

A bi-monthly
publication of the
National Evangelical
Christian Fellowship
of Malaysia

Berita NECF



Editorial

Will Kingdom Work Slow Down?

By now, church offerings would have shown signs of the global financial crisis as a result of retrenchment and salary cut among church-goers. Fear of the uncertain future may even cause worshippers to hold back when the offering bags go round. And for those still holding on to their jobs, the real challenge for them will be to continue to give at the pre-recession level.

With smaller intakes and reduced budgets, church ministries will undoubtedly be affected. Some churches may even have to lay off their workers or cut their salaries.

The world is undergoing recession, but should God's Kingdom suffer that too?

Seizing the Sabbatical Principle

Recessions come and go. How then should Christians respond to each cycle of financial woes, especially the present one, without fear and doubt but instead, with Scriptural security? Let us look at the Sabbatical principle as a way out of this fear.

Firstly, it is important to understand the financial implications of the Sabbatical principle – how the Lord has provided in the past – in order to enable us to continue to

give sacrificially to support and sustain Kingdom ministry whether in good or bad times.

By grasping the Sabbatical principle, we will be able to emulate Joseph who made the appropriate 'financial' preparation for future hard times.

More importantly, it will transform and renew our attitudes in order to resist or break the bondage of materialism and self-centred individualism.

Additionally, we will be able to stamp our Christian presence in the world as the true witness of God's love and charity in manifesting the spirit of *koinonia* and *diakonia* (providing immediate relief to those who need help).

The Sabbatical principle underscores the fact that God has already made preparations for future down times. The principle refers to the provision made concerning the land in Lev. 25:2, "...the land shall keep a sabbath to the Lord." It is also called "sabbath of solemn rest" (vs 4) and "year of rest" (vs 5).

Just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God gave them specific instructions on working the land. For six years, they were to

No recession. Embrace the Sabbatical Principle.

sow, prune and gather but on the seventh, they were to let it rest and lie fallow. During the seventh year (called land Sabbath), whatever the land produced was for the poor to glean and the leftover was for the beasts (Ex. 23:11).

The Israelites were not to till their land nor harvest the produce. God gave this command to teach them to look to Him as their provider. In the long run, it was intended as an encouragement to all His people, in all ages, to trust Him by obeying His commands, and to cast their care upon Him.

Continued on page 5...

Inside this Issue

Chairman: Allah Again	2
Israel-Palestine	3
Pak Lah's Last Tea	4
Onward Christian Women	6
Called to Politics	7
No Stopping 'Allah'	8
From Change to Transformation	9
Reviving Our Parched Wasteland	11
Transforming the Nation Through the Marketplace	12

NECF Malaysia Council

Chairman

Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Vice-Chairman

Elder Kong Yeng Phooi

Honorary Secretary

Pr Tay Wah Seng

Honorary Treasurer

Dr Khoo Kay Hup

Committee Members

Rev. Dexter Low

Rev. Ng Kok Kee

Rev. Richard Ong

Rev. Peter Mutang

Rev. Foo Moy Peng

Rev. Elisha Satvinder

Rev. Simon Chandran

Pr Chan Theam Lai

Pr Alfred Phua

Pr Jerry Dusing

Mrs Grace Hee

Advisor

Rev. Tan Sri Prince Guneratnam

NECF Malaysia Staff

Secretary-General

Sam Ang

Senior Executive Secretary

Patrick Cheng

Executive Secretaries

Lucrece Loo (Prayer)

Kathryn Tan (Finance)

Eugene Yapp (Research)

Cheong Sze Ying (Chinese)

Pr Azariah Rajendran (Tamil)

Alfred Tais (Bahasa Malaysia)

Larry Lee (Youth and Leadership Development)

Simon S. Arputham (Administrator)

Ong Juat Heng (Communications)

Jeff Chok (Information Technology)

Confidential Secretary

Ching Bee Gaik

Administrative Secretaries

Yvonne Chin

Leong Kit Wah

Sangan Mutang

Administrative Assistants

Sally Tan

Jouslly Buaya

Executive Advisor

Rev. Wong Kim Kong, J.M.N.

Editorial

Editor

Sam Ang

Assistant Editor

Ong Juat Heng

Address

32, Jalan SS2/103,

47300 Petaling Jaya

Selangor, Malaysia

Tel: 603-7727 8227

Fax: 603-7729 1139

Email: editor@necf.org.my

Printed by Akitiara Corporation

1&3, Jln TPP1/3, Tmn Perindustrian Puchong

Batu12, 47100 Puchong, Selangor

Chairman's Message

Allah Again



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

In the interview last Dec. 31 on the issue of restriction of the Alkitab, Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar assured the Christian community that there was no “agenda to discriminate” and that the restriction was to ensure that there was “no confusion and controversy” among the Muslim community (*Online Utusan Malaysia*, 30/12/08).

However we feel that these attempts by the Government could be more helpful if they were made by *both* the Muslim and Christian communities to explain the meaning and understanding of the word ‘Allah’ in context in their respective places of worship.

In a multi-racial and multi-religious society where religious freedom is espoused and where the world is encouraged to look at us as a ‘model’ of racial and religious harmony, it does appear inconsistent when the Government is resistant towards others who use the word ‘God’ (Allah) in the national language, especially in the Holy Scriptures.

If one were to accept the flawed argument by Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, then the *other religions* in Malaysia may soon find themselves unable to use the word ‘Allah’ in other places of worship besides churches.

It does seem logical that the Sikhs may be next in line as they too use ‘Allah’ in their Scriptures, though we pray that they will not be subjected to the same restriction.

While the Ministry would like the public to think that the issue is limited to the use of ‘Allah’ in the Christian Scriptures, this is not so as the Government has consequentially curtailed the use of the same word in other Christian publications, as seen in their ongoing restrictions and

confiscations of such materials.

To avoid confusion and controversy, perhaps a better approach would be to get Muslims, Christians, Sikhs (who also use the word ‘Allah’ in their Scriptures) and any other religious groups to educate their respective adherents on the obvious elementary truth – that their understanding of ‘Allah’ is not the same as our ‘Allah’.

Simply put, their ‘God’ is not our ‘God’. This is not very complicated, very ‘un-confusing’ and ‘non-controversial’. Done in context in our respective places of worship, this will go a long way in promoting goodwill besides high respect for each other’s faith.

Millions of religious leaders have been doing this for centuries and we find no reason why this cannot be done in the context of Malaysia.

Having said all that, we need to bear in mind that the word ‘Allah’ predates the birth of Islam, and it has been used by both Muslims and Christians worldwide for centuries and definitely before Independence in 1957.

The Britannica (*online dictionary*) tells us “the name’s origin can be traced back to the earliest Semitic writings in which the word for god was *Il* or *El*, the latter being an Old Testament synonym for *Yahweh*. ‘Allah’ is the standard Arabic word for ‘God’ and is

...Continued on pg 5

NECF PRAYER CALL ON ISRAEL-PALESTINE

As an evangelical Christian organisation in Malaysia committed to the full authority of our holy scriptures, we are compelled to call on all member churches to pray earnestly and without ceasing for the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict in the narrow Gaza Strip that has claimed over 1,300 lives thus far.

It is indeed alarming and distressing to read, hear and see news reports highlighting the suffering and hardship endured by the people, especially the Palestinians, as well as the death of innocent civilians, many of whom are women and children, arising from the violent aggression of Israel's military power.

