

Berita NECF

Editorial

all eyes on the Main Man

In October 2010, at a Barisan National Convention held at the MCA Building, the Prime Minister warned about the four diseases that the delegates must watch for. The four diseases mentioned were **delusion, amnesia, inertia** and **arrogance**.

The effects of the four diseases include turning love to hate, hope to anger and support into opposition. There is so much truth in what was said that we in the church need to

pay heed for ourselves. We need to continually evaluate how we do church or else the church will no longer be relevant; especially to the younger generation.

In the book *Essential Church*, co-authored by Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer III there is a profound chapter, “*All Eyes on the Main Man*.” The book challenges us to reclaim the generation of dropouts (generally students) that is prevailing in the churches in the

United States, especially those in the 18-22 age bracket.

In the chapter “*All Eyes on the Main Man*” the authors highlighted concerns that we as leaders need to be aware of. They are:-

1. The church inevitably takes on the characteristics and personality of its leaders. And when students begin to see that they are not essential to the health of the church, they pack up and leave.

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Being

SALT & LIGHT
in Malaysia

Check out the main feature ‘Being Salt & Light in Malaysia’ on page 8.

Note: In line with our move to increase our online communication, Berita NECF will now be reduced to four issues per year.

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By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Stay Above

The Fray

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With the advancement of the net with its many benefits, comes the slime of the devil.

The recent CFM Christmas function, attracted much misunderstanding and mud slinging over the requests of an over enthusiastic aide at the Prime Minister's office (PMO), to remove crosses and not to sing hymnals. Today, the misunderstanding is clarified and the issue resolved but we must not miss out on the many lessons therein.

During the high tea, I had the privilege to be seated in the front and from where I was seated, I could see the crucifixes on the grilled door of the archbishop's office, behind the Prime Minister as he made his speech. And Christian songs were sung.

The Catholics obviously "did not comply" nor were the CFM compliant. To be so bold as to take the government to the courts over the Allah issue and to seemingly balk at such requests would definitely be inconsistent. And the Christian leaders were not.

As I reflect on what has happened, I can't help but conclude we have reached a **new low in investigative reporting**. Nowadays it would seem that if something is not denied, then it must be true. All one has to do is sit tight and wait for denial. Failing which, it must be "true." Also the rule of the day seems to be: "criticize first" then apologize later. Better still, if proven wrong, just keep quiet.

With the advancement of wireless technology, it does seem that just

about anybody can say anything. Consequently private opinions become public too easily, and therein we see **growing disrespect for boundaries**. What used to be the prerogatives of authorities, be it spiritual or secular, now technocrats, journalists, mothers and mavericks can all have their say. I am all for freedom of speech, but not at the expense of respecting boundaries. Things would definitely have been "less messy" if we all waited for our Church leaders to say what needed to be said. With the growth of the net, it does seem like the days of Judges are upon us, where everyone did what is right in their own eyes.¹

"As I reflect on what has happened, I can't help but conclude we have reached a new low in investigative reporting."

The political, and unfortunately the church culture as well, are increasingly debased.

I also see a **poor substitution of clever words for character and spirituality**. Yes, anybody can say anything and everything. The recent fiasco saw a non Christian accusing some Church leaders for licking "a...."² This is not unexpected but the sad and unfortunate fact is that this spurred some Christians to join in to chastise the Church publicly. Although sometimes well written and cleverly argued, but I beg that we the Church do not ignore the character of the people who are "Dioptraphes-

Continued next page...

like” who prate against the Body with malicious words.³

I would further ask **“what happened to ‘grace?’”** Even if one is “right,” what happened to “walking in grace?” Armed with blogs, twitters and facebook, instead of “turning the other cheek,” they relentlessly attack all and sundry. It does seem that no cheek is safe in today’s angry climate.

Lastly, I must honestly and shamefully say, for some to call upon the PMO to apologize is a **sure manifestation of immaturity of a segment of the Church.** The Bride has forsaken her

comeliness, taken on a neo-political stance and begun to talk like any political party. Well, now that we know the truth, who has taken the first step to apologize to the aggrieved? Like in the “snakes and ladders” game, with the unfortunate throw of the dice, we have been bitten by the serpent (of slander) and we are back at the bottom. What a way to end 2010 and begin 2011!

One author once said that public critics often “don’t know the whole truth,” “have already made up their minds” and “don’t really care about you” but only in expressing their opinions.

Hence, he advocates that we should avoid wasting time in responding to “public criticism.”

There is much truth there. Let us choose to stay above the fray.

¹ Judges 17:6; 21:25.

² Actual word used but too impolite to repeat.

³ 3 John 9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. NKJV

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...continued from front cover: All Eyes On The Main Man.

2. We neglect investing in future generations just because we are achieving successes now. We ignore potential problems if we are winning in the here and now. We don’t like to think about the risks involved in our decisions if things are going our way.

3. Leaders have often championed for servant leadership but the students observe characteristics like caring, authenticity, and inspiring missing in many of them. We must acknowledge that you can’t lead people unless they trust your leadership.

4. How well a leader engages and relates to this age group correlates directly with how long they will stay in the church. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that teens will ‘grow into’ the message you preach. Research has found that the older the teen, the more critical it is to reach them at that stage of life.

The reason the PM mentioned the four diseases at the convention was to remind his fellow colleagues that BN needs to be relevant to changing times. Having held power for 53 years is no guarantee that they will continue to do so if they neglect the younger generation.

Likewise the same applies to the church. We need to reclaim these generations and demonstrate that the church is essential to their lives. We need to meet them where they are and to prove to them that a biblically sound body of believers is essential to the lives of every Christian, young and old alike.



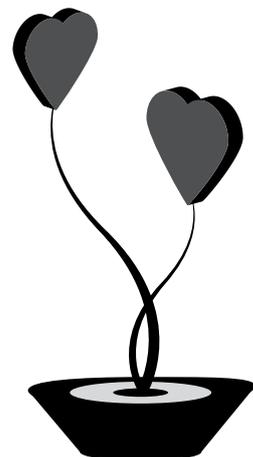
Marriage Register

We are pleased to inform you that NECF has been granted a Marriage Register to serve its member churches. The appointed Marriage Registrars are Patrick Cheng and Samuel Ang. All marriage solemnisation will be conducted at the NECF Office.

