

Q3  
2018

# berita NECF



Chairman's Message

## The Red Sea Lessons

By Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng

**N**ever before has the Church been so ecstatic over the results of a general election. Never before have the people of the Book so strongly believed in the power of prayer. Never before have the citizens been so proud of their country and new Prime Minister. "The spirit of the first Merdeka" was resurrected and Malaysia, after so many years of self-inflicted shame, held her head up high as effusive praise poured in over the bloodless, somewhat smooth transition of government.

God, as it were, had stepped out of the heavens and pressed the "reset button" for our beloved nation.

Many cherished the chance to be part of history through their vote. Indeed, the voters redeemed democracy for our nation at the ballot box. At this time of writing, all signs point positively to the new government's sincerity in honouring their manifesto and determination to make Malaysia truly Malaysian.

Perhaps for the first time, we can identify with the "enslaved nation" that crossed and came out of the Red Sea. Similarly, there is dancing, singing and joyous

celebrations as the people witnessed God do the impossible on their behalf.

But I want to suggest there are many parallels between the Red Sea crossing and our nation's emergence from "political captivity."

Firstly, the post Red Sea jubilation is no guarantee there will be no leadership crisis. The first person to lead in the worship fest that followed (Exo 15) was also among the first to lead an antagonistic company against the leader who had spearheaded the victory. We cannot afford to overlook the Miriam phenomenon. Despite being family, Miriam challenged Moses' sole authority to speak to the people on God's behalf. In addition, she disapproved of Moses having a Cushite wife (Num 12). Expect "little rebellions," racial slurs and continued attacks on the leadership. Victory is never a sign that there will be no leadership hiccups.

The wilderness journey that followed shocked literally all who had embarked on the uncharted journey. As a people who had survived Egypt, one would have

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expected the hardy Israelites to be able to handle most forms of ensuing hardship. After such an exhilarating march through the Red Sea, they must have pinned their hopes on God not to do any less.

But within three days, at Marah (Ex15:22ff), bitter waters revealed what was in the hearts of the emancipated people. There their long-held "complaining complex" was made manifest. It was one thing to get the people out of Egypt, but quite another to get Egypt out of the people. Therein lies the second lesson: the government may have changed, but I suspect we, the people have not. Patience is not a well-known Malaysian virtue, and unfortunately the same goes for the Church.

Instead of just focusing on those who rule over us, maybe we should take a good look at those who are being ruled over. I have commented on many occasions that Malaysia is one of the most difficult countries to rule. We have so many interest groups, so many political parties, so many religious demands, so many rulers, so many communities - all of which need to be handled and balanced wisely.

A change of government without any transformation of society is no "true *reformasi*."

Are we prepared to take ownership of our country? Being happy with the General Election (GE) outcome is not synonymous with taking responsibility for our country. Being so accustomed to identifying the nation's ails and scandals, and demanding corrective actions, we oftentimes forget the need for corporate responsibility with the government to find solutions, albeit that was almost impossible to do with the previous government.

But now that the reset button has been hit, let us work together, and not be so quick to take our customary position, casting stones from across the road whenever a shortcoming is identified. God willing, our new government will also mature and *be more consultative*. A good place would be when new laws that affect the religious communities are imposed. All of us at the MCCBCHST<sup>1</sup> did not appreciate the surprise introduction of the withholding tax last year, classifying non-resident religious leaders, priests and bishops as "public entertainers."

I thank God for the change, and believe more changes are on the horizon. Nevertheless, I am realistic to expect more "bad news". Hence the third lesson we can take away from the Red Sea crossing is this: "Stay calm and confident; *give God time to work*." When the masses were hemmed in between the enemy from behind and the Red Sea in front, they had no choice but to look to God.

To the Church, I would say, trust God to deliver in His own unique way. Don't be so quick to whine. Let us view every crisis as a faith builder for the future. What is before us is the rare opportunity to work with the government to reshape the nation.

We have not arrived. What lies before us is a journey. Getting out of Egypt is not the same as entering our Promised Land.

Meanwhile, let our new found faith in prayer cause us to be found at our houses of prayer. My first reaction right after the GE results were announced was, "Indeed He answers prayers." He still does... so let's keep building prayer altars.

<sup>1</sup> The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism is a non-profit interfaith organisation in Malaysia.



# Sowing the Seeds for the Future of Our (New) Malaysia

*By Dato' Dr HSS Amar-Singh and Datin Dr Lim Swee-Im*

**M**any of us who have dreamed, worked and prayed for a new Malaysia are delighted with the outcome of the recent elections, a result that occurred despite enormous obstacles. Some of us did not expect to see this in our life time, and that it has come sooner, is a blessing and healing to our souls and spirits. It happened as a result of the people's will and desire to see changes for the better. We bless all those who spearheaded the change, often paying a significant price for their actions. We also bless all those who had sowed the seeds for this present future, some unknown unsung heroes who laboured without recognition.

We are waiting for the euphoria and dust to settle so that the government can get down to serious work. We know that as a nation we will have to labour with them to sow the seeds of change for a more meaningful future for our beloved nation. We know that this will not be easy. A four-party coalition is not easy to manage and gel together as one. Cracks have already begun to appear and this has prompted us to add our voice to the task of nation re-building. We have thankfully managed this difficult

transition with no violence. It would be a shame then for us now to allow infighting to destroy what was so difficult and precious to achieve.