The Bible clearly teaches that God longs for justice and peace for all people, irrespective of race, creed or nationhood. We believe that the principles of peace and justice, so powerfully spoken by the Hebrew prophets, are applicable and relevant to all nations and all people of the world in this time of crisis in the Middle East.

The Bible also says human beings are created in the image of God and that all are vested with human dignity. As such, all human beings, whether Jews or Palestinians, have equal rights to life, liberty and livelihood. The atrocities in this war in the Middle East have caused much destruction and loss of innocent lives which go against the grain of human dignity.

We thank God that both sides have finally agreed to a ceasefire. We enjoined all to pray and intercede to our great God for a fair, negotiated solution for both the Israelis and Palestinians that will usher in lasting peace,

harmony and justice for the people, be they Jews or Palestinians, and for the two nation states involved in the conflict.

We call on all evangelicals, all Christians, and everyone of good will to join us to pray faithfully in the coming days and months ahead for the following:-

- ❶ That God will intervene and in His own sovereign way bring about a just, lasting solution of peace and harmony in the conflict between the two nation states of Israel and Palestine;
- ❷ That humanitarian assistance and aid in the form of food, medical personnel and supplies will directly and quickly reach the victims of the war and for their benefit; and
- ❸ That all quarters, including the United States government and the United Nations, will resolve and do their uttermost to bring about an end to this conflict, thus preventing more loss of lives and suffering to the people.



Proof Not Required for MyKad Data Change

NECF Malaysia is looking into the issue of the National Registration Department's (NRD) requirement for non-Muslims to produce proof of conversion before they can change the religion in their MyKad. The matter was brought to NECF's attention by a Christian who recently applied to change the status of religion in his MyKad but was told by NRD to produce his baptism certificate as evidence that he had converted to Christianity.

According to the "Pindaan Butiran Kad Pengenalan" (Change of Identity

Card Information) form, the applicant is required to provide supporting documents, such as baptism certificates and letters from the temple, to prove conversion (see <http://www.jpn.gov.my/BM/BKP/ic4.html>).

This requirement is contrary to a 2004 Cabinet decision that non-Muslims need not prove to the NRD that they have changed their faith.

In Nov. 2005, NECF brought up the issue with the then Deputy Home Affairs Minister, Datuk Tan Chai Ho, who then quoted the 2004 Cabinet's decision (*NST*, Nov. 5, 2005).

"Pindaan Butiran Kad Pengenalan"

BAHAGIAN KAD PENGENALAN	
JPN ERA BARU	
:: Laman Utama ::	
MyKad	
Perkhidmatan	
Pindaan Butiran Kad Pengenalan	
Prosedur Memohon Pemohon dikehendaki datang ke Kaunter JPN dan membawa dokumen berikut (asal dan salinan) :-	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kad Pengenalan Sijil Kelahiran / Sijil Anak Angkat / Sijil Warganegara / Pengesahan Taraf Warganegara / Borang Warganegara / Permit Masuk Surat Akuan Berkanun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pemohon n Pemohon t Pemohon y tidak layak Borang Per kaunter JP Bayaran Tu
<i>Sijil baptism (Baptism certificate) required as supporting document to prove change of religion.</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pasport (jika ada) Dokumen sokongan lain yang berkaitan seperti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dikenakan Warganega Bukan War
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Kad memeluk Islam ii. Sijil baptisn iii. Surat kuil iv. Sijil perkahwinan Malaysia v. dan lain-lain dokumen yang diperlukan oleh kakitangan kaunter. 	

Continued on pg 6...

Pak Lah's Last Tea

The 2008 CFM* Christmas tea was a usual gathering attended by a host of leaders from the Christian and non-Muslim community, politicians from both sides of the political divide, representatives of foreign embassies, and special guests Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Badawi and wife Datin Jeanne. The unusual thing was that the PM stayed on for over 90 minutes. In the words of an observant guest, he "lingered". (*Christian Federation of Malaysia.)

The tea is a yearly gathering organised by CFM with the three component bodies taking turns to host the gathering.

The special guests also obliged the host, NECF Malaysia, who requested that they posed for photographs with the children who had earlier presented song items. As they left the place, they also stopped to shake hands with some of the 250 guests as press photographers jostled and elbowed for the best spot.

Earlier on during his speech, the PM's first words were not lost on the crowd. "Thank you for remembering to invite me," he jested. The attendees understood the poignancy of the remark as that would be last time he attended the CFM tea as the Prime Minister (though

rumours are swirling that he might not step down after all).

Why did he 'linger' at the tea gathering? The best guess would be that he was gathering information for his declared last mission before he leaves office – to cool racial and religious tensions in the country. Undoubtedly, these tensions have escalated, maybe even spiked, during his short premiership.

With barely a few weeks left before he steps down, he is racing against time to cool the searing heat. For many, Christians included, it is a hopeless mission, like stuffing toothpaste back into its tube.

The point is that he acknowledged the problem at hand and is working towards a resolution despite the odds of achieving anything. The very least we Christians can do is to hold back our sniggers and pray for him.

During the tea, the Christian community took the opportunity to highlight to the PM a range of issues, from the Alkitab to allocation of worship places to high food prices and rising unemployment and crime.

Following is an extract of the speech made by NECF Chairman Rev. Eu Hong Seng, who spoke on behalf of CFM. The full speech is available on the NECF website.



The first couple shaking hands with the little ones with NECF Chairman Rev. Eu (in batik on the right) looking on.



Last group photo with representatives from CFM.

“With the looming economic crisis, we want to assure the government that Christians have been praying for the well being of our nation – and that we are committed to helping the government and the people, irrespective of race and religion, to weather the coming global crisis.

We stand committed and fervent in nation building, and we, the Christian community, pledge our cooperation and our resources.

We are thankful for the reduction in petrol price, in tandem with world oil prices. But food prices and prices

of many other commodities are still maintained at the level of peak oil prices. The growing unemployment and the perception that crime is on the rise resulting in the feeling of insecurity, need to be addressed.

Amidst all these, the Christian community renews and pledges our commitment to foster greater peace and harmony, with all people in the country, and promises to work with the Government for a better Malaysia.

As we celebrate Christmas, we urge the government to continue to be sensitive and pro-active to the many

needs and concerns of the general population. After the recent Bukit Antarabangsa landslide, a former victim of the earlier Highland Towers landslide remarked, “after all the promises, it won't be long before the tractors and contractors start work again” – we must pause to ask why there is such cynicism in our country.

It is very encouraging to hear that your last mission before leaving office is to cool racial and religious tensions in the country. Indeed a shrinking economy

...Continued on pg 6

...Continued from front cover

To allay their fears of depravation or hardship, God assured the Israelites that the sixth year would yield enough food for the next three years.

Lev. 25:21 records, “And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?’” Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years.”

But why made provision for three years, instead of one (for the seventh year rest)? The answer is found in vs 21: “And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat of the old harvest.” (Lev. 25:20–21)

God had prepared everything ahead of time, even taking into account the fact that it would take two more years before the harvest would arrive. By observing the seventh year of rest, God promised them:

① Security: “...you will dwell in the land in safety” (vs 18). The word “safety” signifies both outward safety and inward security and confidence of spirit, that they would be free from harm or evil and from the fear of evil.

