

BERITA NECF

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF MALAYSIA

VOLUME 12, NO.3

PP5872/12/2000

May - July 2000



EDITORIAL

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN RENEWAL

BREAKTHROUGH
covenant
Lord Jesus,
revive
Your
work
in the midst
of the years



SOMETHING new and exciting is being birthed in the Church of Jesus Christ in Malaysia. It is not clear yet what form this new thing will take but one thing is sure – it will be a fresh work that will display God’s creative wisdom that He has always brought into being through Jesus Christ.

The manifestation of the presence and power of God at the recent “Breakthrough 2000 Conference and Rally” is one of the many signs of the outpouring and amazing work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We anticipate this fire of God is going to spark off a renewed vigour of our Christian service and commitment and will reveal through our lives the blessed Christian witness.

The Old Testament experience often revealed the sure occurrence of the ultimate and complete conversion of Israel when the Spirit of God is poured upon them. This is clearly evident in Isaiah 32:15, “*Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest.*” When this happens, there shall be justice, righteousness and peace. It is then that the people of God will dwell in peace during the millennial kingdom, in contrast to the years of downtrodden devastation that they have experienced throughout the centuries. The troubles plaguing the people of God will cease, the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and what is already fruitful now will become as luxuriant as a forest when the Spirit is poured out onto the nation.

As reiterated by the speakers at the conference, revival comes through the outpouring and working of the Holy Spirit when the people of God are truly seeking and thirsting for renewal in their lives. The blessed times of the Body of Christ in Malaysia shall be ushered in by the *pouring out of the Spirit from on high*, which speaks not only of the goodness of God’s will concerning us, but more so, the good work of God in us. This is the blessed hope and assurance that brings comfort to us – that *the Spirit shall be poured out upon us*, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace and power.

We recognise that this phenomenon comes from on high, and therefore we must look up to our Father in heaven for it. When God designs favours for the Church of Jesus Christ in our land, He pours out His Spirit, both to prepare us to receive His favours and to anoint us with His power for a renewed vigour and zeal in our commitment to serve.

Let us, therefore, together seek for the transformation and renewal of the Church in Malaysia. Our spiritual experience began with our journeying and dwelling in the wilderness – dry and barren. It will continue on to “*a fruitful field*”. It is promised that in the days of the Messiah, the “*fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon...*” (Ps. 72:16).

Having this hope, let us then join forces and together, continue to pray “Lord Jesus, revive Your work in the midst of the years”. Amen! ■

Organised by NECF Malaysia in partnership with

- Breakthrough 2000 Conference - May 25-27
Necara PGRH - Cairns, North Queensland, Australia
- Renewal Rally - May 26 - 28
Necara Stadium, Kuala Lumpur

The next issue will be published
National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia
<http://www.necf.org.my>

BERITA NECF
ISSUE 12/3

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Breakthrough 2000 Conference and Renewal Rally

CHRISTIANS CRY FOR RENEWAL



Christians are desperate for a personal touch from God and hungry for transformation, judging from the staggering response to the altar calls during the recent Breakthrough Conference. At the end of every session during the three days, the altar call area was swarmed by participants hoping expectantly to receive a touch from God through the speaker.

Many, especially our foreign brethren, literally ran to the altar, anxious to reach the front rows so as not to miss out being prayed for by the speaker. And they filled the perimeter of the altar call area even before the speakers gave the invitation, waiting patiently for the speaker to say "Come forward".

Due to massive crowd and the lack of time, many respondents left without being prayed for by the speakers. A local pastor and his wife, who went up for prayers, waited some time but had to leave before the speaker reached them. Though slightly disappointed, he said, "However, my wife and I have received it (the impartation) by faith".

The conference saw a gathering of over 2,700 pastors and leaders from 450 churches all over Asia including Russia, India, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Philippines, USA, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan and Brunei. Locally, more than 2,100 people representing about 350 churches from all the states were present.

During the conference, the delegates were challenged by Carlos Annacondia's call to have compassion for the lost; encouraged by Betty Freidzon's testimony of perseverance in the ministry; confronted by Sergio Scataglini's impassioned plea to lead holy lives; and inspired by Claudio's Freidzon's call to be ready for a great harvest.

