturing way, “I’ve been praying for you this week,” and then identifies a certain issue that has been difficult for us recently. “Am I close? I’ve seen it.” And when our lives don’t match who we are in Christ, it does great things for our soul for someone to mention what he or she has seen. It’s all a matter of perspective.

The time has come to look at new life and holiness from a different angle. In the past, the Church has done a really good job of talking about commitments. I am rapidly reaching the conclusion that even if most of us never make another commitment, we could spend the rest of our lives trying to fulfill the ones we’ve already made. We don’t need a deeper, bigger, better, wider commitment. That’s not what the call to holiness is.

The call to holiness involves yielding control to the Holy Spirit. The big question in this text is, “Who’s in control of your life?” You? Your own assessment? Your own measuring stick? That won’t be good enough. Who is in control? Is it the Holy Spirit as He flows into your life?

Growing up, some of you had the opportunity to play beside some sort of flow of water – a river, a stream, a creek, or crick, as the case may be. You remember how you could put one rock here, and another rock there, and another rock next to that. You could take a pretty wide stream of water, and bring it down to just a trickle. Building a dam was great fun as a child.

Please notice the text. It talks about the Holy Spirit flowing into our lives. You can place a barrier here, a sin there, some bitterness
next to that. You can put some neglect here and some unforgiveness over here. You can effectively take a wide flow of God’s Spirit into your life, and you can bring it down to just a trickle. Don’t build that kind of dam. Your job is to get rid of those sins, that bitterness and neglect, because God wants to pour a whole river of His Spirit into you. Get rid of the barriers and allow God’s Spirit to flow.

How do you do this? Set your eyes on Christ. Put off the “stuff” in your life that doesn’t match with who you are anymore. Put on God’s forgiveness, and then offer it to other people. Finally, put on His love. It not only will fill your heart to its capacity.

Look at the final few verses in this paragraph.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:15-16

Wherever you go, God is offering the grace and the peace of Jesus Christ to you, and to everyone who comes near you. That is God’s dream of holiness for His people. It is God’s dream for you individually – and for us collectively as the Church. Focus on things above, where Jesus is. It’s an incredible perspective.

Dr. Martin Sanders is the Director of the Doctor of Ministry in Christian Leadership in the Global Context at Alliance Theological Seminary. He is actively involved in the lives of students and in developing church leaders around the world. Dr. Sanders is also the president of Global Leadership. He is the author of the books, *Power of Mentoring* and *How to Get the Family You Always Wanted*. 
A group of 70 English speaking ministry workers, from various regions of North America and representing diverse generations, gathered at the North America Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism (NACCCOWE) regional conference in Tuscarora Inn, Mt Bethel, PA to dialogue about the future of English speaking church ministry. Peter Lin led the group towards a consensus regarding some of the social and cultural trends that affect the North America Chinese churches. During the closing ceremony, John Ng gave a summary report to the general conference. Below is the basic text of his report.

Thank you, General Secretary, for your introduction. And thank you for allowing us these few moments to share with the conference what we have been doing at the English track.

Every generation has social and cultural trends that impact that generation. They are like wind that blows through the front door of our churches. A gust of wind startles us and momentarily interrupts our church work. It may be a steady, strong breeze that subtly alters the interior of our church work. Or it maybe a powerful storm that turns our church work up-side-down, inside out.

These winds of time may become crises of ministry. Every generation is given a divine moment, a holy chance to bring about change when facing a crisis. Our conference theme – Crises, Changes, Chances – is a good one. The Chinese phrase – 危機 – crisis is made up of two words: danger and opportunity. Every crisis has its danger and opportunity. The way we seize the divine chance to bring about change will determine whether a crisis is of danger or opportunity.

The historian in I Chronicles made a profound observation (12:32) concerning the elders from the tribe of Issachar. The sacred text reads, "the elders of Issachar, they understood the times and knew what Israel should do." Leaders who understand the times and know what to do will seize that God-given chance to bring change for the good in a crisis.

The English track on the other side of campus has been working hard during these few days towards a consensus regarding some of the social and cultural trends in North America that are impactful in the Chinese church and its English ministry. We stick our wet finger in the air to see what direction the wind is blowing. Here are some of
our tentative conclusions.

