

Berita NECF

Editorial

Giving that **BUILDS**

TIS the season for giving, but not just because Christmas is around the corner.

In the past few months, Malaysians have been wooed with “gifts” of financial assistance, infrastructure allocations, and the like from our government. In October, the national budget for 2012 was unveiled, and targeted the lower income and rural groups. Earlier, there was news that Members of Parliament of the ruling party would be receiving

between RM500,000 to RM2.5 million to upgrade infrastructure and engage constituents ahead of the general elections. The amount received would depend on how “winnable” those seats were¹.

Some call these strings-attached giving “election goodies” or even “bribes”.

Christians have also been in the news for their “giving” through works of service and aid to underprivileged communities. Such work has been a long-standing

feature of Christian charity. But of late, it has been alleged as a cover for proselytisation, a claim that has not yet been proven. Theologically and ethically, however, we as Christians should know that it is wrong to force or trick anyone into the faith, and that conversion is ultimately the work, not of humans, but of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps it is an opportune time to assess the manner in which Christians serve the poor and needy. Presently, many churches run soup

Continued on pg 3...



Check out the main feature ‘Vote with Discernment’ on page 8.

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Inside this Issue

Chairman: The Misunderstood Samaritan	2
Logos Hope & Statement on JAIS	4
Celebrating Christmas in Uncertain Times	5
Malaysia's Destiny	6
Prepare for Malaysia' Jubilee!	7
Vote With Discernment	8
The Christian Vote	10
Sarawak's Re-awakening	11
Church Leadership in a Changing Mission Context	12
Spreading the right message about Sex and Marriage	13
Masters in Public Policy scholarships	14
NECF 2012 Key Events	15



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

The Misunderstood Samaritan

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THE parable of the Good Samaritan found in the Christian Scriptures is short and deceptively simple; it touches deep emotions and common experiences at the same time.

Jesus is tested by a lawyer, who asks, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus draws from him the answer that he must love God and his neighbor as himself. The lawyer persists: "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus then relates the story of the Good Samaritan:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'"

The passage concludes with another question: "Which of these three do you think was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?" The lawyer replied, "He who showed mercy on him." To which Jesus responded,

"Go and do likewise" (Luke 10: 25-37, NKJV).

The same "who is my neighbour?" question is still being asked today. The answer is obvious and not faith-biased - anybody and everybody who is in need.

There are some insights and lessons about the Good Samaritan in our present context.

Firstly, the Samaritan did what nobody wanted to do. This perhaps lends legitimacy to what some have said about recent events - that if "they" had done their work diligently, "those persons" who needed help would not have gone to the Church. Today it is not difficult to be a Samaritan because society is just too religious and too busy to help the poor and needy. The needy are "outcasts" for the simple reason that today's society has "casted them out" - attention is only paid to them for the purpose of gaining "brownie points" or "political mileage" and of course, when there are photo opportunities.

Secondly, there will always be risks. The Samaritan was on the same road as the man who was robbed. He could have been the victim himself.

In a land where we increasingly value "guarded communities" no one is really safe. Anyone can be waylaid, needing the help of others, even perhaps the help of one of another faith.

Thirdly, the Samaritan used his own money to help the ill-fated man. This is what Christians do; this is how we invest in people. We are happy to do it and we all can be proud of this attitude of the Church.

Continued next page...

Fourthly, the Samaritan in Scriptures did not proselytize - he did not give out a tract, did not share his faith, did not ask about the man's religious beliefs, did not set any pre-conditions in order for the man to receive aid. In like manner, the Church has always lent a helping hand to the needy without discriminating. The Church has always carried out her good deeds with no bows and bouquets, or media fanfare. Christians have been a cheerful lot, helping everybody and anybody in need.

Unfortunately, good works and proselytization have almost always been linked because of this lack of understanding of this Scripture. Hence, the modern-day "misunderstood Samaritan."

Fifthly, like the Samaritan's deed, every good work will be scrutinized. Many in Jesus' day looked upon Samaritans with contempt. Even Jesus Himself, in spite of all His good

deeds, was referred to in a derogatory manner as "a Samaritan" (John 8: 48).

The JAIS raid on a dinner at a church on 3 Aug 2011 has taught us so well that where there is a Samaritan, there will be no shortage of risks, threats and accusations!

As a result, some have suggested that Christian good works should perhaps be curtailed or its boundaries redefined. On the other hand, others, even some Muslims, have said that the good deeds of the Church are worthy of emulation.

Sixthly, the Samaritan followed up on the subsequent well being of the unfortunate man. If the victim needed more, he was willing to extend more help. This has been the stance of the Church – we are always willing to do more – and often even when resources are limited. Funds raised from the giving of Church folk are not tax exempt, except for a few approved projects.

Lastly, we find that the Samaritan remained nameless - he didn't leave behind a name card, a publicity brochure, or lay claim to any credit. The Samaritan in this parable is often referred to as "good" because he was content with no recognition or reward for his spontaneous compassionate act.

Suffice that our heavenly Father knows and our reward is in heaven. Our philosophy remains the same - maximum passion, minimum publicity!

*"Maximum passion,
minimum publicity!"*

In spite of all the allegations and unkind remarks thrown at us, let us not forget that Jesus' admonition is unchanged – "Go and do likewise".

For this reason, the Malaysian Church's doors remain open!

...continued from front cover: Giving that BUILDS.

kitchens and provide aid on a charitable basis. Such an approach places little self-responsibility on beneficiaries, nor does it provide them with self-sustaining skills. Where appropriate, shouldn't we be challenged to help people feed themselves instead of relying on handouts? How might we do this creatively and justly?

'A Better World Cafe' was started in 2009 to meet the needs of the local poor.

The August 2011 issue of Christianity Today provides an inspiring example. The article "Feeding the Poor Through Pay-As-You-Can" tells of a church-based café in New Jersey as a model "ministry" for helping people get back on their feet. The "A Better World Café" was started in 2009 to meet the needs of the local poor.

Prices listed in the café are only suggestions, leaving patrons to pay according to their ability. Some do pay more than the suggested price. In addition to the priced menu, there is always one free dish, such a vegetable pasta or rice and beans, to cater to the desperately poor.

Meals can also be earned through volunteer work. For example, one hour of volunteering is paid with a voucher for one meal.

