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Heart & Mind is now The Epistle!*

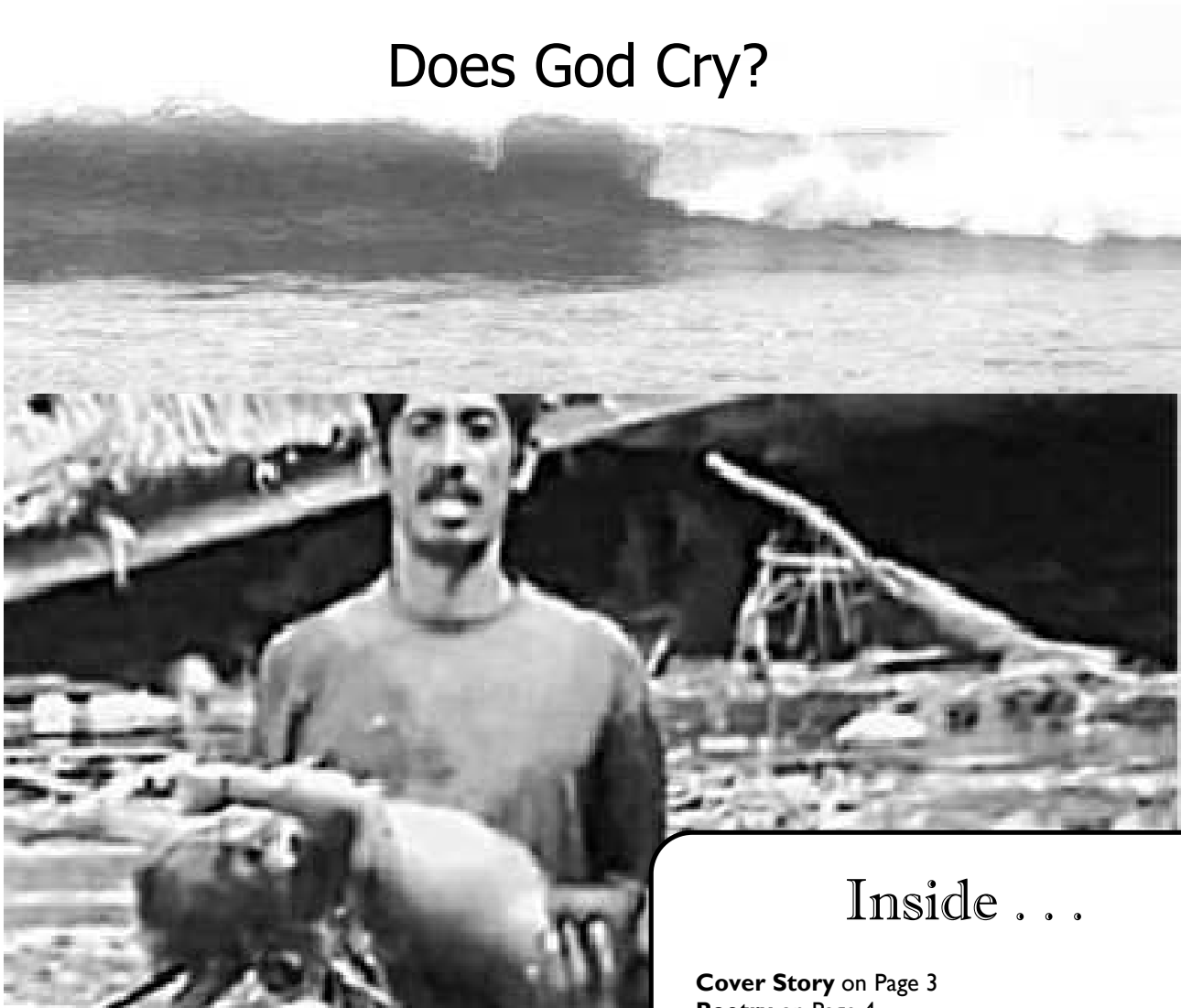
January 2005

The EPIS+LE

A Free Publication for the Christian Community at York University & Surrounding

SHOCK WAVES:

Does God Cry?



Photos courtesy of www.photoduck.com

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Written articles are welcome. Send all submissions to EpistleNews@hotmail.com.

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All articles in this publication are the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the publisher.

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Shock Waves: Does God Cry?

