

beritaNECF

EDITORIAL

A Nation Transformed by His Love

MALAYSIA, a land of opportunities and grace, a melting pot of races and religions and today, a migrant preferred destination. Some of us may not think much of it, but Malaysia is truly a land of promise as many prophets have proclaimed over this country. The issue is, are we missing the “open heaven” opportunities that God has set for us?

Given the opportunity to be vessels for national transformation, how should the Christian community respond to this privilege and grace of God? The clarion call is to “Transform the Nation through the Local Church” and to be effective, the church itself must first experience transformation.

What does a transformed Malaysian church look like? One who is passionately in love with God will bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit and maintain an intimate relationship with Him. The Bible speaks of David, a man after God’s heart (1 Samuel 13:13-14) as one who was quick to respond and obey the Lord. The nation would experience much greater Godly transformation if only we as the church are obedient to Him. Human wisdom and wrong priorities are common barriers (Proverbs 3:5-6) because we chose to submit to self rather than to our Lord. Unity brings forth power (John 17:21), yet churches today are separated by denominational doctrine, leadership styles and individualism. The church cannot be an agent of national transformation if we are not united as one.

Paul spoke profoundly of building healthy relationships among Christians and churches in Colossians 3:1-17. Unity is a divinely ordained command upon Christians and this can only be fulfilled if we are clothed by His love. Differences exist among us, whether physical or emotional, or in our mannerisms, preferences and priorities. Even in our interpretation and implementation of God’s Word, we experience conflict in the acceptance of others’ convictions. We truly need to

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**NECF wishes you a Blessed
Christmas and Joyous New Year!**

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exercise grace in building relationships between Christians and churches. But this is only possible if we allow His love to fill our hearts as "love covers all" (1 Corinthians 13).

The exercising of grace and acceptance by churches upon their pastors and leaders are also transformational factors. Often, pastors struggle in silence as they face criticism and challenges. Praying, loving and caring for pastors are instrumental to the development of a strong community before it can serve as a transformation agent. When we learn to care for our shepherds, God will be pleased and He will equip us as vessels.

How will God transform Malaysia? A nation transformed by God is one whose governing authority fears Him. Corruption, unrighteousness and injustice are reflections of a deteriorating government, and one that doesn't fear God. The fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7) is indeed the key to dislodging such misdeeds to release anointing upon the governing authority. A God-fearing community will release His favour upon the nation, bringing forth transformation and grace to the people.

"A nation transformed by God is one whose governing authority fears Him."

As the church prays in unity, God's power will be released through our intercession for the government, people and nation. Men and women who fear the Lord will be positioned in offices of authority to bring forth good developments to the nation and the restoration of justice to the people (Ezekiel 47:9). God will restore righteousness to the nation and cities and communities will experience His grace and love as the church takes up its transformative role and as hearts are changed from selfishness to sacrifice. The church can then be the prophetic voice of the nation that will prick the conscience of the people.

God will release wisdom to the church to provide solutions for issues and crises faced by the nation. The nation is plagued by many social problems and injustices against the poor, widows, orphans, migrants and other minorities. We need answers to meet the needs of many and to work out issues of concern whether they be the rising cost of food and living expenses, or erosion of religious liberty. Some of these solutions may require Christians and the church to transform their way of living and doing ministry.

The kairos moment is now! As the church rises to fulfil her role in nation building, God will bless. We need to build a nation through His divine power of love, cutting across differences in race, religion, social and financial status. God loves Malaysia. Churches and Christians have responded to the challenge to pray for the nation as indicated by the high turnout in the many prayer meetings organised to celebrate Malaysia's Jubilee. We not only need to continue to pray but also to seek God to transform us so that we may be transformation agents for our nation.

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By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

The River of God

RECENTLY came across this statement by Carl Moeller, the outgoing President of Open Doors USA, a ministry that supports persecuted Christians worldwide. Moeller told The Christian Post:

"In my mind today, the picture I have is a church in a diabetic coma that has gorged itself on the sweets of affluence, materialism, and the idolatry of worshipping the materialistic world. ... We are the ones who can no longer rouse ourselves to even pray for an hour on behalf of things that God would have us pray for."

This Malaysia Day on 16 Sept 2012, we saw a tremendous outpouring of prayer by the church for the country at different locations across the land. There were the Hope of Jubilee events by NECF to usher in Malaysia's 50th or Jubilee year, the largest event being the prayer rally at the Likas Stadium in Kota Kinabalu¹, where over 10,000 Christians gathered. There was also the inter-denominational prayer rally under the "Prayer United" banner which committed the nation to God ahead of the coming general election² (GE).

So many things vie for the Church's attention and among these is our national political situation. But are we clamouring for change without considering the change that is needed inside the Church? To simply shout "change" is not a very intelligent approach. To focus on the mess in the country without focusing on the internal backslidden-ness of the Church is not going to impress God.

In the midst of so many voices, it is always good to read the Scriptures and hear what God has said and continues to say:

Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the

river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. _ Ezekiel 47: 8-11 NKJV

This passage tells us three things which the Malaysian Church needs to be reminded of:

1 Where the river flows there is healing (v8). Who among us does not think that Malaysia needs racial healing. Yet, it is only in God that there can be true healing. The answer is not in the GE but in God.