Beyond feeding the hungry poor, this concept also provides on-the-job training. Volunteers do tasks like

prepare and serve food, wash the dishes, clear tables and man the cash register. They gain skills that help them find employment elsewhere.

As an enterprise, operating costs are kept low by using volunteers, minimizing wastage, using donated food, and stretching ingredients.

There are a limited number of such cafés in the United States and the model is not expected to replace the more common charity-based soup kitchens. However, pay-as-you-can cafés make a good complement to other urban poor ministries. Churches intending to embark on such a café concept would do well to partner with an experienced food and beverage service organisation.

Such a model will of course require greater investments of time, energy and resources. Teaching someone to fish necessarily takes more time and patience than giving them a fish. They would, however, be receiving more than just a temporary fill of their stomachs. In the larger scheme of the Great Commission, this model might also help us build disciples and not just believers who may have converted out of need.

¹ BN MPs get extra funds as snap polls loom, The Malaysian Insider, 4 Sept 2011

Logos Hope makes her mark in Malaysia

Logos Hope's opening in Port Klang was officiated by the Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Senator Heang Seai Kie on 29 Sept 2011.

"Logos Hope as a micro-community represents what a larger community can, and should be. I identify with Logos Hope's vision to extend equal opportunity, help and hope to all, and to guide people to peace and reconciled relationships," she said in her speech before declaring the ship's book fair open.



Caption: Heang (left) talks to Logos Hope director Gian Walsler (right) and captain Chris Hughes while visiting the ship book store.

Heang also mentioned the fine example set by the ship's 400-strong crew of volunteers from over 45 countries who, "despite their differences...respect one another and work together to serve people in each port".

Logos Hope replaces the earlier ships Doulos and Logos2. NECF is a sponsor partner of the ship's visit to Malaysia

The ship's book fair carries over 5,000 titles of books at discounted prices as part of its mission to "bring knowledge, help and hope" to the world. The ship also has interactive activities for children, and a café serving drinks and snacks.

The ship was in Port Klang until 23 Oct, after an earlier call in Penang. The rest of its Malaysia tour includes Kuching followed by Kota Kinabalu as its last port of call from 18 Nov to 4 Dec.

Ensure JAIS Respects Citizens' Rights

THE National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) notes the statement of the Sultan of Selangor DYMM Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah that he is satisfied with the actions of JAIS in relation to the search carried out at the Dream Centre Complex but that there would be no prosecution because of "insufficient" proof.

We also note the statement by the MB of Selangor Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim that a task force will be set up to ensure that JAIS' standard operating procedures (SOP) will be improved.

We hope that the improvement of the SOP is with a view to ensuring that JAIS will not exceed or abuse the powers granted to it by state law but will respect the rights of all persons as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, and recognise that non-Muslims are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Syariah Enactments.

The sanctity of all religious places of worship as sacred ground should be respected and there should not be any entry into places of worship without observing due process of law and proper regard to jurisdictional issues.

We continue to pray for the welfare and wellbeing of our leaders and all citizens and in particular for the progress and advancement of the state of Selangor. Our desire as Christians is that we may together work for the betterment of all citizens living in peace and harmony with each other.

Samuel Ang

Secretary-General, NECF Malaysia

(Statement was first released on 13 Oct 2011)



Celebrating Christmas in Uncertain Times

By Wong Siew Li

THE first Christmas was an ordinary day like any other. Women went about their daily chores. The men labored in the fields and elsewhere as they normally did. Children played as usual. Nothing out of the ordinary happened. Quietly and unobtrusively, in a tiny manger in the town of Bethlehem, a new life had begun - a baby boy had entered the world.

The baby boy was special but only his parents knew. No one else around him had any inkling as to who he was. Wrapped in swaddling clothes in a smelly stable full of animals and resting on a pile of hay, the tiny child—so small and vulnerable—bore the hope of generations past as well as generations to come.

Signs were given to a privileged few. To a group of unnamed shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the field at night, angels had appeared to announce his birth. To wise men from the distant east, a special star in the sky led them to the child.

The child was the fulfillment of promises made thousands of years ago, seared into the imagination of prophets of old at different times and in different places. He was God's idea from the start, from the time when humans proved they needed a Savior. Step by step, the God of the universe worked through the lives of individuals and the affairs of the nations to bring about this grand plan that culminated in this one day when Jesus entered our world.

Christmas is the celebration of God's love. A love meticulously worked through the details of our human

history to bring about salvation. While the world waited, God worked step by step until the Creator of the world himself stepped into our world in human form. He entered our world with little fanfare under the most humble of circumstances. Yet his arrival marked the turn of tide for the created world. Freedom from sin, peace with God, fullness of life, restored relationships—the presence of the child and his message would bring all these and more.

In his coming, we celebrate God's faithfulness in remembering us and in saving the world. In his coming, too, we celebrate the depths of the Creator's love - a love that made him lay aside his majesty to be confined to the limitations of the world.

As we approach this Christmas season, we are forced to grapple with the uncertainty of our times. We are faced with the possibility of an economic recession, the struggles of nationhood and the challenges of religious freedom. But once again, we are reminded that Jesus has come. The transcendent God has entered our world and has intervened on our behalf. We rejoice, we celebrate and we continue to proclaim the good news. That one day in history has changed history for us. It has redefined the meaning of our lives from which we draw strength and courage for the future. The continuing message of Jesus' birth is that God is still at work in our world and Jesus will come again!

Wong Siew Li thinks that Christmas is both a lot more and a lot less than what we make it out to be.

THE NECF Tamil Commission is holding a **special Christmas gathering** to update Tamil pastors on current issues. Three gatherings will be held regionally on these dates and at these venues:

Klang Valley, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Johor - 30 Nov 2011, 9:30am – 1:00pm

Full Gospel Assembly, Off Jalan Kelang Lama, Kuala Lumpur

Contact: Pr Daniel Loh 017-8866 003

Northern region - 2 Dec 2011

9.30am – 1pm

Full Gospel Assembly, Taiping.

