

2024 UK COCM VBS Testimony: Armand Lim

Matthew 9:36-37 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

Jesus showing compassion to the crowd, the feeding of the 5,000, the boy with five loaves and two fish, and the disciples partnering with Jesus to distribute food to the hungry crowds—this miraculous account was a recurring topic throughout the mission. It was discussed during our team devotions, featured in the sermon topics on the two Sunday services we attended while in the UK, and highlighted during the VBS camp.

The mission trip is sandwiched between two Sundays. I believe it is by God's divine plan that, on both Sundays, the pastors spoke about the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000. On our first Sunday, before the mission trip began, we had the opportunity to worship at St. Paul/St. Peter Church, also known as John Newton Church, an 800-year-old church where the famous writer of "Amazing Grace" grew up and served as an associate pastor. The following Sunday, after the mission trip, we attended

an ultra-modern church in Milton Keynes, where COCM is located. Both pastors spoke about the 2,000-year-old miracle, emphasizing the heart of Jesus, how He showed compassion to the people, and took action to help them.

Both sermons highlighted the importance of recognising what we have and trusting God to multiply our offerings. Both pastors emphasize that no matter how small our resources seem, God can use them for something incredible. We are encouraged to offer our time, talents, and gifts to God, trusting that He will multiply them for His glory. We are challenged to seek opportunities to make a difference in our community and to trust in God's provision and multiplication. We do not ask God why, but who and where He wants us to bring the gospel of Jesus. He alone will decide and I'm convinced that God wanted us to be there in UK to serve and minister to the 77 children that attended the Family camp.

Last year, when the church mission committee approached Cherrie and me about the UK mission trip, like many others, I asked, "Why? Why me? Why go so far?"

Why the UK? Why not Taiwan?” One thing I have learned is that it is God who decides the where and how. It is His mission, not GBC’s, not the mission committee’s, and not mine. If God allows it and approves of it, then we can be assured that He will go before us, be with us, and continue to work even after we leave the mission field. All we have to do is say, YES.

God’s presence was with us during the Family Camp. His faithfulness is steadfast as He held the whole team together while we worked with volunteers from North America and the UK in serving the kids. God sustained us with just enough energy and wisdom for each day, just like the manna He provided for His people. We awaited His sustenance daily, and He was faithful and gracious to provide. The weather during our entire stay in the UK deserves special mention—our God controls everything, including nature, and He showed this by providing us with the perfect, cool, dry weather that is rarely seen in the UK.

I’m grateful to God for allowing me to witness the gospel of Jesus being

preached in the UK during the family camp—a country from which, hundreds of years ago, missionaries were sent to the remotest parts of the world, including Asia. It feels like witnessing the gospel of Jesus coming full circle, returning to where it once began. Although many churches in England and Europe are experiencing a decline in membership for various reasons, the Chinese people we are ministering to may well spark a revival of the Christian faith in the UK and Europe. Who knows? Only God does. All we need to do is follow His leading.

Lastly, it’s reassuring to witness that almost half of this year’s team were former VBS kids serving alongside VBS teachers and leaders. It’s a testament to God’s faithfulness to His church and its work.

I welcome all the positive and encouraging responses from the COCM leadership, the children, parents, and other volunteers, but we dare not steal the glory. Instead, we give all the glory to Jesus, our Savior, Sustainer, Provider and our Shepherd. To Him be all the glory.

CHERRIE LIM's 2024 UK MISSION TESTIMONY

Whenever I would tell someone that I will be going on a mission trip to the UK, the usual response would be: why the UK? England does not seem to be an obvious mission field. It's a rich, developed country. People living there would not be interested in hearing the gospel. I suppose even I was a bit skeptical when I was first asked to lead the mission team there. It does not seem to be the most logical place to go and spread God's word. But I agreed to keep an open mind and agreed with the premise that this was going to be an exploratory trip.

The preparation for the trip was the usual selection of team members, planning and leading the training sessions, preparing everyone for a 4-day camp. But what is different from this mission trip is the coordination with a mission partner - COCM. Chinese Overseas Christian Mission is a mission organization that ministers to the overseas Chinese living in UK and Europe. We met Pastor Henry Lu, the director of COCM when he was the speaker in the Chinese service last year, and he gave us some background information on the

mission field that we were headed into. Each year, COCM organizes a Summer Mandarin Family Camp and while they were leading the adult camp, they needed help to handle and take charge of their youth and children's program. GBC was invited to handle the children's program, and so the church approved for an 11-person mission team to lead a VBS camp for Chinese children living in the UK.