## **Capable Leaders and Focus on the People's Needs**

The time now is not for our leaders and elected representatives to think of themselves, their parties, their power, their position but to focus on the people's needs. We know that not all those elected are angels. Many are untested and inexperienced and will need support and time to grow. We can tolerate some mistakes but we cannot tolerate disunity. It is important to be reminded that power can corrupt and unmask who you are. You just have to look at the disposed leaders to be reminded of this. So care must be taken not to grasp for power but to focus on national re-building – making meaningful change that is sustainable.

We fully support the idea of appointing advisors (elders). This should also be done at the regional (state) level. It is also important that the government, and component parties that it comprises, be prepared to appoint experienced, unelected individuals to key positions to formulate policies

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and nation. Choose the best, not cronies. There are very few good governments in the world but those that succeed have capable leaders and they focus on the people's needs.

### Unity at the Centre

We the people now have hope. We ask that this be not destroyed. Our future is still fragile. We are united together with our new leaders for a better, meaningful tomorrow but we are fearful of disunity. It is important that elected leaders work hard to maintain unity. We need unity at the centre, at the core of our government, to face the many negative forces and voices that will come. Those that preach religion and race will attempt to destabilise us. Many will still strive to divide us. Only a united and cohesive centre can see us through the storms that we still have to weather. Lim Guan Eng's response about being a Malaysian, not a Chinese, is what we need. It is time to put aside religion and race. The call for quotas by race, gender or religion, while appearing good on the surface, can undermine our nation building. We want Malaysians who will represent all of us. Tun Dr Mahathir's call to leave behind old ways of working is timely. We are all willing to do the hard work of re-building our nation – not just its services, infrastructure and policies but also our personal and community relationships. We ask that our leaders constantly keep their eyes and hearts on the core needs of the people.



### The Re-Building Required

We have a long way to go to bring Malaysia back on track. Some countries have passed us by in key services for health, education, security and basic service/infrastructure. As we work to re-address our policies, never forget the poor and marginalised. 20-30% of Malaysians struggle day to day and we need affirmative action to enable them to join the rest of the nation in enjoying the country's resources. There will be many little napoleons in the way at the federal and local level that will need to be dealt with. Those who have been at the receiving end of these petty individuals know how much transparency and system change is required. We must be wary of individuals looking to profit from the new government. We need people in the service who are there to serve the people and not behave as lords. We need people who listen to suggestions and face the reality on the ground, not cover up truth. We hope the days of endless committees and talk with no action are over. The time for the nation's involvement in building and running services is at hand. It is important to engage and involve the public in the services that are being developed for them.

### Our Responsibility: Hope to Our Neighbours

It is wonderful that we are no longer viewed as a failed nation. We have redeemed some of our pride in this election in the eyes of the world. As we move forward let us remember that we have an added responsibility to our neighbouring nations. We are now seen as a source of hope, of possible change and a return to true governance. Nation re-building without violence is not easy but we have a unique opportunity to show others that it is possible. Such hope is sorely needed in our post-modern cynical world.

Our success as a nation is not about power or wealth but about character, the heart and soul of our nation. Who we are becoming is as important as what we do or achieve. True success will be measured by the quality and strength of our relationships as a people/nation.

There is hope and we, together, can make a difference. There will be more dark days ahead but let us not allow fear to overcome or distract us.

Hope.

Hope in what is bigger than all of us.

Malaysia.



*Dato' Dr HSS Amar-Singh is a senior Consultant Community Paediatrician, Head of the Paediatrics Department at Hospital Ipoh, and looks after paediatric services in Perak. Datin Dr Lim Swee-Im is married to Dato' Dr Amar-Singh. She is self-retired from conventional medical practice after 10 years of service with the Ministry of Health.*

# Conference Affirms a Sense of Destiny for Women

By Rev Gabriel Jabanathan



Group photo of Women's Conference participants with the speaker

The NECF YouthNet/Tamil Commission organised its **"Women of Destiny"** Conference on the 29th of May 2018 in Seremban. It was the first of its kind and it was well attended by almost 400 women.

It was specifically targeted for women in the 18-40 age group. The speaker was Pramila Jeyaraj, a dynamic and robust preacher and communicator, who co-pastors with her husband, a fast growing church in cosmopolitan Bangalore, South India. The message was simple and clear: God has blessed every woman with a destiny, to which every woman must get connected. Pastor Pramila drove home the message with such punch, clarity and persuasion that no woman would have left the sanctuary hall with a sense of defeat and failure. Her highly positive and confidence-boosting message assured every woman that she was created with a sense of purpose.

The impact of the message showed up at the final moments of the Conference, when the altar call was given. There was such an outpouring of the Spirit that the visible and powerful manifestations shook the place! The anointing of the Spirit so gripped the place that the last session had to be cancelled to give the speaker more time to minister to the many who were crying out for a fuller infilling of the Spirit. No one seemed to be prepared to

move out from the place! All were soaked in the beautiful presence of the Spirit.

It was a day for the participants to remember of the wonderful faithfulness of God. Surely the Lord came to assure us that not one of His people is without a destiny. What a destiny-assurance meeting!



The speaker addressing the Women's Conference participants



Rev Gabriel Jabanathan is the Chairman of the Tamil Commission, NECF and Senior Pastor of the Charis Word Centre Networking Churches.





