

BERITA NECF

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF MALAYSIA

http://www.necf.org.my/html/berita_f.htm

PP5872/13/2001

JULY/AUGUST 2001

MALAYSIAN CHURCH HOSTS LARGEST WEF ASSEMBLY

Prime Minister and ambassadors attend opening banquet

About 600 evangelical Christian leaders from 84 nations across the world gathered in Kuala Lumpur in what was the largest general assembly—both in number of delegates and nations represented—ever held by the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). Prime Minister Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officially opened the 11th assembly in a banquet that provided foreign delegates a taste of Malaysia's varied cultures presented through a series of colourful and spectacular dance presentations.

Much was achieved during the week-long assembly which proved to be an exhausting series of meetings for the delegates. Among the highlights were the passing of two crucial resolutions (an unprecedented move in all WEF's 50 years of existence); and the change of the name "World Evangelical Fellowship" to "World Evangelical Alliance" with effect from January 1, 2002. At the assembly, WEF honoured 72-year-old Norwegian Ingulf Diesen for his contribution to the evangelical movement.

The assembly also saw several "firsts"—the first time a general assembly was graced by the host country's Prime Minister; the first time a general assembly was broadcast live on radio; and the first time a Malaysian was elected into the WEF International Council.

Delegates bade farewell to Rev. Dr Jun Vencer who stepped down as International Director after nine years of service. A dinner was thrown in honour of Dr Vencer where many delegates paid tribute for his dedication and achievements.

The issues discussed during the assembly included domestic abuse, youth, globalisation and ecclesiology—the nature of the Church.

The assembly drew together a range of speakers including: Dr Miroslav Volf, a professor of theology at Yale Divinity School; Rev Joel Edwards, general director of the Evangelical Alliance (UK); Rev Bertil Ekström, regional director for InterAct in Latin America; Stuart McAllister, former general secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance; and Isaac Zokoue, head of Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (Central Africa Republic).

In conjunction with the general assembly, night meetings for the public were held throughout the assembly. Here, the participants were forcefully challenged by speakers including George Verwer, founder and director of Operation Mobilisation;



WEF Chairman David Detert presenting a memento to Dr Mahathir for opening the general assembly. Looking on is NECF Malaysia Chairman Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam.

Dr Clive Calver, president of World Relief (USA); and Dr John Haggai, founder of the Haggai Institute. They were also thrilled by cultural dances presented each night by dancers from the Christian Dance Fellowship of Malaysia.

The general assembly officially closed on the last night meeting in a joyful mood. Singers and dancers decked in vibrant, resplendent costumes led the crowd in jubilant celebration filled with hope for the years ahead. The crowd, which included the delegates, also celebrated the Holy Communion, using the unique communion cups specially flown in from the USA. Called the "Celebration Cup", each cup had a thin wafer and grape juice.

In thanking NECF Malaysia for hosting the general assembly, WEF Chairman David Detert said, "The World Evangelical Fellowship is pleased at the arrangement, hospitality and warmth of NECF Malaysia. We are very impressed with what the NECF Malaysia has been able to do in Malaysia."

He added, "This is an encouragement to the smaller WEF fellowships in countries where Christians are a small minority."

WEF is the umbrella body representing 114 national evangelical alliances, which themselves represent some 160 million Christians worldwide. The WEF general assembly takes place once every four years. ■

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King's Award for NECF Malaysia S-G

NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong was bestowed the High Award (*Darjah Kebesaran*) which carries the title *Johan Mangku Negara* (J.M.N.) in conjunction with the 75th birthday of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah on June 2.

Rev. Wong said he received the award on behalf of the evangelical community in Malaysia for its contribution to nation-building.

"This award is really a tribute to the Christians in Malaysia, particularly the evangelicals, for their effort towards nation-building. I give thanks to God for the privilege to receive the award on behalf of the Christian community," Rev. Wong said.

He added he was motivated to work harder for the enlargement of the Kingdom and the transformation of the nation. Rev. Wong also thanked the many people who have partnered him in serving the Kingdom. He urged Christian leaders to continue to work together, focussing on building God's Kingdom rather than individual churches.

First Malaysian Elected to WEF International Council

Earlier on during the WEF 11th General Assembly, Rev. Wong became the first Malaysian to be elected a member of the WEF International Council, which is the decision making body of WEF.

With his election, the Malaysian evangelical community has come of age and is now recognised as a leader in the worldwide evangelical community, he commented. He added: "Malaysian evangelicals now have the opportunity to directly participate in worldwide policy-making decisions concerning the religious practice of our Christian faith."

On a personal level, Rev. Wong described the election as a recognition of his contribution towards the Body of Christ.

"It will be a challenge for me in terms of providing input to the restructuring of the WEF leadership team and helping the team to strategise the new direction for WEF to take at this critical time of WEF's history," he said.

He also expressed excitement that NECF Malaysia now has greater opportunity to share its views and experience in nation-building with fellow members in WEF.

(NECF Malaysia is considered one of the most viable and visible national fellowships in WEF, according to recently-retired WEF International Director Jun Vencer.)

"On the other hand, we look forward to learning from the other fellowships to enhance NECF Malaysia's ministry," Rev. Wong added.

The other members in the Council, which will serve for four years, are: Sam Emery (South Pacific), David Detert (North America), Godfrey Yogarajah (Asia), Rudolph Westerheide and Derek Copley (Europe), John Smith (Caribbean), and Sam Olsen and Key Yuasa (Latin America). In addition, two members-at-large were elected: Eva Sanderson from Zambia and Margaret Jacobs from Australia. The Africa Evangelical Alliance will nominate its two representatives in December.



Rev. Wong being conferred and congratulated by the King.

WEF Appoints Interim Leadership

Search goes on for a new International Director

A new six-member Interim Operating Team (IOT) has been appointed to manage World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) until a new International Director is found to replace Dr Jun Vencer, who retired after nine years of service.

The team consists of David Detert (France), Joel Edwards (UK), Dwight Gibson (USA), Eva Sanderson (Zambia), Gerald Seale (Barbados) and Bill Taylor (USA).

With the resignation of Dr Vencer, WEF has decided to close its offices in Singapore and Manila until "we see clearly what and where God leads us," according to WEF Chairman David Detert. The WEF Secretariat Office in Chicago continues to

operate under the direction of the IOT.

"We see this not as a time of weakness or danger, but rather God's provision of a period of rest and reconsideration before moving to a new direction. Please pray for the personnel and ministries of WEF during this transition," Detert said.

Meanwhile, WEF has appointed USA-based InterDev to steer the strategic planning process on the future of WEF. InterDev is a Christian organisation engaged in fostering partnerships and developing strategy for Kingdom advancement in unreached countries and among Christian groups.

Gary Edmonds, a member of InterDev, said, "There was a question of WEF's future

after this general assembly. But a survey of delegates has revealed huge goodwill towards WEF. Many of them have a strong desire to be connected to a global body and not operate as individual unconnected groups. There is a passion to move forward as a worldwide evangelical body that also has national and local expressions."

Fifty years have passed since WEF was launched. Where is God leading WEF? "Perhaps this is God's Year of Jubilee for WEF, where we pause, refresh and celebrate what God has given to His church on earth this past half century. Let us pray, listen and hear what God plans for WEF at this point in the history and advancement of His Kingdom," urged Detert. ■

WEF To Change Name

World

Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) will change its name to World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) from 1st January 2002 to reflect evangelicals' growing desire to be more pro-active, inclusive and engaged with the world around them.