By Shiao Chong

The day after Christmas, December 26th, 2004, a massive earthquake hit deep in the Indian Ocean, causing gigantic tsunamis to ripple out from its epicentre. The whole world now knows what happened next. The aftermath from the tsunamis' assault on the beaches of human civilization is nothing short of devastating and horrifying. To date, over 200,000 bodies – most of them children – have been recovered in the tsunami stricken countries of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Malaysia and Somalia.

The ripple effects went far beyond these countries as the rest of the world, shocked by the devastation, reacted by pouring aid and relief to the stricken nations. An emotional tsunami has swept over the rest of the world. But ripple effects were also felt in the spiritual dimension of people's lives. For example, BBC News in the UK asked the question, "How could a God, or some other force for good, have orchestrated a natural disaster with such dreadful consequences?" and invited a Hindu, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim and an Atheist to answer it (on its website: www.news.bbc.co.uk). Closer to home, the *Globe & Mail* had two articles in one issue (Jan. 8, 2005) dealing with the religious fallout of the tsunamis: "Where was God when the waters rose?" (by Peter Short) and "Some see tsunamis as sign of God's ire" (by Michael Valpy).

Those questions haunted me as well. I have been hesitant in writing this article because I know I don't have the answers – at least not satisfactory ones.

How could a loving God will or plan such a horrible disaster? I don't think God planned or willed the tsunamis at all – at least not in the sense of how we normally understand planning and willing. I suspect there's more freedom in God's control than we give credit for.

Is the disaster an act of judgment from God? I don't believe so. In Luke 13, Jesus did not see the 18 people who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them or the Galileans brutally killed by Pilate as being more sinful or under more judgment than anyone else (Luke 13:1-5). We are all in need of repentance.

Where was God when the tsunamis hit? Honestly, I don't know. But an article emailed to me by David Cook, the International Friendship Group Coordinator, encouraged me. Written by Tan Kang San, Director for Mission Research with OMF, the article focused on Romans 8:17-28. Tan pointed out that in this passage, we



A mother's anguish in India at the loss of her loved ones. Photo taken from the web.

see three parties groaning. First of all, creation groans – "we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (v. 22 NIV). Secondly, we, Christians, groan – "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for ... the redemption of our bodies" (v. 23). Finally, God the Holy Spirit groans – "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (v. 26).

I checked my Greek New Testament to ensure it was not a mistranslation. It wasn't. We do not have a God who is capricious, untouched by our sufferings. Rather, we have a God who groans with us, who groans with creation, and bids us Christians to groan as well. We "mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). And these groans, pains and sufferings, are not meaningless groans. They are not groans of a dying man but the groans of a mother giving birth to life – "as in the pains of childbirth" (v. 22). Thus, I can have hope that the sufferings of this present world are not hopeless or meaningless but are sufferings that will give way to life and joy that only a mother holding her newly born child knows. That's the promise and that's my hope.

Does God cry? Yes, I believe so. The God who groans, the God who came in flesh as Jesus Christ to suffer, groan, and die on a cross, is, I believe, also a God who weeps along with those who weep. But not only weep, he also acts to save, restore, and resurrect. And Christians who follow this God also need to act in love, to give generously, and to share in their sorrows.

Shiao Chong is the Christian Reformed Campus Minister for York U and the Editorial Advisor of The Epistle.

Key of My Heart

A Poem By Michael Collum

I give you the key to my heart
 I give you the key to everything
 That I cannot see in me Lord
 I give you the key to my heart
 To the parts I am holding back
 To the parts I have forgotten
 To the parts I do not know
 I give you the key
 Manifest yourself in me
 Faith is what? Without action.
 So I give you my key.
 The key to my heart.
 I humbly offer you the key to my heart
 Come and go as you please
 Please don't leave me grieved
 Holy Spirit of God
 I give you the key to my heart
 I give you the key to everything
 That I might see Lord.



*Michael Collum is an alumni of York.
 He was an English major. As he puts it,
 he has been "studying the Word for
 quite a while now, the rest is eternity".*

The Epistle will publish submissions written by students. This is your space for your ink. So, make your voice heard! You can write anything you want—creative, poetry, fiction, opinion, testimonial, devotion, etc.

All submissions will be edited for length, style and grammar. The Epistle reserves the right to not publish any materials it deems inappropriate.

Not all submissions may be published in the same issue.

*Send submissions to **EpistleNews@hotmail.com***

The Invisible Men

By Ruth Hong

There are invisible people in Toronto.
 Seriously, I'm not kidding.