Throughout these 6 months of preparation, we had a lot of unknowns since there were a lot of firsts: 1) first time to partner with a mission organization such as COCM 2) first time to handle a children's program within the umbrella of a family camp 3) first time to go on a mission trip to England, and 4) first time to work with volunteers or STMs from other countries. We had to trust God that He would lead us and guide our planning in accordance with His perfect will. One main lesson I learned from this mission trip is this: Do not hold on to your plans too tightly. Because in the truest sense of the word, flexibility is key. And true enough, there were several

things we had planned in advance that had to be changed as soon as camp began. Our camp schedule for the last day had to be revised to accommodate a camp photo which affected our whole schedule. New children kept on being added to the registration list even on the first day of camp. But praise the Lord, everyone in the team had a correct mindset: new kids means more opportunities to share God's love. COCM will accept new families who will register even on the first day of camp, and so likewise, we will not turn away any little ones who wants to hear stories about Jesus.

The GBC team was in charge of the VBS program, and so with 11 team members, we led the Music Site, the Crafts Site, the Bible Story site, and the Recreation Site, on top of the opening/closing rallies, the evening activities, and the administrative responsibilities of the camp. It was exhausting, to be honest. We would be ready early in the morning and serve until late at night. Our rest times would be when the children are with their parents: meal times, 1.5 hours of rest in the afternoon because the adults had a break from their camp schedule too. Meals would be eaten

quick, because we needed to head back immediately in order to receive the children from their parents. However, the children were truly lovely and receptive to God's word. VBS was something new to them, and they welcomed the team with open arms.

Another new experience for me as team leader is to work with volunteers from US, UK and Canada. While the GBC team lead the VBS program, these other 10 volunteers served as Group Leaders of 4 teams. They led the children through the rotation schedule and looked after the welfare of the kids (gave them water, brought them to the bathroom, held their hands, wiped their tears and gave them hugs). I only met them 2 days before camp began, except for 2 Zoom meetings that we had 1-2 months prior. I know the Lord had chosen these wonderful women to be part of this children's camp. I truly thank Him for the good working relationship I had with them. All of them appreciated the great teamwork we had and some even wanted to visit Taiwan and our church in the future. Praise the Lord!

Did everything turn out perfectly? Of course not. In fact, there were a lot of adjustments that had to be made on the spot. But were we affected by it? Not at all. Our team worked with joy and excellence. Our team served without complaining. Our team persevered despite the long, tiring hours. And our team had a wonderful time. I praise the Lord for the wonderful friendships that had been made within the GBC team, and with the COCM team, and the other Short Term Missionaries from all over the world. I thank the Lord for this new experience that has taught me great life lessons and faith lessons. I thank the Lord for opening my eyes to a completely new mission field, in a place that is totally unexpected.

More than 2000 years ago, the gospel came from Judea, then went to Samaria, eventually reaching Europe before spreading to the whole world. Now, Europe is filled with empty churches, which are now used as venues for museums and parties. It was the English people who brought the gospel to the East, and now, it is time to bring back the gospel to this place, in the UK where the most number of overseas Chinese live. Please continue to pray for the lost souls in the UK and Europe, and may the Lord continue to use COCM, and continue to use our church to be a beacon of light to that lost world. Thank you.

Rae Lim's 2024 UK Mission Trip Testimony

Hi everyone, my name is Rae. This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to join and serve in our church's UK mission team. It was a journey that not only allowed me to share God's love with the little kids but also deepened my own faith in ways I never expected.

In the beginning, I was joining the team because I kind of "had to" since my parents were the ones leading the team, so I don't think I really put my heart into it if I'm being completely honest. I was also a bit apprehensive and not as excited about serving because it was somewhere our church has never been to and I didn't really know what to expect from this trip. Looking back at it now, it's kinda funny thinking about how I was feeling prior to the trip since this experience truly gave me a whole new perspective on mission trips.

I have served in the music site several times with my sister, but the biggest difference this time was that we were the ones leading and teaching instead of our mom or another adult. I got to experience what it was like to prepare for the mission

trip in ways I've never experienced and take on responsibilities I've only once seen the adults do. Leading the music site came with its challenges as it can be physically tiring jumping up and down and singing for 12 hours straight, but I can say it was immensely rewarding and fulfilling. Seeing the 4-5 year olds try and keep up with us even though they end up just lying on the floor and watch us dance was very endearing. Seeing the little kids all participate to sing and dance their hearts out was heartwarming. And seeing the older kids who might think they're a bit too old for this yet are still willing to dance with us was encouraging. There was this one little boy, he couldn't really understand or speak English, so when I asked him what site was his favorite, he said the music site because he could just dance along despite not really understanding all the words. This reminded me of the power of music in bringing people together and connecting them with God's love. It was a beautiful reminder of how God's love transcends cultural and language barriers. In a short amount of time, I witnessed all these children

expressing their joy and excitement through worship and genuinely loving the songs and dances. I remember this one girl in the older team who was so passionate about learning all the songs and choreography, she even told me that she searched our VBS songs on Youtube beforehand so she can learn the songs and memorize them. Hearing this just made me thank God for answering my prayers and concerns and that the kids learned about Jesus through songs in a way that is engaging and fun for them.