A greater commitment by evangelicals to look less at themselves and more at society for the betterment of the community was the highlight of this year's general assembly, WEF outgoing International Director Dr Jun Vencer told a press conference on the final day of the WEF 11th General Assembly.

Dr Vencer cited WEF's engagement in issues such as refugees, Third World debt and domestic abuse as evidence of this social concern.

The word "Alliance" better represents the true nature of how the world's largest evangelical cooperative actually works drawing together churches and para-church organisations to pool resources and expertise, and engage in evangelism and social action, he said.

Also, as evangelicalism continues to

spread to more countries around the world, it was found that the word "Fellowship" does not translate into every language, causing some countries to have to adopt alternative descriptions such as "Confederation" or "Union". ■

Next WEF General Assembly

The next general assembly is scheduled to take place during the first two weeks of May 2005. No location has been decided, though only countries that will not exclude anybody from coming would be considered. All national fellowships have been invited to submit their proposals to WEF in writing in an Olympics-style bidding process. ■

OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO...

- All churches and individuals for your love gifts;
- Volunteers who served alongside us during the general assembly;
- Drivers who worked round-the-clock ferrying delegates to and from the KLIA airport;
- Dancers, singers and musicians who participated at the general assembly and night meetings; and
- All others who helped in one way or another.

Without your contribution and services, we would not have successfully hosted the WEF 11th General Assembly. Your partnership has enabled God to accomplish His purposes at the general assembly. It has also been a model of unity, which greatly impressed the foreign delegates.

We are indeed humbled and encouraged by your willingness and eagerness to serve our Lord. Thank you and may our Lord bless you bountifully with all spiritual blessings. ■

Glimpses of the WEF 11th General Assembly

Opening Banquet



Waiting for the Prime Minister's arrival...youths from the Boys' Brigade with flags of the participating countries waiting for the Prime Minister's arrival.



WEF International Director Jun Vencer introducing Dr Mahathir to WEF Chairman David Detert while Tan Sri Datuk Francis Yeoh, YTL Corporation Bhd Managing Director, looks on.



The newly-formed Orkes Praise Malaysia (a Christian orchestra) giving its maiden performance at the banquet.

The vibrant colours of Malaysia...dancers from Christian Dance Fellowship Malaysia after the banquet.



"Welcome to Malaysia"...a local delegate greeting his foreign counterparts.

Closing Ceremony



Jun Vencer being prayed for as he officially stepped down as WEF International Director. On his right are wife Anna and their two children.

Ushers lining up to collect the special communion cups for distribution.



Newly elected members of the WEF International Council reading their pledge at the installation.

Dancers being showered with confetti at the end of their high-energy dance which depict the vigour and vitality of WEF's ministry.



At the conference

Throughout the conference, different people took turns to pray at the hotel.



We're brothers...Mongolian and African delegates pose for a photo.

Different races and cultures, worshipping the same God...delegates joining voices in song at the start of a meeting.



A section of the crowd at one of the night meetings.

An ice sculpture of the number '11' sandwiched between two eagles, placed strategically at the entrance to the conference room. It signifies the 11th general assembly of WEF.



*Say cheezz...
WEF 11th
General
Assembly
family photo.*



Gems from the Speakers

Here are some memorable quotes from the speakers of the WEF 11th General Assembly.

Rev. Joel Edwards

"Leadership"

"As Peter Kusmic, theologian and former President of the Croatian Evangelical Alliance, once put it: "Charisma without character leads to catastrophe." Good quality or character is more than being a nice person. It shows up in personal disciplines... Someone once said, "You can delegate everything in leadership apart from your personal devotion."

The Great Commission has always been global. Leadership which fails to see the "big picture" of God's activity in the world will hardly understand what Wesley meant by the world being his parish and will certainly fail to make any real sense of their own work. For what we do as leaders ultimately only makes sense against the context of what God is doing everywhere else."



Dr Haggai

Dr John Edmund Haggai

"The Unstressed Elements of Christian Leadership"

"Love is the only leadership that holds out any hope. You have a wide-open opportunity to help set the course of this changing world in the right direction if you can lead with love.

To the Christian mind, poverty comes from hanging onto things. Those who understand the principle of investment have an abundance mentality. The effective leader devotes his life to bringing his group into the joy of giving. He leads by his own example."

Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam

"The Church—Pentecost"

"We are to live our Christian life, in season and out of season, whether we like it or not...consistently."

Our priority...the passion to reach the lost for Jesus Christ. Our witness...to glorify Jesus, to be the salt and light of the earth."

Cathy Ross

"The Cross & Resurrection"

"I believe Jesus calls us to make him recognisable as Son of God in his weakness and his suffering—not to hide Him behind the respectability of the establishment, behind the big, expensive, exquisitely managed programmes, behind the hierarchy and the bureaucracy—but to allow His glory to be seen and recognised in weakness, servanthood and humility."

Who are the insignificant and marginalised in our worlds? Do we have the courage and the humility to listen and learn from them? Might it be our children? Our ill neighbour? Our friend dying of AIDS?

Who has eyes to see in our world? To which voices does WEF listen? To the big names, to the powerful and successful, to the religious elite? What might be some other voices we in WEF could listen to who might give us the perspective of the poor, the marginalised, the insignificant in our world?"

Rev. Dr Jun Vencer

"Exiles in Your Land"

"There is a need to embrace the social and political reality of your own situation and time. One may just be a migrant in a city or a refugee but where God has placed you, embrace that reality. Look at the land that God has placed you at that time, enjoy and acknowledge the opportunity God has given you to help transform the land. As exiles, one must also engage reality in its totality. Become productive and enjoy the blessings of what you have planted.

God expects us to bless the nations of the world by sharing those resources as well. Additionally, increase, not decrease and grow in numbers. God wants us to grow

regardless of the situation we find ourselves (in)."

Elizabeth Kendall

"Commitment to Service"

"...a servant of Christ must be willing to die to self. He must be emptied of all personal ambition, even of his own great ideas and be prepared to come to God empty—seeking to be filled, submissive—seeking to be led, and humble—seeking merely to be used. So, I believe the challenge for Christian leaders today must therefore be to exalt and glorify Jesus Christ so that Christians have no doubts in their minds that He who sacrificed Himself for them is worthy of their living sacrifice."



Elizabeth Kendall

Rev. Bertil Ekstrom

"The Kingdom of God"

"The Church is not merely an instrument but an agent of transformation of the Kingdom, having the responsibility to make the Kingdom visible. People looking at the Church must see the Kingdom in action and the Church... How can we expect to be respected, trusted and believed if we do not present a message, based on the Bible, that has to do with the needs of the Bible?"

We have, in these last years, focussed very much the ecclesiology in our local communities and in our denominations and organisations. We need to see the bigger picture, the Kingdom of God. Only when we realise that we belong to the same kingdom will we have conditions for real partnership and collaboration."



Stuart McAllister
"Perspective on Globalisation"

"As evangelicals, we need to look at the process (of globalisation) through the eyes of Scripture and faith, with particular concerns for idolatry, injustice and exclusion and the massive effects of de-personalisation as it affects individuals and communities.

The Church is already strategically placed and dispersed. The local Church progressively networked, linked and resourced can be a major factor in strategies of hope... At all levels, we can be salt and light, so the "one size fits all" approach must give way to multiple approaches and diversity."