2 Where the river flows there will be a great multitude of fish (v9). When God moves, this multitude of fish will come. The critical mass will be a divine act. No law or plans of man can frustrate His purpose. The answer is not in more religious liberty nor a better human rights platform. The answer is in the river flowing.

3 But its marshes and swamps will not be healed (v11). Where the river does not flow, there will be "death".

If we are to see true Jubilee in our nation, there must be, first, the restoration of God in our daily lives. Obviously, the devil is alive but we can encourage ourselves that our God is also on the move. The Church is at the crossroads. And my personal prayer is that once again we would remind ourselves of the river of God. It is so important we take time to remind ourselves that we need to do what God wants done and be where God wants us to be, i.e. where the river flows.

Many things will implode in the days ahead and these will not only be the schemes of the wicked. God is not blind to the rot in His House. Revelations reminds us that He gives time even to the Jezebel in His Church to repent³. Let us not be so smug as to think that Jezebel is only in the nation "out there," but not "in here" in the Church.

After the GE, the swamps and marshes that will not be

Continued on next page...

Announcements

NECF Leadership

Pastor Tay Wah Seng is now Vice Chairman II of NECFs Executive Council following approval by the Registrar of Societies on a constitutional amendment to create the post.

Pastor Tay was voted in for this position at the 13th NECF Bi-ennial General Meeting in May 2012. He is the Senior Pastor of Vineyard Church and Chairman of the Johor Baru Pastors' Fellowship. His passion is mentoring and raising younger leaders. Honorary Secretary **Rev Elisha Satvinder** is also Chairman of the newly formed Education Commission. **Pastor Chomy Ching Choon Mee**, a member of the NECF Council, is now Chairman of the Chinese Commission.



From the top:
Pastor Tay, Rev Elisha
and Pastor Ching

NECF Malaysia welcomes new members:

Ordinary Members

1. Vision Valley Centre, Petaling Jaya (Rev Dexter Low)
2. Kuching Gospel Chapel, Kuching (Rev Elvin Yek)
3. Wawasan Penabur Sdn Bhd (Chairman Chow Chee Yan)
4. Hope Kluang, Kluang, Johor (Gue Siok Fei)
5. Gereja Pusat Batu 8 Sidang Inji Orang Asli, Tapah (Ps Samsudin Bah Bulat)
6. City Light Church, Gelugor (Ps Daniel Lau)
7. The New Life Church of Malaysia, Penampang (Rev Ronnie Liew)
8. Malaysia Discipleship Centre, Kuching (Chairman Chin Hon Sin)
9. Agape Chapel, Petaling Jaya (Elder Peter Tan Jin Hooi)
10. Cornerstone Doulos Church, Bandar Sunway, (Ps Mickey Kua)
11. Sg Besi Calvary Life Assembly, Sg Besi (Ps Roger Gan)
12. Poiema Christian Centre, Petaling Jaya (Ps Cheong Khai Weng)
13. GP611 Bread of Life Centre, Cheras (Ps Jeanne Dorine Enionguimoto)
14. Tabernacle of Glory, Bentong (Ps Mariana Karuppiah)
15. Alpha Omega SP, Sungai Petani (Ps Arnold Phua)
16. Faith Evangelical Free Church, Overseas Union Garden, KL, (Elder Lim Lee)
17. National Association of Christian Counsellors (President Edmund Ng)

...continued from page 3: *The River of God*

healed will become obvious. Be prepared to suffer what I call "post-GE shock" – even if the results are what we desire, swamps and marshes will still be there. Simply because the externals we are crying for, are void of the river.

It has been said "we must keep the main thing the main thing". May I suggest that the main thing is God, the "river of God." Malaysia's "calendar Jubilee" is not automatically God's Jubilee. May I remind all, Malaya's Jubilee has come and gone, and it was a non-event.

But now, standing within Malaysia's Jubilee and praying together as God's people, let us not just cry out for change outside – for the politicians, Parliament, the economy and

the wickedness without – but let us cry to God, "Let your river flow, once again".

This Jubilee year, I want to set my own heart right. And I appeal to you the Church, let us set our House in order.

God bless Malaysia. And God bless His Church.

¹ 10,000 Sabah Christians pray for Msia, *Daily Express*, 18 Sept 2012

² Christians in national day of prayer ahead of polls, *Malaysiakini*, 17 Sept 2012

³ Revelation 2:19–23 (NKJV)



Ushering in Jubilee across Malaysia

Compiled By Debbie Loh

MALAYSIA Day and the country's Jubilee Year were ushered in with a joyous celebration in Kota Kinabalu, where an estimated 14,000 Christians filled the Likas Stadium on 16 Sept 2012.

People arrived as early as 4pm to eat together to symbolise the ending of the NECF 40-Day Fast and Prayer for the nation. The national anthem, *Negaraku* was sung, followed by the sounding of shofars and trumpets to mark the start of the prayer rally. It was an all-out celebration complete with 1,200 flag bearers carrying the Sabah and Malaysia flag, 300 dancers with banners, 120 tambourine dancers, 300 shofar blowers, and a 50-member choir in addition to the worship team. These participants worshipped and performed on the football field of the stadium and ministered powerfully to those who attended the prayer rally.

