

**TAICHUNG TAIWAN, MARCH TO MAY 2015: GARY CHOONG
—EXPERIENCING GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL ABIDING LOVE FOR ME**

How shall I share my three months in Providence University (PU), Taichung? Everyday is a new day ordered by the LORD, filled with His grace and mercies, love, forgiveness, goodness, generosity and abiding presence. When I first arrived on campus, I felt lost and disoriented to dormitory living. But as my stay drew to a close, I was sad and reluctant to say goodbye. On the final morning before I left PU, I once again walked the path along the north walls of the campus which I had walked almost every day. I revisited the spots and benches that I used to sit to read, meditate and reflect on God’s Word. Tears flowed down my cheeks as I walked and talked with God, thanking Him for the wonderful time He had given me these past three months.

Ever since I left school, I had been out of touch with the use of the Chinese language. Having to pick up the language which had been shelved for forty years was a humbling, and at times humiliating, experience for me. The first month was the hardest to cope. I sought God’s Presence in His Word: to be encouraged, to be steeled, to be taught, and even to be rebuked. God’s love for me kept me going everyday. The book of Psalms became my soul food. The regular early morning walks, the trees, the chirping of the birds, the stillness, the moments of quietness and meditation – all these brought serenity and peace to my soul. The devotional entries that I penned in my journal greatly encouraged me. It gave me HOPE in the face of difficulties in developing language skills. At one time, something prompted me to watch the movie *Shawshank Redemption* (probably for the fourth time now, over the last few years). Once again, it moved me to recognize that God is at work in my life: “Hope is a good thing, maybe the best thing, and no good thing ever dies.” I was also deeply touched by the assurance of God’s love on March 15, 2015 at Tunghai University Christian Church. During that Sunday morning worship, the lyrics of two songs 你是大牧者／這一生最美的祝福 brought endless tears to my eyes. Over the next two weeks, the music and words of these two songs kept my heart going, as I sense God’s abiding love for me.

God placed **people** along my path to encourage, teach, and mold me. Three different teachers taught me different aspects of life: patience, tactfulness (委婉), and the insecurity of the human heart without God. I also met various people of different backgrounds and in different places. They include: the very first student I met who works in the men’s dormitory; my roommate; a missionary couple; the first two persons I met in the church; a regular mountain climbing couple; a theological educator; a Mexican priest; some very friendly nuns; a single middle-aged Korean student; and a convenience store manager. Each of these persons was Godsend (貴人) – to encourage me, to make me laugh, to fellowship, to pray together, to listen, to share a meal together, to help me along, and to just be human! On the day I left, a kind soul insisted on helping me with the luggage, and also accompanied me to the bus station where I would take a two-hour express bus ride from Taichung to Taoyuan airport.

God led me to different **places** on weekends, places that are outside of Taichung city, to enjoy walking trails in the mountains. The farthest I have been are two famous mountains 大雪山／八仙山. To reach these mountains requires more than two hours public bus ride one way. Due to the infrequent bus schedule, one has to plan carefully so as not to miss the bus both travelling there and coming back. I am so thankful for the opportunity to have visited these two mountain ranges. They are great places for rest and recreation, to enjoy the coolness of mountain air, and to marvel at the beauty of God’s creation!

God gave me time and space to **pray**, to think, to clarify my heart, to journal my thoughts, and to seek His will for the near and mid future. I would like to continue to **pursue** Chinese language study over a protracted period, but how this will work out in terms of timing and schedule is in the Lord’s hand. In relation to CCBC, I see the next two to three years as a season of leadership transition-succession for me. I would like to **pass** the baton to called men and women of God to lead the church beyond what the church is today. I plan to share more details with the leaders soon, and with all of you in the coming days.