Throughout the four days of camp, I witnessed how God has blessed our team. He gave us 77 children joining the camp; He gave us the best weather; He gave us the most supportive volunteers from overseas churches. He gave us a massive venue to serve in, and He gave all the volunteers the strength to serve with a joy of heart despite the long hours. I saw firsthand the impact God can have on kids, including myself (at least until next month). The connections I made with the children and our team members were deeply meaningful, and I felt a strong sense of purpose and fulfillment in serving in this capacity. Serving in a mission trip has

taught me the importance of patience and flexibility, even when the numbers of the children were unpredictable and there were a lot of last-minute changes on the day itself. All the children's program team were able to adapt on the spot which is one of the main reasons I think why our camp was successful.

This mission trip has not only deepened my faith with God but has truly ignited a passion in me to continue serving in this way, to the point where I already want to know if we're going back next year. This experience has shown me how much more there is to learn and grow in my faith, and how much joy there is in serving others. Because of this experience, I'm eager to go on more mission trips in the future, whether it be locally or overseas. Knowing that I was a small part of these kids' spiritual journey with God makes this trip even more meaningful. I will carry the memories of this trip in my heart and continue to pray for the children we served. I am excited to see how God will continue to work in their lives, just as He has worked in mine during this mission trip. Thank you.

Samuel Chiu's 2024 UK Mission Trip Testimony

Hello, I'm Samuel Chiu, and this is my testimony about the mission trip to the UK. Jesus is holy, trustworthy, forgiving, worth following, and He is for everyone. These are the five simple themes of this year's VBS, Twists & Turns. Aside from these attributes, our God is also one who hears prayers.

Starting from last year, I began praying about how I could further serve within GBC. Although I've been a GBC member for years, and have participated in different ministries here and there, I felt like there was still more that God could do through me within this church. I hadn't prayed for long before God answered, and I found myself in not one, not two, not even three, but four new ministries. While I'm normally a pretty confident person, I suddenly felt a wave of hesitation and doubt, for these were ministries I wasn't familiar with, which also came with responsibilities I didn't think I was equipped to carry. I knew that this was something God wanted me to do, because I felt peace despite the uncertainty.

During this mission trip, GBC worked together with the Chinese Overseas

Christian Mission, or COCM, along with a handful of volunteers from around the globe. While COCM hosted a Mandarin family camp, our team took charge of the children's program with the volunteers. We adopted the VBS content that was just hosted in the beginning of July here in GBC. Praise be to God, I had the chance to be a part of GBC's VBS, so I was already relatively familiar with this year's theme, which made preparing for this mission trip a lot less stressful. On the team, I was paired up with Andrea, and we were in charge of the Bible story site, where we would tell Bible stories, memorize verses, and talk about the ABCs, which is a way to commit our faith in Christ. The three letters stand for admit, believe, and confess.

I thank the Lord that our training and preparation went smoothly, and that we were able to start building team chemistry and spiritual preparedness early on. However, spiritual warfare was evident as soon as training began. These battles took the form of mental stagnation, complacency, and the urge to complain just to name a few. However, a major hindrance came when I caught a cold just a day or two before we

set off for the UK. It was both a physical and spiritual challenge. I was struggling not to question God as to why this had to happen. Nevertheless, due to this limitation, I was able to learn to trust our supernatural God even more. I often think of mental or spiritual strength when I hear passages such as “be strong and courageous,” but they can most definitely apply to physical strength too. And that’s exactly what I experienced. I was able to maintain my energy despite the illness and the tight camp schedule. Thanks be to the Lord. As for the aforementioned mental challenges, they unfortunately persisted, but also stood as great reminders to continually divert our focus back to God.

One thing that was clearer than day was that God found every way to show us and the children his love, even if we didn’t know it was him at the moment. I was able to see his love most clearly through the venue arrangement, weather, and teaching the ABCs. We were originally set to use a separate venue that didn’t have restrooms, nor adequate space for our activities. And thankfully, we were switched to one that could accommodate not only our activity needs, but also the needs of the children. Praise the Lord. We were

told repeatedly during this trip that the UK’s weather was rarely this good. Locals probably wouldn’t believe that we had sun almost every day, both before, during, and after the camp. That includes even our free day! And when it did rain, it stopped in time for us to continue with our outdoor activities with no other hindrances. Praise the Lord. What touched me the most were the ABC sessions. Children that tended to be disruptive or overly energetic were focused and thoughtful. They also readily and smoothly absorbed the content that was prepared. When asked about their clarity of humanity’s sinfulness and their conviction to Christ, it was clear that the children were pondering upon God’s words. And clearer than that was the fact that the Spirit was moving within our midst. Praise the Lord, for he is good.

This mission trip taught me obedience and strength. When we heed God’s calling, he will provide all that we need, even if we don’t currently have what it takes to tackle the challenge, be it mental, physical, or spiritual. We may also feel weak at times, which might even be a constant state. But we know that God’s power is made perfect in weakness, and we should be thankful

for the reminder and assurance to rely on him. I can't say that I am completely free from my hesitation when it comes to serving, especially when faced with the prospect of great stress and fatigue. However, I was encouraged by God, and I hope to encourage others through this verse: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58)."