Participants at the 16th BGM

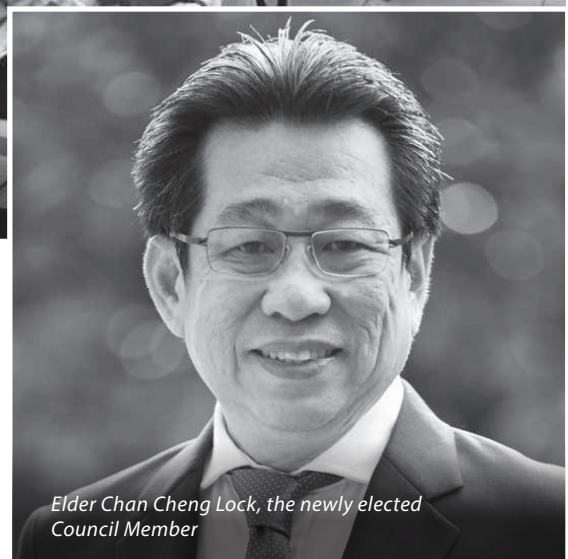
# Moving Forward: NECF's 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial General Meeting

By Jack Cheah

**N**ECF held its 16th Biennial General Meeting (BGM) on 12 May 2018 at Petaling Jaya Gospel Hall. The meeting was attended by 44 official representatives and 18 observers. In his welcoming address and report, the Chairman, Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, emphasized that the church needs to continue to be vigilant and prayerful after General Election (GE) 14. What happened on May 9, 2018 (voting day) represents a chance to turn around as a nation.

The meeting moved on smoothly with each of the reports in the agenda presented and accepted by the floor. Following the reports, the meeting moved to the next item: the election.

The election of the new NECF Council for 2018-2020 saw some changes. Rev Ong Sek Leang and Pr Dr Khoo Kay Hup were elected as Vice-Chairman I and Vice-Chairman II respectively whilst Pr. Chomy Ching Choon Mee was elected as Assistant Honorary Treasurer. Whilst Elder Kong Yeng Phooi declined reelection as council member, Elder Chan Cheng Lock of SS Gospel Centre, Petaling Jaya and Rev Chan Theam Lai of Canning Garden Baptist Church, Ipoh were elected as the new council members. Below is the full list of the NECF Council for the term 2018-2020.



Elder Chan Cheng Lock, the newly elected Council Member

<b>Chairman</b>	: Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng
<b>Vice Chairman I</b>	: Rev. Ong Sek Leang
<b>Vice Chairman II</b>	: Pr. Dr Khoo Kay Hup
<b>Honorary Secretary</b>	: Rev. Elisha Satvinder
<b>Honorary Treasurer</b>	: Pr. Samuel Ang Eng Hoe
<b>Assistant Honorary Treasurer</b>	: Pr. Chomy Ching Choon Mee
<b>Committee Members</b>	: Rev. Dexter Low
	: Pr. Samuel Surendran Krishnan
	: Rev. Foo Moy Peng
	: Rev. Gabriel Jabanathan
	: Elder Chan Cheng Lock
	: Elder Thomas Lim Kok Beng
	: Rev. Datuk Jerry Dusing
	: Rev. Dato' Dr. Justin Wan
	: Rev. Chan Theam Lai
	: Pr. Tay Wah Seng

After the election, Rev Andy Chi was officially appointed as the new Secretary-General with effect from 12th May 2018. The meeting then proceeded with a briefing on the layout plan for the new NECF Office Building by the new Secretary-General. NECF will be opening a new account to start a building fund for this purpose.

Finally, the meeting was informed of the plan for a National Leadership Institute to be launched sometime later this year. The intention to have this institute is to groom and invest in a group of roughly 10 to 20 potential national leaders so that they will be ready to play an important part in nation building in the future.

After a short tea-break, the floor came back for a talk session entitled the challenges of the Church of tomorrow in 4 different areas i.e. Evangelism, Discipleship, Prayer and the Word of God.



*Rev Chan Theam Lai, the newly elected Council Member*

The first speaker, Rev Elisha Satvinder, focused on the importance of having a burden for souls in his talk on Evangelism. He quoted Romans 9:1-3 and 10:1 to point out Paul's burning desire for the salvation of his Jewish brothers to the extent of willingness to be separated from God for them. He also made reference to John Bunyan, the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress" who was more concerned about the salvation of souls than anything else.

He added that we sometimes get lost in the importance of church membership and the number of souls to be saved rather than to be burdened for those who are lost and who may even persecute us. Love should be the determining drive that compels us to reach out to them with the message of reconciliation. The kind of burden we need to have is as demonstrated in the lives of William Booth, the founder of Salvation Army who was quoted to have said, "Try Tears" and Robert Pierce, the founder of World Vision who said, "Let my heart be broken for the things that break God's heart."

The second speaker, Rev Ong Sek Leang, spoke on Discipleship. He started off by stating that revival, according to Michael Brown, is simply defined as the church on spiritual steroids. It often happens when we do the main

or right thing and then God brings spiritual steroids to accelerate what we are doing.