Contact: Dr A. Dhoss 019-5508 987

Eastern region - 9 Dec 2011

9.30am- 1pm

Immanuel Assembly of God on Jalan Temerloh, Mentakab, Pahang

Contact: Pr Joshua Raman 017-9875 452

Malaysia's Destiny

MALAYSIA Day 2011 was celebrated by churches nationwide through the Malaysia Day Prayer Rally. The prayer rally on 15 Sept marked the ending of the 40-Day Fast and Prayer for 2011. In Petaling Jaya, over 1,000 came to the event at GA611 Bread of Life Prayer Tabernacle Church. There were similar rallies at a dozen other churches in various states.

At GA611, Egyptian-Canadian speaker Dr David Demian, Director of Watchmen for the Nations, preached on Malaysia's role in fulfilling the movement of the Gospel which he said is now in the phase of "returning to the Middle East" (Isaiah 19). He said events such as the Arab Spring of 2011 are indicative of this.

Malaysia is a bridge in facilitating the Gospel's return to the Middle East due to the country's multicultural and multi-religious composition, Demian said.

The Kingdom of God which Malaysia would help to establish would not be a political one, but a spiritual one in which Christ would reign and rule in human hearts, he said. To this end, there would also be greater "clashes between the kingdoms of darkness and light", as a hint of what the Church will face.

The prayer rally featured a live streaming crossover with another rally held simultaneously in Kota Kinabalu. The Pastors' Fellowship of Kota Kinabalu unveiled their vision for 2012 as Malaysia's Jubilee Year (see page 7).

Capping the jubilant mood of the evening was the following Declaration for Malaysia (edited) proclaimed in faith that God will answer:

1. *Malaysia, as we celebrate the 48th year of your formation, we declare that your time has come! Be healed of racial divisions and conflicts.*

2. *Let your destiny as a model of a prosperous, united, multiracial and multicultural nation begin to take place from this day forth.*
3. *Dispense justice and freedom of worship for all your people, regardless of race. We declare defeat over religious extremism and racial superiority. Let a righteous and able government arise. We declare for the Federal Constitution to be upheld in its original spirit and in its undiluted form.*
4. *Malaysia, you will win the battle against corruption and mismanagement of wealth. Share and distribute wealth among all communities, so that no community will marginalised.*
5. *We declare righteousness and justice in every aspect of this nation. Let the judicial system be fair and just to all.*
6. *We declare the Election Commission to be clean and fair. We declare that election candidates will refrain from unethical practices during elections.*
7. *We declare improvements in the quality of education. Let bias, inaccuracies and hidden agendas be removed from the school curriculum.*
8. *We declare God's favour and blessings upon this nation so that more citizens will return to work, live and educate for their children here. Let us not lose our citizens to other nations!*
9. *We declare God's people to take their place in prayer and as agents of change to see Malaysia transformed. Let God's people live to see the fulfilment of His destiny in this nation!*

Amen!





Prepare for Malaysia's Jubilee!

IN the Bible, the year of Jubilee or the year at the end of seven seven-year cycles, marks a time of release, return and renewal. The clock is 're-set', so to speak. Jubilee is a year of liberty in which slaves and prisoners are freed and debts forgiven. The land observes a Sabbath rest and is "returned" to God. Jubilee's spiritual parallel is the remission of sins through faith in Jesus Christ so as to be reconciled with God and to live a life of liberty through His Spirit.

In Malaysia, the Pastors' Fellowship Kota Kinabalu (PFKK) has started an initiative to mark 16 Sept 2012 as Malaysia's Jubilee year. This date is also the 49th anniversary of Malaysia's formation through the joining of four independent nations – Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore (until 1965).

However, if we use the Biblical formula of counting seven Sabbath Year-cycles, seven times, (i.e. taking Malaysia's first year of existence as 1963 and not 1964), we get 2012 as Malaysia's 50th year – or Jubilee year.

2012 as the year of Malaysia's Jubilee was announced at the Malaysia Day Prayer Rally 2011 on 15 Sept, which marked the end of the 40-Day Fast and Prayer 2011.

Under Jubilee 2012, churches are urged to step up prayer for the nation. Pray for the fulfillment of jubilee across the country: Good news for the poor, sight for

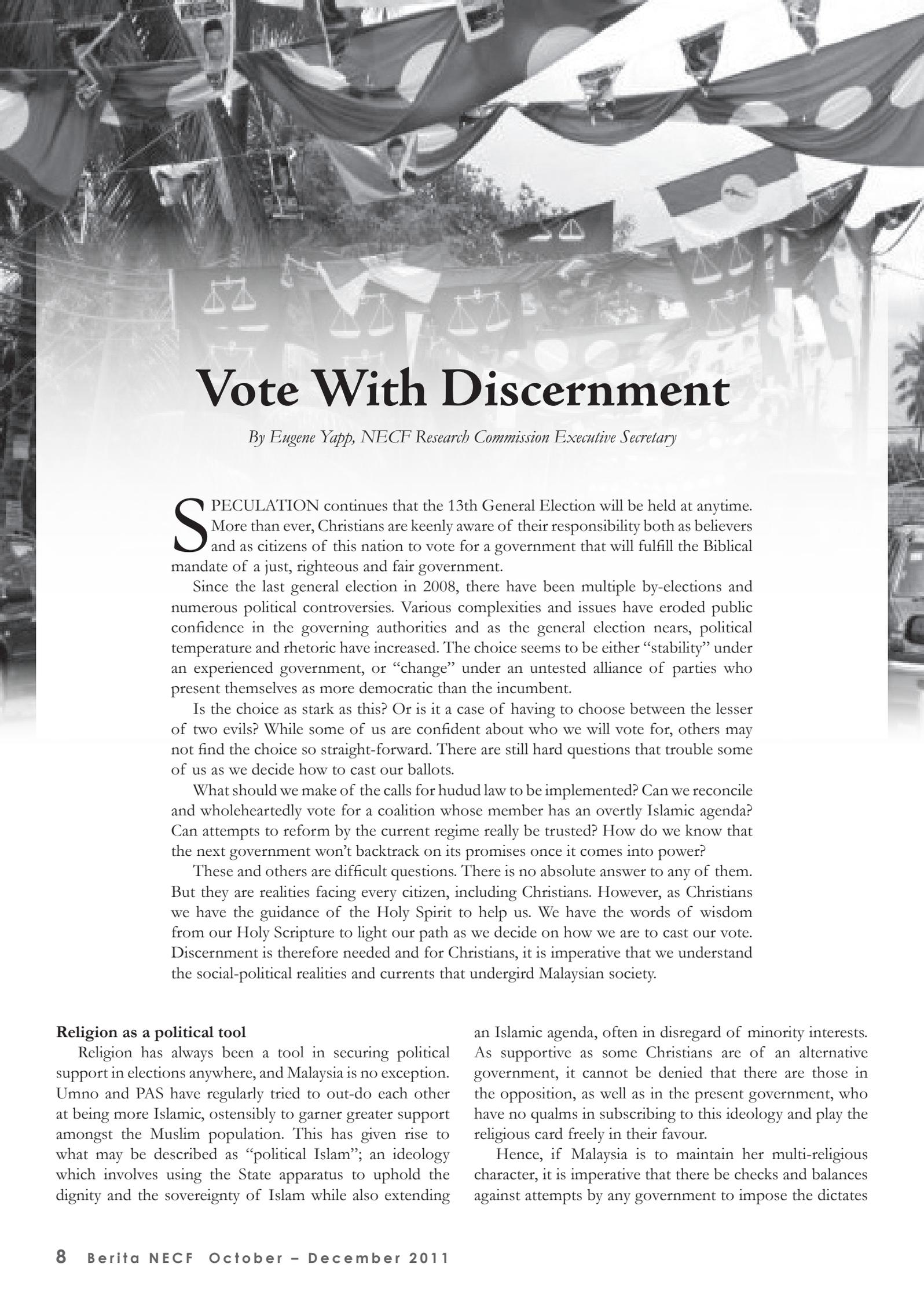
the blind and relief for the oppressed.