Church members who want to use the Marriage Register need to inform the NECF office one month in advance and comply with the following:-

1. The church they attend must be an NECF member
2. The couple would have gone through pre-marital counseling and a letter of confirmation is needed from their Pastor/Counsellor.
3. Signing of the register will take place at NECF office one day before the wedding, where they will be required to verbalise their marriage vows.
4. We request the presence of the couple’s Pastor/Counsellor and also their parents/family members as witnesses.
5. A small fee will be levied to cover administrative costs.

We trust that this will give NECF the opportunity to serve the local churches, especially those that do not have a Marriage Register.



The Choice We As Parents Make

Can A Seven-Year-Old Declare Faith?

Helen Ang in her Malaysiakini blog on January 7, 2011 posted an interesting article: “Can a seven-year old declare faith?” She wrote that Tan Yi Min is now Eilliyah Foong Abdullah. The child is Tan Cheow Hong’s daughter. She was born into the ‘Tan’ family. Her grandfather belonged to the ‘Tan’ clan. So did her great grandfather and her great, great grandfather. Her mother Fatimah Foong Abdullah @ Fong Mee Hui has with cold calculation misused Islam to deprive ‘Eilliyah Foong Abdullah’ of her birthright - the ‘Tan’ surname.

Yi Min’s mother converted her on 9 November 2010 at the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department. She had picked her daughter up from school on 8 November. This indicates that Fatimah converted Yi Min on the very next day. Remember that the child has lived with her father for the past three years. She had never been taught about Islam and knows nothing about the religion. However, in less than 24 hours after she was forcibly taken away with the help of the police and Islamic officials, the little girl miraculously declared before a set of Islamic bureaucrats that she wished to embrace Islam.

On 27 December 2010, Tan Yi Min was brought to Penang High Court wrapped in a tudung. Her Muslim convert mother Fatimah Foong Abdullah had dressed her seven-year-old Chinese daughter in Malay attire along with Muslim head covering, China Press reported.

It is an interesting article for us Christian parents who sometimes do not realise the consequences our choices have on our children while they are in our care. For Tan Yi Min, her faith has been irrevocably decided by her mother. When she reaches adulthood she cannot change her status because in Islam she will be declared an apostate if she does so.

Also mentioned in the article was the question raised by one Encik Sharifuddin Abdul Latiff, the administrator of the media watch group Hartal MSM. He was

Now imagine a traumatised little girl who had just been kidnapped and driven from Penang to Selangor, reciting the syahadah in a language she had never spoken a word of before; and doing it twice correctly (a procedural convention) in the presence of intimidating strangers in an alien environment, a long way from home.

quoted saying that the first thought that crossed his mind was: “Bagaimana budak Cina tujuh tahun boleh mengucap dua kalimah syahadah?”

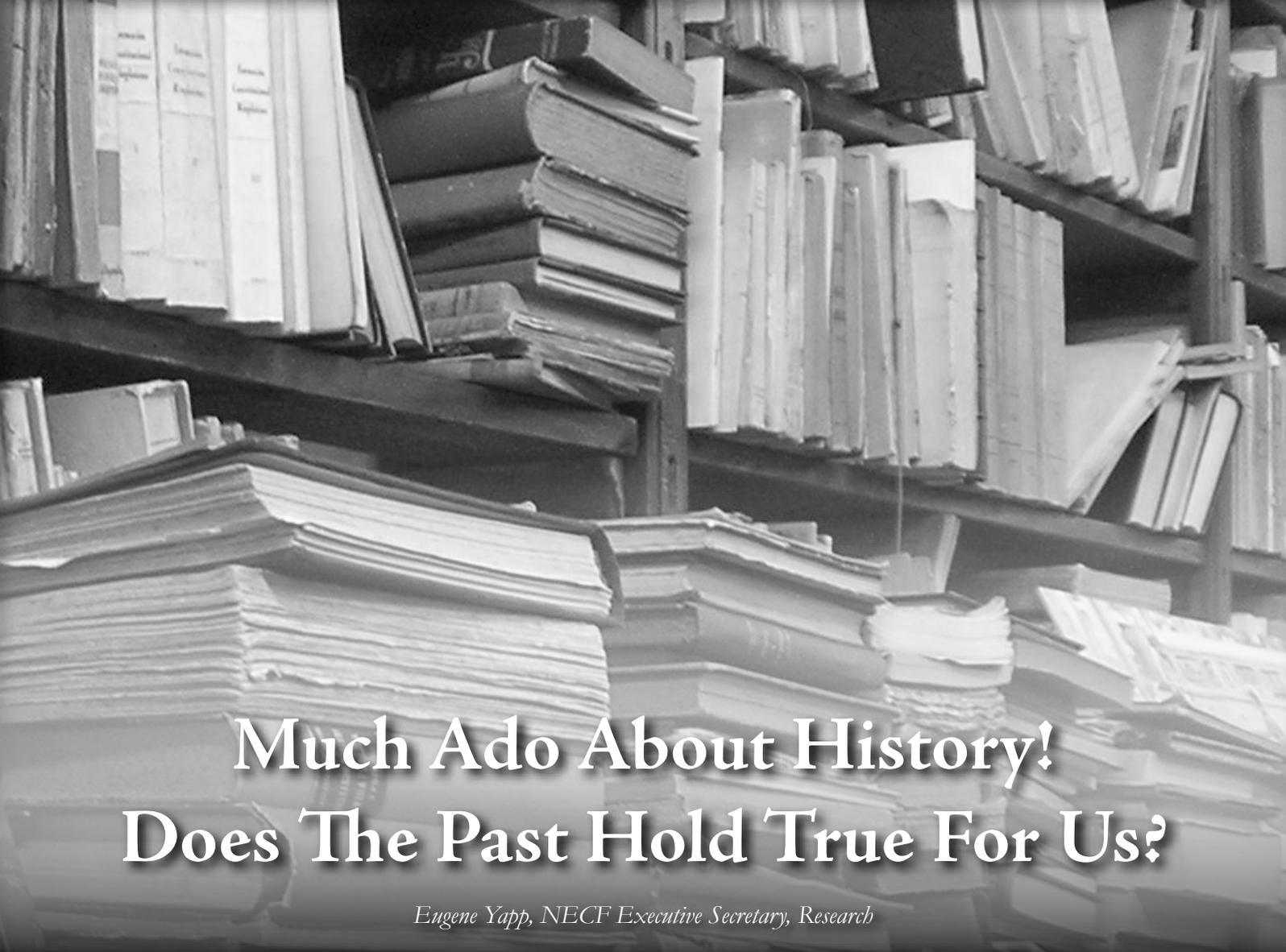
You try saying this: *ašbadu an la ilaha illa (A)llah, wa ašbadu anna Mubammada(n) rasulu (A)llah*. Now imagine a traumatised little girl who had just been kidnapped and driven from Penang to Selangor, reciting the syahadah in a language she had never spoken a word of before; and doing it twice correctly (a procedural convention) in the presence of intimidating strangers in an alien environment, a long way from home.