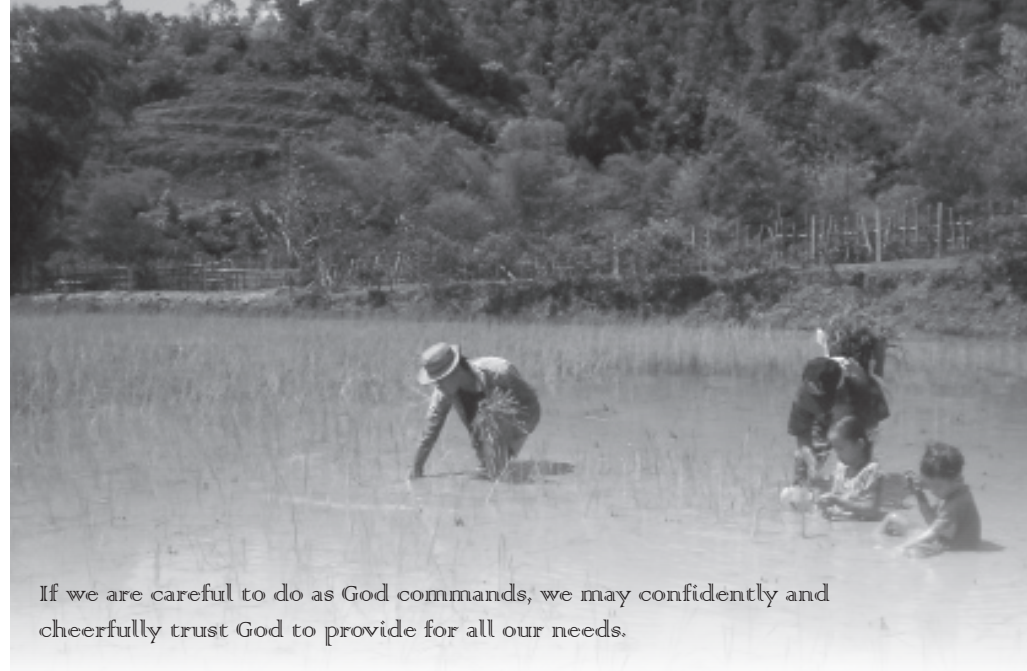
② Sufficiency: “...you will eat your fill.” (vs 19). If we are careful to do as God commands, we may confidently and cheerfully trust God to provide for all our needs.

What About Us?

The economic recession is a cyclical process and will recur over certain periods of time. Likewise, the Sabbatical principle is a cyclical process in that it occurs every seven years. Therefore, it is God’s design by His divine intervention that provision is made during the suspension of labour.

Have we experienced God’s provision and His security and sufficiency as mentioned in the Sabbatical principle of Leviticus?

With our accumulated wealth,



If we are careful to do as God commands, we may confidently and cheerfully trust God to provide for all our needs.

properties, investment and savings from our past abundance, what does God want us to do with this blessing in the midst of the present economic crisis? Bear in mind that in planning ahead of time, God had taken note of the poor and even the animals by forbidding the Israelites to reap what the land produced on the seventh year, but to leave it to the needy.

If we have not experienced this provision of God, what should be our immediate and future response to this biblical truth?

We are in a time of great change, but we are certain that God is committed to our growth. Let us not allow the enemy to rob us of this hope. Let our faith and trust in God grow day by day as we work together to build His Kingdom.

Meanwhile, let us:

① Repent of our greed and unethical ways of living our lives if we have not walked in His ways;

② Make practical and realistic adjustment to any misappropriation of financial commitment;

③ Adopt biblical stewardship and early-church radical life-style;

④ Reach out to those in need, including the many full-time workers whose livelihood may suffer as a result of smaller donations; and

⑤ Continue to give so that Kingdom work will continue to flourish.

...Continued from pg 2: Allah Again

used by Arab Christians as well as by Muslims.”

We must also remind ourselves that in the context in Malaysia, our Government, through our Prime Minister, desires to ease religious tensions and has been preaching tolerance.

How can this be when the Government is effectively saying, through legislation and government directives, “you cannot call your God ‘God’ (Allah)?”

Surely we can learn from our neighbour Indonesia, the most populous Muslim nation in the world, where the word ‘Allah’ is allowed in the Alkitab. There is no confusion and controversy there today.

The Christian community has adopted our national language policy since its introduction and we remained committed to nation building.

Copyrighting a word or laying claim on ‘a word’ (in the national language) to be used by one community to the exclusion of others (not to mention it is also a widely-used language in the ASEAN region) is unquestionably inappropriate of a nation that is seeking to become a ‘first world nation with a first world mentality.’

We call upon all churches to pray for good sense to prevail.

Onward Christian Women

God has positioned Christian women in just about every domain and sphere of influence, participants at a recent women's closed-door consultation agreed.

At the end of the presentation by 10 women, who are leaders in various domains, the consultation concluded it was scriptural that women were made to work, serve and minister in every sector in the world.

Christian women must arise to use every station to influence their spheres for God's glory. However, they must break free from their shackles of self-limitation and embrace boldness, liberty and release by recognising their positions as daughters of the Almighty God.

To help Christian women progress, more common-interest networks need to be established, which will effect changes in women's attitudes and mindsets towards their service for the Lord.

The 10 presenters and their topics were: Hannah Yeoh, Subang Jaya State Assemblyman (politics); Chong Weng Lian, Life College Chief Executive (education); Lillian Dorai, head of Family Life Centre cum pastor of Women's Ministry at FGA KL (family); Patricia Toh, Managing Director of Allegro Consultancy (business); Grace Hee, Safety, Health and Environment Manager of

a major oil and gas company (corporate); Dr Florence Wang, Visiting Consultant on SLE at UH and Malaysia's first nephrologist, (health); Ee Joo Lian, lawyer (law); Yap Heong Mong, OMF Malaysia Home Director (missions); Ang Siew Khim, pastor at River of Life Sanctuary (church); and Rev. Lim Siew Pik, TCA College Malaysia Vice-President of Academic Affairs, (theology).

Sixteen other Christian woman leaders joined the 10 presenters at the consultation, organised by the NECF Women's Commission to gather information for a report on the agenda for women in nation building for the various domains.

Among the issues raised



Hannah Yeoh being prayed for by Pr Ang Siew Khim (left) and NECF Women's Commission Chairman Grace Hee (right) at the consultation.

were:

- Churches and para-church organisations are the 'hands and feet' to be Christ's witness to bless their community;
- Churches need to challenge their youths to enter the mission field;
- Men need to release their wives to ministry;
- Women require the firm support of family and Church to be successful in their work and ministry; and
- Small businesses are an excellent mean to working from home and Christian women should tap on micro-finance to get started.

...continued from pg 4: Pak Lah's Last Tea

and the widening polarisation of the different communities are the biggest threats facing the country.

In your journey to finalise your last mission, may we suggest that the Government re-look at its restriction on the Alkitab.

Bahasa Malaysia is our national language. Therefore we continue to be perplexed by the classification of the Bahasa Malaysia Alkitab under section 22 of the ISA as a document "prejudicial to the national interest and security of the Federation."

Though special exemption was made for the Alkitab to be used by Christians in churches, in this modern day and

age, where almost anything can be accessed on the Internet, it is regrettable that our Holy Scriptures is still seen as "prejudicial to the security" of the country.

Last but not least, we will continue to pray for religious freedom for all. Twenty to 30 years ago, it seemed strange when various religious groups started to use shop-houses for worship services. Today, we are experiencing the same malady but to a much greater degree. Churches in particular, now have to use industrial lots for places of worship.

Our prayer is that, as we are encouraged by the Government to promote the good of our various faiths, we all would be given more space, literally and figuratively, to do so. "

...continued from pg 3: Proof not required

He said that the Cabinet's position may not have "filtered down properly" to the department.