There is also a special focus on East Malaysia. Church leaders there desire to see the righting of wrongs done to indigenous peoples in the name of development and politics. Leaders are praying for full respect and adherence to the Sabah 20-point and Sarawak 18-point Agreements signed with Malaya upon the formation of Malaysia. These points include full freedom of religion as there shall be no State religion in North Borneo. They also include autonomy over land.

There is much to be done to help the natives of Sabah and Sarawak reclaim what has been taken from them. Christians in East Malaysia and the Peninsular must unite as one Church to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". After all, the welfare of the Malaysian Church as a whole rests on over 60% of her congregation – who are East Malaysians!

Jubilee 2012 is less than 12 months away. Using 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a guide, churches and individuals are urged to prepare themselves by emphasizing consecration of the self and of the church, hold more regular prayer focusing on Malaysia, enhance individual and corporate worship, and seek repentance and reconciliation with one another.

To know more, visit www.jubileemalaysia.com.



Vote With Discernment

By Eugene Yapp, NECF Research Commission Executive Secretary

SPECULATION continues that the 13th General Election will be held at anytime. More than ever, Christians are keenly aware of their responsibility both as believers and as citizens of this nation to vote for a government that will fulfill the Biblical mandate of a just, righteous and fair government.

Since the last general election in 2008, there have been multiple by-elections and numerous political controversies. Various complexities and issues have eroded public confidence in the governing authorities and as the general election nears, political temperature and rhetoric have increased. The choice seems to be either “stability” under an experienced government, or “change” under an untested alliance of parties who present themselves as more democratic than the incumbent.

Is the choice as stark as this? Or is it a case of having to choose between the lesser of two evils? While some of us are confident about who we will vote for, others may not find the choice so straight-forward. There are still hard questions that trouble some of us as we decide how to cast our ballots.

What should we make of the calls for hudud law to be implemented? Can we reconcile and wholeheartedly vote for a coalition whose member has an overtly Islamic agenda? Can attempts to reform by the current regime really be trusted? How do we know that the next government won't backtrack on its promises once it comes into power?

These and others are difficult questions. There is no absolute answer to any of them. But they are realities facing every citizen, including Christians. However, as Christians we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us. We have the words of wisdom from our Holy Scripture to light our path as we decide on how we are to cast our vote. Discernment is therefore needed and for Christians, it is imperative that we understand the social-political realities and currents that undergird Malaysian society.

Religion as a political tool

Religion has always been a tool in securing political support in elections anywhere, and Malaysia is no exception. Umno and PAS have regularly tried to out-do each other at being more Islamic, ostensibly to garner greater support amongst the Muslim population. This has given rise to what may be described as “political Islam”; an ideology which involves using the State apparatus to uphold the dignity and the sovereignty of Islam while also extending

an Islamic agenda, often in disregard of minority interests. As supportive as some Christians are of an alternative government, it cannot be denied that there are those in the opposition, as well as in the present government, who have no qualms in subscribing to this ideology and play the religious card freely in their favour.

Hence, if Malaysia is to maintain her multi-religious character, it is imperative that there be checks and balances against attempts by any government to impose the dictates

and practices of any one particular religion over society. Such a call is in accordance with the Christian understanding that there should be no prohibition in the profession and cohesion in the practice of one's religion. This notwithstanding, Christians ought to constantly remind themselves that the Kingdom Christ came to establish is not one of political power but one that is characterized by the divine.

Can reform attempts and promises be trusted?

As electors, we will need to carefully examine the manifestos of each political parties as well as their "track record" before deciding how we should vote. Support for a particular party or candidate must be based on policies and programmes viewed as a whole, rather than on a stand on a single issue. What are some policies and programmes we should take cognisance of?

Recent attempts at reform by the ruling party in their intention to repeal certain oppressive laws should be evaluated against the party's position on rights and fundamental liberties in totality. Does the party speak of civil liberties as inherent rights of citizens, or as a "privilege" only the government can bestow? Is its language on reform populist, or does it display genuine appreciation of the people's aspirations and understanding of what is for the country's betterment, even at the cost to its own hold on power? Is such an understanding consistently applied across the board or is it merely responding to pressure points or worst, in a piece-meal fashion?

True transformation and genuine reform is now critically needed. Genuine reforms for Malaysia must involve the strengthening of public institutions including the judiciary, law enforcement, education and government administration. Genuine reform must ensure that integrity and rule of law is restored and respected. Genuine reforms must ensure that biases in whatever forms are removed



and that there is no place for arbitrary decisions and abuse of power and of processes. These should be the yardsticks by which to evaluate the promises of contesting parties in the election.

A framework for decision-making

In the Genesis account, it is significant to note that God did not mandate the angels or the spiritual beings to tend the earth. Instead, He chose humans, created in His image, who are physical and spiritual, rational and moral, social and sexual, to bring good to creation.

