

Berita NECF

Editorial

When Disobedience is the higher law

Christ's compassion was prophetic. He went to the source of suffering and dealt with it, and often, He had to go against the laws of the time to exercise His acts of compassion.

We find this in an account in the Gospel of John where He healed a man who had been sick for 38 years. The lame man was lying near a pool of water. When the waters of the pool were stirred, therapeutic powers went into action, and the sick who entered the water was healed. The man was sick, the treatment was free and within sight, yet he could not get it.

Why not? He explained to Jesus that he did not have anyone to help him into the water when it was stirred. No one cared for him.

Jesus told this man who had not stood for almost four decades to pick up his mat and walk. He did! But it was the Sabbath. In Jerusalem, you can forget whether it was Tuesday or Thursday, but no one forgets the Sabbath, and on this holy day, it was forbidden to carry one's mat as it was considered WORK. The Jewish religious leaders were too keen to

enforce the Sabbath legislation because they wanted to please God.

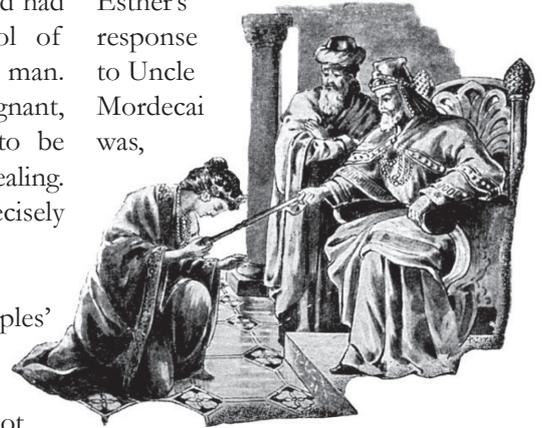
It was not by mistake that Jesus used this powerless lame man to challenge an uncompassionate society by a deliberate act of defiance. God had provided the stirred-up pool of water for the healing of this man. It was the social pool of stagnant, selfish society that needed to be stirred up for the man's healing. 'Stirring the pool' was precisely what Jesus did.

Jesus sought to open His disciples' eyes by a brilliant act of civil disobedience. The healing incident in the above was not an isolated incident; it was part of Christ's pattern. He knew this would be seen as work on the Sabbath and therefore a deliberate act of defiance of the religious laws. Yet, He did it. His compassion prodded Him to defy the religious laws of His time.

The Old Testament records the story of Queen Esther who risked her life in civil disobedience to save her people. She signed her own death sentence when she approached the king without being summoned by him. The law granted

the death penalty for entering the king's presence without invitation; Esther knew the law well and yet she defied it as it was the only way to get the king's attention.

Esther's response to Uncle Mordecai was,



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Printed by Akitiara Corporation
1&3, Jln TPP1/3, Tmn Perindustrian Puchong
Batu12, 47100 Puchong, Selangor

Chairman's Message



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

MORE of HIM, Less of me

“HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE.” (John 3:30 NKJV) I can't think of a more appropriate motto for year 2010.

The apostle of love is the only disciple who declared this. He understood that he had nothing that God did not give him (v27), he was not the Christ, though he had a powerful ministry and reputation (v28) and that he had this privilege of communicating with the God of gods (v29).

Understandably, John had this passion to see Jesus promoted. Notice the “must.” He must increase.

He is to go on growing¹ whilst I go on decreasing. These were John's last words from the dungeon until his enquiry whether Jesus was the Messiah (Matt11:2ff)

He must – this means it is not an option. There is no choice. It is non-negotiable. We must obey and do all that is necessary to ensure this is done.

Be it Church, job, office, school, or family, Jesus must be glorified.

When our business does well, when one gets promoted – does anybody know it is God who helped us?

Are we quick to glorify God? Do we spontaneously give Him the credit? Do our neighbours know we are trusting in Him alone? Do we always put Him first? Do people of other faiths have a better opinion of the Church because of us?

When our buildings are built, does a-l-l glory really go to God?

When our testimonies are sporadic and our character suspect, then the “must element” is missing.

For God's plan is twofold – there is to be a growing and continual comparison between Christ and us – and this is clearly seen in John's life (John3:31–36).

John must diminish and Christ must continue to grow.

Too often, our “humble decrease” is but for a season or occasion. We focus on Him increasingly but we lose sight of our “must decrease.”

Are we really decreasing? We seem to be plagued by Hollywood Christianity. We boast of CEO leadership (in contrast to servant leadership); there is the new generation of workers who are slow to respond to their call till the pay package is right; more and more want to be “consulted”, the growing dependence on publicity; inflated figures about our churches; the uncontrollable; many who feel they have the right to correct and slander churches publicly etc.

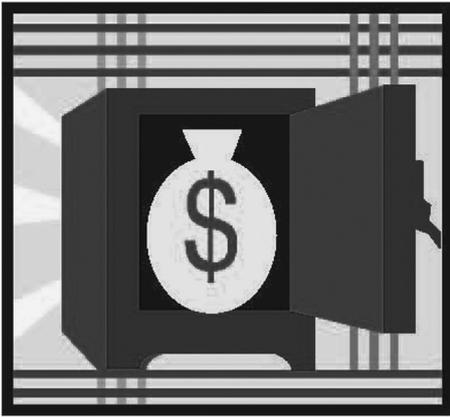
This worrying trend clearly shows that we have yet to learn to live I-must-decrease lives.

There can be no genuine “increase” if there is no “decrease” on our part.

I pray that 2010 will be a year we all re-learn humility and walk with this single focus – “He must increase!”

Please note
that the email address of
Berita NECF has been changed to
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¹Present active infinitive auxancin (NT:837)
– Roberston's Word Pictures in the NT



Corruption destroys Nation Building

By Sam Ang and Eugene Yapp

Recently, *The Malaysian Insider* reported that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will set up a special operations division to handle high-profile cases to counter allegations that the anti-graft body is lenient when probing powerful and influential politicians.

What comes to mind when you receive such news? Political patronage? Corruption? Who cares? One can become indifferent and say this is not our fight. If this crossed your mind, could it be that churches have rarely addressed such matters and say nothing of how Christians should handle and confront such maladies?

It appears as though the Christian faith has nothing to say about the ills and destructive forces of corruption.

But is this the case? No, for the issue and malady of corruption is as much pertinent to Christians as is the issue of conversion and discipleship.

As Christians, we believe that irrespective of one's stature and wealth and how powerful or politically influential he/she is, our God searches the hearts of all men and we stand as equals on Judgment Day. Every act of unrighteousness and injustice will be revealed on that day, and nothing will escape His eyes.

Let's examine three characteristics of corruption and its consequences and how Christians may respond to them.