These people are everywhere. They walk on the street. They sit on park benches. They talk to people. They're invisible though, so most don't see or hear them.

They're the people who have fallen through the cracks of society.

It's hard not to be guilty when I deliberately ignore human beings sitting on the ground in the cold weather, asking me for some spare change. I know part of it is usually because I'm halfway to Broke Town myself, but to be honest, there are more reasons. Part of me, honestly and ashamedly, is scared of these people on the streets. The stereotype is that they could be on drugs, or drunk, and therefore violent. The other part is probably the belief that they would only spend the money on booze or 'crack'. It's hard not to buy into stereotypes when it's all that's fed to you by society.

The more disturbing part of the whole matter I think is that sometimes because I did not stop to give a looney, some guy did not have enough change to buy himself a hotdog, and died of hunger and cold on the sidewalk. I could be indirectly a murderer.

What would Jesus have done though, if he was a college student with barely enough money to make rent, to buy groceries, and to buy a bus pass, and he walked past a homeless man asking for a bit of change?

What would Jesus have done? Jesus, who had mingled with the marginalized and the despised people of His time. There were the fishermen who Christ picked, over supposedly holy men, to spread his word. There was the adulteress who was sentenced to death by stoning. There was the woman at the well in Samaria, who was ostracized because of her unfortunate home circumstances.

There are worse Christians of course. There are Christians who not only want to exclude, but to destroy all that they do not recognize as something that fits in with their worldview.

The conflict in Eastern Europe that happened not too long ago in history is a prime example of people cruelly persecuting others in the name of Christianity. Much of the Ku Klux Klan claim memberships in Christianity too.



Hey, the same American imperialists who went out and slaughtered a whole bunch of people in the Middle East lately, you know what they like saying? "In God We Trust".

And then Christians wonder why non-believers don't want to become Christians, despite Christ's good news.

And then people wonder why Christians are so picked upon in mainstream society.

Our bloody hands are hidden by the gloves of the Church.

The next time I want to think of myself as being in the one true religion and everything else falls short... well yeah I ought to. Then I ought to remember that I, however, am not superior just because of that, and there are people who do not believe in Christ who have behaved in nobler ways.

If Jesus did not exclude or persecute, and if to be a "Christian" means to be more "Christ-like", then perhaps I ought find a way to be more like Christ.

Then maybe, people will stop disliking Christians and start wanting to be one.

Ruth Hong is a Staff Writer for The Epistle and a fourth year student.

An International Christmas

By Shiao Chong

Ever saw a Christmas pageant where the three wise men were actually played by persons from the East? Or square danced with people from all over the world? Or hear prayers in multiple languages? These are some of what I experienced in International Christmas Camp.

International Christmas Camp is an annual event organized by the International Student Ministries of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Held at Ontario Pioneer Camp in the Muskoka region, International Christmas Camp is a five-day event for international university students from across Ontario, many of whom have nowhere to go for the Christmas holidays when universities are closed.

Attending Christmas Camp is a bit of a tradition now for my wife, kids and myself. We have attended Christmas Camp for the last three years. From December 23rd to 27th, we shared meals, games, bible studies, snow sports, and other activities with nearly 70 other people – Christians and non-Christians – hailing from such countries as China, South Korea, Japan, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Colombia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Egypt and Nigeria. I have always enjoyed myself on these camps. Even though I was a volunteer leader/teacher, I have always found that I learnt as much as I taught.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are always right smack in the middle of, and are the highlights of, Christmas Camp. A Christmas Eve pageant, complete with bible readings, Christmas carols, little shepherds and wise men, are always remarkably well performed. Remarkable when you consider that the choir was only formed 48 hours earlier by volunteers from the international students themselves – many of whom never even sung a Christmas carol before! With minimum rehearsals, Louise, the music/choir director somehow manages to get the rag-tag choir ready in time. Recruiting actors for the pageant is another matter. This year, we had Canadian and Turkish shepherd boys, Brazilian and Canadian angels, a Vietnamese couple for Joseph and Mary, African, Turkish and Sri Lankan wise men, and a teddy bear for baby Jesus! (see photo)

Christmas Day service is a more serious affair, with bible readings, worship songs, a student testimony, and a message by Tony Lai, this year's speaker.



But one of the most memorable moments of the service is the prayer time where people from various countries pray in their own languages. You can really sense the multi-cultural and global reality of Christianity through that prayer time.