The Bible has an account of how a father made a tragic vow to God without realising that his decision would inadvertently affect his own daughter. In Judges 11, Jephthah said to the Lord, “If you will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon it shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”

When Jephthah returned, it was his daughter who came out to meet him. He realised that he had given his word to the Lord and could not take it back. She was his only child.

As Christian parents, we need to guard ourselves from making the wrong choices for our children, especially the ones that affect their future. What we decide now can hold grave consequences for them. Many times our decisions do have selfish motives and they affect the lives of those whom we love. Seek the Lord’s wisdom and the counsel of godly men or women who can help you to think and pray through the situation. Never make choices that have selfish motives.





Much Ado About History! Does The Past Hold True For Us?

Eugene Yapp, NECF Executive Secretary, Research

Much has been said about the controversial History textbook used by Malaysian secondary school students. The matter received heightened attention when a concerned mother wrote an open letter that was published in *Malaysia Today*.¹ She wanted to know why our school curriculum has been written with a religious slant by writers of only one religious persuasion, and why Malaysian students are subsequently compelled to focus disproportionately on one religion without a balanced view of others. The present secondary school history curriculum has been around for awhile but it was only recently that it has attracted a certain level of attention and criticism.

Arguments and discussions abound as to whether the topics covered by the subject's textbook amount to a fair and accurate representation of past events, and if they meet the acceptable standards of teaching materials for a textbook. Professor Azmi Sharom from the University of Malaya for example, castigates the present textbook as having an overemphasis on Islamic civilisation and even within those confines, laments over the elements of Islamic theology that are found. He therefore calls for a serious review and reworking of the present secondary school's history curriculum as it is "very imbalanced".² On the other hand, the Ministry of Education (MOE)'s attempts to explain

away the curriculum's emphasis on Islamic civilisation in its statements have been far from satisfactory. However, despite the public sentiment on the issue, the MOE has not appeared to review or rectify this state of affairs, which only raises questions about its inaction or the delay in action. Could it simply be due to indifference or worse still, a lack of political will to redress the situation?

Christians who are called to be "salt and light" (Matt.5:13-14) to this world and who have been mandated to "speak the truth in love" (Eph.4:15) must therefore ask critical questions about this impasse. Philosophers like Jurgen Habermas and Michel Foucault warn that there is an inextricable link between truth, power and social relations. Other social thinkers like Steve Lukes pointed out that rulers may prevent their subjects from having grievances by manipulating their perception and preferences until they view the existing order of things as natural or unchangeable.³ Drawing on Steve Lukes' view, we have to ask if our schools' biased history curriculum can be seen as a tool to shape impressionable, young Malaysians' minds in order to justify the existing order of things simply because it is perceived by some as divinely ordained.

Continued on pg 6...

NECF MALAYSIA welcomes new members...

Ordinary Members

1. SION Assembly, Kapar pastored by Salez a/l Antony Samy
2. Petra Praise Assembly (Tamil) Penang pastored by Immanuel Jegatheesuveren
3. ECF Holyword Church, Pekan Nanas pastored by Woo Yong Huat
4. Pertubuhan Persaudaraan Kristian Kota Masai pastored by Thian Whon Mee
5. Setia Alam Community Church, Shah Alam pastored by Cheah Eng Seng
6. The Word Centre, Klang pastored by Ravi a/l Alagaratnam
7. Evangel Christian Assembly (Kuala Lumpur) and Evangel Christian Assembly (JB) pastored by Rev. Sitoh Vee Nah
8. SIB Subang Jaya pastored by Matias Balang
9. Persatuan Persaudaraan Kristian Elim Kota Tinggi pastored by Chen Soo Ha
10. Trinity Community Centre, Kuching pastored by Rev. Daron Tan

Associate Members

1. Lavin Leong Seng Hoi
2. Mr. Aw Peck Chin
3. Pr. Koh Chu Soon
4. Pr. Jonathan Lim Geok Ping
5. Mr. Tin Kim Ang
6. Dr. Lim Wee Yoong
7. Peter Khor Kong Wah
8. Mr. Lee Hock Heng
9. Dr. Ong Eng Joe
10. Rev. Sitoh Vee Nah

...continued from page 5: *Mush Ado About History! Does The Past Hold True For Us?*

If this is indeed the rationale behind the overemphasis on Islamic civilisation, doubts will rightly be cast on the sincerity of Prime Minister Dato' Sri Najib's notion of 1 Malaysia. History must rightly take her place as the study of events and human dealings in the past that have shaped the world and our nation's destiny. Her value lies in being an instrument of information and education with the capacity to nurture and shape the young minds of a country's future generation so that they may be useful citizens locally and globally. To further this end, it is imperative that the account of past events and their significance be kept as accurate as possible within a balanced perspective for the nurturing of a balance personality.

So we ask the question, what then can be done? I take my cue from Dr Colin Abraham in his comments on a similar issue. He wrote a letter to Malaysia Today with respect to the novel *Interlok* as a suitable secondary textbook.⁴ Dr Abraham suggests a specific body be established to oversee matters related to curricula review and the selection of suitable textbooks for our school students. On the specific matter of our History textbook, we would like to add that, apart from MOE officials, Dewan Bahasa Pustaka academics and other educational agencies, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) representatives should also be included in this specific body tasked to review the curriculum and recommend suitable textbooks for our children. In this way, all can contribute to the wellbeing of our educational curriculum and ensure transparency and scrutiny in textbook selection and content for the sake of our children and nation.