Datuk Tan was then commenting on a statement by NRD director-general, Datuk Mohd Abdul Halim Muhammad who had said non-Muslims needed to show proof that they had converted or changed faiths "to prevent abuse".

During the press interview, Datuk Tan had clarified that non-Muslims only needed to fill in an "A" form, and that the Cabinet had agreed that "there was no need for a letter or certificate as proof. It should be enough for the applicant to just state so."

Called to Politics

Our brethren politicians need our prayers as they strive to fulfil their calling.

We are all too familiar with the common prejudice against politicians as corrupt, self-serving and power-hungry opportunists. Whether it is the Christian West or the Islamic Middle East, the same prejudice strikes everywhere. Likewise in Malaysia where politicians are generally perceived in the negative vein.

Do honest, selfless, citizen-caring Malaysian politicians exist today? The bright news is: Yes, they do. The March 8 election offered the public the assurance, little it may be, that there are politicians who truly desire to make their communities a better place for everyone.

Among these gems are Christians who dared to enter this noble but ruthless vocation because they felt 'called'. However, there is a marked difference between politicians who happen to be Christians and Christians who have the firm conviction that God has called them to the arena of politics so that they would be salt and light to their community.

Qualities of Christian politicians

As Christians, it is our duty to uphold – whether in prayer or otherwise – our brothers and sisters who are in governing positions. But first, let's look at the qualities that are expected from Christian politicians as viewed through the Bible.

Firstly, they are God-fearing, trustworthy and non-covetous (Exodus 18:21 – "...able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness...").

Next, they are wise, understanding and respected among men (Deut. 1:13 – "Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men..."). While those elected into positions of authority are automatically given the title 'Yang Berhormat', genuine respect can only be earned through integrity and diligent service before God and men.

Thirdly, they are fair, impartial and unbiased in their judgments and policies (Deut. 16:18–20).

Lastly, they are uncompromising in their relationship with God (Daniel 6). Although Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel all held office under heathen rulers, they stood their grounds when commanded to do things against their godly heritage, such as worshipping idols or ceasing prayers.

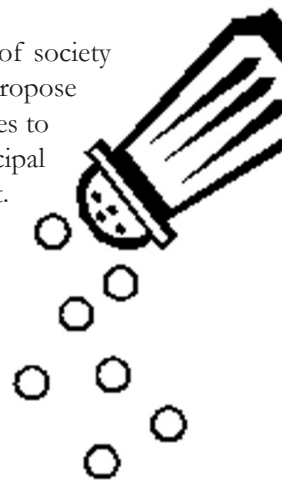
Role of Christian Politicians

Christian politicians who know the laws of God in their hearts are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16) in this institution that God has placed them.

- As salt of the earth, they are to help preserve the moral fabric of the country, stem the tide of moral

decay and corruption in every stratum of society beginning from the top. They should propose and set in place administrative structures to act as checks and balances in the municipal councils, State and Federal government.

- As light of the world, they are to be a model in righteousness, godliness and humility. As appointed leaders, they should not lord over the people under them but carry out their duties with a servant heart (Mark 10:42–45).



Praying for Christian Politicians

① For God's strength and courage

They need the courage to do the right thing, though it may be unpopular with certain powerful people. For example, a former MP who spoke up against the inaccuracies in the school history curriculum was strongly opposed by some parliamentarians and subsequently threatened by people who surrounded his service centre.

② For God's protection

When Christian politicians begin to speak up concerning injustice and unrighteousness, they may receive threats of physical harm against themselves and their family members. Recently, the family of a lady politician had the scare of their life when a molotov cocktail bomb was thrown into their house. Pray also for God's angels to protect their going out and coming in (Psalm 121:7–8).

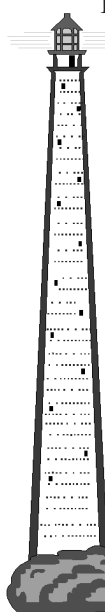
③ For humility in service

The word 'minister' actually means 'servant'. Hence politicians, especially, those appointed as cabinet ministers, are servants to all. Whether they are state assemblymen who look into the welfare of their constituencies (clogged drains, traffic congestion, etc.) or members of parliament who are responsible for good governance, economic development and religious freedom, Christian politicians need to exhibit much patience and humility in carrying out their duties.

④ For support from family and church

Being public servants, their work often take them away from their family. This may add strain and tension to family cohesiveness. While this is the price and

Continued on pg 9...



HERALD

No STOPPING 'ALLAH'

Report

On 30 Dec. 2008, the Home Ministry approved the Herald's annual printing permit but with conditions attached (*NST*, Jan 1). The conditions were:

- Cease publication of the Herald in Bahasa Malaysia until the court decides on its move to seek a declaratory relief that it is entitled to use the word "Allah";
- The publication can only be sold in churches; and
- It must print clearly on the cover that the paper is only meant for Christians.

On 3 Jan., *NST* reported that the Roman Catholic Church of Malaysia has rejected the three conditions. In the same report, Archbishop Tan Sri Murphy Pakiam was quoted as saying with regards to the first condition, "We are unable to see how these two matters are related. Even if the court dismissed our application for judicial review, that has no bearing on the publication in Bahasa Malaysia."

The Archbishop added, "Connecting the matter of the publication in Bahasa Malaysia with the determination of the judicial review proceedings is not only grossly unreasonable, irrational and illegal but also reeks of ill-will and bad faith in that this condition serves as a form of retribution or punishment on account of our filing the judicial review."

On 7 Jan., *The Malaysian Insider* reported that The Catholic Lawyer's Society of Kuala Lumpur claimed that the Home Ministry's decision to ban the Bahasa Malaysia edition of the Herald was unconstitutional (<http://themalaysianinsider.com/index.php/malaysia/15269>).

The Society's President said, "Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar's decision to bar the Malay edition inside the weekly paper

contravened Article 3(1), 10(1)(a), 11(1) and (3) of the Constitution which 'grants the right to freely practise one's religion, the general freedom of speech and expression and the right of every person and religious group to propagate and manage its own religious affairs'".

As a consequence, the Society claimed that the Minister was effectively denying some 750,000 people the right to religious instructions. It has been reported that the publisher of the Herald and the Archbishop planned to take the matter to court if the matter was not resolved amicably.

Since then, *the Star Online* has reported that the Home Ministry had never prohibited the use of Bahasa Malaysia in the Roman Catholic Church's publication, (<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/1/10/nation/2988525&sec=nation>).

The Ministry's Quran Publication Control and Text Division Secretary, Che Din Yusoh, in a statement on 11 Jan. said, "The ministry is only against the use of the word 'Allah' to refer to God. The correct and appropriate translation for God in Bahasa Malaysia or Melayu is 'Tuhan'".

Note

It appears that the Government is tightening up on the publication of Christian materials in Bahasa Malaysia for fear that this may cause confusion to the various adherence and cause racial disharmony. This latest decision by the Government has certainly not gone down well with the Catholic Church of Malaysia and they are now considering another suit.

The views given by Minister in the Prime Minister Department Datuk Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi "that the Bible cannot be translated into Bahasa Malaysia" reflects this fear (<http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info>.

[asp?y=2008&dt=1231&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Dalam_Negeri&pg=dn_05.htm](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info)).

Whether the statement by the Minister has any relation to the issuing of the annual publication permit of the Herald with conditions is a matter of conjecture. The concern for the Christian community must surely be this – the prohibition from using the word 'Allah' even before the decision of the courts is grossly unfair and is an infringement of our fundamental liberties.