It was organised by NECF Malaysia as part of its effort to bring revival and renewal not only to Malaysia but also to the Asian region. The speakers, who were the prime movers of the revival phenomenon in Argentina, were specially brought in to share their experiences and impart the anointing for the coming revival.

Through Scataglini's messages, the participants were convicted that the fires of revival could only come when churches break down their barriers and stand united before God. At the end of one of his messages, senior pastors and leaders from all the denominations represented at the conference went up to the stage, held hands and prayed.

It was a significant moment and perhaps the most memorable one during the three-day conference as the leaders pledged to work towards unity in the body of Christ. Many agreed that this act of coming together signaled a further breakthrough in efforts to bring unity to the Church of Malaysia, following what had begun at last year's Emmanuel Celebration event which gathered some 150,000 people during the three nights at the Bukit Jalil main stadium.

This year, the attendance at the three-night rally was small in comparison with the Emmanuel Celebration, but the ministry and response were just as good, if not better. This time round, there was no confusing overlapping of interpretations as the minority language-groups were placed outside the Putra Stadium hall. Each night, the Bahasa Malaysia-, Tamil- and Chinese-hearing groups viewed the speaker on large screens and heard the message from their interpreters who stood beside the screens. Meanwhile, inside the indoor stadium, the English-hearing crowd heard the message crisp and clear, thanks to the high-quality sound system, which many commented, was "concert quality".

Each night, the rally began with a spectacular dance presentation by 400 dancers, who were brought from various churches and trained by the Christian Dance Federation Malaysia. The colourful costumes, banners, flags and paraphernalia were a sight to behold as the dancers moved and twirled to the thunderous applause from the appreciative crowd.

The worship team also featured an inter-church choir who led the crowd into a great time of rejoicing and jubilation. The celebration climaxed on the last night of the rally when thousands of people left their seats and flooded the arena to dance before God.

The arena was also flooded during the three nights as multitudes responded to the altar call and went down to be prayed for. And just like the conference, the rally was a scene of hunger and desperation for God's personal touch. Although the rally was primarily a renewal event for Christians, many non-believers at the gathering responded to the call for salvation.

(See insert for more photos.) ■

Breakthrough 2000 Conference and Renewal Rally

WHAT THEY SAID...

At the Breakthrough 2000 Conference

SESSION 1, 25 MAY 2000, CLAUDIO FREIDZON

Entering A New Time of Conquest

Christians are living in special days and we need to understand and discern them. God will lead us to new territories where He will fill us with a portion of power that is 10-fold. The "new time of conquest" is the beginning of the third Day as stated in 2 Peter 3:8 which is the third millennium.

THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF ENTERING INTO THE THIRD DAY

- a) Gen. 1:11—As God brought forth vegetation and plants yielding seed on the third day, the seed that has been planted in our hearts for many years will now bear fruit. It is the time of fruitfulness and productivity.
- b) Gen. 22:4 & 8—The Lord provided a substitute for the sacrifice of Abraham's son. Likewise, it is the year of provision and the manifestation of His glory. The power of God that is rising within the church will be unleashed to the church and surrounding communities. Many will be converted.
- c) Exodus 19:10 & 11—It is the time to consecrate ourselves and get ready. On the third day, the Lord will come down with power in the presence of His people. He will give us the authority to face the demonised and heal the sick. Our lives will be transformed and signs of healing and deliverance will follow.
- d) Hosea 6:1 & 2—He will restore us. The church will experience a supernatural anointing and that which was dead, hurt, destroyed, and torn apart will soon be restored.

As we enter into a greater dimension of His glory, we will witness 10-fold the power that was demonstrated in Moses' time before the exodus from Egypt.

TIME TO WORSHIP

It is the time to worship just like when Paul and Silas worshiped in the "midnight hour" before an earthquake shook and the chains that bound them were broken. The Holy Spirit will break all chains and cause spiritual earthquake. God will pour out His Glory and we will experience a breakthrough in our worship and lives.

see page 4



It's "Sunday Night Fever" as young and old alike celebrate God's love in dance – last night of the rally at Putra Stadium.