Christian parents: Are we willing to take up this mantle and be involved in our PTAs? It has been observed that

non-Muslim Chinese and Indian parents are increasingly enrolling their children in private or international schools. Others whose children are in the vernacular or national schools rarely play a part in the PTA or concern themselves with its affairs. Indeed, as Datin Noor Azimah of Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) says, "many parents bravely talk and talk about the weaknesses of the educational systems, yet when it comes to standing up and walking the talk, they disappear into the wilderness, nowhere to be found but the few who (do) stand up for a cause find themselves standing, sadly alone".⁵

Does this quote reflect the actions or inactions of Christian parents when it comes to things of national interest in our educational system? If the church is to be found relevant and involved in nation building, Christian parents must first take baby steps in the area of education before taking the giant leap into the public arena of human rights, politics and public policy reforms, etc. Can we do that for 2011?

God bless the church for the sake of Malaysia!

¹ "School History Textbooks - Historical Facts or Political and Religious Propaganda?" *Malaysia Today*, 16 December 2010

² "Balanced worldview via history", *The Star*, 30 December 2010, p42

³ *Steve Lukes, Power: A Radical View*, 1974

⁴ "Unlock *Interlok*", *MalaysiaToday*, 26 January 2011

⁵ "Best to forge unity at school, but ...", *NST*, 27 January 2011, p17.

40-Day Fast And Prayer 2011

Rev Andy Chi, Prayer Executive Secretary

And now give me this mountain of which Jehovah spoke on that day. For you heard in that day how the giants were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. If Jehovah will be with me, then I will be able to drive them out, as Jehovah said. (Jos 14:12)

Giants were first mentioned in Genesis 6:4. In Hebrew they are called nephilim which means “violent” or “causing to fall”. They were a race of large stature and violent tyrants that “fell on” others. They occupied the land of Canaan and were greatly feared by the inhabitants. They were formidable foes that often stood against the Lord’s people.

Today, giants still exist. Unlike human giants of the past, they exist in the form of personalities, corruption, injustice, ethnic and religious politics, and power abuse. They dwell and operate through Government institutions, corporations and various sections of our society. These giants present a serious threat against our national security and unity. Even the Church is not spared. Religious issues have been used for political ends and consequently our religious rights and freedom are affected. If these giants are allowed to prevail, they would spell doom for our nation and endanger God’s work.

This will be our 11th year calling for a “40 Day Fast and Pray” event for the nation. We believe prayer coupled with fasting and strategic action is the key to overthrowing these giants and liberating our nation. Although we have won some significant battles through prayer, the war is far from over. Therefore we should remain vigilant, steadfast and immovable in our faith. We must continue to stand our ground and wage this battle until all the giants have been defeated.

Our “40-Day Fast and Pray” event will begin on 7 August and conclude on 15 September. At the same time, we will be holding our 40 Day Pastors and Leaders Prayer Shield. We have set aside 7 August for the launch of the Pastors and Leaders Prayer Shield, which is also the first day of the fast. Our theme “Be Agents of Change” was chosen to continue in the direction taken by NECF with a special focus on the Seven Spheres of Influence in our nation.

We would like to invite you again to join us for another season of prayer and fasting for the wellbeing of our nation.

IGNITING THE
FIRE
IN FAMILY MINISTRY

DATE:
JUNE 28, 2011
(6.00PM – 9.30PM)
&
JUNE 29, 2011
(8.00AM – 5.00PM)

VENUE:
CONFERENCE ROOM
FOCUS ON THE FAMILY MALAYSIA

DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR OUR SPEAKERS SHARE ON:

- ❖ **Visionary Parenting** – Understand the importance of rooting everything we do in church and family on the sufficiency of Scripture
- ❖ **The Heart of Family Ministry** – Be challenged to move from a Church-Centered, Home-Supported ministry concept to one that is Home-Centered, Church-Supported
- ❖ **It Starts with Me** – Hear how God challenged Ben to think in new ways, and changed his life at home and ministry at church
- ❖ **Fun and Exciting Family Times** – Discover fun and creative ways to impart spiritual truths to children using the *Family Time* format
- ❖ **Preparing Homes for Teaching the Faith** – Listen to examples of how churches have used *Family Time* to equip and support families
- ❖ **Creating a Faith-at-Home Culture in Your Church** – Learn how parents can make intentional and consistent efforts to speak faith into their children’s heart

SPEAKERS



PROF. BEN
FREUDENBURG
*Family Friendly Partners Network
& Concordia University*



DR. ROB RIENOW
Visionary Family Ministries



KIRK WEAVER
Family Time Training



MIKE HEINZ
Kids Kaunt Publishing

COST:
RM120 per person
RM100 per person (for group of 4 or more)

To register or for more information, please call
Focus on the Family Malaysia at 03-7954 7920
or email focus@family.org.my.

Organisers



Being



Introduction

Our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). In the Bible the word “kingdom” does not refer to a physical location. [I am aware that the Alkitab translates “kingdom” as “kerajaan”, which clearly does not refer to a physical location. So the Malay translation is not likely to be misunderstood, but writing in English I have to correct the common misconception.] God’s kingdom [“Kerajaan Allah”] refers to God’s kingship or reign [pemerintahan Allah?], and wherever His reign is manifested or recognised.

So when God’s kingdom comes to the earth, it means people submit to His reign, and His will is done on earth, as it is in heaven.

And we are to pray for God’s kingdom to come to the earth, not just our family or the Church. This means Jesus wants us to pray for God’s will to be done in our nation as well.

But we cannot pray in spirit and in truth for something that we do not care about. This means Jesus wants us to care

about God’s will to be done in our nation.

And after teaching us to pray for God’s kingdom to come, Jesus commanded us to also “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33a). This means He wants us to care about God’s kingdom to the extent that we will not only pray for its coming, but will also do something about it.