The Government has consistently maintained that Bahasa Malaysia is our national language and constantly promotes its use within all walks of life in society. Yet when it comes to reading materials or scriptures containing the word 'Allah', it is not allowed.

The latest statement by the ministry's Quran Publication Control and Text Division Secretary has also caused further confusion to the issue.

In such circumstance, it is no wonder the Catholic Church has said that they would continue to use the word 'Allah' in their publication while its suit is still in the hands of the courts.

Suggested Prayer Points

1. God will intervene to ensure that good sense will prevail and that a fair and equitable outcome will emerge;
2. The Government will respect the rights of the people for religious freedom and expression as enshrined in the Federal Constitution; and
3. Wisdom for our Christian leaders as they deliberate and find an amicable as well as a permanent lasting solution to this present state of affairs, which is causing great confusion to the public and adherence of the various faiths.

From Change to Transformation

There were changes galore throughout the world, beginning in our very backyard when the unimaginable happened – the ruling government's loss of a two-third majority in Parliament and defeat in five states in the March election. In November, Martin Luther King, Jr's dream of racial equality woke up to reality with the election of the first 'coloured' US American president.

Political changes also took place all over world, but what was more frightening were the economic changes hitting the world. The years of financial greed and abuse finally imploded in the US and the violent waves soon lashed economies throughout the world.

While changes continue to spin at a frightening speed, let's pause a while to think about its 'twin' word – 'transformation'. According to the dictionary, 'transformation' goes far deeper than 'change'. To change is "to become different" but to transform is to undergo total change or to change something dramatically. Think of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon and that will give you an instant picture of transformation.

NECF Malaysia has, as its mission, "Transforming the Nation through the Local Church." Indeed, it is a lofty mission and some well-meaning friends have even sniggered at the notion that our nation could be transformed as it appears to be beyond redemption with the deeply-rooted corrupt system and dishonest

'Change' was the mantra for the year 2008. And as the world spins towards the return of our Lord Jesus, we can expect to see many more gripping changes that will blow our imagination. Meanwhile, what do we do?

politicians in their firmly-entrenched powerful positions. For this cynical lot, despair has overshadowed hope and the possibility of better days to come.

People of hope

But we are told to be a people of hope. Throughout the Bible, hope carried people through their death valleys. Two thousand years ago, Jesus appeared as the Hope of all mankind during the dark period of the Jewish nation under the oppressive Roman rule.

People of hope don't just sit around and twiddle their thumbs. They do

something – no matter how small that something is. They get busy with God's work even though what they do may seem insignificant, even to themselves.

Consider the two midwives in Exodus 1 during the time of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt. The king of Egypt had ordered the two – Shiphrah and Puah – to kill all male babies delivered by them (vs 16), but they feared God and did not obey him.

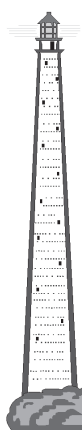
Instead, they saved all the male babies, and therefore,

Continued next pg...



People of hope don't just sit around and twiddle their thumbs.

...continued from pg 7: Called to Politics



sacrifice that the politicians' spouse may be willing to pay, friends and church-mates can alleviate the burden by words of encouragement, practical help and much prayer support.

5 For protection against moral corruption

As Christian politicians are also susceptible to the corruption of

power, pray that they will find suitable spiritual advisors to hold them accountable in both their private and public life (Prov. 4:23; 1 Tim. 4:16).

Conclusion

What makes a Christian politician different from a socialist fighting injustice, corruption and inequality?

While the agenda looks similar, the Christian politician goes beyond man's temporal sufferings to the Judgment Seat of Christ where all injustice and

unrighteousness will be judged.

While he fights with all that is within him against unjust governmental structures and policies, he also knows the peace of God which passes all understanding which can garrison his heart against all unrighteousness and wickedness.

Like the apostle Paul, he is an ambassador of Christ bearing the message of reconciliation, ever prepared to share the reason of the hope he has within him (2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Peter 3:15).

...continued from pg 9: From Change to Transformation

the people multiplied and grew very mighty (vs 20).

Did the midwives ever pause for a moment and consider the magnitude of their deed? Perhaps not, for they were too busy delivering babies and...fearing God. They did what they could within their ability to serve God, and left the big picture to Him.

Not many of us can do mighty exploits, but each of us in our own little way, can contribute to the big picture by doing what is within our ability. When we combine each of our 'little', the outcome may just be explosive, just like the many individual votes that were cast in the 2008 elections.

Likewise, smaller churches should never question their contribution to the Kingdom, for when combined, the contributions from many small churches will be large enough to rock the nation. Then, the goal of transforming the nation through the local church will be realised.

One plus one equals three

While every church, big or small, has a part to play in Kingdom work, NECF believes that combined churches' efforts will yield results far greater than the sum of their effects individually. It's the principle of synergy.

We see this happening in Penang where 19 churches in

the island have got together to run a ministry to serve the needy families in Penang, focusing on the Rifle Range area – a community of some 26,000 mixed-race residents living in nine blocks of low-cost flats.

The ministry was initiated in 2006 by several Christians who were challenged to go outside the walls of their church.

They started off by feeding the homeless in Penang's KOMTAR area several times a week. Through this, they took in a homeless couple and housed them in a flat in Rifle Range. Next, they

adopted a man who attempted suicide and housed him in the same area.

It was in Rifle Range that the group saw the vision of starting a 'house of hope', and thus House of Hope (HoH) was born. The 'house' grew, and before long, 19 churches had moved in. More amazingly, HoH comprised churches from the three major languages – English, Mandarin and Tamil (see pg 14 for story on House of Hope).

Inspired by the HoH story, the Johor Baru pastors' fellowship is now looking into setting up a similar ministry for synergic results.

May all churches consider the great gain of working together to advance His Kingdom, and experience the blessed joy of helping to build the nation together.

Not many of us can do mighty exploits, but each of us in our own little way, can contribute to the big picture by doing what is within our ability.

Knowledge for Eternity

The SPM Bible Knowledge (BK) subject must be taken seriously and churches and Christian Fellowships ought to encourage their youths to take the paper. This is to ensure the number of candidates for the SPM paper is maintained, or better still increased, so that the Education Ministry will continue to offer it as an SPM subject.

Thanks to the relentless promotional efforts of several school-related Christian organisations and individuals, BK has

seen a resurgence in popularity of late. More schools and churches are now holding classes for their Form 4 and 5 students to prepare them for the exam. Most of the weekly classes are free while some charge a nominal fee.

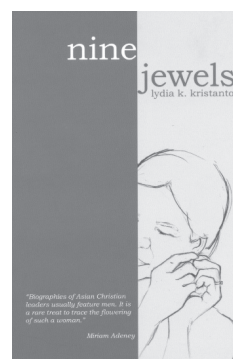
For more information, contact: Malayan Christian Schools' Council at 03-7956 5310; Scripture Union at 03-7782 9592; Teachers' Christian Fellowship (TCF) at 03-5637 5623; Malaysian Catholic Education Council at 03-20785062; and Pustaka SUFES bookshop at 03-7782 8239.

Those who are interested to teach BK can also attend training sessions and purchase the training materials.

This year's training seminar will be held on Feb. 28 (Saturday) at Dream Centre, Petaling Jaya. Contact TCF for more information.