What they said: *from page 3*

SESSION 2, 25 MAY 2000, SERGIO SCATAGLINI

HOLINESS FOR EFFECTIVENESS

Believers are transformed by the renewal of the mind. We believe in sanctification by works and salvation by faith. God will impart the holiness that we need in our lives (I John 2:6). Without holiness, we will not see God and there will be no growth, only death. There is enough power in the Blood to set us free and live a life of total purity.

TEN BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO DEFEAT SIN

1. Receive the baptism of Fire and let God empower you to fight sin.
2. Do something radical in your life (Matt. 5:29). Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.
3. Make it your goal to be like Jesus (Matt. 5:48, Eph. 5:1, I John 2:6).
4. Begin to dream about reaching the lost.
5. Begin to discern between good and evil (Lev. 10:10). Remove all earthly possessions that cause us to sin.
6. Make a covenant with your eyes (Job 31:1).
7. Develop a righteous indignation against sin. Holiness is loving God AND hating evil.
8. Leave aside the passion for worldliness and exchange it with a passion for Jesus and a burden for the lost.
9. Read God's Word when in temptation. Your faith will be strengthened.
10. Scare yourself a little. Read Galatians 5.

As the Holy Spirit controls us, He will purify every cell of our body and we will be free from our sinful nature to live for Jesus. Repent if we want revival in the church. Without brokenness of hearts, there is no healing of nations.

SESSION 3, 26 MAY 2000, BETTY FREIDZON

A RENEWED HEART FOR THE MINISTRY

When we put aside our own selfish thoughts and ministries, and come together in unity, God's power is unleashed. The devil is rendered helpless and cannot stop God's work in families and churches.

In the early part of our marriage, God led us to a new area to start our ministry. The home we had was a wreck and we had very little then. Our congregation consisted of three grandmothers and we had to look after them. Those were wilderness years but that was the place God used as our training school. Were we willing to surrender everything? During the cold winters, I kept on worshipping the Lord but we were facing closed doors for a

long time. My heart soon began to contain sadness. I fasted, prayed and questioned God. The enemy brought discouragement, sadness and anguish and the daily routine of life began to take control of me. My life became dull and lost the brilliance of God.

When I thought of my husband, Claudio, there was no love inside me. Many nights, a voice said that he did not love me and I was convinced. Many situations wore out the love inside me. I felt I was a victim of the ministry.

One day, the Holy Spirit said to me that He would not respond to my prayers because I did not forgive. I asked God to show me my heart and He showed me the bitterness and rejection from the bad experiences I had gone through. He showed me pride, vanity, selfishness, self-pity and all kinds of sin within me. The enemy with his dirty claws had oppressed my heart and that's why I did not feel any love. Ministry can wear out the heart and take away



Settle down— shofar blowers calling people to attention at the beginning of each night's meeting.

the love, fire and passion.

I needed a new heart, a new vision and asked the Lord to put His fire within me and He did. As I repented, He showed me that I was hurting others. Before, I only saw how others had hurt me. I asked God for forgiveness and for a sensitive heart, a heart that depends only on Him. He gave me a new heart to love. I no longer saw the defects in my husband and became a subject to him as unto the Lord. When I repented, change and forgiveness came to my home. The chains were broken and so were many curses that have been spoken.

God created us man and woman to complement each other and when we are united, we become a great team for Him. He wants to anoint our marriages as the harvest time is here. He will lift us up to be mothers and fathers to birth many spiritual children.

SESSION 4, 26 MAY 2000, SERGIO SCATAGLINI

Principles To Becoming An Influencer

If you want people to follow Jesus, you must become an influencer. If the fire of God does not make any difference to your family and those around you, then you have not received the real fire.

Real fire gives you authority (to change). Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be His witnesses like Elijah who became a tremendous influencer when Israel was backsliding.

In 1 Kings 17:7, we read that the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. How can it be that God takes you to a place, you obeyed and suddenly the river that has been sustaining you stops flowing? The anointing has stopped. You try everything to get back the anointing but nothing happens.

Principle 1: Be willing to change. Do not be conformed to your past. Elijah was comfortable and safe in the ravine. The anointing God gave him was for a season and now, God wanted to give him a different kind of work. Elijah gave the word to the nation that there would be no rain and now, he was suffering the consequences of that word. Are you willing to stand strong once you take a direction for God? When the fire comes and you obey God, there will be high risk because dramatic changes will come to our lives. Are you willing to take new directions if He calls?