1. Corruption Turns Every Social Institution Upside Down

C. S. Lewis in *Reflections on the Psalms* had this to say, "In most places and times, it has been very difficult for the 'small man' to get his case heard. The judge (and, doubtless one or two of his underlings) has to be bribed. If you can't afford to 'oil his palm' your case will never be heard."

A devout Indian evangelical leader once shared he would neither take nor give a bribe for his personal convenience. However, he said, "I run an orphanage. My children cannot get water unless I bribe. For their sake, I have no other option".

This real-life experience depicts how corruption utterly destroys the very institutions that are meant for the public welfare of a nation. On the home front, we have politicians-bureaucrats making public overtures before a by-election that should the constituency vote for the ruling coalition, they will get a bridge or a mosque! Here, we ask the question, "Isn't this an inducement and hence, blatant corruption?"

In the administration of a nation, development projects, whether big or small, can be viewed as work provisions provided under the national budget for building the nation. Such national development projects must always be a national agenda and priority.

However, due to our so-called privatisation policy, public functions and assets management have now been moved into private hands. They are no longer within the bounds of public institutions designed to cater to the needs of the many. This has opened the doors for basic needs in development, such as building bridges and toilets, to be used as "voting tools" for political expediency and leverage, thereby contributing to corruption.

The above illustrates how corruption utterly destroys the fabric of core institutions of society. The institution of society is for the protection of individuals and welfare of citizens of a nation. In protecting citizens, institutions are to cater to justice. But corruption has turned every institution from servants of society promoting fair distribution to tyrannical masters hoarding over every resource. Corrupt societies can never flourish for they do not produce the sort of values and practices so essential for a free liberal democratic society.

2. Corruption Undermines the Value of Work and Individual Dignity

Meritocracy enables healthy competition. Its value lies in promoting excellence because it places competence above 'connections'. It implies righteousness for righteousness recognises the due diligence and hard work for which one strives to achieve. But when 'connection' rises above meritocracy, it becomes a situation of whom you know rather than what you know to earn your place and respect in society. This degrades human dignity and worth. It is also grossly unfair and unjust to those who have put in great efforts to learn what they know and

Continued on pg 5...

Bridging East and West Malaysian Churches

Sarawak and Sabah churches can look forward to closer ties with Peninsular Malaysian believers following trips by NECF Malaysia staff to Kuching and Kota Kinabalu in February.

In Kuching, the team comprising NECF Executive Secretaries Eugene Yapp and Andy Chi, and NECF Secretary-General Sam Ang, held many meetings and discussions with pastors and leaders of Kuching Ministerial Fellowship (KMF).

The trip to Kuching was necessitated by the need for speedier, more up-to-date and effective communication with Sarawak churches, particular those in Kuching, Sibul, Miri and the interiors.

The desire for better communication with our East Malaysian brethren arose from the current 'Allah' issue when NECF felt the need to personally hear from them their thoughts and feelings about the issue. Likewise, there was a need to update the Sarawak brethren on the actions that NECF and its counterparts have been working on towards resolving the issue.

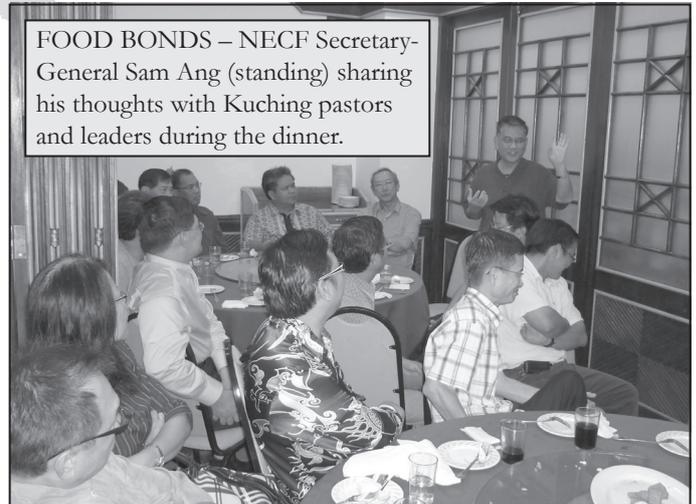
At a dinner hosted by NECF, but sponsored by KMF, KMF pastors and leaders expressed their appreciation to West Malaysian Christians for standing with them on the 'Allah' issue and agreed that a more open and fluid communication between KMF and NECF is much needed.

The NECF team spent time with various other pastors and learnt more about the social dynamics of Kuching churches, their various ministries and respective challenges. They also visited Pr Cheli's Reading Bus project (see January-February Berita NECF, page 6).

It was a trip worth every sen spent as communication and fellowship with the Kuching churches were re-established and there is now a deeper understanding of and identification with the pastors and leaders there.

Next Stop: Sabah

NECF Research Executive Eugene Yapp held a brainstorming session with SIB Sabah Central Council at Kota Kinabalu during which its president, Pr Jerry Dusing, shared SIB's vision of enhancing three particular areas for



FOOD BONDS – NECF Secretary-General Sam Ang (standing) sharing his thoughts with Kuching pastors and leaders during the dinner.

Sabah churches – mission and evangelism, education and human resources management, and administration and finance.

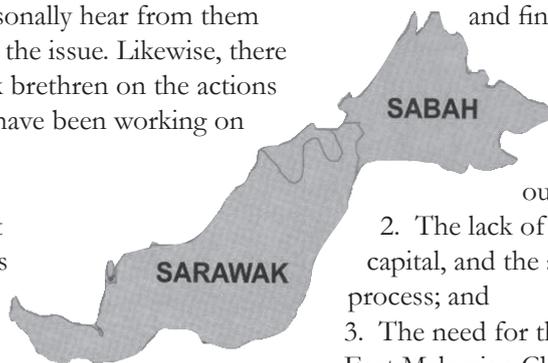
He also raised several challenges facing the Sabah Church, particularly:

1. Mass conversions of their people out of Christianity;
2. The lack of expertise and resources, both human and capital, and the apparent helplessness in combatting this process; and
3. The need for the West Malaysian Church to help the East Malaysian Church, particularly SIB as it is the biggest denomination in Sabah. SIB Sabah President Jerry Dusing said that Christians in Malaysia to have a say and future in the nation's affairs, the West Malaysian Church must help the East Malaysian Church.

From the discussion, Eugene observed three things that the West Malaysian Church needed to consider doing:

1. Supporting the Sabah Church with its material and spiritual resources;
2. Viewing the support as as a shared partnership and fellowship, not a giver-receiver relationship; and
3. Building a stronger bond between the East and West Malaysian Church which will result in a strong Malaysian Church that is able to withstand the many challenges threatening our religious freedom.

The trip to Kota Kinabalu has helped NECF to better understand the struggles faced by the Sabah Church and the specific help that can be extended to them.