Dr Mirsoslav Volf
"The Nature of the Church"

"Jesus did not come proclaiming the church; Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God... The church is what came about after the proclamation of the kingdom had failed. Is the church therefore simply the result of the failure of a grander plan? Certainly not. Why did Jesus call the 12 apostles?... The people of God is inseparable from the kingdom of God.

The Church, it is said, is like the moon. The moon has no light of its own. All the light by which it makes our nights so beautiful is reflected light, light borrowed from the sun.

The Church has no power of its own and no goals of its own. Like the moon, all the light that the Church possesses is the light of Christ shining by the power of the Spirit. And of all the things that the Church may have—beautiful buildings, successful programmes, political power, or economic wealth—none of them ultimately matters and all may even be detrimental. The only thing that truly matters is that the Church be reflection of Christ's own light in that it continues his mission anointed by the Spirit."



Dr Ian Provan
"Wholistic Ministry—Creation"

"We all know, or we think that we do, what it is that we are redeemed from; but what are we redeemed for?

We are redeemed from sin: from the darkness that has entered into this world of right relationships and has produced such catastrophic disruption, as human beings have sought to *be* God rather than to be the *image* of God, and in turning away from God have brought disaster on themselves, their neighbours and their environment. We are redeemed from sin.

Redemption is...the restoration of the divine image in human beings, and the intrinsically connected reconstitution of the right relationships that we were created to have with God, neighbour and creation. That is what we are redeemed for. It is a redemption in respect of God's creation purposes for us, which are closely connected with God's purposes for us also in the new creation in which we are caught up in Christ."

George Verwer
"A Call for Balance, Grace, Reality, Integrity and Action"

"...God wants to give you greater vision during these days. You already are people of vision but He wants to increase your vision. He wants to maybe add some countries to your prayer list that are not there yet.

It is the burden that the whole body of Christ throughout the world respond to the challenge of the HIV and Aids epidemic."

Dr Isaac Zokoue
"Babel and Tribalism"

The story of the tower of Babel presents God as a God of all languages, all cultures,

all skin colours—the God of diversity. Creation is a mosaic of colours and beauty and shows what God alone can do... What we now deplore tribalism, ethnocentrism, racism is a perversion by man of what in the beginning was a good thing by God.

Our tower of Babel today is then called globalisation and what the people intended to do in the plain of Shinar was the first form of globalisation. They wanted one nation with one language, willing to build one city, one tower in order to make one name for themselves."

Dr Clive Calver
"Wholistic Ministry"

"Jesus was always willing to the poor...He's always been God of the poor. That's why the hallmark of His people at the end of the day should not just be right theology but right living.

An evangelicalism that doesn't touch the poor is not evangelicalism in its purest form at all. It never has been and never can be."

Dr Calver



PM's Exclusive Interview With Christian Radio

Prime Minister Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave an exclusive interview to John Pantry of London's Premier Christian Radio after opening the WEF 11th General Assembly. In the interview, he expressed fears of the risks posed to Malaysia by large multi-nationals.

Your Excellency, after a number of recent events, the debate is underway in Britain as to how the government should best manage a multi-cultural, multi-faith and now, with immigration on the increase, a multi-racial society. I am bound to ask you what your government has learnt in this area that may help?

We have had a long experience of living in a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious community so we find it fairly easy to reach an understanding. After the racial riots in 1969, we found that there really was no benefit in trying to grab everything for ourselves. It is far better, as we say, to grow the cake and share the bigger cake among ourselves. That helps us to accommodate each other.

Malaysia is clearly a resourceful nation whose rapid financial progress has been

affected by events outside its control, as have many Eastern nations. But today, Kuala Lumpur looks as prosperous as ever with new buildings under construction across the city. Is the country now firmly back on its feet?

I think so, I think we did very well last year but this year we should do well too, excepting the downturn in the US economy affects us because the US has big trade with us. But still, I think we are better off than most countries affected by the currency crisis.

Are multi-national companies and billion dollar-investors beginning to pose a threat to democratic and sovereign states?

We have always welcomed the multi-national companies which have invested in this country, created jobs for our people and generally contributed to its growth and prosperity. But now we are seeing a new breed of multi-nationals which are so huge because of mergers and merging again. If they come in and are allowed to operate without any regulation they are likely to make our own companies go out of business. And in the end, they will all be absorbed by these huge corporations, which

would be even bigger than the government. This is not something we would like to see.

Finally, as financial success in Malaysia finally eliminates poverty, what other problems will become your priority?

We have an ambition to become a developed nation. So even though we expect to eliminate poverty, we will raise the poverty line and try to keep our people's income improving all the time so that our poverty line will match those in the developed countries. We will have to work very hard towards (Vision) 2020 and the people generally accept this as they see they are contributing to their own development. ■



WEF Endorses Campaign To Cancel Debt

Some 160 million Christians from 114 countries have added their full backing to the church-based, grassroots campaign to cancel Third World debt, ahead of the next G7 summit to be held in Genoa, Italy, in July.

Delegates at the WEF 11th General Assembly passed a resolution calling on governments and financial institutions of both North and South to "act decisively, transparently and with integrity to combat corruption and fulfil the Jubilee 2000 vision by taking the necessary steps to break the chains of debt and give a new start to the world's poorest nations."

The resolution called the international community to commit itself to achieving "growing justice in world trade in the light of globalisation; this must recognise the role of trade, particularly in

arms, that fuels conflict and causes widespread poverty and suffering."

Stephen Rand, Prayer and Campaigns Director of the UK-based relief and development agency Tearfund, said: "Despite the partial

success of the Jubilee 2000, we still have a situation where more money is flowing out of poor countries in debt repayments than is given in aid.

"There are countries spending more on repaying debt than on health and education. Debt still means that children of the poor are dying of preventable disease."

According to Rand, the Jubilee 2000 campaign began with the vision of an individual Christian. It grew into the largest-ever-global protest with 24.3 million petition signatures from 160 countries.

"Adopting this resolution in our Jubilee year sends a signal around the world that evangelical Christians want to speak for justice in the face of the negative impact of global finance and global structures," he said. ■

ISSUE 57 Women to Women



The 11th WEF General Assembly held in Kuala Lumpur, 4 -10 May 2001, gave us the opportunity to meet with women from the Women's Commissions in different parts of the world.

Women to Women spoke to some of these women. As we listened to them, it becomes clear to us that our hearts beat for the same concern - that the women in our nations come to know the Saviour who alone can give lasting peace, joy and hope. The call is also out to network, to learn from and encourage each other that we may serve the Lord more effectively.

Women in Missions

Cathy Ross, New Zealand

What started you off in your interest in missions?

I have always been fascinated by and interested in other cultures and languages. I have always had a concern for the poor and for justice issues. My husband went to medical school in order to be a missionary doctor, so that is how we ended up in Zaire in medical and educational roles.

Would it be accurate to say that women outnumber men in interest and participation in missions? Why is this so?

Yes. Roughly 2/3 of the world's mission force is women. Historically, some women went into missions, as they were not able to exercise their gifts at home! Perhaps women are naturally more relational and are therefore keen to share their relationship with Jesus Christ with others. Perhaps women are more naturally compassionate and less interested in climbing the career ladder so they find it easier to move and go into missions.

What special contributions do women bring to missions?

- A relational approach—perhaps a fundamental understanding and appreciation that missions is relationships. - both vertical (with Jesus) and horizontal (with our neighbour).
- An ability to juggle different roles and responsibilities
- A servant heart; empathy with those who



suffer

- An ability to listen

What are the challenges facing Christian women in the 21st century?