The Mayor of Kota Kinabalu attended and gave an inspiring speech. Later, all present in the stadium stood up to make a pledge for nation-building and the rally ended with a fireworks display.

"It was an awesome time for the church in Kota Kinabalu and the land of Sabah. God's presence was felt strongly among us," said Pastor Steven Choon of SIB Skyline.

Earlier in the morning, 5,000 Sabah Christians had gathered at Padang Merdeka in Kota Kinabalu to commemorate the 1963 signing ceremony for Sabah to form part of Malaysia. The City Mayor was also present at the event where a declaration was read out and the Holy Communion was served, conducted by native church leaders.

In Miri, about 800 people gathered at SIB Canada Hill which overlooks the city. It was a moving display of inter-denominational unity with leaders and members from the evangelical, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, charismatic and Pentecostal churches all in attendance. The meeting began with the blowing of shofars towards Miri city to declare that the Jubilee has come.

Continued on next page...

...continued from page 5: Ushering in Jubilee across Malaysia

"It was a united time of praise, worship, exhortation and prayer," said SIB Canada Hill's Pastor Robinson Simunyi.

The Hope of Jubilee celebration for the Klang Valley at FGT Subang focused on prayer for the country, people and the land. Christians were called to restore their faith in the nation, to love and be loyal to Malaysia, to be a blessing to the land and to transform it for God. They named each ethnic group by name, asking for forgiveness and renewed love. Flag-bearers of Malaysia's 13 states and three federal territories moved around the hall as people stretched out hands in prayer for each state and territory.

Pastor Khoo Kay Hup of FGA KL then led in corporate prayer for Malaysia to prosper. Pastor Edwin Agung of SIB Brickfields prayed in Bahasa Malaysia for healing and unity among the races and Rev Esther Kong of GA611 Bread of Life Centre led in seeking God for forgiveness for sins. NECF Secretary-General Rev Chan Theam Lai then led the gathering in a declaration of God's blessings on the land, people and country.

In Malacca, about 1,500 people from different local churches gathered at Dataran Pahlawan Melaka where the churches put up a cultural dance performance to celebrate the occasion. Johor Baru churches gathered at Pusat Kebajikan Kalvari where over 600 Christians met for worship and intercession. The event was organised by the JB Pastors' Fellowship, and in keeping with the fellowship's 2012 theme, "Passing the Baton", the prayers were led by mostly younger pastors and leaders.

Kuala Terengganu churches held a combined prayer service at Lifeline AOG and saw a turnout of almost 100 Christians, including representatives from all denominations including the Roman Catholic Church. A local leader said such a good turnout had not been seen for a long time. The exhortation on the Old Testament teaching of the Jubilee principle was an eye-opener for many Terengganu Christians.

There were also joint gatherings between churches in Alor Star, Kota Baru, Tawau and Kuching. Though Malaysia Day has come and gone and we have ushered in Malaysia's Jubilee, NECF is not ending prayer efforts for the Jubilee Year. Combined monthly prayer meetings among churches will continue to be held in the Klang Valley and churches in other regions are urged to do the same. Together, let us do our part to fulfil Malaysia's redemptive destiny!



God bless each and every Malaysian!



Praying for the Aboriginal people.



Praying for the different states in Malaysia.



Sarawakian Orang Ulu dance performed as part of the Jubilee worship at Kuching Trinity Methodist.

Jubilee: A Window of Opportunity

By Debbie Loh

THOUGH thousands of miles away and on another continent, East Africa has a lesson for Malaysia. A spiritual revival swept eastern African countries in the 1930s and 1940s and led to church growth which lasted until the 1970s. But all was lost when the church did not seize its kairós moment to act on national transformation following the revival. In 1971, Uganda fell to the dictatorship of Idi Amin. Later, the HIV/AIDS virus ravaged the country as well as other parts of the African continent. It took more than 20 years of war, oppressive dictatorship and AIDS before Uganda could struggle back to its feet. Even now, the restoration is not complete.

"Don't let that happen to Malaysia," said Ugandan pastor Julius Suubi, who gave the exhortation at the NECF Hope of Jubilee Celebration at FGT Subang Jaya on 16 Sept 2012.

"The season of Jubilee that you are ushering in is a moment for the revival and transformation of the nation. It is just beginning and the onus is on you to take hold of this opening in the spiritual realm, to see Malaysia's destiny fulfilled," said Pastor Suubi, who runs the Highway of Holiness Ministries International, an intercessory ministry for nations.

He spoke on the application of the Jubilee Year in the context of modern-day Malaysia. Jubilee was a "prophetic

season", he said, during which the things promised in Leviticus 25 would come to pass but only if the church was earnest in repentance, prayer and action.

He affirmed Malaysia's national destiny "towards the redemption of mankind", but said the country was still unable to fully embrace its redemptive calling "because of certain limitations". These included the breakdown of the family institution, corporate or collective sins as a nation, historical wounds between ethnic groups and lack of repentance and forgiveness.

To receive the Jubilee promises of liberty, restoration, renewal, and rest, the church has to confess the corporate sins of the nation and pray for revival. "God desires to show mercy. Judgement is his last option and only when people refuse to turn back to him," Pastor Suubi said.