There were seminars too on the last night of camp, ranging from such topics as “Culture Shock” to “Hot Topics: Tough Questions on Christianity”. Besides giving a seminar, “The Story of the Bible”, I also sat on the panel that grappled with the tough questions asked by the campers in the “Hot Topics” seminar. As mentioned before, I find myself learning enormously from these sessions. I can only hope that others have learnt just as much from my contributions.

Before you start thinking that International Christmas is all work/study and no play, there are plenty of fun opportunities at Christmas Camp. From outdoor winter activities like snowshoe-ing, skiing, tubing, broom ball, and snow soccer to indoor games like table tennis and captain ball, there are no lack of fun for campers. For many of the international students, this was their first taste of the winter sports. Another big hit with the internationals is the “hoe-down” on the first night. A professional square dance couple teaches us to square dance and do the “Macarena” in a span of two hours. I can't say that we mastered the steps but it was definitely a lot of fun.

With such a variety of international backgrounds, it would be amiss if we did not learn from each other's cultures. To foster that we planned two cultural events: Cultural Exchange Night and International Dinner. Cul-

(Continued on page 7)

Post-Conference Blues?

By Leah Xing

Whenever I attend a Christian conference, I tend to experience tremendous growth during and after the event. In a recent Inter-Varsity event, the National Student Leadership Conference (NSLC) from Dec. 27 to Jan. 1 at Ontario Pioneer Camp, I walked away from the five-day event challenged and motivated to seek God's will for my life even more.

"I always had this notion that my heart would immediately be transformed at a conference event."

NSLC was geared toward fostering leadership amongst Inter-Varsity students in numerous university chapters in Canada. The various speakers had challenged me and other students alike in our Christian walk on the subjects of calling, witnessing, and reconciliation.

I knew it would take me months to apply what I learned at the conference in my personal life. For the longest time, I always had this notion that my heart would immediately be transformed at a Christian conference event. However, this was not so—not ever.

Even long after the conference, I would always remember not to question God where and how the details of His plan and just simply let His spirit work by saying "yes." In a simple act of obedience, miracles happen. Moreover, by beginning to say "yes" to God is when the transformation starts to happen.

Even today, I struggle continuously to say "yes" and realize I am very much dependent on God's strength for boldness in witnessing to non-believers. I have much to gain from witnessing to others; after all, it is a two way street as witnesses should also be learners. This is something I learnt from aboriginal Christian speaker Terry's messages at the conference.

Leah Xing is the Student Editor of The Epistle and a fourth year Environmental Studies major.

Cultural Exchange

(Continued from page 6)

tural Exchange was a wonderful evening where campers share something from their home culture through song, dance, or some other performance. We heard songs from numerous languages, a few dances, including the Brazilian samba, witnessed the Japanese tea ceremony, learned how to say, "Happy New Year" in Vietnamese and Turkish, to name a few of the cultural exchanges. International Dinner was an international smorgasbord of multi-cultural dishes cooked by the campers themselves, representing the food of their home countries. We enjoyed Korean bulgogi, Japanese sushi, Vietnamese soup noodles, Caribbean curried chicken, and Brazilian desert, among many other tasty delights.

Finally, what most campers treasure are the friendships that are formed during the camp. People whom you otherwise would never get a chance to meet now become good friends lasting long after Christmas is

over. On the last morning, everybody seems to be taking photos and swapping emails with each other.

My family and I have always found International Christmas Camp an enriching and rewarding experience. I highly recommend anyone who is looking for a different Christmas experience to seriously consider International Christmas Camp – either as a volunteer helper or simply as a camper. It will be an experience you will never forget. In fact, one of the Pioneer Camp staff told us that playing host to us was the best Christmas he has ever had.

Shiao Chong is the Christian Reformed Campus Minister for York U and Editorial Advisor for The Epistle.

For more information on International Christmas Camp, please contact David and Kathy Cook, d.k.cook@sympatico.ca

Service Opportunities

Do you want to gain volunteer experience?

Do you want to be involved with something meaningful and productive for York's Christian Community?

If so, come and join *The Epistle* (formally known as *Heart & Mind* Newsletter). We are seeking the following positions: staff writers, graphic artists, photographers and distribution manager.

The Epistle is a free Christian publication for York's Christian community. We distribute on campus to various groups and also off campus to several churches. Our vision is to see York's Christian community united through an open publication forum to encourage one and another in the Christian journey.