- Issues such as the role of women in leadership
- Justice issues which pertain particularly to women - sexual exploitation of women and children, circumcision, violence against women, health issues as they relate to women—AIDS, childbirth, exclusion of women and girls, juggling of family and work
- Reading and interpreting the Bible so women can exercise their God-given gifts

You are a wife, mother and lecturer in a Bible College. How do you do it?

I have a very supportive husband! We have always shared childcare and domestic responsibilities. We try to support each other in our respective roles and callings so that we can exercise our gifts to the glory of God. We also guard our family life, as we believe God has entrusted us with children and called us to be parents.

You are currently working on a postgraduate thesis on "More than Wives." Tell us something about this.

I am researching four Christian Missionary Services missionary wives to NZ in the nineteenth century. I am looking at their roles and self-understanding. For example, the first missionary families that were sent out by CMS only had the husband's name recorded in the "CMS Register." And yet the wives were equally involved, running the mission stations while their husbands were away, teaching the women and girls especially while also assuming the major part of the domestic responsibilities. I would like to tell the stories of these women so we can begin to discover the hidden history of women in missions.

Cathy Ross is Director of School of Global Mission, Bible College of New Zealand.

Women Reaching Women

Dr Olly Mesach, Indonesia

Tell us something about the Women's Commission in Indonesia. How is it serving the women?

By leadership training - in the setting up of crisis centres for abused women and girls and launching vocational training. We provide pastoral counselling and other practical lessons for ministry: homiletics, Bible studies, etc. Other services include day-care for children and providing of scholarships for schoolchildren.

What is the level of women's participation in the churches?

Generally, at all levels, till membership at the Central Board of the Synod. Women have been ordained as pastors.

What are the challenges facing Christian women in Indonesia?

Issues like abuse against women, especially violence, the uplifting of poverty. The discipling of women converts is another important area. There is a great harvest at this moment and the unity of Christian women is essential. In some churches, there is still a reluctance to accept women in leadership.

What are some ways we could network and work together to build and encourage women?

In three ways:

- I) exchange information
- II) conduct comparative studies
- III) visit each other

Dr Olly Mesach was the chairperson of Bethel Women (a Women's Commission of Gereja Bethel), Indonesia from 1985 to 1999. She is now the Advisor of Bethel Women. Her ministries include prayer and counseling of abused women and girls.



Grace Nedelchev, Bulgaria



Tell us something about the Women's Commission in Bulgaria.

The Women's Commission consists of representatives from each of the five denominations - five women and one coordinator. They organize the women's work - special training for women, seminars and conferences. They also plan social activities for the women in the five denominations.

What is the level of women's participation in leadership in the churches?

In many of the churches, there are women in the church committees, but they are usually responsible for women matters. Most of the members in the churches are women so women mostly do the work but they do not have much access to leadership positions.

What are the challenges facing Christian women in Bulgaria?

There is a lot of poverty and unemployment, so there are many challenges and opportunities to take care of the people. Activities include soup kitchens, orphanages, homes for elderly people, street kids. The issue of abuse is also a challenge - sex trafficking is a great problem for the country.

What are some ways we could network and work together to encourage and build up women?

- 1. Encourage exchange of information and pray for each other.
- 2. Organize women's conferences.
- 3. Share our experiences in women's work.

Grace is a member of the Task Force against abuse and is involved in women's work in Bulgaria.



Mary Bassali, Egypt

Tell us something about the Women's Commission in Egypt. How is it serving the women?

We are trying to help women fulfil their role at home, in church and society. At home, we would like to teach mothers to teach their daughters that husbands should help in the home as well. This will give the women the time to serve in the church. We are a patriarchal society and Egyptian men do not help with housework at all. It is seen as the belittling of their manhood.

Most Egyptian women in the villages are illiterate. We go to the villages and take literacy classes. In church, we run kindergartens for children of working mothers. There is also a geriatric centre - many old people are left alone because the children have migrated.

What is the level of women's participation in leadership in the churches?

We organize conferences for women in leadership and women from all over Egypt attend these. The churches encourage women to lead in women's meetings but not in the main services. We also organize conferences for pastors' wives and for the handicapped. We help the poorer girls who live in the slum areas. They do not get to go on picnics and so we plan outings for them. Instead of carrying on a life of begging, we encourage them to learn a skill. We teach them to sew and help them to buy sewing machines.

What are the challenges facing Christian women in Egypt?

1. Our women need to take up their responsibilities in society. Generally, the women do not go out to vote during elections.
2. The patriarchal system does not allow women to be pastors.

What are some ways we could work together?

1. Meet together and share our experiences.
2. Adapt what we learn from each other for use in our own context.
3. Organize leadership conferences.

Mary Bassali is the chair of WEF Women's Commission in the Middle East. She has two married daughters and four grandchildren. ■

Are You a Victim of Abuse?

There are various forms of abuse. These include:

Physical Power & Violence

This ranges from the withholding of personal care and affection to threats to personal safety, to pushing, hitting, punching, systematic torture and murder. Physical violence in the home is a crime.

Psychological or Emotional Power and Violence

This is typically harassment aimed at demeaning, humiliating or intimidating. Behaviours tend to focus on insults about appearance, ideas and the competence of women.

Social Power & Violence

This includes demeaning, restricting or controlling women's choices regarding friends and activities. Social violence can escalate to virtual imprisonment of women and children in the home.

Economic or Financial Power & Violence

This involves the use of power to control or place conditions on money and purchases. It can escalate to extreme deprivation.

Spiritual Power & Violence

All violence affects the spirit because the victim experiences feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness, and worthlessness and because her safety, freedom, sense of self and trust in others is undermined. More specifically, spiritual violence happens in the church community whenever the Bible, pastoral 'care' or ideas about God (theology) are used to justify abusive behaviour and control.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NLT



We are all significant in God's eyes.

"And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to Him than a whole flock of sparrows." Luke 12:7 NLT

We all face difficulties in our lives. And we all use various means of solving these problems. Violence and acting out in anger are not solutions to any problems we may be encountering. *"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."* (Proverbs 29:11 NLT) Abuse in any relationship should not be tolerated.

Are you a victim of abuse: from page 11

"The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates everyone who loves violence." (Psalm 11:5 NLT) This verse tells us that God hates violence. People who use violence may want to control you or scare you, they may have bad tempers, stress in their lives, alcohol or drug problems or low self esteem, or they simply may not know a better way of dealing with their problems. This still does not mean that violence should be tolerated.

If he is abusive...

- Seek help
- Take time to heal
- Seek positive friends
- Avoid being alone with him

"He heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds." Psalm 147:3 NLT

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to you." 1 Peter 5:7 NLT

You need time to heal spiritually and emotionally. Allow God to be your comfort. There are others in your life that can help as well.

Talk to your...

- Close friend
- Pastor
- Doctor or counsellor

These people can help you. They can listen, give advice and be supportive of your decisions.

Helping a friend who is suffering from abuse

- Listen
- Do not blame
- Do not ignore the signs of abuse
- Be supportive
- Give encouragement
- Be a shoulder to lean on
- Offer to go with them for help
- Invite them to go places with you
- Ask for help to deal with this

Project of World Evangelical Fellowship Commission on Women's Concerns, Task Force on Abuse Against Women.

Tea with Friends

By Goh Poh Gaik



Local favourites galore!