Finally, he noted that despite God's command to Israel to observe the Jubilee and his promises of blessing, the Israelites never once practiced it because of their sin. "Jubilee which comes once every 50 years for a nation, is a once in a lifetime experience for most of us. Don't be like Israel and miss the opportunity," he said.



Inward Transformation, Outward Action

By Eugene Yapp

WITH the recent wave of prayer to usher in Malaysia's 50th Jubilee, there is a sense of anticipation of the great things to come. "The Lord will bless Malaysia!", "Send revival, O Lord!"

But any spiritual movement will not have a lasting effect if it is only confined to hype or passion. There must be a substantial grounding in the cause and belief of our faith as it negotiates the everyday realities of the home, marketplace, culture and national governance. Only then can we see lasting and consequential effects of this "Jubilee movement" in society.

Prayer as inward transformation for outward action

When we pray, is it simply a means to an end, to what we want, be it our blessings for ourselves or for the nation? Is it an affirmation of our own desires? Is prayer only about seeking and desiring?

Inspired by theologian Karl Barth, one may see prayer as simultaneously being worship and intercession, confession and petition, praise and yearning for the coming of the kingdom of God, all at the same time.

Cambridge theologian, Graham Ward also illuminates:

The place of prayer is where the material and spiritual inform each other, the place where the universe cannot be separated from the particular, where the eternal economics of divine givenness operate within history – as providence, as grace. Prayer is the realisation of a place in Christ. Only in Christ is it prayer. And prayer is not a safe place, in the sense that it is not a stable place. Prayer requires surrender of control. This is not necessarily a surrender of reason as it is not a surrender of consciousness. It is a surrender, perhaps more precisely a releasing of the body, to the jurisdiction of the soul ... Prayer is where the laboring begins. This is the kitchen, the workplace for our (italics mine) cultural negotiation.

This deeper perspective of prayer requires us to know who God is, to delight in His presence and to seek His will as to how we are to navigate the prevailing culture around us. Prayer is thus about our being, our communion with

God and not necessarily of receiving visions, dreams or prophecy. Prayer is delighting in the presence of God. It is relational and reflective, a moment of allowing God to break us down so that we can be inwardly transformed for outward action.

Such a posture is best reflected in the life of the great social activist, Martin Luther King, Jr. In an essay entitled *Reversed Thunder: The Significance of Prayer for Political Theology*, Andrew Prevot points out how prayer significantly contributed to King's life as a public leader.

As the fervor driving the Montgomery bus boycott reached fever pitch, King received a telephone call at midnight from a racist who called him a "nigger" and threatened to kill him and "blow up" his home. Deeply disturbed and unable to sleep, King retreated to his kitchen for coffee, thinking that this could possibly provide some relief. Love for family and church, devotion to the struggle, and feelings of utter helplessness gripped him in that moment of deep restlessness, painful stillness, and desperate searching. ... King had a face-to-face encounter with what he, in the tradition of his forebears, called "a Waymaker," exposing his fears, insecurities, and vulnerabilities with sincerity and humility. Great comfort came as an "inner voice" spoke to King, reminding him that he was not alone, commanding him to "stand up" for righteousness, justice, and truth, and assuring him that "lo, I will be with you, even to the end of the world."

What King experienced was a spiritual transformation which restored his faith and reaffirmed in him that "the sovereign work of the Almighty was being manifested in both his own life and in the bus protest." When King turned to prayer, he received the strength and courage to go on fighting non-violently for justice and risking all which ultimately led to the loss of his own life. Such action and passion for justice and righteousness can only be accomplished when there is inner transformation, where the heart and soul are completely surrendered to the divine purposes of God.

Prayer as Means of Grace and Solidarity

Prayer is also the place where we meet the grace of our God. Latin American liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutiérrez, reminds us that it is in and through our prayers “that human agency is transcended and limited by the grace of God, which alone creates and redeems us in an absolute sense. Prayer is an encounter with this grace; it is the key practice through which we acknowledge that our freedom is infinitely surpassed by another”.

This does not mean that prayer dispenses with human agency. On the contrary, prayer quickens our spiritual fervour and grace enhances us as God’s agents of transformation. We become moved to stand in solidarity with victims of oppressions and suffering. It is when our prayers are directed to those trapped in these conditions and when we begin to feel what they feel, that our prayers become communion and transformational. Prayer is where we experience grace and yet remain in solidarity sustained by a deep sense of communion fellowship with the vanquished.

German Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz exhorts us to pray in this fashion. Metz posits the argument that our prayers will only be legitimate if they are voiced in remembrance of the millions of Jewish men, women, and children who were murdered in the Nazi death camps. According to Metz, such prayers of solidarity in memory of the victims should take the form of an “impassioned questioning of God” in the vein of Job, the Psalmists, and the prophets of Israel. Such kind of prayer is best reflected in the African American spirituals in voicing their unjust suffering and raising it up as a question and supplication to God, thereby inspiring patience, hope and perseverance.