Nine Jewels

Author: Lydia K Kristanto
Price: RM 20

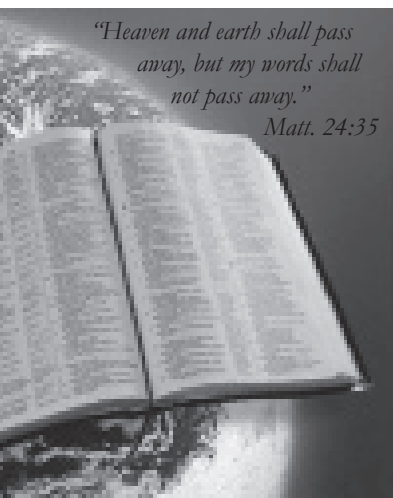


IN "Nine Jewels", Lydia shares intimately about her childhood and growing years and how God has weaved and is continuing to spin her life. Through all her experiences, she has discovered the thread of God's love in her life-journey.

Lydia is the wife of Rev. Loh Soon Choy, a member of the NECF Research Commission. The book is available at Canaaland, Pustaka SUFES, NECF Malaysia and Malaysia Bible Seminari.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Matt. 24:35



AS WE LOOK AT OUR SCHOOLS AND MALAYSIAN SOCIETY AT LARGE TODAY, WE CANNOT help but feel that something is very wrong with our education system.

The noble aspiration of the Falsafah Pendidikan (Education Philosophy), which was supposed to have guided the development of education in Malaysia for the last 14 years "...to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God...", hangs mournfully on the walls, school halls and corridors, mockingly reminding one and all how far short our schools have missed the mark.

Who would be salt and light in our schools and to our children in the most crucial years of their life? Who would bring love back to our schools? Should we just stay on the sidelines and complain?

Rather, should we not give of our best sons and daughters to redeem and reclaim a wasteland and, with God's help, turn at least portions of it into vineyards again?

Christians have always believed in the importance of the role of schools and teachers in the moral, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical formation of children and young people who will one day be parents and responsible citizens who in turn will determine the fate of the country.

Over the course of 150 years of Christian involvement in education in our nation, tens of thousands of children and young people across four generations have not only received knowledge but also come to know right and wrong, truth, justice, kindness and compassion.

Today, there are still 229 capital-assisted mission schools: 145 primary and 84 secondary schools nominally under the care of mission boards. Some of these mission schools, despite all odds, have still retained their reputation as the foremost institutions of learning in our land.

However, many are a mere shadow of their past glory. There are many reasons for this sad state of affairs. There are less and less members of the alumni who will come forward to support the mission school which laid the sound foundation in their life and set them on the road to success.

Many have moved away from their hometown. Mission boards have difficulty in finding committed Christian leaders in the local community to be members of school board. Nowadays, looking for good Christian school heads is like looking for pearls on an ocean floor.

The problem is

Reviving Our Parched Wasteland

*By Yap Kok Keong
Chairman
Malayan Christian School's Council*

compounded by the fact that the handful of Christian teachers senior enough to be appointed as heads of mission schools are opting for early retirement and fewer and fewer Christian young people are joining the teaching profession.

To many Christians, it is just another job, a profession without glamour, a career without prospect, not to mention

the tough conditions in our schools and the perceived mismanagement and injustice in the system.

Teaching is a calling for Christians. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was a teacher. Christians have always been challenged to imitate His life. Over the course of a teaching life of 28 to 30 years, a teacher would have had the privilege to shape thousands of lives and perhaps touch the lives of some for eternity.

What children and young people of every generation really need, more so perhaps this generation, is not just knowledge but help to find meaning and direction in life.

They cry out for teachers who really care, who will give them back a sense of self-worth, who will walk that extra mile to help them grow in kindness and compassion, in understanding, justice and love; and who will hold out faith and hope to them in a harsh, materialistic and fiercely competitive world. Because we have Christ, we have so much to offer the needy children and young people of our land.

The lonely call of God to the ancient prophet, "Who will go for me? Whom can I send?" as His heart goes out to a people lost, should echo again in every Christian's heart.

Such a call must now resound from our pulpits and our homes, energetically taken up by youth pastors and leaders and laid before Christian young people. Teaching is a worthy vocation, a fulfilling option in the service of God and mankind.

Who would be salt and light in our schools and to our children in the most crucial years of their life?



God created the cosmos that reflects His glory and goodness (Ps 8:19). Although this creation has been marred by sin and its consequences (Gen 3), God continues a redemptive relationship with it through ongoing creativity and the sustaining of all things.

Man is to co-labour with God as seen in the first blessings and commandments given to Adam and Eve: “be fruitful”, “multiply”, “fill the earth” and “subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). There is an implicit invitation to enjoy the creation as well as a responsibility to care for its wellbeing. God gives us the capacity to fulfil the task. Adam and Eve were to be involved in the process that would enhance the value of what God created. Work enables the translation of raw resources into food, goods and services for the benefit of mankind. As such, work is an activity of human co-creativity with God and therefore an act of worship – our consecration and giving back to God.

Business and the Cultural Mandate

The Bible has much to say about ethical and fair dealing in work and business. It has instructional texts on what is pleasing to God in relation to business, employment, trading, using money, lending and so on. They are applicable in the areas such as quality control, fair wages, good working conditions, reasonable return on investments, corporate social responsibility and the like.

Business provides opportunities for both the entrepreneurs and employees to use their particular gifts in service to others as unto the Lord. It sustains not only those who establish enterprises, but also those who are employed and those who benefit from the goods and/or services provided.

At the same time, work and business also offer opportunities for sinful practices. Exploitation of the poor, dishonesty, greed and materialism are among some of the examples. As a result of ill practices by a few, some may end up losing the ability to support themselves and contribute to others (family, community, etc.). This represents a loss of dignity and is far from God’s original design.

Christians are called to play a role in God’s restoration process by helping to reclaim the inherent dignity and value of work and business. We are to be ambassadors for God’s kingdom in the marketplace, salt and light in and through business. We are to bless all peoples regardless of cultural background and countries through God-honouring business enterprises and reformation of unjust economic systems. Therefore Christians are challenged to consider seriously the redemptive potential of business and employment as missions.

The Marketplace Challenges

The 16th century Reformation recovered the doctrine of the

Transforming the Nation through the Market- place

By Cheong Seng Gee

priesthood of all believers. It included labour as Christian calling to glorify God. The great revival movements of the 18th and 19th centuries promoted holiness and Christian service in all areas of life, including business and the workplace.

The movement of God’s Spirit during these last decades has reinforced the integration of evangelism, social concern, work and faith, thus emphasising the redemptive potential of business as mission.

Nonetheless the Church today faces a dilemma. On the one hand, the Church is becoming irrelevant to the world, not because Christians shun everything secular, but because they compartmentalise their lives, never letting their spiritual lives encroach upon their ‘secular’ occupations and practices.

On the other hand, ‘Christian occupations’ and practices are being increasingly shaped or reshaped according to the world’s mould. For example, the number of church leaders attending management seminars on leadership and personality profiling is growing. Churches continue to search for the best approach to do church.

Continued next pg...

The mission of the Church is to bring people to Christ, help them grow in discipleship and then send them out to bring the Kingdom of God into their personal spheres of influence.

Some, however, believe that it is matter of interpreting or understanding the concept of the Kingdom of God.

Dr Leong Tien Fock¹ argues that our concept of God's kingdom contradicts Christ's explicit teaching. But did Jesus not say that the kingdom of God is "within you" (Luke 17:21), meaning "in your hearts", and that it is "not of this world" (John 18:36)?