"He chose humans, created in His image, who are physical and spiritual, rational and moral, social and sexual, to bring good to creation."

Humans are invested with dignity and authority by God and delegated the task of ruling the world. The election process is one way to in which we now exercise this delegated authority. Those who are in power must in turn facilitate and ensure that the conditions to live and express ourselves as free human beings are

guaranteed and safeguarded.

As Christians who believe in this "high" view of the dignity of persons, we must be particularly sensitive to attempts, however well-meaning, from any quarter to exploit or manipulate people, or to deny or curtail their freedom to function humanly.

It is therefore the duty of every Christian to vote wisely in the hope that the government elected will serve the common good of all and ensure our democratic space for freedom of religion and other human rights. The government elected must foster public institutions that bring about the conditions for good and righteous living so that all citizens may live in a peaceful, harmonious manner, as well as responsibly and contentedly.

Let us also remember that beyond the election, the next government will only be as good as citizens allow it to be. Therefore, missional-minded Christians who see themselves as agents of change must continue to strengthen democratic governance by participating in it through prayer, action and advocacy.

May your conscience, directed by God's Word, enable you to make a wise decision. God bless you.

The Christian Vote

By Bob Teoh, missionary and poll watcher

YOU might have come across fellow-Christians arguing animatedly about politics only to find out that more often than not, they have not even bothered to register to vote. Such opinions count for little. What grounds does someone who refuses to participate in forming the government have for complaining that the government has failed him or her? There are over four million such people who are not registered as voters. Are you one of them?

If so, you are responsible for the worse form of government; the one you didn't elect and the one others have to put up with. Worse still, people who are not entitled to vote may be voting on your behalf – non-citizens who have somehow been registered on the country's electoral roll.

Some of us have excuses like "The system can't be trusted," or "Neither side is worth voting for, both are just as bad". These remain excuses, a bad testimony of our Christian citizenry.

Romans 13:1 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.(NIV)

God, in His sovereignty, has allowed Malaysia to be governed through a general mandate of the people once every five years. God has also instituted authorities to govern with justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24).

You have no choice nor excuse but to exercise this mandate to put the governing authorities in place. Morally-speaking, how can one be subject to such authority when one has opted out of the mandating process by not registering to vote, or not voting?

One in ten voters is presumably a Christian. This is a strategic block of ten percent of the total votes. Winners in

an election can be decided by just a small percentage swing.

Most people did not believe their votes counted for anything until they saw the results of their collective will in the 2008 General Elections. The ruling coalition lost its two-third majority and thus its ability to amend the Federal Constitution at will. Ours is perhaps the most frequently amended Constitution with some 700 changes made over the past 50 years. The bulldozing of amendments without check and balance, especially of laws which give cabinet ministers absolute discretion, has given rise to governance through extra-judicial powers.

The federal opposition also won five states. This is also unprecedented. But it happened because individuals exercised their votes. That solitary vote in your hand will make a difference to you, your children and their children.

A case in point is Ba' Kelalan in Sarawak, one of the smallest state constituencies (6,958 registered voters) and a stronghold of the ruling coalition. The constituency is considered the Bible Belt of Malaysia and has witnessed extraordinary revivals in the past.

Baru Bian, a Lun Bawang lawyer, church leader, native land rights activist and a pastor's son, decided to stand for elections here, his home village, as part of his extended ministry in the April 2011 state elections. He had lost twice in previous attempts but this year, he won by just a ten percent swing or 478 votes. Voter demographics had shifted in his favour because some of the young people decided to register as voters.

It is estimated that about 70 percent of the four million people who are entitled to vote but have not registered are between 21 and 35-years old. Electoral demographics will be altered further to reflect a more youthful profile if more of the unregistered four million register.

If you are one of the four million fence-sitters, register now as a voter. You will then have a part in fulfilling the Bible's mandate for citizens and authorities.



Sarawak's Re-awakening:

Interview with Pastor Robinson Simunyi

IN Malaysia, about 60% of the total Christian population are in Sabah and Sarawak. Berita NECF hopes to occasionally feature the thoughts and views of pastors and Christian leaders in East Malaysia. In this issue, Pastor Robinson Simunyi of SIB Canada Hill in Miri, talks about issues facing Christians in Sarawak.

Berita NECF: How have churches moved forward since the April 2011 Sarawak election?

Ps Robinson: Many churches in town and city areas are fervently praying for Sarawak and Malaysia as a whole. Christians want to see righteousness, integrity and justice as the foundations on which the state should be governed. There is deep concern for the future of Sarawak as to where we are heading.

Churches are challenged with the task of bringing the gospel to the longhouses, villages and communities that have not been reached. But churches are also confronted with other challenges like land right issues, unbalanced development, and the spreading of other faiths and beliefs that seek to influence and win over our children.

To a certain extent, these challenges are good because they have awoken many Sarawak churches to be alert, to pray more and be more urgent about outreach. There is a real concern to protect children in the interior and to start pre-schools in these areas.

What are some lessons Sarawak Christians have learned since the state election?

Ps Robinson: a) United and continuous prayer does make a difference. Christians have come to realise the need to pray more and bring about awareness for a good and clean government, and for good, capable and honest representatives. This message needs to be conveyed to those in the interior to build their awareness.

b) It is a challenge to change the mindset of people in the interior because they fear that they will be left out of development depending on how they vote. They are also not aware about what is going on with regards to corruption and other issues.

c) Christians need to know that politics is not dirty. It is the people in politics that give politics a bad name and make it dirty. Politics is the art and science of how a government is formed and how a country is governed. Every adult citizen should be involved in the electoral process of the country, meaning, he or she has to be involved in how the government of the day is formed. All young people 21 years-old and above need to be reminded that they must register as voters and they must cast their votes.

What are some challenges faced by Sarawak Christians that Peninsula believers should know about?

Ps Robinson: (i) We need prayer support from the churches in West Malaysia.

(ii) We need equipping and training for our leaders and



believers in specific areas of ministry, e.g. teaching pre-school.

(iii) We need resources like teaching materials and finances to help us reach the very remote areas of Sarawak. The cost of going to these places is high. We also need finances to build church buildings, pastors' houses and facilities in the interior areas. Many churches here do not want to ask because we do not want to be seen as "beggars" but these are genuine needs.