When such forms of prayer are absent, Christians are likely to embrace a culture of utopianism or worse, descend into forgetfulness, resignation and indifference. Prayer is that which keeps the question of social justice alive and moves us to act towards those around us. Such realignment of priorities demands that we be “in the place of the other” to demonstrate practical help and service. Praying for transformation or revival cannot be confined to the “prophetic” or “worshipful spirit” in the absence of concrete expressions to deal with the horrors in our world.

Towards transformational prayer

The Christian tradition of spirituality and prayer is vast and diverse as this essay demonstrates. We thus have ample resources to draw on for our spiritual journey and prayer life. What remains in this Jubilee season is for Christians to discover or re-discover the richness of such resources and appropriate them into the spiritual life and vitality of church and God’s mission for the world.

We therefore strive and pursue after a prayer that is a means of grace and that transforms us to live exemplary lives amidst the devastation of sin and corruption. Let us strive for a spirituality that integrates supplication, intercession, thought and action into a single way of life for the coming of His kingdom and the glory of His great name!

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Tax deduction on tithes

EFFECTIVE 2013, cash offerings to the church can be tax deductible if churches apply for approval. The amount claimable is up to a maximum of 7% on taxable income in line with provisions in the Income Tax Act. This incentive was first announced last year under the 2012 national budget. The application guidelines were recently finalised after a year of negotiations between the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) and the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) with other religious groups.

The application will require each church to set up a separate account, called Tabung Pengurusan Rumah Ibadat or House of Worship Management Fund. The full guidelines by the IRB (dated 27/9/12) can be downloaded from the IRB website at this address: <http://www.hasil.org.my/goindex.php?kump=5&skum=5&posi=3&unit=7000&sequ=2>

Download the following documents:

1. GARIS PANDUAN PERMOHONAN UNTUK KELULUSAN DI BAWAH SUBSEKSYEN 44(6) AKTA CUKAI PENDAPATAN 1967 BAGI TABUNG PENGURUSAN RUMAH IBADAT
2. CONTOH PERATURAN TABUNG PENGURUSAN RUMAH IBADAT

Should your church wish to apply for this incentive, please follow the IRB guidelines. When the IRB approves an application, it will issue a number to each church. Churches can then issue official receipts bearing the number to members and donors.

Back to nature!

THE NECF office took a staff retreat to Johor Baru over three days in October, where we visited the Pulau Kukup National Park, the world's largest uninhabited mangrove island which is recognised as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance for its biodiversity and ecological function. On this trip, we were blessed to have the company and hospitality of NECF Vice Chairman II, Pastor Tay Wah Seng, who also heads the Johor Pastors' Fellowship. Pastor Tay led the team in a time of devotion and personal reflection. Recharged, we're ready to face 2013!



NECF sets off to conquer the Pulau Kukup mangrove island!

Trustees and church governance

By Mable Leong

AT some stage of church growth, most churches will grapple with land and property issues. Under Malaysian law, most churches are either registered as companies limited by guarantee or as societies, both of which have the legal right to acquire and own property and to hold and administer it in accordance with the law.

With many small and independent churches emerging, what of churches that are neither registered as a company nor society? Such a church may appoint a trustee or trustees who have the power to purchase, own and administer land and property on behalf of beneficiaries, in other words, the church congregation. A trust would fall under "bodies expressly empowered to hold land under any other written law" in Section 43 of the National Land Code 1965 on the groups of persons who are eligible to hold and deal in land.

A trust can be created by appointing one or more trustees by resolution of a general meeting and with a trust deed prepared by a competent legal practitioner. Trusts set up by churches tend to be unincorporated. Some churches prefer the company structure although a trust is generally simpler to administer and cheaper to establish and operate.

There are, however, scenarios where the trust can run into problems. Some of these can involve the death of the trustee with no clarity as to whom the church property goes to. The heir of the trustee may spark off a legal tussle by attempting to lay claim to the property. Or a trustee might have left the church but refuses to relinquish his position and transfer the property to the church or a new trustee. An unscrupulous trustee may take advantage of the trust and abuse it for his own benefit. If the trustee does not act in good faith, we can expect a hard time for the church.

In an interview with Berita NECF, Transparency International Malaysia President Datuk Paul Low, who is also an elder of a local church, stresses that it is critical for churches to have safeguards because of the extensive powers that trustees hold. Legally, a trustee has no obligation to consult either the settlor or the beneficiaries and has wide powers under the Trustee Act 1949. While church members can sue for breach of trust, the process can be lengthy and will involve many complications besides marring the good name of the body of Christ.

Most important is a Trust Deed that clearly and precisely defines the duties and powers of the trustee, with restrictions and checks to minimise any abuse. Some of these safeguards can be, for example, obtaining the unanimous decision of all trustees. It is also wise for churches to appoint more than one trustee and to ensure that there is no conflict of interest especially if the trustees hold other positions in the church management. Another option is to utilise the services of a trust corporation.

The church has to ensure that its appointed trustees are trustworthy as well as God-fearing, and be capable of managing property on behalf of the congregation. They are responsible to see that the church is administered in line with its stated purposes and within legal requirements. Trustees are accountable to the church and to the public generally. The work of the trustee should thus be seen as spiritual work so that the church will be blameless before men. As the body of Christ, the church's stewardship must be on par, if not better than secular organisations.