...continued from pg 3



how to effect what they know effectively. These are the men and women who value merits and find personal fulfillment in putting premium on such values and thereby contributing to nation building.

Unfortunately, through the auspices of our so-called privatisation initiatives, 'connections' have tended to rise above meritocracy. The transfer of public functions and assets management into the hands of private individuals or corporations has resulted in the 'piratisation of public goods'.

This is obvious when privatisation projects land in the hands of the select elite who more often than not, comprises members of the political order. Through 'connections', these projects or planning ideas eventually end up within certain economically- and financially-

that in such instances, corruption will eventually destroy a nation and must be eradicated as it is threat to the national security of the federation.

How May Christians Respond?

What does the Bible have to say about corruption? Corruption violates at least two of the Ten Commandments – covetousness and stealing.

God says, "You shall not covet....anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17); yet all corruption is rooted in covetousness. Corruption also violates the command, "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15); yet corruption is plundering that which does not belong to you. In short, corruption is 'anti-national' and constitutes a form of rebellion and idolatry against our great God.

As Christians, we know that sin is rebellion and

"...corruption has turned every institution from servants of society promoting fair distribution to tyrannical masters hoarding over every resource."

motivated individuals and corporations who would heap huge and unjust gains through unfair disadvantages.

When such corrupt practices are allowed to escalate and pervade into all aspects and sectors of society, those attempting to live by meritocracy will throw in the towel and subsequently join the bandwagon. It is a vicious cycle that needs to be broken.

If the corruption cycle is not broken, the nation will only have incompetent people – mediocre men and women at best, and dishonest men and women at worst – as leaders, educators and administrators.

Our nation is therefore in critical need of transformation, for our future is at stake!

3. Corruption is an 'Anti-National' Activity and a Sin Against God

Corruption compromises our national integrity and well-being as well. Recently, it was reported that certain secrets of national interest were leaked to some foreign countries. Those who were responsible were severely warned.

Surveys have revealed that the level of corruption or the tolerance of it by society has a direct correlation with the level of economic well-being of the nation.

The World Bank estimates that corruption may cost a country as much as 4% the Gross Domestic Product. In the case of Malaysia, our Gross Domestic Product is estimated at RM650 billion. Based on the World Bank's estimate, our cost of corruption is therefore RM26 billion a year! And this is our taxpayers' money that could be put to good use, such as alleviating poverty and uplifting the standard of living!

Corruption compromises the integrity of a nation and the people who rule and manage it. It may be argued

disobedience against God. Corruption is therefore an offence against God, man, nature and is 'anti-nation'. It goes against the very fabric of responsibility that God has placed on all human beings as custodians and stewards of His creation.

When the 'Bride of Christ' (the Church) compromises with evil and begins to live in complicity with and compliance to corruption, it produces death.

The call to stand up against corruption is clear. It is a simple call to the Church to be true to Herself as the 'Bride of Christ', to bring forth fruits of righteousness and to give birth to a quality of holiness that is beyond the natural human ability.

The Church has the duty to educate and nurture her members to exercise their moral citizenry in a responsible manner in accordance with their faith and conscience in matters of justice and good governance.

To do so, the Church must never be spectators but active participants in imputing the values of truth, righteousness, integrity and good governance, both within and without the Church.

This is a tall order but let us become good examples as well as good models for society to emulate.

Let us also uphold those who are in advocacy for righteousness and good governance, fighting corruption in the very context and places they are in. Their lives will be models for the future generations that desire to be involved in Nation Building!

Note: The authors of this article are indebted to the thoughts by Vishal Mangaliwadi, *Truth and Transformation: A Manifesto for Ailing Nations*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2009 and K.J John, *Corruption and Truth in Development* at <http://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/108937>

From Heart to Mouth

The remarks were most probably unscripted. Perhaps, they slipped off the mouth as the speaker got heated in his historical ruminations about the landing of the Chinese and Indians on Malaysian soil. Perhaps he forgot the multi-racial crowd listening keenly to his words.

Then the words slipped off his mouth: “Indians came to Malaysia as beggars and Chinese, especially the women, came to sell their bodies.” All fired up now, he continued his rants with threats to revoke the citizenship of Malaysians who had raised demands against certain government education policies.

The crowd was stunned, especially when the occasion was the “Rapat 1Malaysia” seminar in line with the Prime Minister’s 1Malaysia pet initiative aimed at forging unity and heralding progress to the country.

An even bigger irony was that the speaker was Datuk Nasir Safar, the PM’s special aide. Immediately after his remarks blazed on Internet portals, the Prime Minister’s Office issued a statement distancing itself from his remarks, and yet apologising for Nasir, saying he “never intended to make any derogatory remarks.”

Nasir also denied making the remarks. In a telephone interview with *The Malaysian Insider* the same day, he said, “I did not say the word ‘pendatang’ (immigrant). I only said the country has been successful as the Chinese and the Indians from those days until today have been coming here to work” and added that he did not threaten anyone. (<http://themalaysianinsider.com/index.php/malaysia/51737-pms-aide-to-quit-over-racist-remark>)

Those who attended the seminar begged to differ. So, was Datuk Nasir aware of what he was saying? Did he suffer a lapse of temporary amnesia?

Only God knows but what was obvious was that he spoke off the cuff, which meant that the words must have spilled out from within him.

This reminds us of a verse in the Bible – “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” These words recorded in Matt. 12:34 were Jesus’ sharp observation of the link between the human heart and the mouth. For the things in our heart will find their way out of our mouths.

That’s why the Bible says that we are to guard our heart above all else “for it is the wellspring of life” and to “put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.”



Prov 4:23-24

What’s in our heart? Do we secretly harbour a ‘Nasir’ within? Or is it a storehouse of compassion and love for the people around us, especially for those unlike us that are of a different race and faith?

If we desire to reach out to our surrounding world and make a lasting impact for Christ, our hearts must first be wellsprings that bring life. If our nation-building efforts are to be impactful, our hearts must be clear of prejudice and bias.

As FGA KL Elder Khoo Kay Hup shared with intercessors at the recent NECF Thanksgiving Tea (see pg 8), “In the midst of turmoil and all the negativity that we see, we need to have the right spirit when we intercede for the lost. We could become self-righteous and even call down God’s wrath on situations where we find injustice, but the heart of an intercessor must first be filled with God’s love.”

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps 139:23-24

...continued from front cover

“And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (Esther 4:16). Thankfully, the story ended well when Esther found favour with the king and he lifted his golden scepter towards her to ‘pardon’ her for her defiance.

Civil disobedience is a deliberate, courageous and compassionate act of a reformer to expose and condemn the institutionalised evils of his day.