In recent years more and more Christians in Malaysia have been praying for God’s will to be done in Malaysia.

We will now talk about how we can go beyond praying, to seeking God’s will to be done in our nation.

To do this we must first know what is God’s will for a nation. And since the government is in charge of the nation, we will focus on God’s will for human government.

We can learn about God’s will for a nation and for its government by looking at what Israel in the Old Testament was supposed to be.

LIGHT

in Malaysia

by Dr. Leong Tien Fock

A. Gleaning from The Historical Israel

1. Introduction

Israel was commanded to observe the Ten Commandments in every cultural sphere of the nation, from the sphere of the family to the sphere of the government.

Hence the Ten Commandments were the supreme law of Israel; the other laws of the nation applied the Ten Commandments to specific situations.

Today, such a supreme law, to which even the government must submit, is called the constitution of the nation.

The Ten Commandments are applicable to all nations, ancient or modern. But as for the specific laws of Israel, they were appropriate for an ancient nation occupying the Holy Land; these laws may or may not be appropriate for a modern nation.

But by looking at how the Ten Commandments were applied in Israel we can learn how to apply them today.

2. Israel and Government

Since our focus is on the sphere of the government, we

will look at the fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother" (Deuteronomy 5:16).

This commandment is not just about honoring the parents but also the other authorities in the nation. The parents are the authorities in their respective families. In a nation, there is a need for authorities beyond the family.

According to Deuteronomy chapters 16 to 18, there are four more categories of authorities: the judges, the king, the priests and the prophets.

All five categories are needed for a nation to function properly.

Each of the categories has its own jurisdiction, and each jurisdiction answers directly to God. They do this by submitting to God's will, which is expressed in the Ten Commandments, the constitution of Israel.

This means, even though the king is in charge of the nation, he himself must submit to the constitution, and under normal circumstances, he cannot interfere in the

Continued on pg 10...

jurisdictions of the other authorities. But since he is overall in charge he intervenes when a crime is committed in any jurisdiction. When this happens, a judge would try the case. And he would do so based on laws given by God, not laws made by the king or the judge; and the king cannot interfere with how the judge decides the case. Hence the king, the laws, and the judges are independent of each other. In this way, the king holds the people accountable to God, and not to himself.

Each of the categories of authorities also represents a cultural sphere.

Just as the parents represent the sphere of the family, the priests represent the sphere of religion. As for the sphere of the government, it was represented by the king, the judges and the laws given by God through Moses.

Hence the government had three branches. We have just seen that all three branches were independent of each other.

B.Looking at Malaysia Today

1.The Government Sphere

In a modern nation like Malaysia, the sphere of the government also has three independent branches.

1.Corresponding to the king is the branch that governs the nation. It is called the Executive. At the federal level, the Executive branch consists of the Prime Minister and his cabinet; at the state level, it is the Chief Minister and his cabinet.

2.Corresponding to the laws of Moses is the Legislature. At the federal level the Legislature consists of the Parliament; at the state level it is the State Assembly. This branch of the government makes the laws of the nation, and the laws must be consistent with the constitution.

3.Corresponding to the judges is the Judiciary, which interprets and applies the constitution and the laws of the nation.

2.The Accountability Issue

As in the case of Israel, God's will for a modern nation like Malaysia is that the government holds the people accountable to God, and not to the Prime Minister.

In practice, for this to happen it is important to ensure that the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister does not have influence over the Judiciary or the Legislature. Otherwise he can manipulate the Judiciary to act in favor of himself even when he is clearly corrupt.

And since the Legislature makes the laws that the Judiciary interprets and implements, it is important that we vote for the right people to be in the Parliament and the

State Assembly.

How then can a government today hold the nation accountable to God? As the Ten Commandments expresses God's will, when the government holds the people accountable to a constitution that is consistent with the Ten Commandments, it is already holding the nation accountable to God.

i.The Nature of the Constitution

What kind of a constitution would this be, besides requiring the three branches of the government to be independent? Since the family and religion answer directly to God and not to the government, the people must be free to choose and practice the religion of their choice. If they choose or practice a religion that fails to worship the God who created them, the problem is between them and the Creator God. The government cannot interfere unless the people practice a religion that promotes criminal activities.

Hence a constitution that is consistent with the Ten Commandments must guarantee religious freedom. It has to be what is called a "secular constitution". This means the constitution is neutral in terms of religion; it is neither for nor against any religion. And certainly it is not based on any religion. But how can a constitution that is consistent with the Ten Commandments be secular when the Ten Commandments are taught in the Christian Scripture?

All religions teach what is called the Golden Rule: "Do not do to others what we don't want others do to us". Even people who say they have no religion would accept this teaching. Jesus taught the positive version: "Do to others what we want others do to us". Islam also teaches this version.

According to the Lord Jesus the Golden Rule summarises the Ten Commandments (Matthew 7:12). And according to the Apostle Paul, people of all religions, or no religion, are aware of the Golden Rule because God has put the Ten Commandments into their conscience (Romans 2:14-16).

So a constitution that is based on the Golden Rule is already consistent with the Ten Commandments. Such a constitution would treat every citizen equally in the eyes of the law. And it would take into consideration the welfare of all citizens. It does not matter whether the citizen is male or female, young or old, rich or poor, educated or not. And it certainly does not matter what the race or religion of the citizen is.

So God's will for a nation is that the government holds the people accountable to a constitution that is based on the Golden Rule.

Today, the constitution of most nations is based, at least to some extent, on the Golden Rule. A good example is the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, which seeks to protect the interests of Malaysians of all races and religions in a unique way. When the government holds the people accountable to such a constitution, it is holding the nation accountable to God.

ii. The Prophetic Role of Media

But the people in government are also imperfect human beings.

Though they have sworn to uphold and protect the constitution, they themselves often fall into the temptation of violating the constitution for selfish gains.

Sometimes they violate the constitution not directly, but indirectly. They do this by interpreting the constitution wrongly.

It is important for the government and the citizens to recognize that a constitution based on the Golden Rule will not do much good unless it is also interpreted and implemented according to the Golden Rule.

So what happens when the government violates the constitution, whether directly or indirectly? Who then holds the government accountable to God?