Principle 2: Find your Zarephath. In 1 Kings 17:9, God took Elijah to Zarephath, a place of great need. Some of you may admire and dream of having big ministries. Elijah had dreams for his nation but instead of sending him to the government, God sent him to Zarephath which was not a good place because it was not in the Holy Land and he had to depend on a widow. The path to the place of influence and effectiveness is not to get big titles but to go to the place of need. That place could be your church, your neighbour or perhaps, a smaller church whose pastor needs encouragement.

Principle 3: Be sure of your calling. Elijah multiplied food by God's power and fed the widow and her son but soon afterwards, her son became ill and died. Instead of having faith in Elijah and asking him to heal her son, she accused him of causing his death. She was disappointed and disillusioned but Elijah did not quit the ministry. Later, the widow's son came back to life through Elijah. Ministry is difficult. If you tremble before criticisms and your enemies, God will break you. Fear destroys ministry; timidity quenches the anointing. So, be sure of God's calling. Don't quit. Are you willing to preach holiness and righteousness even if your life is at risk just like Elijah who stood fearlessly before King Ahab? "It does not take great men or women to do great things. It only takes consecrated men and women".

Principle 4: Don't hide. Elijah hid but the Lord called him up, first to Zarephath and then to stand in front of the king and then to call Israel and the pagans to see the fire of God. There is a tendency to hide in safety and comfort but are you ready to go to more places to preach His precious gospel when revival comes?

Principle 5: Repair the altar. In 1 Kings 18:30, Elijah called to the people to come to him and he repaired the altar using 12 stones to represent the tribes of Israel. Why has the fire not come yet? Could it be that we have worked separately, doing our own church work in a local area? Why is the altar of our nations in ruin? You say, "I want to pray for revival in my own stone". So, you wait but the fire does not come because the Lord wants to see His body united. He wants us to experience the fire together. We cannot produce revival; it only comes down from God. But we can prepare for it by repairing the altar.

Principle 6: Reject depression. After the fire has come, beware of Satan for he will attack you. In 1 Kings 19, we read that a powerful woman, Jezebel, intimidated Elijah and he withdrew into hiding again. Satan wanted to destroy Elijah through fear of death and yet, Elijah never died. He was taken to heaven in chariots of fire. Could it be that you are depressed in the area that God was

going to bless you and Satan is trying to abort the blessing? Reject depression.

SESSION 5, 27 MAY 2000, CARLOS ANNA CONDIA

Spiritual Warfare and the Anointing

The person who is called of God has a special anointing. God's authority accompanies the anointing. Anointing gives life to methods of strategy employed. Without anointing, methodology is dead. With anointing, every method is good. Spiritual warfare is like air warfare. Prayer and winning souls are necessary for spiritual warfare. We are in the midst of this battle as part of His army and He is anointing us to claim back the lost souls from the evil one. Our hearts should beat like Jesus' for lost souls in order for God's call in our lives to be fulfilled. There is no revival if there is no winning of lost souls.

God had given Adam the key to rule the kingdom but through sin, Adam gave it away. Because of man's disobedience, the ownership of the world has changed hands. But when Jesus died, a new pact was signed and it brought reconciliation between man and God. Satan was defeated and we now have authority over him (2 Cor 4:3). We are now heirs to the kingdom and have the keys to open the blessings of God.

SESSION 6, 27 MAY 2000, CLAUDIO FREIDZON

CALLED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Luke 4:18—The purpose of anointing is to bring good news to the poor, to give away what we have received. As leaders, we are sometimes full of contradictions but God wants to transform us so that we can make a difference. We are the salt but if the salt has no flavour, it is useless. People will not follow us and our ministry will be dead. Through the Holy Spirit's anointing, God will raise a generation of exceptional leaders who will make a difference.

Deuteronomy 8—People who have gone through crises will become exceptional. Therefore, God will take us to the wilderness to change us and reveal His plans. 2 Kings 5—Naaman had all the authority and was respected; yet, he had leprosy. And like Naaman, we may be great preachers but if we have areas in our lives that are "sick", our ministry is dead. God will cleanse us just as He had cleansed Naaman if we humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness. He will then transform and renew us completely.