(iv) We need more English-speaking pastors and leaders here. Christian graduates in West Malaysia should come over to work in Sarawak with the intention to help the Sarawak churches. Do not be judgemental about how we do things. Come over with the intention to help us. Come and work alongside our leaders. We need more young people from West Malaysia to work and minister alongside our young people in Sarawak.

In what ways could Peninsula Christians be more supportive of fellow-believers in Sarawak?

Ps Robinson: We should network and serve together. Fellowship meetings should be organised to interact, to get to know one another and to share our thoughts and ideas on how we can help one another.

Ministry visits should be encouraged so that areas of genuine needs can be addressed. Peninsular churches then can identify the areas or fields they can be involved in to help.

Church Leadership In A Changing Mission Context

By Eugene Yapp, NECF Research Commission Executive Secretary



Caption: Paul and Carol teaching a session.

COMING to terms with being a “missional church” requires some shift in thinking. No longer is mission the exclusive activity of sent missionaries to another culture and no longer is it confined to works of evangelism among pre-believers. To be missional means impacting the sphere of influence we are in with good works that bless society, demonstrating Christ to every individual.

What does this mean for the church and its leaders, who traditionally encourage entry into full-time ministry or missions as a way of “serving God” while relegating other type of work to the “secular” bin?

This was explored through regional seminars conducted by Dr Paul and Carol Alexander of Mathersey Hall, a Christian college for ministry in London. Seminars were held from 10 to 12 August 2011 in Kuching and Johor Baru.

The missional church, said Paul, was not so much a concept as it is being – we are redeemed by the Lord to be an impact and a blessing to everyone in every sphere of life. That many churches struggle to be missional in this manner is due in part to our Christian tradition of dichotomising reality, Paul said. Christians tend to separate what should not be separated – the church from public life, ministry from the marketplace.

As leadership and culture influenced a church’s missional outlook, the seminar also addressed these issues. Carol’s analysis of leadership styles revealed that many of older

church leaders are from the “builders” generation with a manner that is more “militant”. Whereas, the present batch of leaders are mostly from the “boomer” generation. Their leadership style is characterised more by an “entrepreneurial” spirit with emphasis on “team-work”.

While not speaking against any particular style of leadership, Carol said the crux of missional leadership is one that embraces authentic relationship-building, and empowers and nurtures people to release them into the wider community as “movers and shakers”.

Church leaders and participants were urged to continue the dialogue on what it means to be missional in one’s own particular context. Are people being adequately empowered to see their work in the marketplace as missions? Is the church affirming Christians who work in spheres typically seen as taboo for some evangelicals, such as politics, social activism or even entertainment? Being missional demands that we continue discussing, reflecting and attempting to discern what God is doing in our midst. Then we ought to participate with the Holy Spirit in bringing about good and transformation.

It is the hope and desire of NECF to see churches engaging in conversation to discern what God is doing for our beloved nation. This is a task not just for leaders but for every believer to discern and together be a part of God’s great purpose for Malaysia.

Spreading the right message

about **Sex** and **Marriage**

SEX

FOCUS on the Family Malaysia (FOFM) is calling for more people to be trained as No Apologies[®] facilitators to reach more youths with its character-based abstinence programme. The No Apologies[®] Training of Facilitators (NATOF) workshop will be from 10-12 Dec 2011 at the FOFM office in Petaling Jaya.

No Apologies[®] teaches youths how to make wise choices regarding high-risk behaviour, including pre-marital sex. Youths are challenged to sign a pledge card to save sex for marriage, thus taking a stand against the prevailing culture. Contrary to perception that abstinence programmes are ineffective, a 2010 study by FOFM found that of 1,680 past participants who signed the pledge card, 1,542 (91.79%) say they have honoured their commitment to be sexually abstinent until marriage.

In Malaysia, as of July 2011, a total of 43,631 individuals had gone through the No Apologies[®] programme, and 39,693 had taken the pledge.

More need to be reached with this message, however, as reports show that youth as young as nine are engaging in premarital sex¹. One in 3.5 Malaysian teenagers² say premarital sex is acceptable. The number of unwanted teenage pregnancies is escalating³ at an alarming rate.

Training for facilitators is open to teachers, counsellors, parents, youths and anyone interested in working with young people. Training is conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin.

The registration form and training details can be obtained from the FOFM website www.family.org.my. Call 03-79547920 or write to focus@family.org.my for more information.

MARRIAGE

FOFM and NECF are also urging churches to participate in Marriage Week 2012. Sunday, 12 Feb 2012 has been designated as the day for the global church to celebrate and encourage marriage. This campaign by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and Marriage Week International has the following components which churches are urged to incorporate:

- 1. Four-week sermon outlines on marriage.** Pastors can use these outlines in pulpit preaching in the run-up to 12 February. The outlines will be made available to churches by the end of December 2011.
- 2. Marriage rededication on 12 February.** Churches can hold a simple ceremony for interested married couples to renew their vows as on this date. A proposed outline of a marriage rededication ceremony will be given to churches.
- 3. Special edition couples' devotional.** A 52-week (one year) devotional booklet will be sold for a nominal price. This is for couples to do a weekly devotion together followed by ideas to enrich their marriages. Churches can pre-order consignments.
- 4. Mid-2012 marriage conference.** To sustain momentum from Marriage Week, a conference is scheduled for the middle of the year in the Klang Valley and will be replicated at regional level. Dates will be issued once plans are confirmed.

¹ Leong, S.L., Lam, L., Aruldas, S. (2004, February 6). Report: Youths Sexually Active at Early Age. *The Star*, p. F22.