Postmodernity

Postmodernity is the overarching cultural context in which all churches move, work, and have their being. It is probably the greatest challenge facing the church today. This next generation of Asian-Americans lives in a postmodern context. Your children and mine are all postmodernists. They are individualistic, skeptical, anti-community, anti-absolute truths, anti-authority. And yet they also hunger for community, significance and meaning. Only when we understand postmodernity will we be able to minister to the needs of this next generation.

Asian Century

Historians and others note that the 21st century will be an Asian century. Asia and Asians are gaining enormous economic, political and spiritual powers around the world. The Asian church is becoming the largest in this global village. The epicenter of Christianity is no longer in Europe and not in North America. It is in Asia. We Asian churches in North America, as part of this Asian century, have an incredible opportunity like no other time in history to seize this profound moment to impact the world with the gospel.

Leadership & Mentoring

English speaking church leaders are like tall trees in the wilderness. They are few. This next generation of Asian Christians lacks leadership role models, a training ground for leaders in the churches and spiritual leaders as mentors. To raise a new generation of church leaders for the next generation, the church must be transformed into a teaching church as well as a proclaiming church. Like a teaching hospital, the church needs to be a place where those who are preparing for ministry have an opportunity to learn by doing.

A Community Within Community

The Chinese in North America are culturally diverse and multi-generational. The Chinese church, mostly invisible, is isolated and insulated from the many Chinese sectors. To make an impact with the gospel, the Chinese church needs to be a viable community within many communities. To reach this diversity, the church needs to be authentic and relevant in living the gospel as well as proclaiming the gospel.

Materialism & Secularism

The Chinese family is raising a whole generation of materialists. Secular culture has weaved into the very fabric of our families. Our children and children’s children are no different from the world in their lifestyle, core values, and social lives. We parents have nurtured them to study hard, work hard, make lots of money; we have urged them to live well and wealthy. Collectively the church needs to reject secularism and reclaim the simplicity of the gospel in the way we live, work, and make money. How else can we impact our community with the gospel.

Social Network & Technology

Finally, the internet has changed our world as we know it forever. This www world has truly become a global village. Internet technology has impacted the way we communicate, teach, and learn. It has shaped our practice of relationships and community. In many ways, the church is behind in taking advantage of its uses. The next generation can show us how to use this technology to do ministry, make
disciples, train leaders, and preach the gospel.

_Crises, Changes, Chances._ That is our conference theme. Every church of every generation has a divine chance to bring about change for the good in time of crisis. I end with that Latin phrase — _carpe diem_ — seize the day. May God help us seize the day. May the church seize this moment. May the first generation and the next generation work together in this divine appointment to plan ministry, do ministry, and lead ministry as we bring changes for the good, for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you!

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” This was the declaration of the Psalmist in Psalm 133:1. This sentiment encapsulates the later aspirations of Paul in his letter to the believers in Ephesus, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3), and my call to ministry as well.

Approximately five years ago, I became concerned with the lack of spiritual growth and maturity among younger brothers and sisters in my Chinese-American church, some of whom had been attending church for many years. About the same time, I became interested in the dearth of second-generation Chinese-American churches. After some pondering and prayer, I was convicted that the two issues were connected. Perhaps the lack of second-generation Chinese-American churches was due to the scarcity of spiritually mature Chinese-American Christians beyond the first-generation. As a Christian man, born in China but raised in the United States, I was deeply moved to find a solution, and I found it in discipleship. My church had an active discipleship program, and I had discipled and been discipled before, but now I found new passion for it.

Prior to this life changing experience, I felt my calling was to be a missionary in China. I was bilingual and bi-cultural, had been on short-term missions to China, and had a burden for evangelism in the country of my birth. Now, however, the Lord opened my eyes and heart to the greater need among successive generations of Chinese-Americans who either are unsaved or who have drifted away from the faith. Many writers on the subject have called it the “silent exodus,” or the departure of successive generations of Asian-American Christians from the churches of their im-

Dr. John Ng is an associate professor of pastoral studies at ATS. Besides teaching, he is also actively involved in local church ministries, mentoring and equipping English speaking workers for Chinese churches.
migrant parents. I was now called to minister to this “nation” composed of the children and grandchildren of Christian immigrants from China. Indeed, I realized that with my cultural and linguistic background, I was well-suited to this ministry. My calling came into focus. I felt a deep conviction to be a bridge and peacemaker between the generations within the Chinese church and to develop younger generations of Chinese-American Christians into spiritually mature followers of Christ.