In Israel this is the role of the prophets. A true prophet was personally called and commissioned by God and hence he answered to no one except God. He would confront the king with God's message when the king violated the Ten Commandments.

The prophets represent the cultural sphere that holds the government accountable to the constitution, and hence to God. What is the equivalent of the prophets in a modern nation?

In a democratic nation like Malaysia this prophetic role is usually played by the media, together with informed citizens.

The sphere of the media, like the other cultural spheres, is answerable to the constitution, and not to the government.

Like in the case of the family and religion, the government cannot interfere with the functioning of the media.

The government can intervene only when the media does what is against the constitution, such as spreading malicious lies or stirring up hatred between races or religions.

The media holds the government accountable to the constitution by informing the citizens concerning the truth

about the nation and the government. And citizens who are thus informed can then further hold the government accountable to the constitution through democratic means.

One means that is most powerful, and one that every informed citizen can use, is to vote in elections according to his conscience. The purpose of elections is to allow the citizens to choose the right people to be in government. And the right people to be in government are those who truly uphold and protect the constitution. Through elections informed citizens have the power to remove people in government who violate the constitution.

Hence a media that is independent is feared by the government. This is good for the government and the nation, as it helps the government to do what is right, and not do what is wrong. Only then can the nation prosper.

But very often the government, especially a corrupt government, does not allow the media to be independent.

When the control of the media becomes significant, especially because the government is corrupt, an alternative media needs to be initiated and supported by concerned citizens. Otherwise the citizens of the nation will only know what the corrupt government wants them to know.

So the success of the alternative media is crucial in enabling the citizens to hold a corrupt government accountable to the constitution.

C. How Shall God's Church Respond?

1. Our Response Generally

Having considered God's will for a nation and its government, we now come back to the question of how Christians can seek God's will to be done in their respective nations.

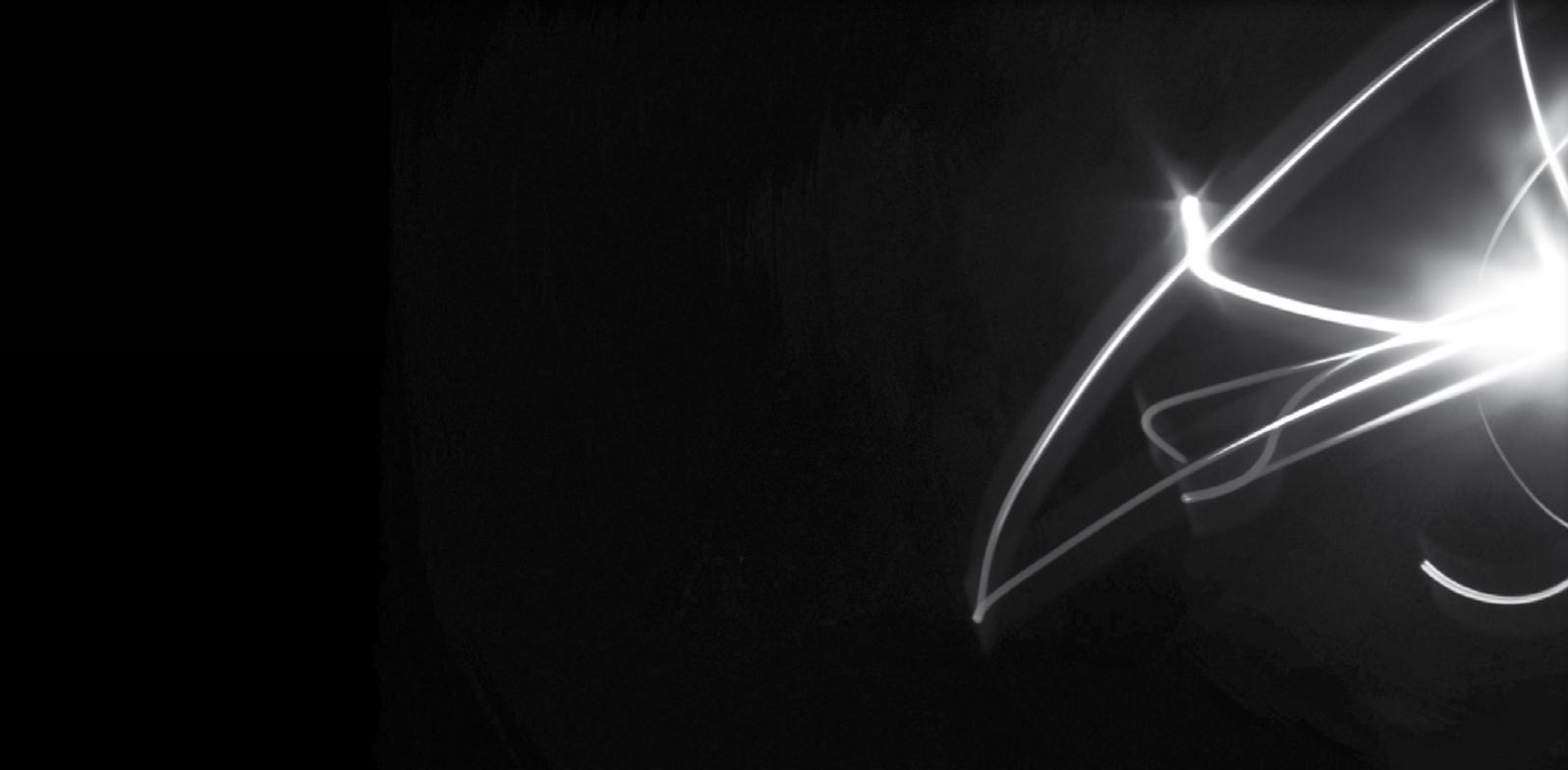
Actually the command to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness is a command to live out the Church's calling to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

Christians shine their light when they seek God's will done in every sphere of their lives.

When this happens, just as light exposes darkness, their good deeds make the evil deeds of the world obvious. And just as light helps people find the right path, the good deeds of the Christians help people see the truth of the Gospel, and point them to Christ.

Since there are Christians in every cultural sphere, God's kingdom has thus come to every cultural sphere. The

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...continued from page 11: *Being Salt & Light In Malaysia.*

Christians in each of the spheres then become the base from which God's kingdom spreads within the respective spheres.