Does this not mean that it is spiritual and internal (private/personal) rather than physical and external (public)? Howard Marshall in his commentary on Luke's Gospel suggests, "Nowhere else is the kingdom regarded as something internal... Jesus speaks of men entering the kingdom, not of the kingdom entering men."

Transformation of the Marketplace

Here lies the challenge of transforming the nation through the marketplace. The move from private to public and the role of faith in today's society through work and business is ever more challenging.

We will further examine the emerging roles for Malaysian Christians in the public square in the context of business as mission, transformational influence, Christian professionals, and faith-at-work movements which ultimately define the business of the church. (Editor's note: Only the first two – business as mission and transformational influence – are covered here.)

Business as Mission (BAM)

The story of Hans Nielsen Hauge, who was born in Norway in the late 1700s, is a classic example of societal transformation. Norway was a poor nation with no democracy. Religious freedom was limited. Hauge travelled throughout the country, establishing businesses as missionary initiatives besides church planting.

His work led to both spiritual awakening and entrepreneurship

movement. His contribution to the development of modern Norway was and still is largely recognised. The term "Business as Mission" (BAM) was coined during the period of the Hauge movement.

A modern conceptual framework for BAM is based on "real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses with a Kingdom-of-God purpose, perspective and impact, leading to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically and socially for the greater glory of God."²

BAM keeps four things in mind: (a) God is at the centre; (b) global is the scope; (c) people are the focus and (d) God's glory is the outcome. Its bottom line is best expressed as AMDG or *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam* – for the greater glory of God.

Transformational Influence

Business or employment in the marketplace can indeed be a transformational tool through the influence and persuasion elements it brings. This however must not be understated as Christians do bring with them the "aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2:15) besides being the salt and light of the world (Matt 5:13–14).

Body Shop founder, the late Anita Roddick³, believed that business must regard "life as sacred and awe-inspiring," and sought to combine business acumen and moral responsibility. Her workers took part in demonstrations and window displays publicised campaigns on social issues. She herself spoke out vehemently against the purported evils of big businesses.

Donald E. Flow, owner and CEO of the Flow Automotive Companies in car dealerships in the United States, asks daily: "How is my service to

Christ infused with the power of the Holy Spirit so that my life truly reflects the Kingdom of God?"

Similarly, his daily prayer would be: "I pray that customers and employees might experience the aroma of Christ as we serve them, and that our service will be infused with the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray that we might have the discipline to look to others' needs before we look to our own. I pray for faithfulness to our mission as it relates to fulfilling our call to service. And I pray for forgiveness when we have failed to live faithfully to our calling."⁴

Closer to home in Malaysia, Tan Sri Dato' Francis Yeoh's achievements are remarkable. He was selected by Fortune Magazine Asia as one of the 25 Most Powerful Business Personalities in 2004, and appointed as member of Barclays Asia-Pacific Advisory Committee in 2005.

Despite his successful business ventures, he has publicly and unashamedly declared his dependence on God. "It is sometimes tempting to believe that I deserve some of these awards but the truth is, God writes the script and is the author of my faith and my life and I'm just a humble, willing little pencil in His hand."⁵

There lies the sense of spirituality in everyday business – honouring God and honouring people. Admittedly, Roddick, Flow and Yeoh, being humans, have weaknesses and may not always be consistent in walking their talk. Yet, they have presented us some

Continued next pg...



HoH volunteers reaching out to the Rifle Range community: (from left) medical checks, children programme and painting the flats.

Hope for the Needy Community

House of Hope is an inter-denominational ministry that is spiritually covered by *Hua Ai* (Penang Chinese Churches Caring Network).

Since a majority of the new believers that were birthed from the ministry speak Mandarin, Hokkien and Tamil, HoH has also enlisted the help of some Mandarin- and Hokkien-speaking pastors as well as a Tamil-speaking church worker.

And to prove its commitment to the ministry, the churches have appointed Pr Alfred Phua to work full time in the ministry. Pr Phua is also a member of the NECF Malaysia Council

The ministry has an ambitious, but achievable, vision of transforming communities economically and socially. By helping the underprivileged in the areas of education, healthcare and

finance, HoH aims to break the cycle of poverty and crime and thereby, transforming the community. Though the ministry's geographical outreach is Penang, its focus is on families living in the Rifle Range area.

Since 2006, HoH has continually:

- Subsidised monthly flat rentals for needy families;
- Provided monthly food subsidies
- Facilitated applications for social welfare aid;
- Conducted occasional health and medical screenings and provided basic medical follow-ups;
- Conducted children's programmes, such as pre-school and tuition classes, art and craft classes and music; and
- Organised "gotong-royong" (community clean-up) to maintain the cleanliness of common areas

of the Rifle Range flats

In addition, HoH has held major events during festive occasions to celebrate and connect with the residents there. Among the events are Christmas parties and *Chap Goh Meh* celebrations.

A medical clinic, a physiotherapy centre and a leisure park are in the pipeline to better serve the Rifle Range community. So are plans to set up a foundation to help deserving students pursue tertiary education.

To cap it all, HoH is also considering establishing a community church in the area because of the increasing numbers of believers.

It may be unthinkable for a single church to achieve all these grandiose plans, but with some 20 churches holding the plow, the dream is not so far-fetched after all.

...continued from pg 13: *Transforming the Nation Through the Marketplace*

models of living out Christian faith in the corporate world.

Defining the Business of the Church

Now, what then is the role of the local Church? Or simply, what is the business of the Church? The business of the Church is ministry in/to the marketplace. How do we come to this conclusion? Well, the Church exists as a community of believers for three main reasons, namely, worship, discipleship and mission.

The mission of the Church is to bring people to Christ, help them grow in discipleship and then send them out to bring the Kingdom of God into their personal spheres of influence.

Therefore the business of the Church is to build the Kingdom of God in the nine primary spheres

of society: business, creative arts, education, government/politics, health, justice, media, religion and sports.

However we must bear in mind that the more successful businessmen are, the more vulnerable they become. Pride, fear of man and greed can become issues. Some may not realise that they too are in a spiritual warfare and may not be equipped to fight the battle.

What should be done is to disciple young businessmen to be marketplace ministers, just as we train people to be pastors. Joseph is a good example. He was specially prepared to be the leader he was meant to be, an incorruptible prime minister in a secular world. We have to intentionally undergird vocation with spirituality.

Endnotes

- 1 Dr Leong Tien Fock, "In the World

But Not of It", Asian Beacon, December 2005.

2 Ibid.

3 Connecting with Culture : Anita Roddick, Peter Heslam, Director of Transforming Business at Cambridge University, 28 September 2007, www.licc.org.uk/culture/anita-roddick

4 The Business of the Church, OnWatch, Australian Marketplace Connections, Bulletin 2005-07, www.marketplaceconnections.com/archive/2005/business.htm

5 Asian Business Leaders Award 2005 : Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Francis Yeoh Sock Ping, www.cnbcasia.com/abla2005/finalist6.shtm

This article is an extract and a contribution of the NECF Malaysia Research Commission, of which the writer is a member of. The full article will be published in the upcoming Forum VI – a collection of articles on current issues written by the commission's members.

EVANGELISM CONSULTATION

Feb. 27, NECF Malaysia, Petaling Jaya

THE nationwide 2007 Celebration of Hope Malaysia evangelism programme reached out to about 40,000 people who heard the gospel through the *Matthew and Friends* homes. As a result, some 10,000 experienced the saving grace of God.

Although NECF Malaysia trained nearly 2,000 churches to run the programme, only 800 churches actually participated. Hence the projected number of salvations was not realised.