My journey continued with a book by Greg Ogden, Transforming Discipleship. In it, Ogden suggests praying to God to assign you disciples. So with an open heart, I prayed that the Lord show me who He desired for me to disciple. Sure enough, the Lord brought a couple of names to mind, and after much prayer and confirmation, I approached these two younger brothers about discipleship. After they had prayed and considered the proposal, they agreed to discipleship. We would meet weekly for one year, although the relationship would continue beyond a year. Although I had discipled in the past, never had I witnessed the Lord’s hand so evidently and persistently in the discipleship. We hid nothing from each other, and through our transparency and openness, the Lord was able to change bad habits and smash spiritual strongholds. As the younger brothers grew spiritually through the course of the discipleship meetings, they began to minister to me as much as I had ministered to them. I have since discipled three other brothers and witnessed the Lord’s handiwork in each man’s life. It is a true privilege to observe the great Gardener grow mature and devoted leaders. I longed to see the baton pass securely to a new generation of Chinese-American Christians so that we may “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).

At the same time, I discovered that not only was I ministering to the American-born Chinese (ABC) but I was serving their parents as well. I was helping the first generation parents understand and connect with their children and vice versa. Where there was fear and miscommunication, now there was hope and understanding. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). I believe that being rightful sons and heirs of God, we also inherit his ministry of peace, and that ministry requires much effort.

Within the Chinese-American families, immigrant parents often find themselves increasingly disconnected from their own children both culturally and linguistically. While they spoke Chinese and were more culturally Asian, their children spoke English and were culturally American. This dynamic often led to friction between parents and children. The family experience simply became magnified in the Chinese-American church. First-generation immigrant-congregations became increasingly at odds culturally and linguistically with their English-speaking Chinese-American congregations. Not surprisingly, frictions occur sometimes leading to divisions within the church.

Having experienced generational frictions first-hand, I understood that my discipleship of ABCs Christians would inevitably lead to issues between the generations. With a firm handle on both cultures, I hoped to culturally-translate the viewpoint of one side to the other. I felt committed to bring mutual understanding between the congregations and to build trust and relationships between the two sides.
Beginning with a heart for missions and the people of China, I discovered the great need right here among Chinese-American churches. God transformed and honed my vision for spreading the Gospel in China to helping believers live out the Gospel of Peace among the Chinese-American churches. My prayer and conviction is that through the love, unity, and peace lived out in our churches, we will fulfill Christ’s encouragement in Matthew 5:16, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Amen!

David is in his second year of study at the seminary. He was born in China and came to the United States at age 5. His desire is to become a bridge and peacemaker between the immigrant generations and the local born generations.

In February 2010, I was in the process of extending my work visa and planning my life in the U.S. My spiritual mentor asked me, “If you see serving the Lord as the goal of your spiritual growth, why is being equipped at a seminary not on your life checklist?” He warmly reminded me that studying in seminary might be a possible option for my next step.

Through prayer, I realized that although God had given me a heart to serve Him full time, few of my life plans were related to this call. My efforts were spent on satisfying my family’s needs, fulfilling my parents’ expectations, and achieving my personal ambition of success. Serving the Lord was not my first priority. I naively anticipated that one day a miracle would happen to deliver me from everything, and then I could totally serve my God without any struggles.

“If I cannot take a first step to follow his calling, I will gradually lead my heart into coldness,” I told myself.

Therefore, with both courage from God and fear I decided to respond to his calling and applied to ATS.

My work manager and colleagues felt sad about my decision. However, God opened my eyes to see the way to follow Him, experience Him, testify about Him, and obey Him. I knew I had chosen the best for my life!

God did not show me supernatural miracles or achieve all my prayers to confirm His calling. Yet, when I submitted myself to obey His will, I immediately experienced His power. God moved my wife to commit herself to serve Himself through the rest of her life. God called my parents to be willing to offer their son for God’s use. He also released me from the expectation and anxiety of success. I really experienced peace and rest in my heart.

God also financially sup-

Hao Chun Chang
First Year Student
ported me step by step. Through my church brothers and sisters and my parents, He blessed my family and provided for our daily needs. By His grace, I could keep following His calling which He entrusted to me. I really learned a lesson that God’s calling is power and can be experienced by any of His children who want to obey it.