Revival has to do with discipleship which the Church must determine deliberately to follow. The Church has been commissioned by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to undertake discipleship and it is best expressed in the context of the local church. Discipleship is both a process and an environment where everyone is empowered with the given governance and authority. It has 4 characteristics as follows:

1. Centrality of Jesus in the lifestyle and message;
2. Cost of discipleship in terms of self-denial and self-censorship;
3. Call of discipleship to follow, suffer, serve and sacrifice; and
4. Call of final goal of discipleship in world evangelism

He concluded by stating the following 4 challenges in discipleship:

1. Worldliness;
2. Distraction from different emphasis, and as such even Charismatic churches must also place great importance on discipleship;
3. Self-importance or emphasis on self-comfort and self-rights; and
4. Lifestyle emphasis in terms of what and why we wear. What we wear will change our nature if our emphasis is what we wear rather than why we wear.

Pr Dr Khoo Kay Hup was the third speaker and he spoke on prayer. According to him, there was something striking in the lives of famous Christian personalities like John Sung, Derek Prince, Rees Howells, Smith Wigglesworth and Little David, who rose up to serve God mightily during the dark period of the Great Depression (1929-1939) and Second World War (1939-1945). They were very disciplined and committed to the reading of the Word of God besides their prayer lives. For example, Little David memorized Scriptures at the age of three and fasted and prayed at six years old.

It was said that Little David would read the Word for half an hour followed by prayer for half an hour three times, culminating in a total of three hours. The importance of reading the Word and prayer was also demonstrated in the lives of two elderly ladies who were blind and arthritic by the names of Peggy and Christine Smith. Both were instrumental in bringing about the Hebrides Revival on the Isles of Lewis from 1945-1952.

It is thus very important to draw God's presence by saturating in His Word. His Word abides in us (John 15:7-8). A true heart of worship can only come from saturating in the Word of God.....we discover God in the Word... it is out of that discovery that we can praise His Holy Name." In this regard we should only pray after reading the Word. It would be good to read 10 chapters of the Bible according to a chronological plan each day as we seek to raise prayer altars in this land.

Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, the final speaker, emphasized the importance of the Word of God for the Church to be strong.

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Praying for Rev Andy Chi, the new Secretary-General of NECF

He quoted from Luke 11:28, "...blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it" and said that many Christians have missed the point. Get back to the basics of giving high regard to the Word of God, for example, by bringing our hard copy Bibles to church. There are no gimmicks in going about this and there is a great need to do the following:

1. Study the Word; and
2. Willing to invest in getting it.

On the second point, he noted that many are willing to invest a lot of money in buying academic books, be it chemistry or law but not in getting hold of the Bible which could in fact cost less than RM100. There are also Christians who complain about why it is so expensive to pay for a course in church to study the Bible when it costs only RM30.

He rounded up by quoting Isaiah 66:1-2 (NIV) which states, "These are the ones I look on with favour: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word." According to him, God highly esteems the one who is not only humble and contrite in spirit but also who trembles at His word. There will be shallow revival in the Church unless the Church recognizes and gives due importance and honour to the Word of God. When the Bible is not in us, it is like having no battery. Every reading of every situation will then be wrong because of the lack of enablement to do so.



Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF



The new NECF Council meeting together



# Restoring Hope, Redeeming Childhood

By Rev Elisha Satvinder



A group of us were sitting around the office kitchen table when we received a phone call from UNHCR, telling us that we had been given an award for refugee work. The award was from an organization called The Big Heart Foundation. At first we were slightly confused, as we did not even know we had been nominated for anything! As the details slowly started coming in, and we googled up the Foundation, we realized that it was far bigger an honor than we had expected. We were stunned.

The Sharjah International Award for Refugee Advocacy and Support, given by The Big Heart Foundation in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is offered to 'leading humanitarian institutions in Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, providing support and advocacy services to refugees and the displaced'. The magnitude of this acknowledgement at a global level had us in awe and amazement at God's goodness and grace.

Within two weeks, my wife Petrina and I were flown to Sharjah in Dubai for the award ceremony, where we met His Royal Highness, Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, the Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. It was an experience we will never forget.

We were welcomed so warmly, and treated with such respect and kindness. The people of Sharjah demonstrated such a spirit of hospitality, such a keenness to help the poor even if it was from a country so far away. The award came at such a timely moment, affirming the value of our work and the impact of loving and working with the poor, not just in Malaysia, but also beyond our own borders. We were greatly encouraged.

## Where it all began

Where did it all begin though?

Petrina and I never set out to build a school. We came back from the USA to plant a church in Kuala Lumpur, but it was then that we encountered the poor among the flat dwellers of Sentul. Here, we befriended children from families of drug addicts and gangsters, who had dropped out of school, were loitering around the area, and would soon become just like their parents: illiterate and impoverished. A few

years later, we would encounter large refugee communities that also needed support. It was clear that to be a church was to seek and see transformation in our society.

We started various support programmes, but soon realized that these would not provide the lasting impact we wanted to see. No amount of counseling or grocery hand-outs would ever help these people break out of the cycle of poverty.

It was then that we decided to start a preschool. We consolidated our efforts and focused solely on delivering quality education that would give these children a leg up in society. There were about 20 children at the beginning, but soon, it swelled to hundreds of them. Today, Dignity for Children Foundation (Dignity) serves over 1000 youth and children aged 1 – 18 years. Utilizing a combination of the renowned Montessori philosophy and a unique learner-centered approach that includes soft skills and vocational skills education, we strive to offer the best education for the underprivileged there is to be had. Many of our students have resettled or graduated, and gone on to do great things: gain scholarships, enter university, secure stable jobs and provide for their families, even start their own NGOs dealing with severe social problems. The impact of working with just one child stretches beyond, to his family, his community, and to his country.