God's kingdom spreads in each of the spheres when the Christians in the respective spheres act as salt by seeking God's will done through their life.

They do this by influencing the non-Christians to do God's will.

The most effective way to influence them is of course to first lead them to accept Christ. But it is still possible to influence them to do God's will even if they do not accept Christ. For God has put the Golden Rule into their conscience. By being light we arouse their conscience to recognise what is right, and by being salt we move their conscience to do what is right.

Since our focus is on the sphere of the government, we will now focus on how Christians can seek God's kingdom to come to their nation by holding the government accountable to God.

2. Our Response to Politics

i. Our Prophetic Role

We have seen how the media plays this prophetic role.

But since the Church is called to be salt and light, the Church has also been called to play the prophetic role of holding the government accountable to God.

Christians can of course work with, and work in, the media to fulfill this prophetic task.

But we must realize that the Church itself is called to play the prophetic role.

ii. The Christian Root

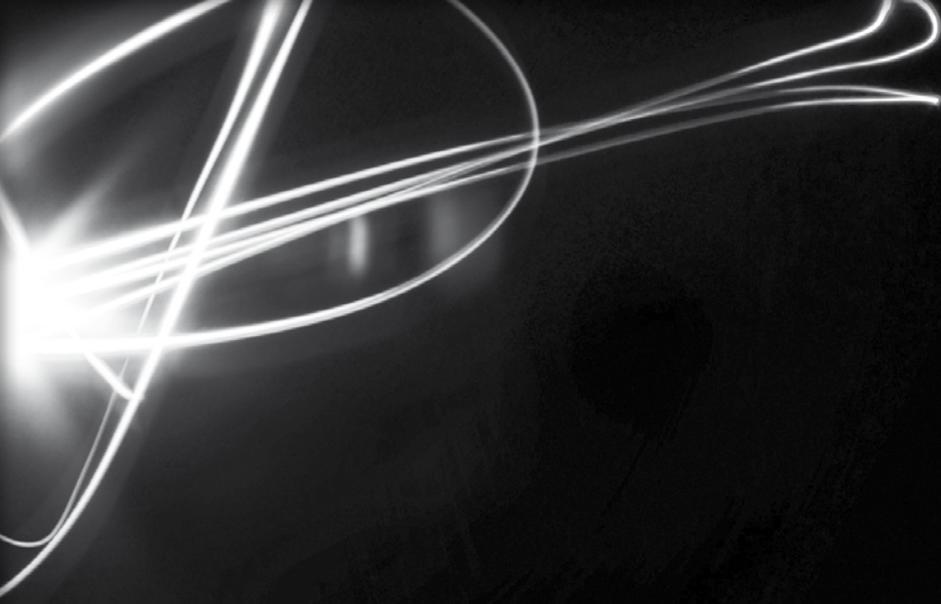
In the pre-modern world there was virtually no nation that had a constitution that was consistent with the Ten Commandments, and to which even the king must submit. The king was above the law and could do virtually anything he wanted to do. The prophetic task of holding the government accountable to God was then very difficult and dangerous.

At the very beginning of the Church, the Apostles and the early Christians resisted their government when they were required to do what was against God's will. They were persecuted and even martyred for this. In this way they held their government accountable to God.

Since then, Christians throughout the centuries have also resisted governments that violated God's will. And based on the political teachings of the Bible, they have also written about what the government can or cannot do.

The outcome of all this is that today, even non-Christians would defend the Biblical principles of human government that we have discussed above. They do not realise that they are defending Biblical teaching.

We have seen that what the government of a modern nation like Malaysia is supposed to be is so similar to what the government of ancient Israel was supposed to be. This is not a coincidence. The practice of having a constitution, and one that requires the government to have three independent branches, is the result of the Bible's influence in Western nations, and the Western nations' influence on the rest of



the world. So it is not surprising that today even nations governed by people who reject the Bible are following the basic political teachings of the Bible.

iii. Our Task

In other words, because of the salt-and-light efforts of Christians in the past, God's kingdom has already taken root in most of the governments of the world in the form of constitutions that are consistent with the Ten Commandments.

In these nations, the Church today does not need to start from scratch. What needs to be done is to ensure that the governments correctly interpret and implement their constitutions.

With a good constitution in place, the prophetic task of holding the government accountable to God has become easier.

It is now a matter of holding the government accountable to the constitution.

Malaysia is one such nation.

And in our case, most of the activists involved in holding the government accountable to the Federal Constitution are non-Christians. Of course they do not realise and will not agree that they are actually doing God's will. But they are, even though that is not their intention. And because of them, the Church's prophetic task of holding the government accountable to God has become even easier for Christians in Malaysia.

D. The Challenge

We recognise that not every Christian is called to be a political activist. But the least that a Christian can do is to be adequately informed concerning the truth about his nation and his government and then vote with his conscience.

If the mainstream media is biased towards the government he needs to seek out alternative sources of information that are free from government control.

Jesus desires so much that we seek God's kingdom in and through our life that He has promised to add to us all the things that we need in order to live (Matthew 6:33b).

He knows we need to make a living. Often this becomes a hindrance to seeking God kingdom. But Jesus has set us free to seek God's will done in our family and in our nation by promising to meet our needs. In fact, He says, "seek FIRST the kingdom of God ... and all these things will be added to you". Hence seeking God's will done on earth has higher priority than even making a living.

But this is not a problem as Jesus has promised to add to us all that we need.

So even the need to make a living is no excuse for not seeking God's will done in and through our life.

Dr. Leong Tien Fock, an Old Testament scholar and a researcher/observer of societal issues at the Campus Crusade For Christ in West Malaysia. This paper is condensed from his presentation at the seminar, entitled 'Biblical Perspective of Political Engagement', conducted on 7 November 2010 in Kuching, jointly organised by the National Evangelical Fellowship Malaysia and the Kuching Ministers Fellowship.