**My Life at ATS**

I began to study at ATS in September 2010. As a full-time student, I grew through my studies. I had to learn self-discipline in order to be responsible with God’s calling. It was difficult to find the balance between being a husband, a father, a church brother and a student. I did experience a deep tension and struggled in working with my family, my school, and my church. It was painful to force myself to change my daily routines. Day by day, I kept asking God for grace to help me be a loyal steward for managing what He had given to me, and He was always faithful to answer my tearful prayer. Thankfully, these pressures nurtured me to be strong and let me experience the sweetness of walking with Him.

I have heard it said that studying at seminary only can give knowledge but is useless for spiritual growth. However, I believe this is a sad misunderstanding. The courses at ATS helped me to understand God’s Word with a serious perspective and attitude. In the past, I had a vague understanding about interpreting the Bible and mindlessly applied the messages to my life without any standard. Therefore, I rarely experienced the power of the words and was unsatisfied about my Christian life. However, the professors of ATS assisted me in systematically understanding God’s Word so I could avoid arbitrarily putting my personal intents into the text. God’s Word gradually became stable in my heart, and the Holy Spirit increased my faith to help me accomplish the things that He wanted me to do. This lesson changed my prayer and worship. My attitude toward God and the Christian life were transformed by His words. My doubts were lessened, and my faith in Him became greater.

Additionally, the love of my peers always warmed my heart. Through their prayer, support, and greetings I realized that I am not alone. It is wonderful to grow together as a group. Also, when my professors told of their experiences in churches and missions, my understanding about God’s kingdom was widened, and my passion to serve Him was enriched. The North America Chinese Bi-Cultural and Pastoral Ministries Program provides a variety of practical courses designed especially for the needs of Chinese churches, and counseling geared towards the needs of Chinese students. I not only grew academically but also received care for my soul.

I cannot stop myself from praising the Lord when I think about what He has given to me at ATS.

**Thanksgiving**

During this period of study, I deeply found that God doesn’t call people to suffer from His calling. He calls people to follow Him in order to receive His grace. My heart cries out, “My Lord, thank you for letting me be here!”

I thank God for His guidance and carefully prepare for the following challenges. I also pray for all the students and myself. May our faithful Father give us wisdom and strength to help us be trustworthy in His work. By His mercy, His everlasting presence will be the sweetest reward in our hearts.

Hao Chun Chang and his family.
On July 31 of 2010, "Life, Ministry and Commitment" Dedication Day was held at ATS's Nyack campus. More than 60 people attended this special event to seek God's will and guidance for their lives.

God's will and desire for each person may look different, but He would love to see each come to Him with a heart willing to pursue Him and His guidance.

The presence of the Spirit was overwhelming as hearts were touched and tears were shed.

At the end of the day, Rev. Stanley Kwong challenged and extended an invitation to brothers and sisters to respond to God's callings for their lives.

More than 15 local pastors and alumni of the Chinese Studies Program participated throughout the day. All attendees were encouraged by their heartfelt words, teaching, and counsel.
Special Tribute

The Alliance Theological Seminary community recently lost an extraordinary faculty member. Dr. Paul Siu, professor of theology and former Director of the Chinese Studies Program unexpectedly passed on November 7, 2010. While the seminary community is saddened by the loss, we are thankful for Dr. Siu's life. He dedicated his life to serve Jesus whom he so loved. His passion for Christ will be forever remembered.

Alumni Update

New Ministry
Jeremiah Kong (May 2002) began serving at Bayside Community Bible Church, NY in January.
Tak Tong Lee (December 2002) is now (as of 2011) serving at the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church.
James Yuan-Tai Chang (May 2005) moved to Ottawa, Canada at the end of 2010 and joined the ministry team at the United Church of Canada.

Ordination
Jim Huei Liu (May 2007). After serving at the Chinese Bible Church of Maryland for three years, he was called to serve at their sister church in North Carolina. His ordination and installation service was held on September 11, 2010 at Chinese Bible Church of North Carolina.

Courses Offered

Rockland Campus
Spring 2011

Planting and Growing Healthy Chinese Churches
Instructor: Dr. John Ng
Date and Time: January 25 - May 3, Tuesdays, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Summer 2011
Development of the Chinese Church
Instructor: Dr. Peter Au
Date and Time: May 10-14, Tuesday to Saturday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

For information, please contact:
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