It is our dream to build an Urban Youth Education Village and a Farm School, where children and youth are able to have a second chance at life, no matter their background. We are active partners with the Lord in changing the reality of the poor communities.

Our work crosses race and religion, but expresses the very heart of God who has great compassion for the broken, the downtrodden and the poor. The poor are not optional missionary work for those who are called. They are the Church's mandate.

## The least of these

Acts 10:38 says, "Jesus arrived from Nazareth, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, ready for action. He went through the country helping people and healing everyone who was beaten down ..." [The Message]

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Children of Dignity and Rev Elisha and wife, Petrina receiving the Sharjah International Award for Refugee Advocacy and Support

Jesus’s business was to bring hope and redemption to all who were beaten down – by sickness, poverty, challenges, and great troubles. He took action, touching the needs and demonstrating the powerful love of the Father to those who were around Him. He sets an incredible example for all His followers. We are the hands, feet and heart of Jesus. The poor should be our business too.

Working with the poor is not limited to Dignity or a few others. It is the work of the Church, and there are plenty of opportunities around us.

As of this year, there are still more than 70,000 children in Malaysia living in poor conditions with no access to public schools. The youth employment rate is still at 12.4%, with an undeniable gap between the rich and poor. This is a problem we cannot ignore! Every day, there is a family in need that you can touch and demonstrate God’s redemptive love.

Receiving the Sharjah award reminded me that we do not need to go very far to make a global impact. You are able to make a difference in your own community, wherever you are, here in Malaysia!

We are amazed that we are invited to be part of God’s redemptive plan and action in demonstrating His love to man. But as much as we are thankful, our desire is that you too are stirred and challenged to be the redemptive agent of God where you are. Go and be the salt and light of the earth.



Rev Elisha Satvinder is the Senior Pastor of New Covenant Community Church, Kuala Lumpur and the Honorary Secretary of NECF. He and his wife, Petrina, founded the Dignity for Children Foundation.

# NECF welcomes new members

Church	Pastor	Town
Ordinary Members		
One Voice Community Services	Pr Justin Gerard Ryan	Kuala Lumpur
Associate Members		
Mrs. Grace Hee		
Rev. Tryphena Law Pek Leng		



# Looking at Suicide from a Christian Doctor's Perspective

By Dr Alex Tang



**T**he suicide of American television celebrity, actor, chef and author Anthony Bourdain on June 8, 2018, shocked many people when the news hit the social media. It was a shock to us that Bourdain who was handsome, respected, successful, popular, and at the prime of his career would choose to commit suicide. We often think that suicide occurs only to 'other people'. Likewise, it was not long ago that the suicide of popular actor comedian Robin Williams raised similar existential questions but we were too busy in our fast-paced lives to search for the real hard answers. Kim Jong-Hyun, a popular member of the group SHINee, one of Korea's top boy bands, shocked his young fans worldwide by his suicide in December 2017. In his suicide note, Kim cited loneliness and depression. Suicide is a taboo subject in our culture and is not discussed much in public except in high profile celebrity suicides. This article will discuss the prevalence and causes of suicide and how we as a church can help those who might view and contemplate suicide as the solution to their problems.

The World Health Organization (WHO) gives the statistics of 800,000 suicide occurrences per year which makes for one suicide in every 40 seconds! The highest suicide rate is in the 15-29 years and those above the 70 years old age range. In the last 45 years the rate of suicide has increased by 65% worldwide. There are no reliable statistics for Malaysia as suicide is a crime here and hence not often reported. From the anecdotal accounts of NGOs such as The Befrienders and hospital sources, the prevalence of Malaysia suicide rates is increasing together with the rising suicide rates in the world.

The act of committing suicide is an act of desperation. Ironical as it may seem, it is an act of self-preservation where the natural instinct is to kill oneself to escape from a situation where the person cannot see any other way out. The pain they experience is so overwhelming and self-consuming that they see death as the only answer. Pastor Rick Warren who lost his son Matthew to suicide in 2013 noted, "Suicide is a permanent, irreversible attempt to solve a temporary problem. You don't have to die to end your pain."

The pain they feel may be physical, emotional, mental or spiritual which are described as follows:

- Some people who are suffering from intractable cancers or other chronic diseases may be in a constant state of never-ending physical pain where anti-pain medication has ceased to offer any relief from the pain.
- Depression is also an important cause of emotional pain that is often overlooked and missed by others. The pain is like a cloud of darkness that envelopes and suffocates the lives of those who suffer from it. Depression is all consuming, leaving a numbing emptiness within. It is often impossible for one to come out of depression by will power alone. The emotional pain of loss and abandonment caused by loss of children, spouses, and of divorce can also be crippling.
- Mental pain may come yet from financial disasters, addiction, and loss of self-esteem. People committing suicide to avoid paying a crippling loan from the 'Ah Longs' or moneylenders may not be as rare as we think.

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- Spiritual pain is the existential pain of the loss of God's presence that manifests as an emptiness in our lives. It is often confused with depression. The spiritual pain associated with celebrity suicides is only the tip of the iceberg.

As we look at suicide, it is important to remember that it is an act of desperation. We should view such people with compassion. Even the best of us may be driven by circumstances to the brink of this abyss.

As Christians, what should our thoughts be about suicide? Surprisingly, the Bible has little to say about suicide. There are seven incidents of suicides in the Scriptures: Abimelech (Judges 9:52-54); Samson (Judges 16: 29-30); Saul and his armor bearer (1 Samuel 31:3-5); Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15:31b); Zimri (1 Kings 16:18-20); and Judas Iscariot (Matt 27:3-5).