Not All is doomed for Chinese New Year

In the aftermath of the Flood that hit the Southern region of Peninsula Malaysia, Segamat was like a warzone with every home and shoplot in the town affected by the Flood. No one was spared as in front of every door, heaps of damaged furniture and unusable household items stench the neighborhood. Chinese New Year's Eve that was just around the corner added to the bleak outlook amidst the gloomy skies. Thankfully the Electricity and Water were soon restored to the Segamat town while help was on their way from the Johor Baru Pastors' Fellowship (JBPF).

The 40 footer container was only possible due to the combined effort of the JB Churches who operates a Crisis Relief Store since Nov, 2010 in anticipation of the escalating disasters that were happening world wide.

Under the leadership of Ps Benedict Rajan, Ps Boey and Ps Et Yong of Calvary City Church, the volunteers immediately swung into action to pack and despatch 300 packets of 10 kg rice, hundreds of mattresses, 60 gunny sacks of clothing, gas stoves and gas cookers, mineral water, and others essential to the affected areas.

Bro. Frankie Chan from the House of Hope responded to the crisis by setting up the Soup Kitchen at the Prayer House Segamat which also served as the base of the relief operation for Segamat town and the surrounding areas. He brought along his experience, tools and relief gifts in food donations from Kota Tinggi and lifted up the spirit of the flood victims in bringing festive cheer to the affected Chinese folks. Their Reunion Dinner came in the form of hot packets food which were dispatched with the help of Ps Vincent Teo of PKK Segamat.





The Helping Hands of JBPF



Carrying goods from the store



Although the festive holidays were a challenge to mobilize hands and feet, they managed to bring God's love to those caught in crisis. The operation on 7th-8th Feb, 2011 were 3 pronged:

- Volunteers to help in logistics, bringing relief items to the needy
- Volunteers to help in the Soup Kitchen
- Volunteers to help in cleaning up homes

The relief team also worked with Ps Steven Wong from Charisma Church, Segamat who planned a post-flood relief targeting 2,000 people at the cost of RM 100 per person consisting of the following essential items like Milo, cooking oil, instant noodles, biscuits, packet drinks and rice.

We thank God for their effort in representing the Malaysian Church rise to the occasion to be a shining light for such a time like this. Indeed, in every crisis, there is a window of opportunity to reach out and touch lives. Truly, it is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)

While NECF has already given RM20,000 to support the relief work, the needs are immense. We encourage you to participate in this great work through your financial gifts. Kindly make your cheque payable to NECF Malaysia, and indicate that it is for the Johor Relief Work.

(Note: This is an edited report from the JB Pastors Fellowship)

India The governments of Meghalaya and Assam are staring at a major humanitarian crisis with over 30,000 people displaced from their homes due to an outbreak of ethnic clashes between the Garos and Rabha tribal people groups in North East India.

PRAY Pray for the ethnic conflicts to subside, peace to be restored, that no political parties will exploit the conflicts for their ends and that the bond between the Rabha and Garo believers will be strengthened in Christ, as a powerful testimony of healing and reconciliation to the local community. Pray too for wisdom for the local authorities to work out appropriate solutions to the conflict. – WO

Indonesia Government officials in West Java Province, Indonesia, banned the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI) in Bogor's Taman Yasmin area from worshipping on 26 December 2010 while Islamic groups pressured the authorities to seize the property of another church. Demonstrations were carried out against GKI's Christmas service on 25 December but police were able to restrain the demonstrators. The Bogor municipality requested that GKI cancel its Sunday morning worship service on 26 December 2010. Also, the church members were barred from entering the church premises the next day. A GKI spokesman says that while discrimination is becoming systematic and is spreading in Indonesia, most Indonesians turn a blind eye to it.

PRAY Pray for a change in the discriminatory systems against Indonesian Christians, that justice and religious freedom will be established and that the Indonesian church will be strengthened by the challenges it faces. - CDN

Egypt The Egyptian uprising could cause instability to the country and across the Middle East. While President Mubarak has agreed to institute reforms and a smooth transition, the protesters are calling for his resignation. Egyptian Christian leaders have been calling for intercession for their nation lest unwanted extremists take advantage of the transition of power. Pray that God will reveal every secret plot of the extremists and for a smooth transition to a secular government.

PRAY Pray also for the police and military to exercise their powers wisely to control the delicate situation and for comfort and peace on the civilians who are caught in the middle of this instability. - GI

Mongolia When the door for the gospel was opened in 1990, the church grew from four believers to 50,000-60,000 believers across 500-plus churches. In September 2011, the Mongolian church will celebrate its 20th anniversary and all the churches will be invited to participate in many events and activities.

PRAY Pray for the Church of Mongolia as it will launch its 20/10 project during its anniversary, aimed at reaching 10% of the 2.7 million population of Mongolia by the year 2020, training 300,000 disciples for Christ and planting 3,500 churches – WEA.

Australia Besides the floods and cyclones that have hit north-eastern Australia, this continent has been undergoing many changes, all of which place greater strains and tensions on the nation. Increasing pluralism and aggressive secularisation have taken greater hold of Australia's public life. Traditionally a Christian

country, Australia is now characterised more by its diversity of religions under a secular rubric, with increasingly secular laws – especially regarding issues of sexuality, religion and the sanctity of life. Sustained immigration has created a multicultural country – at least in the larger cities – and introduced fast-growing religious and ethnic minorities, with all the attending tensions. Pray that Christian values might not be driven into the margins, but that believers will engage secular society in a productive and relevant manner.

PRAY Pray also that its role as regional peacekeeper would continue to bond Australians together and establish stability in many Pacific and Asian countries like Timor, Bougainville, and the Solomon Islands. - WEA

Vietnam It is one of the most tightly controlled nations in the world where Christians face severe opposition for their faith and witness. Some have family members who are imprisoned for serving Christ. Others are underground church members who live with the constant threat of arrest and imprisonment. Pastor Quang, a prominent church leader and lawyer in Ho Chi Minh City has been imprisoned, slandered in newspapers and followed by police in recent years. In December 2010, authorities demolished a building that was both his home and the headquarters of the Vietnam Mennonite Church. However, and he and his church are determined to continue proclaiming their faith in the Lord.

PRAY Pray that imprisoned Vietnamese believers will be released. Ask God to enable them to share his grace and truth with others, even in prison and those facing trials for their faith will draw strength from God. - VOM