We see this in Jesus’ healing of the lame man on a Sabbath and Esther’s intrusion into the king’s presence. In the earlier account, Jesus exposed the heartlessness of the Jewish laws; in the second, Esther went against the law so as to expose Haman’s evil plot to exterminate the Jews.

How do we Malaysian Christians respond to this? Firstly, are there any laws in our system, and even in our churches, that go against the character of our God or the teachings of our

Scriptures? If there are (and there are), are we bold enough to imitate our Lord Jesus and Queen Esther?

Our service today lacks power because often, it is marked by timidity. Often too, we cloaked our fear with the turn-the-other-cheek excuse, or by quoting Romans 13:1-5 to free ourselves from the burden of having to engage with the system and society.

We are called to follow our Lord. May He grant us the courage to be like Him.

Sinking Surreptitiously into Spiritual Defection



By Sam Ang

John and Adeline feel they are good Christians – better than most. It’s just that since their children have grown up, church has not been quite as important anymore. They have heard almost every sermon they could hear and John says he is tired of “re-runs.” Besides, they have convinced themselves that they have not left God; they are just leaving the church. After all, they are retired.

Would that be the best excuse for avoiding church and serving the congregation? Could they not be involved in a ministry where their spiritual experience will encourage the younger generation?

Betty has been leading women’s Bible study for several years and finds it the most fulfilling thing she has ever done in her life. She loves teaching. She knows that teaching about God is a good thing, but she cannot help wondering whether she is doing it for the right reason. Sometimes she feels guilty, secretly wondering about her true motivations. She thinks they might not all be sincerely spiritual, but she’s pretty sure she does not want to know the truth. If no one is complaining at Bible Study, why should she worry? Feeling better, she dismisses the disturbing thoughts.

Spiritual defection happens slowly and most Christians are not even aware of it when it happens. It is easier to spot it in others than in ourselves, and since it manifests itself differently in different people, it can be difficult to detect. In other people’s eyes, and even in our own, our Christian faith is pure and strong, our motives unquestionable.

We are not all that we are pretending to be, and we know it. Often, our godliness is for public consumption. Our patience may be plastic. Our public prayers may be eloquent but our private prayers are often non-existent or anaemic. And thus, we begin a downward spiral defection from sincere service to

Christ and His Church.

In time, we become FAKES! Because we are so different, we may not recognise ourselves as spiritual fakes at first. The deception goes deep in some of us. The problem, of course, is that deception is so ingrained in us that the deceit often becomes second nature – not just in church.

Did you catch a glimpse of yourself in the description above? If you did, don’t take it personally; you are not alone. In fact the church is filled with spiritual defectors who come in all shapes, sizes, styles and varieties.

How do we arrest the problem and not become a fake? Let’s start with some soul-searching questions:

- What are your primary reasons for serving? Remember God is more interested in why we are doing something than in what we are doing.
- Are we secretly attracted to spiritual reputation? Acts 5:1-10 tells the story of the infamous Ananias and Sapphira. They wanted to look good spiritually in the eyes of their fellow worshippers. Unfortunately they were fakes.
- Is there much joy in our service to the Lord regardless of whether people notice our work? Sure, we get discouraged sometimes when the ministry is tough and nobody seems to notice our labour. But do we quickly rise above the disappointment and press on, rather than quit in resentment?

At the end of the day, we can fool everyone around us, but we worship a God whose eyes roam the earth for an honest heart. Let’s get real with Him.

Note: Much of the content is taken from “Faking Church” by Dan Schaeffer.

Pre-School Project for Jehai Kids

As part of the NECF Malaysia Nation-Building Agenda, NECF is helping to support a pre-school project spearheaded by Dr Paul Chen (see pg 10 book review) at Kg Cuweh in the Temenggor Forest in Perak near the Thai border.

Dr Chen, a medical doctor, is the senior pastor of River of Life Sanctuary, Puchong, Selangor.

NECF's monetary contribution of over RM16,000 for two years, to be reviewed thereafter, goes towards the salaries of a teacher and a helper.



(Right pix) Music stimulates learning and these Jehai children are giving their brains a boost by learning songs and rhythm. In the background is a Jehai house from where mothers listen to what is being taught. The school is in the open, under a tree. A hut has yet to be built.



(Bottom right pix) Jehai children giving thanks before their meal.



(Right pix) Teacher Jenny Gitom (left) and helper Suriab Raman (right) preparing the children's meals.



Keep cool, keep praying

Malaysian Christians must remain calm, patient and vigilant while church leaders engage with the Government for an amicable solution to the current crises facing the Malaysian Church.

Speaking to participants at the NECF Malaysia Thanksgiving Tea at FGA Kuala Lumpur in February, NECF Secretary-General Sam Ang urged intercessors to persevere in continuous intercession for the nation.

FGA Elder Dr Khoo Kay Hup picked up the momentum by sharing the critical need for every Christian to be an intercessor according to Ezekiel 22:30, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."

However, "we need to have the right spirit when we intercede for the lost in the midst of the turmoil and all the negativity that we see," Dr Khoo stressed, adding that the heart of an intercessor must first be filled with God's love.

Otherwise, "we could become self-righteous and even call down God's wrath on situations where we find injustice," he cautioned.

Dr Khoo reminded participants that their role is to engage with God for the present time to build for the future.

The Thanksgiving Tea is an annual gathering of those involved in the prayer ministry for the nation.

Jointly organised by the NECF Prayer and Research commissions, the gathering reflects on and give thanks for the past year's events, besides updating participants on the critical issues facing the nation and the Church.

The tea gathering was attended by 170 people from 28 churches.

At the gathering, Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) Chief Coordinator Elder Dr Tan Nget Hong shared that



11,000 of the 12,000 seats at Shah Alam Stadium Malawati seats have been booked. (This year's GDOP gathering will be held at the stadium to celebrate its 10th year in Malaysia.)

Admission to the event is by ticket which is free of charge and churches must act quickly to reserve the remainder tickets.

In conjunction with the GDOP stadium gathering, Run for the Nation (RunNat) led by Victor Chua has

Continued on next page...

Good Governance, Integrity and Transparency Talk cum NECF Malaysia 12th BGM

May 22 (Saturday) morning • Petaling Jaya Gospel Hall

NECF Malaysia is holding a talk on governance, transparency and integrity and who better to speak on this subject than Datuk Paul Low, Transparency International (Malaysia) President.

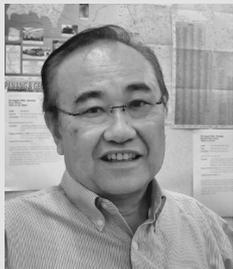
While Paul is heavily involved in pushing for good governance and combatting corruption in the marketplace, he is also actively serving as an elder in his church.