It is interesting to note that of the seven suicides recorded in the Scriptures, the suicides of Abimelech, Saul and Zimri were recorded as direct judgement of God on their sins, even going so far as to say that God killed Saul. The Scriptures were silent on the other four suicides though the ignoble context in each case speaks for itself. Therefore, the Scriptures offer no specific guidelines, allowing each situation to speak for itself. Theologian Karl Barth noted the following in his multivolume *Church Dogmatics*: "a remarkable fact that in the Bible suicide is nowhere explicitly forbidden."

In certain Christian traditions, suicide is regarded as an 'unpardonable' sin and those who commit suicide are not given the rites and burial on the church grounds. They are usually buried outside the church and are regarded as being condemned to hell. What is the origin of this belief? The root of this belief may be traced to Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theologians of the church. In his thesis, *On Suicide*, Thomas Aquinas argued that to commit suicide is to sin against God, family and community. God is sovereign, and He decides when we are born and when we die. To commit suicide is to usurp the sovereignty of God over our time of death. Suicide deprives children of their parents, and community of the contribution of that person. Thomas Aquinas never said that suicide is an unpardonable sin. Unfortunately Church traditions made it into an unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is stated in Mark 3:22-30 and Matthew 12:22-32 as sinning against the Holy Spirit; suicide is not.

Suicide is an act committed in sheer desperation. What can we offer to those who are suicidal? There are several ways in which we can help.

Firstly, Christians must be educated on suicide so as to remove the taboo associated with it. Education gives a clearer perspective and understanding of the utter hopelessness and despair that drive people to suicide; they need our help and are not to be shunned or rejected.

Secondly, Christians must be willing to walk alongside those in pain. Suicidal persons tend to withdraw from human contact. Often they are lonely and are entangled in their loneliness within. They need someone to talk to, and to befriend them.

*Befrienders* and other such voluntary suicide hot-lines have proven effective in tackling and helping/getting potential suicidal persons to abort their suicide attempts because they provide that much needed listening ear. That being said, the NGOs are mere frontlines who should be able to approach the church to help these broken persons. Help is not just the offering of platitudes but the offer to journey together for a period of time. It needs commitment. Unfortunately, not many churches are registered with them to offer such help at the present moment.



Thirdly, Christians have to learn to recognize the warning signs of a suicidal person. We need to be able to pick up on cues such as excessive talk and obsession with details on ways to kill themselves, the increasing use of alcohol or drugs, the sudden giving away of their favorite things. We should be extra vigilant of those in unbearable pain as described above, those withdrawn, or those who are experiencing extreme mood swings.

Fourthly, Christians should know when to call for further help. A suicidal person should not be left alone, and may need to be committed to a psychiatric facility. The help of professionals such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and counsellors may be required to deal with the person's depression and other pain issues.

Finally, all the above actions must be **saturated with prayers**. There are many occasions where I have observed the **power of prayer penetrating what often is an impenetrable hard shell that a suicidal person had built around him/her**.

Suicide will become increasingly common in our high-pressured society. Euthanasia or assisted suicide for the terminally ill has been successfully lobbied to become law in many countries recently. Any suicide however will have serious ramifications to the immediate family, community, and society. Christians can do much to help people who are suicidal and prevent their suicide attempts.



Dr Alex Tang is a consultant pediatrician at a private hospital, an associate professor at Monash University Malaysia, and teaches practical theology and biomedical ethics at local and overseas seminaries. He is an elder of Holy Light Church (English) Presbyterian Church, Johor Bharu





*A regular Proclaimer listening group comes together every week*

# Helping Everyone to Hear the Word of God

*By Dr Anthony Ng*

**W**hen asked if the Bible is important or not, almost every believer will say that it is. Yet when probed further on how many have actually finished reading this most important document from God, most would be too shy to answer truthfully.

If we are reading this article we are already gifted with the ability to read, and we have all the resources available to us today. Yet, if we do not take the effort to make the Bible the central part of our lives, then how much more difficult it is for our brethren who have limited access to education and the Word of God in their mother tongue.

As disciples of Christ, we can use tools to help us read God's Word and also send these tools to help everyone hear and understand God's love letter to us. We now have audio and visual technology and resources to help those who cannot (or may not want to) read.

Early efforts to present the Bible used single-voice recordings on cassette tapes (remember those?). Today we have multi-voice dramatized recordings which we can download into our ever-present smartphones. One of the ministries involved in making these available is the Faith Comes by Hearing (FCBH) ministry. This global ministry now has a stable of more than 1,200 recordings that are freely distributed in playback devices (called Proclaimers), in CDs and in MP3 players, through radio and satellite transmissions. Currently, these are downloadable through the online Bible.is app and through sharable offline single-language apps for Android phones (soon for iPhones).

The mission of this ministry is to present God's Word for every person; its aim is to record in as many of the 7,000+ languages in today's world so that the Bible can touch everyone in his or her heart language.

The use of the audio Bible is not limited to formal church groups. A cell group uses a Proclaimer to learn a certain language so that the members can be fluent when they go on their mission trips to this people group. A few kindergartens or pre-schools use it for their students to be familiar with English or mother tongue. School hostels use it for morning devotions or during meal times. A headman insists that the children of his longhouse listen to ten minutes of the Bub Kudus when they return home from pre-school each day to remind them that they are foremost Iban by race and language and that they are Christian by faith. In another village, the priest uses his Proclaimer for the call to worship, broadcasting it loudly from the roof of his church. He testifies that church attendance has increased since he started this practice.