Hands stretched forth to receive God's touch—at the Breakthrough 2000 Conference.

A Record of Thanks...

THE NECF MALAYSIA wants to record its appreciation for the partnership of churches and Christians as represented by the Breakthrough 2000 Conference and Renewal Rally Executive Committee and Planning Committee in helping to organise this event.

They are as follow:-

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Elder Kong Yeng Phooi
Mr Samuel Ang

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Rev. Wong Kim Kong, *NECF Secretary-General (Chief Coordinator)*
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Rev. Peter Ong, *Calvary Church, KL (Member-at-large)*
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Rev. Cheng Hing Chai, *Taman Midah Lutheran Church (Chinese churches)*
Rev. David Packiam, *The Dwelling Place (Counselling)*

Rev. Dr John Nagamuthu, *Rhema Charismatic Assembly (Tamil churches)*

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Rev. Karen Ong, *Kuala Lumpur Assembly (Dance Presentation)*

Rev. Luke Chan, *Faith Charismatic Centre (Catchers)*

Rev. Mohan Singh, *Shiloh Assembly (Technical – Rally)*

Rev. Ong Sek Leang, *Metro Tabernacle (Follow-up)*

Rev. Ronnie Teoh, *Balai Baptist Kalvari (Facilities)*

Rev. Yow Kit Yen, *Calvary Church, KL (Medical)*

Pr Ann Low, *Kajang Assembly of God and NECF Executive Secretary – Prayer (Prayer)*

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Edwin Chun, *Renewal Lutheran Church (Hospitality)*

Jim Guneratnam, *Calvary Church, KL (Technical – Conference)*

K.L. Lam, *SS Methodist Church (Publicity)*

Lee Wee Min, *Focus On The Family (Books/Materials)*

Mike Bernie Chin, *SIB KL (Technical Consultant)*

Tan Chin Leong, *Full Gospel Assembly, KL (Usher)*

Thomas Lang, *Diakonia Christian Church (Security)*

And finally, our heartfelt thanks to members of the sub-committees; volunteers; Worship leaders, singers and musicians; NECF staff; and all those who have helped in one way or another. ■

WATCHING OVER THE NATION IN PRAYER

An ongoing 24-hour Prayer Watch, endorsed by NECF Malaysia, to intercede for the nation has been launched. Organised by several churches from different denominations in the Klang Valley, the prayer initiative aims to unite the churches of Malaysia to “humble themselves to pray and turn from their wicked ways so that revival may come to the land”.

The vision to establish the Prayer Watch was first sown in the hearts of intercessors during last year's NECF Prayer Wave. The Emmanuel Celebration prayer efforts that soon followed spurred the vision further for more united prayer among inter-denominational churches. By 1 January 2000, the seed had taken root.

On 1 April, NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong officially launched the Prayer Watch in a simple but spiritually significant ceremony. About 30 elders, pastors, prayer leaders



Rev. Wong Kim Kong addressing the gathering while Elder Timothy Phua looks on at the launching of the Prayer Watch.

and intercessors from various denominations attended the opening.

The venue of the Prayer Watch is strategically located at a high place overlooking the skyline of Kuala Lumpur. At any one time, there will be a group of Christians there interceding for the nation.

A month before the launch, Claudio Freidzon (one of the speakers at the recent Breakthrough 2000 Conference and Renewal Rally) attended a prayer session at the venue and declared prophetically: “As pastors and intercessors gather to pray, I sense the Lord will release His strategy to take the city and nation. The strategy will be unique for Malaysia, and will not be like the Argentina's (revival)”.

To encourage the intercessors further, God brought Canon Alfredo Cooper of Chile quite unexpectedly to the April 1 launch. He shared a vision he had of dark clouds hovering over Malaysia and lightning suddenly striking the land from top to bottom. “...the Holy Spirit told me that the vision is for this place (the venue of the Prayer Watch),” he enthused. The Chilean church is now praying for revival in Malaysia!

(Contributed by NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission) ■

RETURN TO YOUR GOD— A CALL TO THE CHINESE



God has left “witnesses” about Himself in the ancient Chinese characters and the Chinese classics, and the roots of Christianity can be traced back to the earliest Chinese emperors. According to Perth-based Chinese businessman Steve Oh, there are “mountains of evidence” and scholarship to prove that *Shangti*, the original God worshipped by the Chinese, is the same God worshipped by the Hebrews and also the Christians.