Following Paul's sharing, NECF will conduct its 12th BGM which will include the election of the NECF Council Members.

At the BGM, NECF will unveil its nation-building programme and some of the projects in the pipeline.

Among them are:

- NECF Foundation
- Good Times (Internet news portal)
- Prayer Vision
- Vocational School/Youth Camp



Change requires...
the collective action of
civil society movement, of
which Christians can be a
part of — *Datuk Paul Low*

Malaysia voted for change in the last election and one of the main issues is that the previous government had failed in its promises to reduce corruption. We all want a clean, accountable and efficient government regardless of which political party or parties are in the administration.

The need for change and transformation is recognised by almost all sections of the society.

The Government has launched the Government Transformation Platform with measurable performance indices and the emphasis of dealing with corruption and governance is reflected by the index called corruption perception index as published by Transparency International.

Corruption as defined by Transparency International is the abuse of entrusted power for personal gains.

The Malaysian public has, for too long, tolerated corrupt practices and in many instances such practices have been

institutionalised and become a way of life to the extent that we now have both petty as well as grand corruption.

Any effort to impute significant change for the better cannot be left to a few people, organisations or leaders.

Change (for the better) requires the involvement of the whole society because ultimately, it is only the citizens who can make the elected representatives accountable through election.

Change requires the collective action of the civil society movement of which Christians can be a part of.

Churches are now being mobilised to be concerned with nation building. While the Church needs to be non-partisan and politically neutral, it is also its duty to guide her members to exercise their moral citizenry in a responsible manner in accordance to their faith in matters of justice and good governance.

The Church is part of civil society and cannot remain passive or inactive on such matters.

What then can the Church do to be a participant rather than a spectator in imputing good governance and integrity firstly within the Church and then without the Church?

Editor's Note: Let's come and humbly learn how we can more effectively make the Malaysian Church the salt and light in society. Contact NECF for more information.

...continued from previous page

organised a charity cum prayer torch run in every state on the eve of GDOP. Torch runners from each state will then travel to Petaling Jaya to complete the run together into the stadium to launch the gathering.

Funds raised from the run will be donated to selected organisations as part of the GDOP 90 Days of Blessings efforts.

Another report that greatly stirred the gathering was by Lei Wah who shared that almost all the pre-believing children who attended last year's

National Children's Prayer Conference confessed faith in Christ. This year, the organisers intend to invite children from different orphanages throughout the country to attend the conference.

The gathering ended with a time of fervent intercession for the nation and, of course, tea.

Special Insurance Deal for NECF members

NECF Malaysia-Great Eastern Group Multiple Benefits Insurance Scheme

In 2005, the NECF Foundation initiated a group insurance scheme, called the NECF-Great Eastern Group Insurance Scheme. Underwritten by Great Eastern (GE), the scheme is for church members and full-time workers – and extended to their family members – who are working at or attending churches and para-church organisations which are members of NECF Malaysia.

GE gives back to NECF two percent of the premium collected and the money is used to help subsidise the premium of full-time workers who cannot afford to pay the full premium. Currently, NECF is helping to subsidise the yearly premium payments of 394 East Malaysian full-time workers.

From May 1 to May 17, NECF and GE are running a special promotion for eligible participants whereby those who sign up will enjoy free underwriting. This means they need not go through the required medical check-up.

Under the scheme, participants will enjoy the following benefits for a premium of RM30 per month:

- Critical illness coverage of RM30,000 or
- Natural death coverage of RM30,000 or

- Accidental death of RM60,000 or
- Total permanent disability (due to illness) of RM30,000 or
- Total permanent disability (due to accident) of RM60,000
- Bereavement (death claim) of RM2,000
- Maturity benefits at age 65 if there has been no claim

The maximum amount that can be taken under this special promotion is RM50 per month. The maximum amount that can be taken under this scheme (inclusive of such group schemes with GE) is RM250 per month.

Participants must be below 55 years of age. In order to enjoy the free underwriting service, GE requires a minimum participation of 200 members for this special promotion.

For further information, contact Laura Chong's GE Agency at:

Office: 03-4294 7673 (Vivian)

Lawrence: 019-338 2687

Laura: 013-336 7088

Sharon: 012-659 6216



BOOK REVIEW

Title: Reaching an unreached people group: The Jehai of the Temenggor Forest

Author: Dr Paul C.Y. Chen

What does it take to reach an unreached people group? Conceptually, it would take cross-cultural evangelism and church planting. One would not escape the fact that cross-cultural evangelism is only a partner in the overall Christian mission.

In the context of the Kingdom of God, it is never accomplished in isolation from the other basic needs of the people. Reaching the unreached takes into serious account the pressing needs of the people, whether it is food security, health care, educational opportunity and physical safety.

Reaching the Jehai at the Temenggor Forest captures the correct approach in seeing people within a holistic

Review by Elder Doraisingam Manikam, FGA KL Missions Director

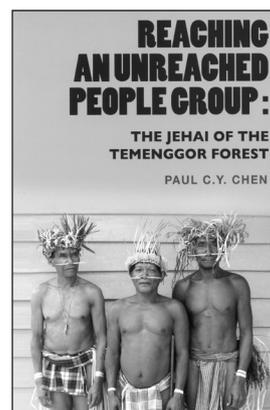
framework of kingdom thinking.

The Jehai is one of the six ethnic Negrito groups of the Orang Asli cluster. The work among the Jehai is remarkable because it has emerged out of a holistic framework of kingdom thinking.

Dr Paul Chen has infused in the framework the cultural understanding of the people along with their health, economic, educational and spiritual needs.

Lest one thinks that this framework is merely a conceptual one, Paul demonstrates that this framework is filled with love, kindness, patience, wisdom and tenacity.

It is an exciting story of a people's journey towards faith in Jesus Christ. This is a significant contribution to the missions in Malaysia. It is highly recommended for every local student in missions.



Dr Paul Chen was Professor of Preventive Medicine in the University of Malaya and Professor of Community Medicine in the International Medical University Kuala Lumpur. He has served in the World Health Organisation in South-east Asia as head of its programmes in Papua New Guinea.

His book is available at Christian bookstores at RM20 each.

ALLAH DISPUTE NOT ABOUT GOD

By Bob Teoh

On the surface, the ‘Allah’ issue seems to be a fight over one word but it is much more than that.

It is not about religion itself or about God, but about fundamental issues confronting the nation.

- It is about the constitutional guarantee to our civil liberties such as the freedom of speech, association and religion.
- It is about our right to seek judicial recourse when the Government makes bad decisions affecting our constitutional rights.
- It is about the duty of the judiciary to overturn any bad decision made by the Government.
- It’s about ensuring that the Syariah judiciary remains subordinate to the civil court according to the Federal Constitution.
- It’s about defining the boundaries for the exercise of power by the Malay Rulers and the King and defining their roles in Islam and Muslims and non-Muslims.