Resources:

Ng Kam Weng. (2004). *Doing the Right Thing: A Practical Guide on Legal Matters for Churches in Malaysia*. Petaling Jaya: Kairos Research Centre Sdn Bhd.

Building Up Daughters of Destiny

By Michealle Low and Sally Dharminder

Be steadfast, ye daughters of destiny! This was the theme of 2012 Single Women Ministers' retreat organised by the NECF Women's Commission in June. A group of women pastors, missionaries, full-time ministers in churches and Christian NGOs attended the two-day camp at the Bayu Beach Resort in Port Dickson which was sponsored by a gracious donor and a few churches. God bless you, you know who you are!

The sessions were personal and powerful as they related to real issues single full-time women ministers faced. Pastor Nesam Ebenezer spoke on "God Wants You Whole" in which she used the word "Love" to explore Loyalty to God, Obedience to God's, Vision for God's work, and Expectations from God. Yeo Pei Li, a qualified psychologist spoke on the inner life of a single woman minister. She got the group to reflect on life in service of God and how women

ministers reacted to challenges to their ministry. Yeo also led the group in self-discovery activities and in individual needs profile assessments for participants to understand themselves better.

There was a light-hearted session on fashion tips and a team-building activity where a mini-fashion show was held, with each group selecting a "model" and dressing her up by mixing and matching the accessories provided.

A prayer and sharing session ended the two-day retreat, with NECF Women's Commission Chairperson Grace Hee dabbing oil on each participant's forehead as a symbol of God's anointing.

The commission continued its empowerment of women through a leadership seminar on 20 Oct titled *Be The Best*



That You Can Be. The seminar was targeted at young women leaders as part of the Commission's forward-looking strategy to invest in this age group in keeping with NECF's nation-building agenda. Twenty-three women from various Klang Valley churches attended the day-long seminar.

The keynote speaker was Juwita Suwito, Malaysia's well-known Christian artist. She shared personal stories from her life, like how God helped her overcome her fear of failure. She motivated participants to bring their "seed" dreams before God so that they can recognise His Hand in charting their course of life. After Juwita's session, participants spent some time writing personal a "love letter" to God in which they expressed their dreams and interests. This exercise helped them define their hopes and expectations of how the seminar could become a stepping-stone in their journey of serving God.

Commission chairperson Hee then led a session on six keys to successful leadership which was followed by a workshop activity on areas of leadership that the women needed to improve on. There was time for personal reflection, charting out personal action plans and a question and answer forum fielded by the six commission members. The forum was a time of exhortation through Scripture and personal experience that greatly encouraged the women.

What is clear from these events is that there is a spiritual hunger among Christian women for more of such sessions. The Women's Commission continues to pray for effective continuity of leadership development programmes for the women of the next generation.



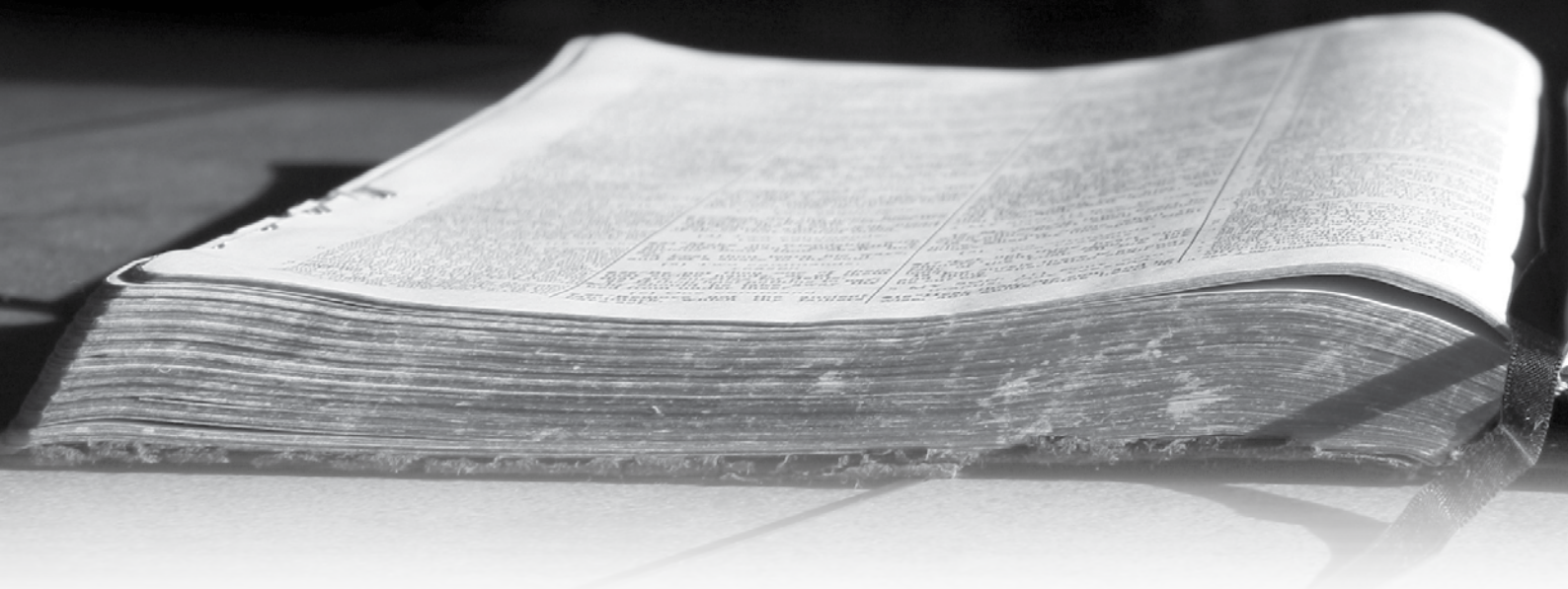
The 'fashion models'.