Yet, the devil has duped the Chinese into believing that Christianity is a Western religion and this has put off the Chinese from accepting Jesus. So, how can we endear these unbelieving Chinese to Jesus?

Come August, those with a heart for the Chinese people will be able to learn how to evangelise them more effectively through a seminar and series of talks on God and the ancient Chinese language and history.

It is a call to the non-believing Chinese to “Return to your God”, as the seminar is aptly titled. Meanwhile, Chinese Christians will be encouraged to discover at the seminar that God has been with the Chinese from the dawn of time.

Oh, together with researchers cum

authors Dr Ethel Nelson and Samuel Wang, will deliver the talks to church leaders, seminary students and also the public through evangelistic dinners and night meetings in Penang, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. All the meetings will be conducted in English and Mandarin.

Dr Nelson is a retired pathologist and for the past 10 years, has been involved in research and writing about the ancient Chinese characters and their “link” to Genesis. Wang, a former Hare Krishna leader in Beijing, is a student of Chinese classics. Both of them now live in USA and work closely in research, writing and public speaking. Among the many books they have published is the best-selling *God and the Ancient Chinese*.

The seminar is organised by the partnership of Malaysian churches with NECF Malaysia, Baptist Theological Seminary and Shangti-E Movement, a new group initiated by Oh and several others to research deeper into the Chinese culture, history and language in the Biblical perspective.

Oh urged every Chinese Christian – especially the English-educated ones – and everyone who wants to save Chinese souls to attend the seminar. “I don’t know Mandarin...but I love the Chinese. I love to hear the gospel preached in Chinese and prayers in Chinese,” Oh said.

There are many Chinese, especially the older generation and those from the traditional Chinese upbringing, who will never accept Jesus because the devil has bluffed them into thinking Jesus is a Westerner. “But if they are told that Jesus is the original God of China, who was with them with the Father and the Holy Spirit from the beginning, they may see the gospel in a different light,” Oh continued.

Besides equipping the participants to evangelise the Chinese more effectively, the seminar is an opportunity to bring the Chinese- and English-speaking Christians closer. “For the sake of the unsaved, we

must become ‘all things to all men’ and if it means becoming more Chinese, then we should. Unity in a common purpose can only strengthen our Christian witness.”

“I hope many will grasp the opportunity to bring the gospel to the Chinese in a fresh way through their ancient history, culture and language. Come and learn,” Oh urged. ■

The seminar and talks will be held in:

- Penang from 10 to 12 August (contact Pastor Sunny Tan at 04-8811245);
- Ipoh from 14 to 16 August (contact Dr Su Too Kiat at 05-2419307);
- Kuala Lumpur from 21 to 23 August (contact Chan Wah See at 03-732 0258)

A bi-lingual (English and Mandarin) evangelistic dinner will be held on the last night of the seminar in each town.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD THE "S-M-A-R-T" WAY

Most Christians will agree that the Bible is the most important book and yet how many actually read it daily, much less memorise and apply it. Recognising this problem, the Trinity Baptist Church in Alor Setar recently established a school to help students acquire the discipline of daily Bible reading.

Known as the "S-M-A-R-T School" (the acronym for Sword, Meditate, Armed, Renewed and Triumphed), the in-house programme also aims at offering basic practical applications for daily living.

On 17 April, the church held a grand graduation ceremony as part of its Sunday Worship Service for its first batch of 148 students. To show that the study of God's Word is serious business, the graduands donned graduation gowns and mortar boards to receive their scrolls.

It was the climax of the six-month course conducted by the church pastors

who led the students through the four gospels and the book of James. From the teaching on the life of Christ – how He overcame challenges – the students discovered how they too could live victorious lives.

Besides completing the weekly homework and memorising Scripture verses based on their studies, the students also had to read at least one book a month from their extensive church library before they could graduate. In addition, they were encouraged to read the Bible through a one-year reading programme together with other church members.