There are continuing attempts to mislead the public with wild and unsubstantiated allegations that both the Catholic Church and the Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) Sabah as well as Christians in general are being unnecessarily confrontational by refusing to settle their case out of court.

They are also accused of disrespecting Islam as the official religion and the Sultans as custodians of the faith. Christians are also accused of trying to convert Malays by confusing them by using ‘Allah’. The opposite seems to be true. Berita Harian on Feb 24, 2009 quoted Sabah’s Governor Tun Ahmadshah Abdullah as saying there had been 117,579 new converts registered with Majlis Ugama Islam Sabah since 1970.

Another silly accusation is that the Government should not have allowed a Chinese judge to hear the Herald case (filed by the Catholic Church). This suggestion is an affront to any judge’s dignity. Following the Catholic Church’s Herald case, Sisters in Islam (SIS) was also successful in its application for a judicial review over the Home Minister’s decision to ban their book, “Muslim Women & the Challenges of Islamic Extremism.”

The book was published in 2005 and had been freely sold for over two years until it was banned by the minister under section 7(1) of the Printing Presses & Publications Act 1984. A Malay judge heard their complaint and came to the same decision as the Chinese judge that the Government had exceeded its power and had acted wrongly under the same law.

Commenting on the judgment in *The Star* (Feb 10),

Shad Saleem Faruqi, Emeritus Professor of Law at UiTM and Visiting Professor at USM, said if one looks at the Act literally, the minister’s discretion is absolute. Despite this, he said Justice Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof held that the minister’s discretion is not to be regarded as final.

“There are serious questions of constitutionality about those provisions of the Printing Presses Act that confer on the minister a number of absolute discretions,” he said.

The ‘Allah’ word problem arose after Dr Mahathir Mohamad banned the Al Kitab or the Bahasa Bible in December 1981 by a gazette order. Soon after that, he became Prime Minister. When Christian leaders complained, the Government, by another gazette order a few months later, allowed the Al Kitab to be used but only in churches.

But then the Home Ministry began their harassment by confiscating the Al Kitab and other Bahasa Christian publications, apparently because they were found outside church premises at ports and airports on the way to churches which imported them. Printing of such publications locally was also difficult because printers were intimidated.

Again the churches complained and the Government formed a Cabinet sub-committee headed by the late Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Ghafar Baba, who attempted to resolve the matter by issuing another decree in 1986. On top of the restricted use of the Al Kitab (in churches), the Cabinet also decreed that the word ‘Allah’ could not be used by Christians. Instead of solving the problem, the decree created even more problems.

During former Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Badawi’s premiership, the *Bup Kudus* – the Iban Bible which uses the word ‘Allah Taala’ – was banned. The Ibans were furious and the Government relented. Despite this, the confiscation of the Al Kitab and Bahasa Christian publications persisted. Recently, 20,000 copies of the Al Kitab were detained at various entry points to the country.

The deadlock over the ‘Allah’ word prohibition then forced both the Catholic Church and the SIB Sabah to take their cause to the courts. The two cases are still stuck in the court.

In the Herald case, Justice Datuk Lau Bee Lan in her judgment (Dec 31, 2009) said the Senior Federal Counsel’s contention that according to S13a of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, the Minister’s decision “shall be final and shall not be called into question in any court on any ground whatsoever” is misconceived.

Continued on page 13...

Digging Deep for Gems

- Have you ever started the year making a resolution to read the Bible from cover to cover but got bogged down in Leviticus or Numbers?
- Do you feel frustrated trying to get past a surface-level understanding of the Bible, to see how it ties in to world history, philosophy, and contemporary scientific worldview?
- Have you ever found it difficult to explain Biblical concepts and worldviews to skeptical friends?
- Have you ever wanted a daily Bible study practice that goes deep and really expands your horizons in order to know God better?

If yes, then go for **PROJECT TIMOTHY**.

Reading the Bible alone can be a confusing experience. In fact, God never meant the Bible to be read in solitude, according to Project Timothy (PT), a programme that offers the opportunity to dig deep into God's Word in a small, tightly-knit community.

Designed by Malaysian-born but New-York based apologist-scholar Rev. Dr Ron Choong, PT takes its participants systematically through the Bible in six semesters of five sessions each to cover the entire Bible over three years.

It does not matter which particular part of the Bible participants enter in at, for God intended His children to have *all* of His Word shape their thinking through a daily routine of reading and meditation.

The programme is a deliberately slow, focused and close reading of the Bible, and is more about an approach than simply learning a particular body of knowledge. It emphasises methodology, that is, learning *how* to read and understand the Bible and hear it as God's Word.

The final goal is to help each participant develop a biblical worldview by which to understand and draw on

the resources of the Bible in a responsible and coherent fashion. Lectures prepared by Rev. Dr Choong will be delivered at special sessions to weave a web of knowledge around the different fields of inquiry – such as archaeology, history, the sciences and geography – with which the Bible engages.

PT is a programme of the Academy for Christian Thought of which Rev. Dr Choong is the Executive Director. To know more about PT and how you can participate in this course, visit www.actministry.com

Rev. Dr Choong was originally trained in English law (LLB Hons) and the natural sciences (BA). He turned to philosophy, archaeology, science and theology in preparation for a ministry in apologetics and evangelism.

An ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church, he has served in the New York area with an international summer ministry for 15 years. He holds a doctorate in philosophy of science and theology on the implications of the *imago Dei* (image of God) and has three master's degrees in history, philosophy and theology.

Log on to www.actministry.org to know more.

Get the "Jesus Film" in Hakka, Urdu or other alien languages



Have you tried reaching out to someone who speaks a dialect that is completely alien to you?

Perhaps you've tried sharing the gospel with the foreign workers you meet daily such as the Myanmar workers in the coffee-shop or the Nepali

guards in your neighbourhood.?

Feeling handicapped? Here comes help. The Malaysian Campus Crusade for Christ (MCCC) now stocks the "Jesus Film" in several local dialects and foreign languages as follows:

- Cantonese
- FooChow
- Hakka
- Teochew

- Burmese (Myanmar)
- Hindi
- Nepali
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Others

Churches are advised to make bulk purchases of the video discs. Contact the MCCC office at (tel.) 03-7956 3610 (tel.) or (e-mail) mccc@mccc.org.my

Build what nation?



Since NECF Malaysia made nation building a key agenda in its ministry, the folks in the office have talked and breathed nation building. It's nation building this and nation building that, day in, day out. (When a colleague's wife recently gave birth to a girl, he proudly proclaimed he was contributing to nation building!)