² Focus on the Family Malaysia. (2008). No Apologies[®] Pre and Post Workshop Survey. Selangor, Malaysia: No Apologies[®] Team

³ Jones, K. (2010, June 27). In Malaysia, Unwanted Teenage Pregnancies Rising Alarmingly. *Medindia*. Retrieved from <http://www.medindia.net/news/In-Malaysia-Unwanted-Teenage-Pregnancies-Rising-Alarmingly-70577-1.htm>

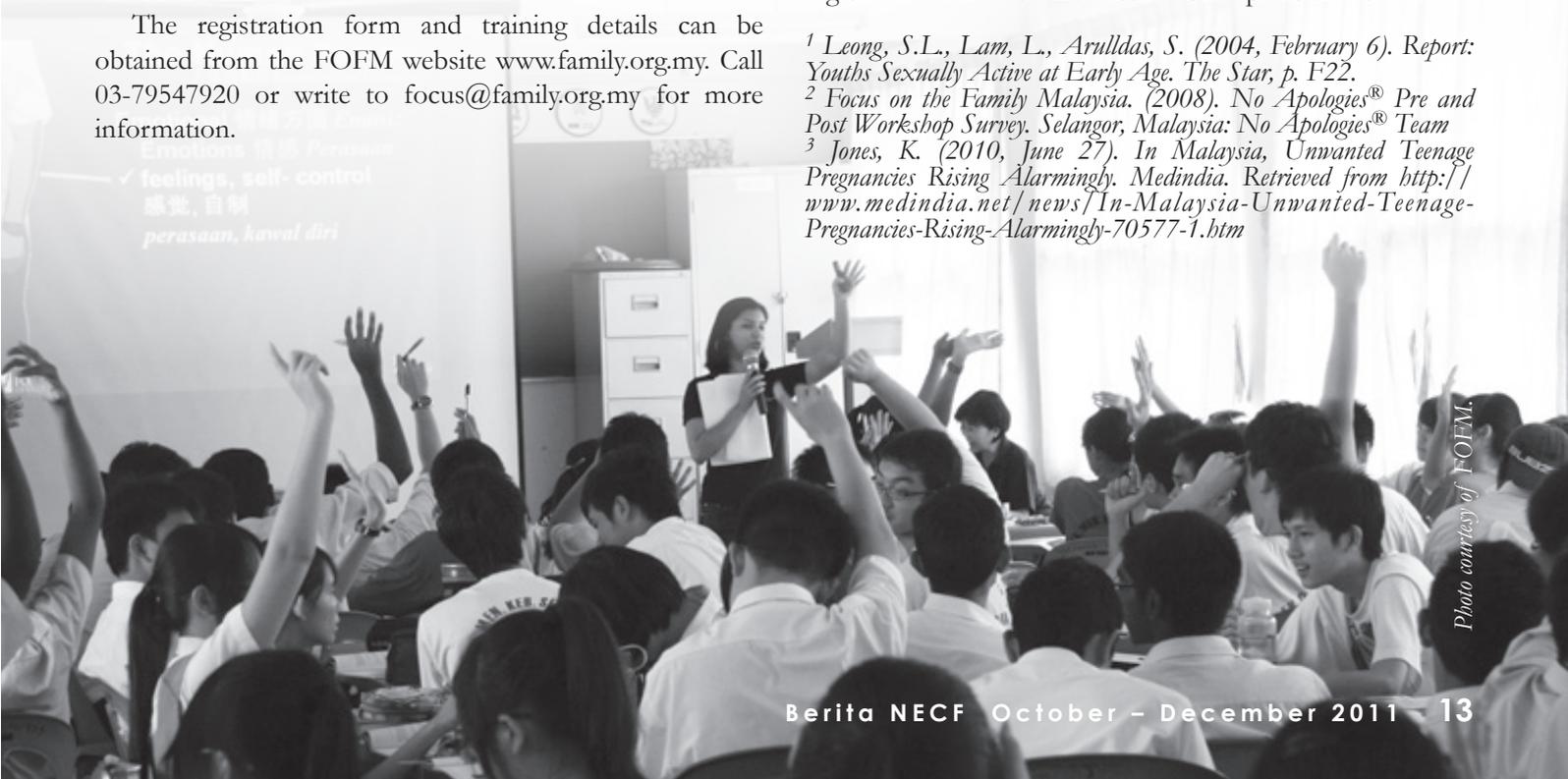


Photo courtesy of FOFM.

Masters in Public Policy scholarships

IN line with our nation-building agenda, NECF is partnering with UCSI University to offer two partial scholarships for a Masters in Public Policy, starting January 2012. Public policy has a role in the NECF vision to see Christians live out their purpose and calling as agents of national transformation in the different spheres of society and in public institutions.

The Masters Programme is an 18-month, weekends-only course offered on Fridays 3.00pm to 9.00pm and Saturdays 9.00am to 5.00pm. Candidates who meet the following Criteria/Requirements are encouraged to apply under these terms:

1. The candidate must fulfil the entry requirements as stipulated by UCSI University (please refer to www.ucsi.edu.my)
2. Candidate must be able to finance RM10,000 or one-fourth of the Masters programme.
3. Candidate must share NECF's nation-building agenda and hold the view that pursuing this Masters is part of his/her calling to participate in nation-building.
4. Candidate must serve with the NECF Nation-Building Department for a bond period of either an 18 months' internship for the duration of the Masters + 12 months after completion of the Masters, or, for 24 months after completion of the programme.
5. Salary/compensation will be discussed and offered based on candidate's background, competencies and ability to contribute.
6. Candidate must be a Christian of over five

years' standing and have at least five years of work experience.

7. Some formal theological training is preferred and would be advantageous in securing this scholarship, but is not compulsory.
8. Candidate must provide at least three references from his/her pastor/elder and employer.

The Application Process:

1. Candidate must write officially to NECF with a CV highlighting how he/she fulfils the above Criteria/Requirements.
2. Candidate will be vetted by NECF and if selected, he/she will be called for a first interview. Before the interview, candidate will be required to fill an application form and write a short essay on an assigned topic.
3. Upon successfully passing NECF's selection criteria and process, candidate will be offered a letter of internship from NECF and a letter of acceptance from UCSI University.

Disclaimer:

NECF cannot guarantee acceptance for this programme by UCSI University and the internship/bond is subject to the candidate being accepted by the university. Interested candidates can email their CV with a formal letter to enquiries@necf.org.my to the attention of Senior Executive Secretary, with the email subject header 'UCSI Masters in Public Policy'.