Since 2013, FCBH has worked with the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship (FGBMF) to distribute the Proclaimers. These audio Bible sets which are solar powered are suitable for use in remote areas which have no electricity or have difficulty getting it. Indeed, they have been used to promote and strengthen Bible literacy, especially among rural communities in the interior who are not only illiterate but who do not have fulltime pastors in many of their churches. More than 2,000 listening groups have been started in the country using these audio Bible sets.

There are numerous testimonies of people and churches transformed or impacted when they get together to listen. Stories of healings, deliverance, answered prayers and even reconciliation abound.

Recently, a group of Christian drug-rehabilitation centres reported that newly-admitted residents who listen to the audio Bible during their 'cold-turkey' detoxification period recover much faster. They are also more receptive to treatment and healing, in addition to accepting the saving grace of God and receiving instruction on discipleship.

NECF has given its financial support to the Proclaimer project ministry with a gift of RM 20,000.00 on 21 August 2014. It had also jointly organised with FGBMF a seminar on Faith Comes by Hearing at the Christian Training Centre, Mentakab, Pahang, on 8 April 2017. NECF plans to do more to introduce the use of Proclaimer sets in order to improve Bible literacy in English in Bahasa Malaysia speaking churches through its Restorative Educational Empowerment Programme (REEP).

The Word of God is simply His letter to us all, to be heard (or read aloud) that we may know His profound love and



*A listening group in Sabah where people are more oral*

salvation for mankind. May our faith truly grow deeper through hearing His word again and again!



*Dr Anthony Ng known as "The Proclaimer Man" is the Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) ASEAN Coordinator. He worships at Faith Methodist Church Cheras, Kuala Lumpur*

Are you a leader in your school, workplace or church?

Do you have a passion to make Christ known?



EVANGELISM TRAINING

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# A Covenant-keeper... A Fresh Beginning in your 40-Day Fast & Prayer for the Nation

By Rev Looi Kok Kim

**G**od is Holy. He longs for an altar consecrated to Him. One of the most obscure but highly significant passages on a consecrated altar is Exodus 20:24-25:

*"Build my altar wherever I cause my name to be remembered, and I will come to you and bless you. 25 If you use stones to build my altar, use only natural, uncut stones. Do not shape the stones with a tool, for that would make the altar unfit for holy use."*

The first half of Exodus tells the story of the people of God released from slavery in Egypt. The deliverance was accomplished by God's intervention in history. God entered into confrontation with Pharaoh and Egypt's gods, and His mighty acts demonstrate the power of His mercy to liberate the people from slavery. The people of God will have a historic anchor for their faith. God has brought the people out of slavery.

But the freed people are a "stiff-necked" people. They are unbelieving, unresponsive, ungrateful, and completely undisciplined. God now must weld this mob of people into His people with a destiny - a people capable of bringing God's righteousness, justice and His loving kindness into a new era in a nation. They are to be covenant-keepers. This covenant-keeper journey is a fresh start to a total-surrender lifestyle towards godliness.

The second half of Exodus gives an overview of the law through which God will guide His people to be a holy community. Hence, God had intentionally instructed Moses to call upon His people to build an altar (Exodus 20:24-25). An altar is a place of sacrifice; His Presence brings blessings. There is to be no personal agenda but the people are to come in reverent simplicity. This is totally unbelievable! It is an altar built of natural, uncut stones. The point is God is holy and He is transcendent. He wants us to come, as we are, to know Him.

Likewise, being a covenant-keeper sets us apart unto God. That's the heart of holiness. We are to be distinct from the world because of the inward journey set before us. Holiness is thus not merely external. It is not behavioral modification without inner change. Holiness is an inner journey where our characters are molded and forged. A journey through which our values are changed. This journey begins with a personal encounter with Jesus. The way of Jesus is the way of humility. Forgoing a meal or more, forgoing your favorite drink or TV series is a way of putting Him first and honoring Him.

This year's 40-Day Fast and Prayer which begins from 7th August to 15th September comes with an intentional destiny and a purpose-driven focus. It motivates you to enter this spiritual discipline not on your own, but to recruit

a small group of people with the same desire - the desire to know God by saturating your mind with God's word. It is a journey of the unknown but anchored in faith and trust in God. It gives a sense of ownership and accountability so that you will not give up but will finish the journey. Your teammates count. They are the ones who will encourage you and one another. Keeping a journal of your own encounters with God will keep you looking forward to more and greater encounters. The stories you record will bless others.

The big picture of God's blessings is exponential. Imagine the people of God collectively making a decision to sign up as covenant-keepers for 40 Days. As Dr. John Mulinde says, "It is not enough to get God to hear us and see some encouragement in society. We must create an atmosphere for Him to come and abide with us so that real work of restoration and redemption can begin in our land." Fervent fasting and prayers do attract the attention of God. And this is where healing, miracles, salvation, deliverances and restoration happen. Above all, you will know God better.