Women

do several things well but in two areas, we indisputably excel. Food and Friendship. So when the NECF Women's Commission learnt that several women from the Women's Commissions from different parts of the world were attending the 11th General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, we unanimously decided to invite our sisters for tea. There were local gastronomical delights we wanted to treat them to. How could visitors from Bulgaria, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Egypt, India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, America, not savour local favourites like satay, roti jala, curry chicken durian cake, tapioca cake, lobak, jackfruit, rambutan, etc before leaving our shores?

The tea was held in the home of Dr Cheah Soo Ngoh, a commission member, on Sunday May 6.

The table, laden with local treats, looked great... we thought. Our guests confirmed this when they took out their cameras to get pictures of the colourful spread.

We had to keep an eye on the clock as our guests had another appointment to keep. But we had a great time. Our gifts of batik silk scarves delighted the women and were appropriate mementos of the occasion. We wish to thank members of our churches who helped with transport and stayed to fellowship with our guests.

We did what women excel in, and enjoy doing—we shared food and made friends. Roti jala, anyone?

WOMEN to WOMEN

Advisor/Co-ordinator: Goh Poh Gaik

Women to women, a project of the NECF Commission on Women's Concerns, is a bimonthly supplement to Berita NECF.

It has the broad objectives of:

- educating and raising awareness of the social and theological issues affecting women
- stimulating efforts towards networking and dialogue amongst women
- encouraging one another in the use of our gifts and talents for the Lord's Kingdom

Your letters and contributions (feedback, suggestions, ideas, articles, poems, cartoons, etc.) are most welcome.

Send to:

The Co-ordinator, **WOMEN TO WOMEN**

NECF, 32, Jalan SS2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

The views expressed in this supplement do not necessarily reflect those of the Commission or the NECF.

Handle Disputes Biblically

Christians should resolve their disputes privately instead of publicly airing them in the media, NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong said.

He was responding to an e-mail, which was carried by local internet news provider Malaysiakini, condemning NECF Malaysia for inviting Prime Minister Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to officiate the opening ceremony of the WEF 11th General Assembly on May 4.

"In handling disputes, we should always remember the biblical principle in Matthew 18. In this case, if you are unhappy with what we at NECF have done, you should approach us and discuss your disagreement with us.

"To go to the media and publicly voice your opposition does not glorify our Lord and will only discredit the work of the Church. It weakens our corporate witness

and makes us a laughingstock to the community," Rev. Wong said.

The writer of the e-mail had said in his e-mail: "...to invite someone (Dr Mahathir), who doesn't hesitate to use his powers to silence those who oppose him, to open the general assembly is an insult to the worldwide evangelical community...it is sad that a body that claims to be evangelical chooses to be openly associated with someone who treats another human being with contempt if he/she disagrees or opposes him."

To this, Rev. Wong urged Christians not to be quick in judging others. "The Scriptures state that no one is righteous. To invite someone who is flawless on every front, even from the Church, is impossible.

He was saddened that the writer of the e-mail had discounted the efforts of NECF Malaysia in tackling many urgent issues facing the Church.

"NECF Malaysia maintains its evangelical stand without compromising biblical standards, even in the presence of the Prime Minister. In fact, his presence is evidence of his recognition of the evangelical community's contribution to nation-building," Rev. Wong stressed.

Dr Clive Calver concurred. The President of World Relief said in his message during one of the general assembly night meetings, that the Prime Minister's willingness to open the general assembly showed that the evangelical community in Malaysia was recognised and respected by the authorities.

Rev. Wong also said, "As to our invitation to the Prime Minister, one must distinguish between his public office and his religious inclination. We did not invite him as a Muslim but as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. As citizens, we have a duty to respect his public office."

Dazzling Display of Malaysian Cultures

Dancing before delegates from 84 nations, foreign dignitaries and the Prime Minister! It was the opportunity of a lifetime which the Christian Dance Fellowship of Malaysia (CDFM) just could not pass up even though it would mean many laborious hours of practice.

So, when NECF Malaysia approached the fellowship to produce the cultural dance presentations for the WEF 11th General Assembly opening banquet and night meetings, it immediately seized the offer. About 150 dancers were recruited from local churches to participate in the seven dance items, out of which five were choreographed by veteran choreographer Surianty Liu from Hong Kong.

Born in Indonesia, Surianty, 60, is the founder cum president cum artistic director cum choreographer of three dance companies in Hong Kong, Jakarta and Guangzhou. Regarded as an expert of South-East Asian dances, she has a vision of redeeming dance for God and spends a considerable amount of time "christianising" dance styles.

Take for example the "Oriental Journey", a fusion of traditional Indian dance and modern jazz. Surianty created this lively dance to portray high praises to God for His bountiful blessings that are like an overflowing stream of water and the countless sand in the deep sea. The delightful dance, which was presented at the opening banquet, expressed thankfulness and joy that come from a worshipful heart.

Another memorable dance was the "Harvest Dance" presented on the closing night of the general assembly. Here, Surianty fused several South-East Asia dance forms to depict the sowing and harvesting process and calling for more labourers to be sent into the harvest fields. The exciting, fast-paced presentation by the 33 CDFM dancers, decked in the most splendid costumes imaginable, was truly a sight to behold.

What did our foreign guests think of the cultural dance presentations? When asked, the replies were all the same: remarkable and unforgettable. The dancers deserve the accolades for their months of hard work.



The delightful Dikir Putri item with Kelantanese dance movements to depict peace and harmony among the local people. Dikir means "Praise God".

A fusion of traditional Indian dance and modern jazz.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO EVANGELICALS ELSEWHERE

The World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) comprises six regional fellowships, which partner with the national fellowships of the countries in their regions. Berita NECF met up with four regional secretaries to find out the challenges evangelicals are facing in their regions.



Gerry Seale,
Evangelical
Association of the
Caribbean (EAC)

The EAC was launched in 1977. Today, it has 11 national members, two denominations and four agencies in full membership. Another four agencies hold associate membership.

Gerry shares: "One significant challenge we face is finance to fund our programmes. Ours is a small region made up of small islands, which means small financial resource base.

We also face significant challenges in family structure, which is partly a result of our heritage of African slavery where slaves were treated and bred like animals. The concept of family was not allowed under the slavery system and this is a lingering problem even though slavery was abolished more than 100 years ago. For example, in Barbados, more than 70 percent of children are born outside of marriage and this is common across the islands of the Caribbean.

The other reality that results from the slavery situation is the significant economic issue where the minority of the whites still controls the economic wealth. For example, in Barbados, three percent of the population is white but they dominate the economy. It's been very difficult for the blacks to break into economic empowerment because 200 years ago, structures were built in the society to prevent them from doing so.

On our part, we have established a number of commissions. Our Communications Commission networks Christian media. Out of this has come funding for a project, which links via satellite the 50 over Christian radio stations. The commission provides training for pastors on how to use radio as a medium to advance their ministries and has also conducted Christian writers' workshops.

We have an Evangelism and Missions Commission, which organises missions conferences, and a Theological Commission, which networks all the Bible Schools in the region and publishes an annual theological review. We have a prayer network through e-mail and we hope to start our research network soon. We are now also looking at starting a Children's Commission.

Because ours is a disaster-prone region with many developmental issues, we are forming a Commission on Relief and Development. This commission will tackle the AIDS issue because the Caribbean is second only to Africa in the incidence of HIV infections.

We also want to begin developmental projects that will assist the poorest parts of the Caribbean. World Relief is partnering with us here. Tearfund and Samaritans' Purse have also expressed interest."