A group activity.



Lost in Translation By CKL



HAVE you ever tried to explain how sin prevents us from having a relationship with God to someone from a Chinese-educated, Taoist or Buddhist background? For them, sin is not that big a deal. But shame and honour are. Yes, Christ did take away our shame and restored our honour, but how do you explain this without addressing sin?

Likewise, saying “Jesus is the Son of God” in an English-speaking church context sounds perfectly normal. But in a different culture, this statement can cause confusion and indignation. It can cause great offence especially among those who believe that God cannot literally have children.

This is why we need a contextualised Bible, one that is culturally and linguistically appropriate, yet faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture. The first time I heard of such a bible was in 2005, when I stepped into the ministry field.

But before that, in preparation to join the field, I had learned all the ways in which to share the Good News: The Four Spiritual Laws, the Jesus Experience and several others. I thought I was prepared, until I arrived in the Central Asian country where I was to serve on a one-year short term trip.

When I got there, I discovered the mindset and culture were so different that what I had learned had almost no impact beyond a small number of university students who wanted to improve their English. In the rural areas (where the majority of people lived), I might as well have been talking quantum physics as far as they were concerned! How do you share about Christ in a culture where the word “Christian” comes across negatively as a colonial or imperialist religion?

I have learned since then, that we sometimes make the mistake of sharing Christianity – the do’s and don’ts that we seem to think makes us Christians – and not Christ. When I came back to Malaysia after that year in Central Asia, I prayed: God, show me how to share Christ without sharing Christianity.

When I joined the ministry field full-time in 2005, I first heard of the (then) on-going project to translate the Bible into a culturally more contextualised and appropriate version. This translation has been completed and is in use in some countries today, amidst a lot of controversy in Christian circles¹. One of the hot issues then still remains a hot issue now: the Son-ship and divinity of Jesus.

The struggles of translators then are the same struggles field workers are facing now: do we lead people to Jesus using a “watered-down”, culturally inoffensive version of the Bible, and then do a bait-and-switch once they come to faith? Do we find other words, in their local language, to say that Jesus “represents” God to avoid using the word “Son”, or that God is “Master” to replace “Abba Father” which Jesus used to address God – so that we don’t offend our listeners?

What happens then, if listeners come to salvation based on this watered-down version of Scripture?

Here’s the crux of the issue. Those responsible for the watered-down translations say they did so because “the translations have never been about avoiding controversy, but choosing words that most accurately reflect the Gospels: Some concepts relating God to family members don’t make sense in some cultures”.

But, that is how God has revealed Himself to us, in the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we obscure this, how are new believers going to learn about the Triune Godhead? How will they learn about Jesus’ fully divine nature? This is not merely a doctrinal or theological issue, but one that goes to the very heart of our faith: Who is this God that we worship and have given our lives to?

Where I am now, the sharing of the Good News is being done the hard way. We don’t obscure the human-divine identity of Jesus. We don’t avoid the Fatherhood of



God. Does our message get rejected? Yes, very much so! Some of our local workers have been spat upon. Some have been chased out of villages. Others (not from the organisation I'm working with) have been arrested. Should we be surprised? No. Weren't the very person and claims of Jesus so offensive to the Pharisees that they wanted to stone him (John 8: 48-59)?

While we don't bombard people with theology, we tell them stories from the Bible. We tell them what Jesus says about God the Father and about himself. And we leave the hearers to reflect on the message. It is a slower method, for sure. Sometimes we have to repeat the stories again and again until the hearers catch the core teaching and meaning. But we are slowly seeing results. I was present when I heard a man, a simple fisherman, much like Peter, say: "If Jesus is not God, then we are wasting our time!"

Until the day comes when there is contextualised Bible that is faithful and accurate, we will keep on telling stories, one at a time, until the truth is revealed to those who have ears to hear (Matthew 13: 9).

Do pray that the Holy Spirit will move the hearts of believers to fund such a project, and others to give their time and energy to make this happen.

Note: CKL is serving in Southeast Asia

¹ Some Western Bible translation agencies have produced translations of the Bible that are deemed less offensive for certain cultures by substituting the Father, Son and Son of God with other words or descriptions. This has resulted in a divisive controversy among Christians and missionaries from the West, with major denominations threatening to pull funding from certain translation agencies. The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is in the midst of conducting a review of such translation practices. To read more about this issue, visit www.biblicalmissiology.org.