## What to do?

Get a copy of the 40-Day Fast and Prayer Booklet. This year's theme is "Harvest." In each eight blocks of five days devotions, an insert in each of the prefaces for the five days provides a summary of the states to pray for, and to record some action plans. As you sign up the Covenant-keeper Card, you are making a decision to be disciplined to complete the 40-Day journey. You do not do this on your own. You need to recruit a small accountability group so that you can encourage one another on this exciting journey of faith. Let us be MAD (Make A Difference), and usher in His Presence for a new era and season for Malaysia.



**My Accountability Group**

☐ Tick the appropriate box.

☐ Yourself with the Lord

☐ Husband & Wife

☐ Family

☐ Your Colleagues/ Classmates

No of people \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Your Friends : No of people \_\_\_\_\_

**What to Do ?**

☐ Once you form a group, decide the type of fasting.

☐ Skip One Meal (Lunch or Dinner)

☐ Skip Both Lunch & Dinner

☐ 40 Days on Juices/Water or Daniel's Fast

☐ Total Fast

**YOUTH/CHILDREN/STUDENTS**

☐ Skip Lunch or Dinner

☐ 40-Day Refrain from your Favorite Food

☐ Drinks ☐ Favorite TV Series/Social Media

☐ Read Novel, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

● Bible Reading with the guide given in 40-Day Fast & Prayer. Target : 10 chapters/day. Decide when to read.

● Use a note book to journal your spiritual journey.

● Start a chat group to encourage one another and share your testimonies.

● Charity Giving - each time when you skip your meal, set aside the amount to bless the NECF's Evangelism and Leadership Development.

(Bank in to National Evangelical Christian Fellowship, Public Bank A/C: 3078972807)

**COMMITMENT PARTICULARS**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Group Leader : \_\_\_\_\_



Looi Kok Kim is the Chairman of NECF's Prayer Commission and the Senior Pastor of Charis Sanctuary (AG), Kuala Lumpur



NECF MALAYSIA

the 大丰收  
**Harvest**  
Tuaian • அறுவடை

மத்தேயு | Matius | 马太福音 | Matthew 9:35-38

40 DAYS FAST & PRAYER | 7 AUG - 15 SEPT 2018  
四十天禁食祷告 | 2018年8月7日至9月15日  
40 HARI PUASA & DOA | 7 OGOS - 15 SEPT 2018  
40-நாள் உபவாசம் & ஜெபம் | 7 ஆகஸ்ட் - 15 செப்டம்பர்

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**Harvest**  
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MATTHEW 9:35-38

40 DAYS FAST & PRAYER  
7 AUG - 15 SEPT 2018

<b>KLANG VALLEY</b> <b>40-DAY FAST &amp; PRAYER LAUNCH</b> <b>WEDNESDAY, 1 August   8-10pm</b> Full Gospel Assembly KL (FGAKL) Lot 689, Taman Goodwood, Jalan Kuchai Lama, Off Jalan Kelang Lama, 58200 Kuala Lumpur.	<b>MALAYSIA DAY PRAYER RALLY</b> <b>SUNDAY, 16 September   6-8pm</b> Full Gospel Tabernacle (FGT) Wisma Eagles, 5 Jalan TP4, Taman Perindustrian UEP, 47620 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan
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LEADERSHIP  
conference

with Dr. Frank Damazio

**FRESH**  
fire

**MALAYSIA DAY**  
prayer rally

SEPT 14, 2018  
9.00am - 3.00pm  
SEPT 15, 2018  
9.00am - 12.30pm  
registration RM100 (inclusive meals)

Dr. Frank Damazio has been in ministry for over forty years as a college professor, church planter, lead pastor of a large multi-site church, Bible college president and chairman of a fellowship of churches. Frank is a graduate of Portland Bible College, has a Masters of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry from Oral Roberts University, and has authored over 30 books. He is presently devoting his life full time to Frank Damazio Ministries through creating web resources, providing leadership coaching, presenting leadership intensives, writing new books and speaking nationally and internationally.

venue  
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5 Jalan TP 4, Taman Perindustrian UEP, 47620, Subang Jaya, Malaysia  
MALAYSIA GPS Coordinates: N03° 27'41.9, E101° 33'86.2 or N3.045699, E101.564366 Organised by HON Centre Sdn. Bhd.

FREE ADMISSION SEPT 16, 2018 7.00pm  
Extra 9:8

A Measure of Revival in Our Bondage

NECF MALAYSIA

**ONE MINUTE WITNESS™**

**About the Training**  
This is a 6 hour Training of Trainer (TOT) for the One Minute Witness. It is targeted for Senior Pastors, Pastors, Church Leaders, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Leaders as well as all who have a deep passion for the lost. It is an effective training that will help leaders turn their congregations into witnesses for Christ.

**Trainer's Profile**  
Tom Ellis, the president of Oasis World Ministries, is known for his great passion for winning souls to Jesus. He has seen over a million people come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Tom believes we must be intentional about sharing our faith. Oasis is now training pastors in 20 countries, and equipping with our ONE MINUTE WITNESS faith-sharing tool, in which nearly one million people have now been trained. He has a heart to help pastors of all denominations equip their people to confidently share their faith without fear.

**Venue**  
Selangor  
10 November 2018  
Full Gospel Tabernacle, Wisma Eagles, Subang  
Penang  
13 November 2018  
Georgetown Baptist Church  
Malacca  
17 November 2018  
City Community Church

**Time**  
8.30am to 4.45pm

**FEE**  
RM30 (for tea-break, lunch and training materials)

For more information & registration please visit [www.necf.org.my](http://www.necf.org.my)