On this special morning, NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong was present to give away the Certificate of Attendance to the graduands. One student was honoured with the Overall Best Student award for having the highest score on the worksheets and best attendance, memorising all the verses, reading the whole Bible and the most



A joyous occasion for graduands of the S-M-A-R-T School.

number of books. Several others who performed well were given book prizes while those who finished reading the whole Bible were rewarded with gift vouchers.

The programme was a huge success, attracting not only new believers but mature Christians too and not just adults but primary school children as well. It also helped foster family ties as some parents took the course with their children. Studying God's Word also imparted effective parenting skills to those students who were parents. A teenager who attended the school discovered how to live victoriously in today's dangerous world and is now more able to share effectively with his peers. ■

EXCELLENCE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

NATIONAL PASTORS' CONFERENCE 2000

A historic breakthrough event in cementing church unity in Malaysia—that was the conclusion reached by pastors who attended the Malaysian National Pastors Conference in March.

Held in picturesque Pulau Langkawi, the conference was attended by 280 pastors and others involved in the pastoral ministry from 150 churches nationwide.

The conference was organised by Agape Enterprise to encourage those who are in the pastoral ministry, especially in the areas of preaching and building the spiritual life of church members. It also provided an excellent forum for participants to be reminded of the dangers and pitfalls in the ministry and to seek ways to avoid or overcome them.

Bro. Selwyn Hughes, Founder and Director of CWR, United Kingdom and his associate, Bro. Philip Greenshade, blessed the gathering with their rich and profound experiential knowledge in building up ministerial capabilities of church workers. Their presentations were complemented and supplemented by ensuing informal discussions among the participants.

During the four days together, the participants unashamedly bared their hearts to God and to one another. Deep-rooted hidden agendas were uncovered and repented of; unique ministry



Strengthening ties across Malaysia at the National Pastors' Conference

problems were discussed and solutions suggested; and a greater understanding of and concern for one another was deepened.

It was indeed a reflection of Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" Unity among the brethren as a family is a formidable strength and the participants went home strengthened and encouraged with the knowledge that they are not alone in the ministry.

The conference would not have been possible if not for the generous sponsorship of several local Christian individuals. Not only were the participants spiritually fed, they were physically refreshed by the beautiful resort and the lavish meals. For these, we thank the sponsors for their kindness.

—Reported by Pastor Lawrence Yap, Senior Pastor of Charis Christian Centre, KL ■



Spiritual Intimacy

by Pastor Susan Tang

SPIRITUAL intimacy. Two powerful and uncommon words. Indeed, they are known only to the uncommon Christian.

A pastor friend of mine once said, "I'm capable of hard work and faithfulness but totally incapable of intimacy with God. Prayer is a hard thing for me; it is just not my cup of tea!"

How shocking! However, I am sure this man is not alone. The ministry is full of people like this - men and women who are capable of doing almost anything and everything for the Lord except getting down on their knees and being intimate with Him. They cannot prevail in His presence. This is why I say spiritual intimacy is enjoyed only by the uncommon Christian.

The common Christian today knows everything from prophecy to anointing, from home cells to music, from miracles to visitations, from missions to running errands etc. but they simply cannot enter into intimacy with the Lord or prevail in His presence. Seeking His face is just too much for them.

Spiritual intimacy does not mean waiting in God's presence with a passive mind and waiting for the time to just tick away! People who do this will be greatly disillusioned. They do not know why they are spending so much time in God's presence, yet they experience no solid changes on the inside. They find themselves still bound to bad and disgusting habits and wrong soul-ties or they are still obsessed with the wrong things in life. They perpetually make wrong decisions and their taste for "forbidden fruits" still prevails.

CRY FOR INTIMACY

When the Bride of Jesus Christ cries out, "Kiss me" and "Draw me" (Song of

The common Christian today knows everything from prophecy to anointing, from home cells to music, from miracles to visitations, from missions to running errands etc. but they simply cannot enter into intimacy with the Lord or prevail in His presence.

Solomon 1:2,4) she is actually crying out for intimacy with the Bridegroom. Do you not realise that this is the deepest and the greatest need in your life?

The cry for reality and the cry, "Oh, God touch me, touch me!" is actually the cry for intimacy with God. Heed that cry within your heart and get connected with Him - He has put it there.