Gordon Showell-
Rogers, European
Evangelical Alliance
(EEA)

Europe is a varied continent with vast spiritual needs, says Gordon. Albania and Switzerland could be on a different planet. Russia is a lot bigger than Monaco. Some are Protestant countries but the majority is Roman Catholics and orthodox.

The EEA has 28 national alliances and several affiliated members. Despite the very dark spiritual context of this post-Christian continent, in which church attendance continues to decline, EEA membership is growing dramatically as church leaders in countries across the region have drawn closer together.

Gordon shares: "Within the evangelical alliance of Europe, we are excited about several things we are doing. We have two major functions. Firstly, the EEA serves the national alliances, encouraging the development of alliances in those countries where they do not exist while encouraging the growth of existing alliances. Our vision is to see well-functioning and representative national alliances in 43 countries across Europe.

Secondly, the EEA performs certain functions that will be more effectively performed as a whole group. These include our advocacy ministry into the European Union and a cooperative set of activities with mission agencies in Europe, and with the Lausanne movement across Europe called Hope for Europe, which tries to bring the hope of Christ into the lives of the European people.

We are firmly committed to learning from the rest of the world, particularly in those regions like Asia, where God is granting growth. We are learning to expect from God, to pray more urgently and passionately that God will come down to our countries. At the same time, we are seeking ways to contribute to other regions."



Gary Walsh,
North America

The fellowship consists of three evangelical fellowships—the National Association of Evangelicals, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and Alliance Francophone des Protestants Evangeliques du Quebec. Together, they represent 83 denominations and over 300 Christian organisations and educational institutions.

Gary shares: “In North America, there is a liberalising of social mores as the government, court and media continue to move the culture and society further away from religious rooting. The national evangelical alliances in the USA and Canada are working very hard to strengthen their ministry of advocacy and representation to the governments.

We have established a committee to work on an extensive scholarly project to create the underpinnings for the Christian approach to moral and social issues in the North American continent.

Right now, there are so many of the old-line denominations that are losing members. The renewal movement within those denominations is looking to the evangelical alliances, so very discreetly, we are opening our doors to these revived people while maintaining our relationships with our co-denominations.

We are moving through the very difficult process of waking up to the fact that the old Christendom era is over and we have been lulled to sleep thinking we are Christian countries.

We are now going through this disconcerting time of being aware that we are going to choose just like everybody else in the world does. The natural cultural thing is not the Christian thing. It's a little discouraging to find out that someone is questioning using the Lord's Prayer at the civic ceremony, or at the High School Graduation. I pray that our evangelical people will not lose heart over this. I tell them we have never been satisfied with nominal Christianity so don't worry about this change.

We've always said it is personal faith in Jesus Christ; it's the gospel that makes the difference. The difficult phase we are going through will drive us to our knees. It will make us stronger, make our families stronger, as we realise we have to make a decision to follow Christ.”



Dr Francis Sunderaj,
Evangelical
Fellowship of Asia
(EFA)

Asia is a continent of vast diversity with a population of about 3.2 billion or 56 percent of the world's population. There are over 1,080 known languages and 2,660 ethno-linguistic groups. Protestant Christians made up about 4.5 percent of the total population. The EFA was formed in 1983 and today, it has 16 national members and 11 Asia-wide Christian agencies.

Dr Sunderaj shares: “The growing influence of post-modernity, dominance of information technology, rapid urbanisation, vast rural population, the effects of globalisation, social exploitation and poverty, erosion of moral values—these are just some of the issues faced by the Church of Asia.

We work through our national fellowships by strengthening them. In 1997, we held the 2nd Asia Missions Congress where we invited several missions and church leaders to motivate and mobilise them to work in unity. We have a consultation for Children at Risk and another one handling women issues. Last year, we had a consultation on biblical stewardship. Leadership seminars are organised for churches in countries such as Nepal, Cambodia and Myanmar, where there is a great need to train leaders.

Some of our national fellowships are very strong while some are weak. But they all try to have their own programmes and work alongside their local churches.”

EFA To Hold Global Congress

The Evangelical Fellowship of Asia (EFA) will hold the Global Congress on Church Ministry and Missions (GCCMM) from October 1 to 5 at Pattaya, Thailand.

EFA hopes to register at least 600 church and mission leaders and missionaries for the congress, themed “The Church in the 21st century: Holiness in the innermost

and witness to the uttermost.”

The congress aims to strengthen and sharpen the ministry and missiology, and evaluate and formulate strategies of church ministry and missions in the light of biblical principles and in view of the challenges of the new millennium. It also aims to re-affirm the role of the church in both local and global missions.

Among the topics and their speakers are *Holiness and Integrity in Ministry* by Dr Ajit Fernando; *The Church in Society* by Dr Clive Calver; *Church as a Community* by Dr Joshua Ogawa; *Issues and Strategies in Missions for the 21st century* by Dr William Taylor; and *Core Values of Partnership in Missions* by Dr Roger Forster.

DR MAHATHIR PLEADS FOR END TO INTER-RELIGIOUS STRIFE

Prime

Minister Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad made an impassioned plea for an end to inter-religious strife when he opened the WEF 11th General Assembly. He said that once started, religious disputes often lead to violence over several generations.

The Prime Minister's speech was itself an example of how people of different religions can respect each other. He said: "Intolerance breeds injustice. Injustice invariably leads to rebellion and retaliation, and these will lead to escalation on the part of both, (thus) making reconciliation almost impossible.

"It would appear that during times of stress, despair and frustration, people become increasingly irrational, and they do things which they never think they are capable of. And so we see hideous brutality perpetrated by the gentlest people.

He added that once begun, religious strife had a tendency to become permanent feuds. Today we see such intractable inter-religious wars in Northern Ireland, between Jews and Muslims and Christians in Palestine, Hindus and Muslims in South Asia and in many other places.

Today, many are still fighting each other out of revenge for the deaths of their ancestors, he said.

"We are now at the beginning of a new century. It is a good time to resolve to break away from the tragedies of the past and to build on the realities of the present," Dr Mahathir urged.

He also called for leaders of different religious groups to begin a process of dialogue with each other in the cause of peace. He said: "In multi-racial, multi-cultural Malaysia it is also worthwhile for religious leaders to re-visit their roles as we move into a new era in the development of society. The greatest contribution they can make is in promoting religious tolerance among their followers."

Dr Mahathir also called on practitioners of religions to be sensitive to each other. "It is true that it is the nature of some religious denominations that propagation of their faith is obligatory. But we should be careful that we don't propagate religions at the cost of conflicts and violence. Such conflicts can only bring about an environment where religions cannot thrive," he said.

He believed religion was the antidote to the current culture of greed that was tending to destroy humanity. He believed that by returning to the guiding principles of religion, poverty would be eliminated.

"The world, through a combination of God-given resources and human ingenuity in terms of technology has never been so rich as it is now. There really is no need for anyone to take everything for himself in order to be rich. There is enough to share.

"Poverty in this day and age is indefensible and a disgrace for the level of civilisation that humans have achieved. No one should be poor if those of us who are not religious are not so greedy," he said.

Dr Mahathir recommended that consistent effort be made on the young generation to help protect and preserve religious tolerance. "Young children are usually free of biases and prejudices. They provide the best example of tolerance and peaceful co-existence," he said, adding that young people must be taught to respect one another.

"Then living together as a community, even while professing different faiths, would not be an impossible task at all." ■

Busy businessman finds time to attend conference

Once

a month, business tycoon Tan Sri Dr Khoo Kay Peng returns to Malaysia for a week to attend to his business affairs. During the rest of the month, he is either in Australia, where his family is stationed, or other parts of the world. So, when he attended the week-long WEF General Assembly conference from beginning to end, many people were surprised by his willingness to devote his precious time to a Christian conference.