2013 Calendar

March

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| TBC | Tamil Prayer Conference |
| 1-2 | BM Commission Summit Pemimpin Jaringan Doa (Kuala Lumpur) |
| 22-23 | Eagles Leadership Conference: Leading Others (First Assembly of God, KL) |
| 2-27 | BM Commission Konferensi Dream Malaysia (Kuching and Kapit) |

April

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| 27 | BM Commission Konferensi Dream Malaysia (Penang) |
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May

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| 9-11 | GDOP 2013 Prayer Conference |
| 19 | Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) |
| 24-25 | Membangun Jemaat Orang Asli Ke Arah Pelayanan |
| 25-27 | Tamil Pastors' Family Conference (Kampar) |
| 30-31 | BM Commission Konferensi Dream Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) |
| 30-1(Jun) | Chinese Prayer Conference (Kuantan) |

July

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| 26-28 | BM Commission Mentor Generasi Muda |
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August

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| 7 | Start of 40-Day Fast & Prayer |
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September

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| 13-16 | Kem Yobel Orang Asli |
| 16 | Malaysia Day 50th Anniversary Celebration |
| 24-26 | BM Commission Konferensi Membapakan (Penang) |



Looking Out Looking Up

PHILIPPINES The Philippine government has reached a peace deal with the largest Muslim terror group, ending 40 years of conflict. The government conceded another autonomous region in Mindanao to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Most Filipinos are Catholics but Muslims are the majority in the Mindanao region. The MILF has long agitated for an independent state, but the agreement to give Bangsamoro leaders more political and economic freedom appears to have pacified them. What is not clear is how this will affect Christians in the Mindanao region. Christians have long been the victims of violence and land-grabs. Meanwhile, the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches has a Peace and Reconciliation Commission that is calling on Christians to extend love and help towards the Bangsamoro people.



PRAY for the protection of Christians in the region, that God will strengthen them in his power. Pray that the roots of injustice and conflict will be addressed holistically and effectively by the Philippine government and MILF leaders. Pray for Christians to be peacemakers. – VOM, PCEC

IRAN Alireza Seyyedian, 37, became a Christian in 2006. Last year, authorities found a video of his baptism in Turkey on his laptop, which they seized in a raid. In December 2011, he was charged with crimes against national security and propaganda against the regime. The judge cited his baptism in Turkey as evidence that Alireza was trying to express dissatisfaction with the regime. He was also accused of hosting a house church and distributing Bibles to youths. In March

2012, Alireza was caught fleeing to Turkey, and was brought back to Iran to Evin prison. He is being held in the section for political prisoners.



PRAY for Alireza. Ask God to strengthen his faith and give him endurance. Remember other believers who are in prison for their faith. – VOM

PAKISTAN A twist in the court case of a Rimsha Masih, 14, a mentally challenged girl accused of blasphemy may now see her walk free. Her accuser instead has been charged with the same accusation of blasphemy by desecrating the Quran to tamper with evidence against Rimsha. The case against Rimsha has now collapsed but the date for her release has been delayed since early September. Rimsha was earlier allegedly beaten by a mob, arrested and put in solitary confinement. Her case has started a debate on how Pakistan's blasphemy laws are used to settle personal scores. It also highlights a finding that those who tend to be accused of blasphemy – Christians – are also the poorest and least educated. A holistic solution to resolve persecution of Christians here will thus involve education and alleviating poverty.



PRAY for Rimsha's swift release from prison. Pray that her accuser and others who abuse blasphemy laws out of revenge and selfish motives will be brought to justice. Pray that the Pakistani Church, Christian NGOs and the government can work together on comprehensive solutions to Christians' poverty and lack of education. – CD

MIDDLE EAST and AFRICA September saw a few weeks of violence as people in these regions reacted angrily to the video "Innocence of Muslims" which has been condemned by Christians including the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). NECF Malaysia has supported the WEA in denouncing the video as insulting and defamatory of Islam, and also in condemning the retaliatory attacks against the US embassy in Libya. The Libya incident was followed

by other acts of violence although it is hard to say whether they were in direct response to the video or part of the on-going persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Africa. Days after the attack on the US embassy in Libya, gunmen shot six Christians playing cards in Nigeria. Also in Nigeria, groups of men vandalised and burnt a Christian community centre and churches after Friday prayers. In Pakistan, a mob torched a church and in Algeria, a church received threats and in Iraq, Christians working in the civil service received written threats.



PRAY for God's peace, healing and restoration to wash over these troubled nations, and for a sense of maturity and responsibility in each person. Pray for the protection of Christians throughout the region. Pray that all will learn forgiveness, be delivered from the spirit of violence and offence, and eyes be opened to deceptions and delusions. – CD, WEA

NEPAL Pray for the people group, the Helambu Sherpa of Nepal. Their livelihoods depend on farming and they live mainly in the lush foothills of the Himalaya mountains. The tourism industry has brought in Western culture and influenced many Sherpa who work as tourist guides. These gentle people are staunchly Buddhist and each home typically has a decorated corner or altar. Many high places for worship can be seen across their landscape where the Sherpa hang prayer flags in the hope that their prayers will be heard and answered. Though exposed to other cultures and modernity through tourism, it remains difficult for Sherpa to accept another religion for fear of losing family, friends and status.



PRAY for the handful of Christian Helambu Sherpa that they will be faithful in living as children of light. Pray for opportunities through tourism for the Sherpa to learn about the Good Shepherd. – WEA