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS: Staff Writers (3 available positions)

Staff writers: Media/culture, Columnist, News correspondent

QUALITIES:

- Have good writing skills and computer skills
- Reliable and responsible and able to meet deadlines
- Team player

VOLUNTEER POSITION: Graphic Artist (1 position)

QUALITIES:

- Creative and imaginative
- Skilled in computer design
- Reliable and dependable; able to meet deadlines
- Team Player

VOLUNTEER POSITION: Photographer (1 position)

QUALITIES:

- Have photography experience
- Team player
- Efficient worker

VOLUNTEER POSITION: Distribution Manager (1 position)

- Dependable and reliable
- Have own vehicle preferred
- Great interpersonal skills

All interested candidates for the following positions should submit a copy of resume (and sample work where applicable) by **Jan. 31, 2005**. Candidates will be contacted for an interview date. Portfolio is preferred but not required. Chosen candidates must be able to commit an hour for meeting per week. The remaining correspondence will be through email and phone.

Send Resumes to: EpistleNews@hotmail.com

(Please note clearly which position you are applying for)



Service Opportunities



Youth Unlimited is a Christ-centered youth ministry that supports over 500 churches across the United States and Canada. Our mission commits us to assist youth ministry efforts in the local church to effectively reach junior high (early teen) and senior high youth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Youth Unlimited (YU) carries out its mission by offering a wide variety of resources, service opportunities, special events and leadership training. All the services of Youth Unlimited are shaped through seeking God's vision for ministry interpreted through a Reformed perspective in diverse social and ethnic contexts.

Among some of YU's service programs suitable for college aged students are:



SERVE is built around experiencing relationships—with Christ, new friends and people in need. You will SERVE a variety of cultures and needs—both physical and spiritual. SERVEs are small, so you'll really get to know everyone. Each evening, worship and small groups provide more opportunities to experience God and new friends. Step Up! Do something with your life! Bring your youth group and your friends to SERVE! (Ages 12-20)



Encounters takes week-long service projects to the next level. Participants can register for two- to six-week-long projects at sites across North America. Encounters allows youth to explore the possibility of long-term missions work and to continue on the journey of having God as the center of their lives. This leadership program is designed to place teens and post-high school individuals in a ministry atmosphere aimed at developing their sense of mission and calling.

For More Info: www.youthunlimited.org

Some brochures are available from the Editorial Advisor, Shiao Chong (yym@sympatico.ca)



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a relief, service, and peace agency of the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. MCC reflects the biblical call to care for the hungry and thirsty, the stranger, the sick and those in prison.

Some of MCC's Young People's Programs:



IVEP (International Visitor Exchange Program) is a vocational and cultural exchange program. International young adults between the ages of 18 - 30 from 30 countries, come to Canada and the United States for one year.



SALT (Serving And Learning Together) is a one year cross-cultural living and service experience for young adults from the United States and Canada. Assignments are available in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia.

For More Info: www.mcc.org

Prayer Hotspots

Anyone, regardless of club affiliation, are welcome to attend any of these prayer times and pray with other Christians. For more information on a Prayer Network, contact **York Revolution Prayer Network at yorkrevolution@gmail.com** .

- MONDAY: 11:30 am at Room 310, Student Center
- TUESDAY: 11:00 am at Scott Chapel in the Scott Religious Center
12:00 pm at Scott Chapel in the Scott Religious Center
- WEDNESDAY: 9:00 am at Chinese Christian Fellowship office in the Scott Religious Center
5:30 pm at Chinese Christian Fellowship office in the Scott Religious Center
- THURSDAY: 10:30 am at Room 310, Student Center
12:00 pm at Scott Chapel in the Scott Religious Center

ALL are welcome to ANY prayer meeting at ANY time in ANY hotspot!



Prayer Focus



Submit your prayer requests to EpistleNews@hotmail.com and we will place it here. *The Epistle* reserves the right not to publish any prayer request. All prayer requests submitted must be accompanied by name of person giving the prayer request.

Tsunami Victims

Pray for the surviving victims of the tsunami—that God may grant healing, both physical and emotional, and probably even spiritual, healing, as they now start to rebuild their lives and their homes after the horrendous loss. Pray for the aid and relief workers/volunteers—for God’s strength to them and that there won’t be many obstacles in their efforts.