Throughout the conference, he punctually turned up at the J.W. Marriott hotel for the morning sessions, then rushed back to his office at mid-day and dutifully re-appeared at Wisma MCA for the night meetings. It was also learned that he intentionally arranged his monthly trip back here to coincide with the conference.

The time spent at the conference was worth every minute of his precious time, according to him. "The conference has been a tremendous spiritual blessing to me," Tan Sri Khoo said. He added that he had gained much from the papers that were presented and the messages delivered at the night meetings. ■



Tan Sri Khoo at one of the night meetings.

Growth, Change and Pride . . .

WEF

outgoing International

Director Rev. Dr Jun Vencer retires in May after nine years in the post. In this interview with Berita NECF, he shares how NECF Malaysia has grown, how God has kept him humble, and his future plans.

Through your nine years of leadership, how have you seen NECF Malaysia grown?

NECF Malaysia is an emerging model of a national fellowship and its rise must be appreciated all the more because of the Islamic context in which it is growing. I can attribute its growth to the statesmanship of your leaders and their willingness to work with the authorities and other sectors. The other factor is the tremendous support from the churches and businessmen. For that, I can only attribute it to the special hand of the Spirit. God has a special purpose for Malaysia at this time. Malaysia seems to provide a model to other third world nations. As long as Malaysia remains generous and compassionate toward the needy and poor and NECF Malaysia continues to reach out to their fellow alliances in need, God will continue to bless you and raise you.

I have seen NECF Malaysia grow from a small fellowship into an office with so many staff working, and now, hosting a global conference. That's tremendous and I can see why you are growing. You not only have the support from the council and other leaders, but you have the devotion of the staff and volunteers. These are the materials that allow God's work to grow. Commitment beyond legal requirements, devotion to duty.

I'm convinced that among the hot spots of the Spirit in the world, God seems to be pointing His finger at Malaysia as one of the places that He will do a mighty work. I feel a sense of awe because whenever God works in a special way, the church and the national fellowship have a tremendous responsibility. You must remain alert and be in constant prayer. You will experience challenges you have never imagined possible and you must not allow a crack in your unity and cooperation. I pray God will put His

mantle of protection around you. For as long as you remain humble, for as long as your motives are pure to glorify Him alone, God will continue to protect you and use you for His work.

Personally, how have you changed since you first assumed the role?

I have a deeper appreciation of the church, the people of God around the world and of our creative God who is constantly using people in different ways. I have seen young men rising and women being used by God in ways the conservative churches had doubted. As for my perception towards myself, I don't think I have changed. I've always believed that there are people who are better than me. Only by the grace of God, I am where I am.

Through my years in WEF, I was driven by one thought "Lord, I want to finish well. Will You just preserve me." I've also felt the prayers of God's people. I went places and people who don't know me would come up to me and say, "Jun Vencer, I don't know you but your name came into our prayer lives." I see old and young people praying for me and I realise now that in many ways I was delivered from so many sensitive situations through their prayers. So it's not only by the grace of God but the power of prayers for me from around the world.

I don't think I have really changed. I still enjoy eating with my fingers. I can stay in a five-star hotel but I still enjoy staying in a home of a friend and a village. I still enjoy fishing.

But surely, at some points during your rising years, you must have felt a sense of... pride?

Yes and pride is very dangerous. It's our humanity. It's the reality that we are not perfect, we live in a fallen world but God is consistently saying, "Grow, grow, grow." There have been times when I walked with someone important and I felt, "Wow." The moment I felt that, I suddenly realised, "Wow, you better go on your knees." My constant prayer was, and still is: "God, if I become arrogant, if I become proud, will



"We can plant as many churches as we want, churches that are a mile long and a mile wide but only one inch deep."

Your Spirit please minister to my Spirit and remind me, 'Hey, remember why I raise you up. You were nobody, now don't be so hot.'" God, in His grace and mercy, used friends and people to tell me, "Jun, be careful." Sometimes I reacted, "Who are you to tell me that?" By His grace, I've heard Him said, "You receive admonition from your brothers." We all need to cultivate a sensitive spirit to the Lord and His word and appreciate what people are saying. Learn to listen.

What are your immediate plans for the future?

I plan to focus my life and energy on training leaders around the world. As you grow older, the sounds of hundreds and thousands of people begin to fade away. I've been asking, "Why did Jesus spend time with only twelve?" What does it mean to train 12 people? Perhaps I want to go that way and say 10 years from now, yeah, I remember him and that one and that one too.

I would also like to focus on planting churches around the world. But I want to go further than just planting churches. We can plant as many churches as we want, churches that are a mile long and a mile wide but only one inch deep. So, it's not just a question of how many churches we have planted but what kind of church we are planting. I believe in transformation. The idea of discipling and transforming nations fascinates me. I have always believed discipling a nation is not just discipling an individual. You do not remove an individual from the context of his family, community, structure and culture. It's got to be the whole of the community. ■

Psalty Concert in Kuala Lumpur

Psalty, the lovable blue singing songbook who has entertained millions of children and led many to Christ, will be coming to Kuala Lumpur for a concert.

From November 22 to 25 (at the start of the year-end school holidays), the California-based Psalty will appear nightly at Juara Stadium, Bukit Kiara. The concert is jointly organised by NECF Malaysia and Scripture Union.

Psalty was dreamt up 16 years ago by Ernie and Debby Rettino and since then, the couple, who play Psalty and Charity Churchmouse respectively, have brought God's message of salvation to children throughout the United States. They have appeared alongside world evangelists such as Billy Graham and Luis Palau.

Keep the dates free and start praying for the non-believing children you're thinking of inviting. ■



The crowd that responded to the Great Commission mandate at the conference.

BM Pastors Pledge to Work Together

More than 3,000 Christians from the Bahasa Malaysia churches were motivated to strive after holiness and heed the Great Commission mandate at the public night meetings of the *Rayakan Yesus* Conference from June 4 to 6.

On the first night, 87 Christians responded to speaker Jeff Hammond's call to give their lives to preaching the Gospel wherever they are. During the following two nights, many more took up his challenge to a deeper commitment to Christ.

Hammond also urged pastors and church leaders of the BM churches to set aside their differences and repent from causing disunity among their churches. Many went forward to the altar as an act of repentance and reconciliation. They also pledged to work together to build His Kingdom rather than their individual churches.

Another speaker, musician Welyar Kauntu, said that there were many talented leaders but their lack of holiness has hampered their effectiveness. Kauntu urged these leaders to develop spiritual disciplines that will help to mould character.

More than 200 registered participants attended the day sessions on leadership during the three-day conference organised by the NECF Malaysia BM Comission. ■

Orang Asli Sunday School Teachers Ask For More Training

Thirty-seven *Orang Asli* Christians from seven denominations gathered at the SUFES Campsite in Tapah from May 28 to 30 for the first Sunday School Teachers' Training Camp organised by the NECF Malaysia *Orang Asli* Ministries Commission.

Most of the participants (86 percent) are currently teaching or have taught Sunday School. Of this, 40 percent have taught for less than a year while only 0.06 percent have more than five years' teaching experience. About 60 percent of the participants, including one teacher who has taught Sunday School for more than five years, have never received any formal training in teaching Sunday School.