From glossy, full-colour powerpoint presentations of charts and visuals of NECF's plans and programmes for our nation building efforts, we even have a nation-building team now, comprising three staff (see January–February 2010 Berita NECF, page 5). To them is charged the grand task of promoting, explaining and drumming into the conscience of every church the critical need to be involved in nation building.

Those in leadership positions may be able to comprehend the concept of nation building more easily since but I have a gut feeling that for most of us 'grassroot Christians', the term is as foggy as our annual June hazy spell when the Indonesian forests are on fire.

What exactly is demanded of me when I'm told I should "contribute to nation building"? (Sorry, no more babies from me.)

Getting Out

Sometimes toward the end of 2009 when several people in my suburban neighbourhood in Petaling Jaya decided to start a security scheme to check the increasing crime activities,



I volunteered to help with the communication aspect of the scheme.

By then, I had lived in the neighbourhood for nearly six years but, like most city dwellers whose gates are locked and doors bolted, I knew only one handful of people around me.

How could I be a blessing to my community when I hardly venture from my fortified walls? The security scheme presented the opportunity and I jumped at it, never mind that the debate still rages on about the legality of closing public roads.

In no time, I got to know many people – from varied races and religions, men and women, young and old – in my neighbourhood.

Many of them are active members of the local mosque and working with them was a rather heady experience as up to then, I had been largely confined to my 'sterile' environment of church and the Christian organisation where

I work.

By venturing out of my fortified walls to serve my community, I have become a participant, albeit a small one, of – nation building.

Recently, I came across "The Trouble with Jesus", a post 9/11 book by one of my favourite authors, Joseph Stowell, the president of Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

Engging Christians to get out and do more to engage their world, he says, "Authentic Christianity is not just about keeping and protecting the faith and keeping the rules. It is even more than living to deepen your relationship with Jesus.

"Authentic Christianity, the real deal, is about embracing all of these important elements and using them as a resource to actively and intentionally engage your world with acts of love that show off Jesus" (emphasis his).

Engaging my world with acts of love that "show off" Jesus (in a humble, unpretentious way that attracts people to Him, not drive people away from Him) – that much about sums up nation building for me.

My 'world' could be my family, my neighbourhood, my workplace, the gym I work out in, the charitable organisations I am serving, or even my children's school.

My 'acts of love' could be anything that makes my 'world' a better place for the people there. The opportunities for nation building activities are endless.

Now all I need is a little push to get out more. May God help me. – *Juat*

...continued from page 11

"I find the Minister in the exercise of his discretion to impose further conditions in the publication permit has not taken into account the relevant matters, hence committing an error of law warranting this Court to interfere and I am of the view the Minister and Government's decision ought to be quashed," she said.

Justice Lau made it clear that what was under judicial review was whether the Government had made a wrong

decision under the printing law. The question of Islam as the official religion and the Sultans' role in it were not under review, and therefore it had nothing to do with the Herald case.

The dispute over the Allah word is three decades old and has dragged on through three prime ministers. It's time to move on. Like Dr Mahathir said, the matter cannot be resolved by the courts. Such crises can be best avoided through an inter-faith mechanism and not by absolute decrees.

COMING UP . . .

Global Day of Prayer

Date: May 23 (Sunday)

Venue: Shah Alam Melawati Stadium

GDOP turns 10 this year and to celebrate this milestone, GDOP Malaysia has booked a stadium to gather over 10,000 Malaysian Christians.

Come and join more than 250 million believers from over 200 countries to pray for our nation and the world at this event.

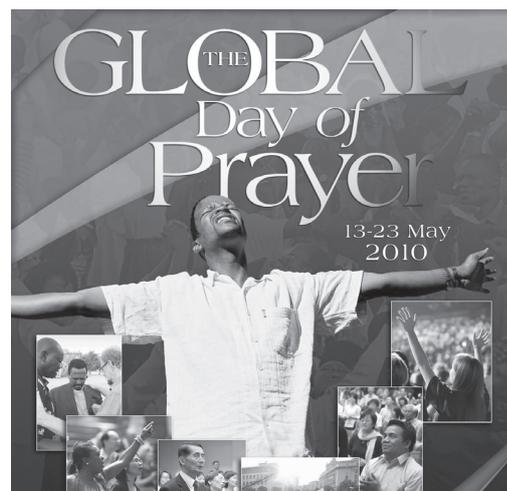
Admission is free but you need a ticket to get in. To date, more than 11,300 of the 12,000 tickets have been taken up by churches. Contact your church to get hold of your ticket or call the NECF office.

Come and pray together in

desperation and in expectation that the earth (including Malaysia) will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea!

GDOP is an annual worldwide prayer event which started in 2000 at Cape Town, South Africa. In 2005, some 200 million believers from 156 nations united for the first GDOP.

The gathering took place on Pentecost Sunday and the pattern was thus set that every Pentecost Sunday, Christians worldwide would gather to pray for their nations and the world.



The Malaysian Church joined the GDOP movement in 2006 when the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission hosted the first gathering in the Klang Valley. GDOP Malaysia's vision is to see GDOP meetings in 40 cities and towns throughout Malaysia every Pentecost Sunday.

NECF Chinese Prayer Camp

Theme: An Opportunity to Transform

Date: May 23-25

Venue: Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya

Speaker: Dr Joseph Paul Ozawa

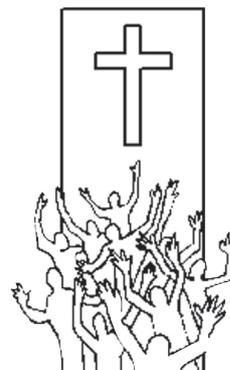
This year's camp will kick off at the Global Day of Prayer event where Christians throughout Malaysia will gather at the Shah Alam Melawati Stadium to pray with our brethren worldwide.

The camp aims to alert and inform Christians about the current challenges facing the nation for more urgent and meaningful intercession. The organiser (NECF Chinese Commission) is targeting younger participants so as to ensure continuity in non-stop intercession for the country.

The speaker has been a licensed clinical psychologist for the last 26 years and is currently the Senior Consultant Psychologist of the Subordinate Courts of Singapore.

In 1995, he moved to Singapore from the US to minister in Asia. He has planted a church among the homeless and street children in San Diego and served as a pastor at several churches in the US and Singapore. In addition, he has also taught in many nations, especially on the topics of strategic intercession.

For more information, contact NECF at 03-7727 8227.



NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ORDINARY MEMBERS

Shah Alam Gospel Centre rep. by Lee Voon Siong; Glory Charis, Selangor, pastored by Rev. Chok Pui Fong; 611 Bread of Life Christian Church in Sibu pastored by Rev. Loh Siong Lai; Wellspring Baptist Sanctuary, P. Jaya, pastored Pax Tan; Pertubuhan Persaudaraan Kristian Kulai, Johor, pastored by Elizabeth Lew Mei Fung; Church of the Zion, Seremban, pastored by Richard De Augustine; Skudai Christian Church, Johor, rep. Mr Tan Fong Nam; and Light of Christ, K. Lumpur, pastored by Patrick a/I Sinnappan.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Desmond Leong Faang Ming; John Lim Soo Teck; Mrs Seraphine Wong; and Mr Chong Choong.

Missional Church Conference

Theme: The Missional Church - Its Contribution to Transformation of Society

Venue: Wisma Eagles (Full Gospel Tabernacle, Subang Jaya)

Date: 26–27 August 2010

Are Malaysian urban churches embroiled in issues of modernity – fragmentation, individualism and materialism?

Are they too preoccupied with their “internal” ministries rather than looking outwards to impacting their community and society?

Are they too focused on prayer, bible studies and saving souls without much regards to social ministries simply because they are too demanding?

This conference will deal honestly with these questions and more in efforts to spawn a generation of Missional Churches. The subject will be dealt with from a Malaysian-Asian perspective.

The term “Missional Church” was first used in the late ‘90s to denote the church as God’s missionary people for everyone, everywhere and for all things. In short, it means that every Christian is a missionary.

The afternoon workshops will propose some of the practical projects NECF has planned as part of its strategic

action to bringing transformation to the nation. The projects include:

- Vocational school project near Nilai, Seremban
- A community school as an alternative to the national-type school
- Public policy think-tank groups – how we may engage with public-policy making
- Meeting community needs such as dialysis centres

Speaker



Dr Paul Alexander has over 30 years’ ministry experience in the pastorate in three different nations. His ministry has taken him on extensive travels to over fifty different nations and today, he continues to motivate leaders and churches to reach their full, missional potential.

East Malaysia Awareness: Seminar, Dialogue & Cultural Performance

Date: 1st May (Saturday)

Venue: SSMC, Petaling Jaya

The BM-speaking Christian community has been facing a lot of challenges lately. How should they circumvent the use of the banned word ‘Allah’ which is affecting the practice of their faith? What should the community do to meet the shortage of Alkitab and other printed materials? What is their response to the more than 400 homeless East Malaysians stranded in Kuala Lumpur (The Star, 25 Feb)?

Wawasan Penabur and the NECF Malaysia BM Commission are therefore organising the “East Malaysia Awareness: Seminar, Dialogue & Cultural Performance” on May 1 (Saturday) to explore strategies for networking and helping each other in the ministry, and brainstorm solutions to face the challenges.

The seminar will be from 9.00a.m to 4.00p.m. and continue again at 6.00p.m. for a celebration in conjunction

with the East Malaysian harvest festivals of Kaamatan and Gawai. There will be a cultural performance with the theme of “Cultural Journey Thru Sabah & Sarawak” at the celebration which is open to the public. Books and CDs in BM will be on sale, together with handicraft products.

The seminar fee is RM10 and for more information, contact Randy at 012-320 3987 or e-mail wawasan.penabur@gmail.com.

Also, check our the website www.wawasan.penabur.org

Friendly Reminder to NECF Malaysia Members

Have you paid your 2010 subscription?
If you have not, please do so immediately.

If you have, thank you for your timely action which has greatly helped us in our financial planning.

CHILE Millions have been affected by the devastating 8.8-magnitude earthquake in Chile on Feb 27, one of the worst natural disasters for the South American country in 50 years.

The quake caused tsunami waves across the vast Pacific Ocean from New Zealand to Japan, with dozens of nations on alert and thousands of people fleeing their homes.

Widespread looting and violence followed the quake as desperate victims waited for aid to arrive.

The looting and a growing perception that government relief efforts have been slow have tainted the country's hard-earned image as Latin America's beacon of order and stability.

With tensions high in Concepcion, soldiers were delivering food and other basic supplies house to house. The government also imposed a night to noon curfew and sent 14,000 troops to Concepcion and its surrounding areas to prevent the widespread looting.

PRAY

- Swift actions to send aids to all affected areas;
- Wisdom for the government to handle the catastrophe efficiently;
- Police and arm forces to take control of affected areas to bring order and to assist rescue work;
- Release of resources, rescue workers, volunteers, doctors, nurses to help affected victims; and
- God's grace and mercy for the nation that through this shaking, multitudes will turn to God.

COMOROS The Union of Comoros is a nation of three islands (and a disputed fourth one) in the Indian Ocean, located off the eastern coast of Africa. It is the third smallest African nation by area with a

population of around 700,000 and is poor and overpopulated.

The Comoros population is almost entirely Muslim and in May 2009, Islam became the state religion. There are some hundreds of expatriate Christians, mainly from France and Madagascar.

There are also some Comoran Christian converts, thought to number fewer than 300. However, there may be many secret believers.

The Comoran constitution allows freedom of religion but the pre-existing penal code prohibits conversion from Islam. Christians are also prohibited from sharing their faith.

In 2006, four Comoran citizens, who had hosted Christian discussions in a private home, were imprisoned for "evangelising". They were released in a general amnesty the same year.

PRAY

- God will raise leaders to encourage the small number of His people;
- For the Comoran Christians to stand firm in their faith;
- God will add to their small number;
- Against the spirit of religious extremism and intolerance against people of other faith; and
- God to visit those hostile towards His people in dreams and visions.

EGYPT Last year was marked by a surge in anti-Christian violence in various places, especially in Minya province. Churches, homes, shops and crops were destroyed. Some Christians were killed while many Christian women and girls were kidnapped and forced to convert and marry men of another faith.

The Church of Egypt is one of the oldest in the world but today, only around 10% of the population are Christians.

Though the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Christians are discriminated against in education and employment. As a result, many Christians are extremely poor and thousands of them live in "garbage villages", earning their living by sorting household rubbish.

The law allows conversion to Christianity; yet Christian converts face severe pressure from either the authorities or their communities.

PRAY

- God will bring justice to His faithful followers;
- For emotional and physical healing for Christians who have been injured or have lost family, friends and property in the attacks in 2009;
- For divine provision of food and other daily necessities for His people; and
- For divine good health for His people living in the "garbage villages".

MEXICO *Voice of the Martyrs* Canada and *Voice of the Martyrs* Mexico report of increasing attacks on believers by traditionalist religious and rebel groups in Chiapas, Mexico in recent months. Reports said on Feb 28, three Christians were shot and wounded on their way home from church services in Mitziton, and rebel sympathizers assaulted some 40 Christians who were asleep in their homes in Tumbala.

PRAY

- For our injured brothers and sisters, and their families; and
- Pray for their faith to strengthen as a result of the suffering; and
- Pray for adequate governmental measures to the increased violence against Christians in the country.