NECF Malaysia welcomes new members:

Ordinary Members

1. Praise Tapah, Chairman Dato' Lim Kheng Yew
2. SIB, Bandar Bukit Tinggi, Pastor Jakob Ajeng
3. Ipoh Elim Gospel Hall Chinese Assembly, Pastor Phung Ngoi Thow
4. Gereja Berita Injil Antiokhia under the eldership of Christian Rimbo
5. Tabernacle of Shalom, Puchong, Rev. S. Arulandu
6. Married for Life (M) Bhd under the directorship of Ng Weng Kong
7. Batu Ferringhi Community Baptist Church under the eldership of Dr. Paul Vo
8. City of Praise, Pastor David Lee

Associate Members

1. Mary Goh Cheng Ee
2. Pr. Dharminder Singh
3. Dr. Rebecca Wong Yuen Shi
4. Mr. Ee Yew Chai
5. Michael Leong Kam Fei
6. Mr. Koshy Thomas

NECF 2012 Key Events

5 - 7 February
*BM Konsultasi
Pendidikan
Rohani &
Akademik*

12 February
*International
Marriage Week*

21 - 22 February
*National
Prayer
Consultation*

13 - 14 March
*8th NECF
Tamil Pastors
& Leaders
Conference*

March
*Eagles Team
Leadership
Summit*

12 May
*NECF Malaysia
Biennial General
Meeting & 30th
Anniversary*

17 - 26 May
*10 Days of
Prayer before
the Global
Day of Prayer*

27 May
*Global Day
of Prayer*

28 May - 25 Aug
*90 Days
of Blessing*

7 - 9 June
*BM Konsultasi
Pelayanan
Relevan &
Pembentukan
Pemimpin*

30 Aug - 1 Sept
*BM Konferensi
Doa*

7 Aug - 15 Sept
*40-Day
Fast & Prayer*

16 September
*Malaysia Day
Prayer Rally*

October
*Minister's
Appreciation
Month*

25 - 27 October
*BM Konsultasi
Pengenjilan &
Pembentukan
Ekonomi*

November
*International
Day of Prayer
for the
Persecuted
Church*

Register early for the **8th NECF Tamil Pastors and Leaders Conference** on the theme 'Be Prepared and Prepare' based on Ezekiel 38:7. Confirmed speakers are Dr R Stanley, founder and President of Blessing Youth Missions, India, and Rev A Swarnaraj, Senior Pastor of Calvary and Blessing Centre, India.

Venue: Full Gospel Tabernacle (FGT) Subang Jaya

Fee: RM30

Contact: Pr Daniel Loh at 03-7727 8227/017-8866 003

ALGERIA In recent years, an Algerian law which regulates the activities of non-Muslims has been used to justify the detention of Christians and church closures. The law, Ordinance 06-03, prohibits any Christian activity from taking place outside state-recognised church buildings. This effectively bans Bible studies in private homes. It also bans evangelistic material and activities. Penalties for breaking the law include exorbitant fines and a maximum of up to five years in prison. Over the years, numerous individuals and churches have been affected by this law. A recent case was that of Karim Siaghi who had given his neighbour a Christian CD. Karim has been charged and found guilty for proselytisation in the absence of witnesses and without any evidence presented. He is currently appealing his sentence.

PRAY PRAY for righteous and god-fearing judges to preside over Karim's appeal and acquit him of the charges. Pray for his wife and children to know God's peace. As Christians worldwide mount a petition campaign by writing to Algerian ambassadors in their countries, pray for a change of heart in the authorities. Pray for other Algerian Christians whose cases are still pending in the courts, for them to have strength and peace in the midst of uncertainty. – OD

LAOS Orphaned children are coming to Christ through the ministry of local churches. But in a northern Laos orphanage, eleven orphans are being pressured by their principal to leave the orphanage, unless they stop attending church.

PRAY PRAY for the faith of these young children to persevere in their faith. Pray for their protection and provision, as they are dependent on government support. Pray that churches in Laos will prosper in their ministry to children and be a

continuous support and source of hope for young believers. – VOM

EGYPT Following riots on 10 Oct 2011 between Egyptian Christians and security forces, Christian leaders have called for prayer, healing and justice as the country faces ongoing sectarian violence since the people's revolution in spring. The October riots began when Christians peacefully demonstrated against an attack on a church. Demonstrators say they were then attacked by mobs. Egypt is due to hold parliamentary elections in a month's time to determine the country's future after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak.

PRAY PRAY for security forces to be fair and unbiased in their actions to uphold justice by bringing perpetrators of the church attacks to book. Pray for Christians to remain steadfast in using peaceful approaches. Pray for God's sovereignty over the coming elections and attempts by groups who want to take advantage of the uncertainty and power vacuum following the revolution.

IRAN In 2009, Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani was convicted of apostasy and imprisoned. The death penalty has been pronounced on him but Youcef has refused to recant his faith. He appealed his fate in the courts in September, but the outcome as of mid-October remains uncertain. However, in response to international condemnation, Iranian officials seem to be shifting the scope of Youcef's alleged crimes. Where first it was apostasy, officials recently said he was being sentenced for treason, and then rape and extortion. Iran has also accused western media of using the case to tarnish the country's image. Youcef's life is clearly only in God's hands as there is no knowing which twist the case will take next. While apostasy is not officially prescribed in Iranian law, it can be punished by death under fatwas and religious texts. The

death sentence on Youcef marks the first time an Iranian court of law has ordered execution for apostasy.

PRAY PRAY for Pastor Youcef's life to be spared. Ask God to strengthen and comfort his wife, two children, and congregation. Pray that international pressure on the Iranian government will work to so that it will treat Youcef and other Christians according to the law, which does not provide for death for apostasy. Ask God to strengthen the faith of Iranian Christians. – WEA, Media Project

THAILAND & CAMBODIA Heavier-than-usual monsoon rains have flooded Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and the Philippines since July. Thailand and Cambodia are the hardest hit, with 315 people dead in Thailand and 247 dead in Cambodia, as of 19 Oct. Thousands have been displaced by the floods with their homes destroyed. Rice fields in these two countries have also been destroyed, destroying the livelihood of farmers and the rural poor, and also affecting food supply. While the floods in Thailand have received wider news coverage, Cambodia, a poorer country, is expected to face an even harder recovery. An estimated 24% of its total rice crops have been wiped out.

PRAY PRAY for those who have been made homeless due to the floods and who have lost family members. Ask that the governments of these nations would act efficiently in conducting relief and reconstruction. Pray that every person who needs help will be reached. Pray for covering for the churches and Christian workers that are delivering help to those affected. Ask God to heal and restore the land so that agricultural communities will have a future. Pray that through this tragedy many will come to know the Lord. – CA