Chong

Jesus Week: Jan. 24-27

Pray for Campus Crusade for Christ’s student leaders who have been working tirelessly to organize this week-long series of seminars, talks and events to witness to others about the Christian faith and about Jesus Christ in particular. Pray that this week’s events will all be a blessing to people, and will happen without any hitches. Pray for all the speakers involved in the events. Pray for all the volunteers.

Chong

Small Groups Discipleship Directory

(In Alphabetical Order of Clubs)

ATHLETES IN ACTION

Discussion Groups exploring how one can integrate faith and sport—how a relationship with God can play a part in all aspects of our lives, sport included!

Mondays, 8:00 pm, Bethune College, Room 228

Thursdays, 2:00 pm, Bethune Cafeteria

Contacts: Monica, Enoch or Jeff, aiayork@hotmail.com

CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST

Campus Crusade has **discipleship groups** designed to build people up in their faith so they can take the initiative to minister to those in their personal lives and on campus. Participants are involved in the organizing and running outreach events for specific areas on campus, for example Bethune Residence.

If interested, please contact:

Andrew McKenzie, andrewmc@yorku.ca (men)

Nicoletta Bona, wwjdnico@hotmail.com (women)

INTER-VARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AT YORK

Being And Making Disciples (BAM): Back to the basics of the call and cost of being a disciple.

Wednesdays, 2:30 pm—4:00 pm, Location Varies (Room 312 Student Center is meeting point)

Contact: Sarah de Bruyn, sarahdebruyn1@yahoo.com

Sunday School Outside the Box: Revisiting the profound truth in the age-old Sunday School stories of the Old and New Testaments.

Thursdays, 3:00 pm—4:00 pm, Location Varies (Room 312 Student Center is meeting point)

Contact: Jennifer Richards, richards_niffer@hotmail.com

LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY

Exploring Christian Leadership: Explore what servant leadership is all about and learn to find your own mission in life.

Two Identical Groups Offered Twice:

Tuesdays, 1:00 pm—2:30 pm, Location Varies (often Room 311C Student Center)

Wednesdays, 2:30 pm—4:00 pm, Location Varies (often Study Room A, Scott Library)

Globalization and the Kingdom of God: Discussion group on the book with the same name—how should Christians respond to globalization? Is globalization evil or good?

Two Identical Groups Offered Twice:

Mondays, 12:30 pm—2:00 pm, Location Varies (often Study Room A, Scott Library)

Thursdays, 2:30 pm—4:00 pm, Location Varies (often Study Room A, Scott Library)

Contact for all sessions: Chong, ycm@sympatico.ca

Upcoming Events

FILL UP THE HOUSE



A Campaign for food and unity.

Feb. 7-8

Food Drop off in the Bear Pit

The Vision:

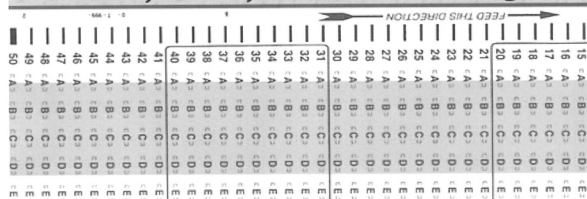
Our vision for 'Fill Up The House' is to see York students and clubs partnering together to gather food to meet the ever-growing practical needs of those in the community surrounding York University and the greater Toronto area.

For More Info: yvcf@hotmail.com

JESUS

CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST

Lord, Liar, Lunatic or Legend?



If the Biblical Jesus really wasn't God, then he was either a compulsive liar, raving mad, or simply a piece of fiction.

Come hear the arguments, ask questions, and

decide for yourself

Speaker:
TONY COSTA
M.A. Religious Studies At UofT
Doctoral Candidate

Room: CLH L
Date: Wednesday January 26th
7:00 PM

JESUS WEEK EVENTS (JAN. 24-27)

All Events in Room 307 Student Center (unless otherwise noted)

Monday, January 24th

The Passion of the Christ | 1:00 am & 1:30 pm

Tuesday, January 25th

Is the Bible Anti-Women? | 1:30 am

God in Sports | 1:30 pm

Wednesday, January 26th

The Da Vinci Code | 10:30 am & 4:30 pm

U2 and Christianity | 12:00 pm

God and Suffering | 1:30 pm

Creation vs Evolution | 3:00 pm

Jesus: Lord, Liar, Lunatic or Legend?

7:00 pm in Curtis Lecture Hall L

Thursday, January 27th

Coffee House | 10:00 am—3:00 pm

For More Info: www.yorku.ca/ccclj14.html