Nevertheless, the programme has helped NECF to identify some current trends in the Malaysian Church and issues that need to be addressed to take the Church to greater heights in evangelism and discipleship.

Since then, the NECF Evangelism Commission has deliberated several times and drawn up the National Evangelism Strategy plan that will last until 2020.

However, the commission wishes to seek some additional input before launching the plan nationwide and subsequently bringing it to the various states.

Thus, the NECF's leadership will be holding a closed-door consultation with some key pastors, evangelism organisations leaders and denomination representatives to discuss the plan. Several pastors will be present to review the plan.

Among them are Pr Daniel Ho (DUMC, Petaling Jaya); Pr Chew Weng Chee (SIB KL); Pr Ong Sek Leang (Metro Tabernacle, Kuala Lumpur); and Tan Tek Seng (Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship).

NECF Chairman Rev. Eu Hong Seng will also attend, while a paper by Rev. Dr Hwa Yung (Bishop of The Methodist Church in Malaysia) will be presented.

Pastors' Wives Retreat

Feb. 19–21, Damai Laut Resort, Perak

THIS first of its kind fully-sponsored retreat is specially held for the wives of senior pastors. Organised by the NECF Malaysia Leadership Commission, the retreat is a collaboration with Impact Pastors Impact Nations (IPIN), a ministry founded by Roland Seow, senior pastor of FGA Melbourne, who has a passion to strengthen pastors around the world.

Pr Roland and his wife have been conducting similar retreats to refresh and strengthen pastors in Australia and elsewhere. Having been a senior pastor's wife for the past 20 years, Evelyn understands many of the difficult issues and challenges pastors' wives experience in their ministry.

The speakers include Pr Jeannie Mok (International City Church, Brisbane, Australia), Mrs Koh Poh Khim (FGA KL), Datuk Chiam Heng Keng (Professor of Social Psychology) and Pr Lew Lee Choo (SIB KL).

Besides gleaning from the different speakers on various aspects of ministry, the retreat will also provide an avenue for the participants to establish a support network.

It's fun to stay at the YMCA

YMCA Kuala Lumpur, a new member of NECF Malaysia, is offering discounted room rate for its hostel to NECF Malaysia members.

NECF members – whether churches or para-church organisations – will get a 10 percent discount from its net room rates. However, they have to make reservations at least seven days in advance.

The discount is also extended to workers of churches and para church organisations which are members of NECF.

Besides the rooms, the hostel has adequate facilities for Christian groups to hold their functions. It has a hall that can accommodate 200 people and many rooms for up to 30 participants. Check with its office for discounts.

For more information, see www.ymcakl.com



NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ORDINARY MEMBERS

The Christian Revival Church, Kota Kinabalu, *pastored by Moris @Maureen Bt. Lajangang*; Gereja Warisan Milik Kristus, Kuantan, *pastored by Chen Me Wa*; Emma Faith Nurturing Centre, Penang, *pastored by Lai Koon Chye*; Evangelical Tabernacle of Praise, Kulai, *pastored by Mohan a/I Mariappan*; Lunas Gospel Mission Church, Kedah, *pastored by Rev. Samuel Lau*; The Realm Church, Penang, *pastored by Paul Barry Hughes*; National Council of YMCA, Malaysia, *represented by Geh Cheng Lok*; and Persatuan Orang Pekak Kristian Negeri Pulau Pinang, *represented by Kim Eun Hyeok*.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Steven Ong Chin Chong; Ayemere Ejoba Success; Rev. Lee Shin Young; and Pr Adeline Koh Lay Yong.

Uganda/Congo The Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) has waged a campaign of terror for over 20 years in Uganda. The UN estimates LRA rebels have kidnapped 20,000 children and forcibly conscripted them into military service or the sex industry. Countless others have suffered their fate through merciless killings.

Led by the infamous Joseph Kony, a Catholic altar boy turned warlord, the LRA has specifically targeted the church community and clergy who have given refuge to those fleeing the rebel's brutality. Catholic Archbishop Monsignor Richard Domba reported the LRA hacked 150 to death during the 2008 Christmas service with another 280 massacred over the following days. The Ugandan army reports that most of the church victims were innocent women, children and the elderly.

On 17 January, LRA soldiers raided a crowded church in north-east Congo where believers were praying for an end to LRA terror. The militants hacked and burnt to death reportedly some hundreds of believers. On 20 January, members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Western Equatorial State, South Sudan, found the bodies of 16 South Sudan civilians who had been abducted by the LRA.

On 22 January the UN reported that the recent LRA violence in north-east Congo had so far left "900 people dead and uprooted 130,000 others, with more than 8,000 Congolese taking refuge in Southern Sudan."

Recently, encouraging signs have surfaced signalling Africa's longest armed conflict may be coming to an end. Kony and his henchmen failed to show up as promised for an October 2008 signing of a peace treaty crafted by Ugandan church and government authorities. In December, Operation Lightning Thunder, a well co-

ordinated assemblage of armed forces from Uganda, Congo and the SPLA, began air strikes destroying rebel bases in the vast Garamba national reserve in north-east Congo. Kony and his forces are now fragmented into small regiments in desperate search for food and shelter.

Could this year witness the end to the LRA? Armed with occult powers, the LRA will not be defeated through normal warfare. Only divine power realised through fervent intercession will stop this menace.

Please pray for:

- Humanitarian assistance to reach the survivors of the Christmas week attacks. The UN estimates 70,000 people have been displaced.

- Rebel commanders and soldiers to peacefully surrender and with church support, re-integrate back to civilian life; may Joseph Kony be brought to justice to bring closure to those who have suffered from his evil deeds.

- Divine strength for the Ugandan and Congo church communities; may they demonstrate rejoicing in hope, patience in tribulation and steadfastness in prayer to the fullest degree.

- Pray that the Lord, who is supreme over all powers in heaven and earth, will intervene and end LRA terror for all time.

Sri Lanka A bill banning 'forcible conversions' will go to the Sri Lankan parliament in February. When it first appeared before the 2004 elections, the bill fuelled an escalation in Buddhist nationalism and persecution of Christians.

If enacted, the 'Bill for the Prohibition of Forcible Conversions' would criminalise any act to convert or attempt to convert a person from one religion to another by the alleged 'use of force, fraud or allurement' – terms so broad the law is open to abuse.

The civil war has sent nationalism soaring and 2009 is an election year. The National Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka comments: "It is our gravest concern that this bill will grant legal sanction for the harassment of religious communities or individuals, and offer convenient tools of harassment for settling personal disputes and grudges, totally unrelated to acts of alleged "forced" conversion."

Pray for Sri Lankan Christians that they will continue to share God's redemptive love regardless of the outcome of the bill.

Uzbekistan Throughout 2008, Christians in Uzbekistan faced persecution from the government. This included police raids during church services, harassment, confiscation and destruction of Bibles and other Christian material, arrest and detention of church leaders and members, fines and imprisonment.

Some large registered churches have been closed down. Mass media continue negative coverage of the Protestant churches, resulting in harsher persecution of Christians by society. However, the persecution has also resulted positively in a growing consolidation, unity and mutual help among Christians, as well as stronger prayer and fasting.

Christians in Uzbekistan ask us to pray that they may be 100 percent victorious amidst persecution.

Pray:

- Thank God for the growing unity among Christian leaders;

- That the government will stop its policy of persecuting religious minorities and that the religious freedom granted by its

Constitution will become a reality in Uzbekistan.

- That God will bless the lawyers and religious specialists helping the persecuted Christians.