Many of them expressed gratitude for the camp but commented that the training was still insufficient. More than half the respondents indicated that they faced the following problems in their Sunday School programmes: no curriculum or systematic teaching and lack of teaching materials and aids.

They agreed that there should be workshops to teach them how to prepare teaching aids and improve their teaching and presentation skills. One participant went even further and wrote that she would like to be trained to train teachers! ■

No tables? Chairs will do...participants at a workshop.



Dick Eastman To Speak At Merdeka Eve Prayer Rally

Dick

Eastman—the renown international leader on prayer and intercession—will speak at the Klang Valley Merdeka Prayer Rally on August 30 at Menara PGRM, Kuala Lumpur, held in conjunction with the nation's Merdeka Day celebration. The International President of Every Home for Christ, USA, Eastman has authored several books on prayer including *No Easy Road* and *The Hour That Changes the World*.

The rally, considered one of the most important prayer event for the year, will gather Christians throughout the nation in a night of thanksgiving and intercession for God's mercy on our land. (For the venue of the prayer rally in other states, see box

below for the names and telephone numbers of the contact persons.)

The rally is part of the NECF Malaysia Merdeka Prayer Celebration, which comprises two other separate events—the 40-day Fast and Prayer and the nationwide Merdeka Day community projects.

The commission is now mobilising Christians to enlist in the fast and prayer initiative, which begins on July 21 and ends August 29.

Finally, on Merdeka Day, churches will move out to their communities to undertake community projects as a demonstration of God's love.

Join us as we call upon the Lord to pour out His mercy and grace on our nation.



Prayer Guide

The NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission has produced a prayer guide for the 40-day fast and prayer. The guide contains daily prayer items and notes on how to fast and pray effectively. The guide is available in English, Bahasa Melayu, Chinese and Tamil. Get your copies from NECF Malaysia. Suggested donation: 50 sen per copy.

40-Day "Break Free" Fast and Prayer

God is our strength and stronghold (Jer. 16:19). In Him only will our nation and nations around be secure. Let us use these 40 days to forsake all other securities, addictions and 'bondages' that have turn our hearts from trust and total dependency on God. Let us repent of our spiritual adultery and align ourselves with God to pray for mercy on our nation.

Ask God to search our hearts to identify the 'strongholds' we have built that have taken up too much of our time so that we have little time left over for God's concern. Examples are over-indulgence in hobbies and long hours at the office or in front of the television or at shopping malls.

If these activities have become a snare to your spiritual development, will you consider putting them away during these 40 days as a form of fasting? As we pull down the strongholds in our hearts, let us also pull down the strongholds that are keeping our nation from seeing the light of Jesus.

Remember: the prayer of a consecrated child has great impact.—
NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission

MERDEKA EVE PRAYER RALLIES

Place	Contact	Person	Tel.	No.
Alor Setar	Pr	Leonard	04-733	1712
I p o h	Pr	Clement	05-313	4511
J o h o r e	Pr	John	07-241	1645
K. Terengganu	Pr	Eddie	09-626	1517
K a n g a r	Pr	Heng	04-976	7853
K l u a n g	Pr	Sunther	019-726	7634
Kota Bahru	Pr	Rodney	09-748	2596
	Pr	Johnny	09-748	2331
Kota Kinabalu	Pr	Chin	088-422	938
	Dr	Philip Lyn	088-238	668
K u a n t a n	Pr	Richard	09-555	2127
K u c h i n g	Pr	Daron	013-808	5864
	Pr	Peter	010-877	0012
K u l i m	Pr	Silas	04-490	3080
M u a r	Bro.	Daniel Tay	06-951	9520
M a l a c c a	Pr	Philip	06-336	8077
Seberang Prai	Pr	Raj	04-582	0136
S e r e m b a n	Pr	Voon	06-765	3777
Sitiawan	Pr	Ling	012-528	4281
	Pr	Joshua	016-531	9060
T a i p i n g	Pr	Bernard	05-808	0751
T a w a u	Pr	Teh / Eric	089-776	589

For Your Intercession



PALESTINE

The Palestine-Israel fighting has caused great suffering among the people in Palestine, says Sami Awad, Executive Director of Bethlehem-based Holy Land Trust, a non-profit humanitarian organisation focused on improving the lives of people throughout the Middle East. Sami was in Kuala Lumpur recently for the WEF 11th General Assembly. He shared with Berita NECF: "We know many people, including Christians, who have lost their family members and homes through the fighting. Also, unemployment rate is high and this has caused many people, including Christians, to leave the country. This is very sad because it further reduces the number of Christians. The Christian community is small and the evangelical community is much, much smaller. That's why we want to develop programmes that will create job opportunities to make them stay back. We have to find ways to keep the Christian faith alive in the country."

Rani asked for prayers for the suffering brethren in Palestine. Pray for God to interfere and that His light will shine in the community through the Christians there. Pray also for Holy Land Trust that God will direct and bless them.

URBAN CITIES

Not so long ago, Christians generally connected missionaries with pith helmets, mud huts, tribal people living in the bush and dangerous snakes. Now more and more churches are becoming aware of the increasing need to send missionaries into the world's urban areas especially to the major cities. People are increasingly migrating there from rural areas, especially young people looking for better opportunities away from the family farm. Hubs of government and commerce, the cities also seem to be breeding places for evil, especially influencing young people's morals away

from the traditional family in developing countries. Pray for more missionaries to serve God in the cities.

HIMALAYAS

God is working mightily through dedicated pastors in the Himalayas. Not only are the numbers receiving Christ increasing but also they are maturing in the faith. Forty-three of them in one town in North India were once strong, orthodox Hindus and Buddhists. Two families who received Christ in another place destroyed the Hindu family altar used to sacrifice animals and worship idols. Pray for the ongoing work in the region, supported by AsiaLink.

TURKEY

The massive earthquake in north-west Turkey followed by a lesser one in 1999 forced the government to open the country's doors to the world and, for the first time, international Christian relief agencies and local churches were able to demonstrate God's love and compassion. If you stand on a street corner preaching the gospel, you will be arrested and deported. But if you sing the same message, you will be applauded. Pray for Christian musical and theatre groups seeking to reach Turkish hearts.

Turkish Christians are often seen as traitors to their nation. They can be ostracised by their families and friends as well as harassed by police and draw hostile media coverage. Pray for God to use these attacks for His purposes.

KENYA

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) is supporting Tearfund feeding centres in the drought-stricken north of Kenya. The programme involves providing high protein food mix and blankets. Pray for the people being fed to find Jesus, the Bread of Life.

MAF planes don't normally fly on Sundays but in Ecuador pilot Sandy Toomer got five calls on a single Sunday morning to rescue snake-bite and serious fall victims. Pray for MAF's life-saving flights and for those they help to find eternal life through receiving Jesus.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Imagine the Government announcing that all teachers are to be taught Christian ethics based on the Bible so that they can teach them in their schools! That's happening in the Czech Republic. The International Bible Society is facilitating the programme. The Manna Mini-Bible is one of the resources being used to teach Christian ethics. It contains illustrations with pictures by schoolchildren and is distributed to each pupil. Pray for God to work through this programme and for His Word to change the children's and teachers' lives.

IRAQ

Many Iraqis who have fled their country since the 1991 Gulf War have not only found refuge in Jordan but Christ as well. Alliance Church, a Tearfund partner, started feeding these desperate people and today runs a health clinic and food voucher scheme. Bible study groups have grown into 10 churches. Pray for this ministry and for all who have responded to it.