Physical intimacy is the joining of two physical bodies through which fruit (children) is produced.

Spiritual intimacy is the joining of two spirits and it should also produce fruit. Unfortunately the lack of fruits within the church today is clear evidence that the Bride has not been intimate with her Lord.

We do have much works and activities but really not much fruits, especially the fruits of self-denial, holiness and the fear of God. Such fruits had always governed revivals in history but why, in spite of so many revivals today, are self-denial,

holiness and the fear of the God still painfully missing in so many lives? The answer is simple. We have lost intimacy with Him.

GO BACK TO OUR FIRST LOVE

It is painful to find ourselves ending up with so many spiritual activities, hype and no spiritual reality. Indeed, it is a curse to get ourselves involved in so many church programmes and projects and end up with no solid moral changes on our inside. Why is this happening? Why is our spiritual worship of God and our wonderful up-to-date church programmes not bringing changes to our inward moral state? The answer: we have lost intimacy with Him.

Oh, that we will go back to our first love! Oh, that we may return to intimacy with Him! This is the cry of His heart. Will you heed it?

When Jesus chided the church at Ephesus with the words, "Thou hast left thy first love" He meant, "You have lost intimacy with Me!" Every married couple knows what happens to a marriage when the intimacy is gone - the loneliness in them leaves them so vulnerable to outside attacks. Yes, when a marriage has become only a physical relationship with no intimacy, it is ready to break up.

This was what had happened to the church at Ephesus. Look at the outward physical activities the church had. God called them "works" (plural!). Unfortunately, years later, her candlestick (testimony) was gone. Why? Because she had lost intimacy with God and therefore she lost her prevailing power. None of us can keep our testimonies, maintain the standard of God or prevail in His presence, especially in these end

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Spiritual intimacy does not mean waiting in God's presence with a passive mind and waiting for the time to tick away.

times, if we have left our first love or if we have lost intimacy with Him.

Revelation 2:2-5

"I know your works (plural - you have plenty!) your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent."

I did not plan to write a book on *Spiritual Intimacy* and was pleasantly surprised when the Lord directed me to do so in the middle of the school term (Station of Life March 2000). Although I had some struggles at first, God in His goodness led me to finish the book in just five days.

I felt the impact of the Holy Spirit all through the writing of this book as I began to draw from my own personal experiences and also from fresh revelation knowledge from the Psalms and the relationship between David and Jonathan. May the reading of it impact you too.

I do not purport to know everything about spiritual intimacy but I do know enough to write this book. I pray and pray that it will bless you by spurring you into deeper and more meaningful intimacy with Father God.

PRINCIPLES THAT GOVERNED DAVID'S RELATIONSHIP WITH JONATHAN

When Jonathan died, David cried and

lamented publicly over his loss. He also said something that was really strange. He lamented that none of the beautiful women or wives in his life was able to give him what Jonathan gave him.

In essence, David was saying, "Your love, O Jonathan, was so marvellous it far surpassed (eclipsed) the love of all the women in my life. What you put into my life can never be compared to what those women gave me."

2 Samuel 1:26

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant has thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing (eclipsing or excelling) the love of women.

What did Jonathan actually give to David? Why was his relationship with David so special? What did his intimate friendship with David (which the Scriptures describe as 'soul-ties') consist of?

Three uncommon features stood out in the relationship between these two great men. Read 1 Samuel 20 and 23.

1. Their mutual exposure of their heart's condition, desires or feelings to one another.
2. Their absolute giving to one another. They were totally at each other's disposal.
3. Their ability to draw strength from one another so they could carry on in adverse circumstances.

This is what an intimate relationship is all about. Jonathan was able to give the above three things to David unreservedly, things which none of the gorgeous women in his life could contribute. David drew mental, emotional and spiritual strength from Jonathan but he drew only physical or sensual pleasure from all the beautiful women in his life.

UNCOMMON PRAYERS

David knew intimacy with Jonathan. I believe he applied these same principles of intimacy when he came to Father God. We can find these principles in the Psalms. The Psalms are powerful and unique writings and many of them are uncommon prayers. The church of Jesus Christ must come back to intimacy with God, seek His face and pray these uncommon prayers if she wants to return to apostolic power and authority.

Anyone who wants to learn intimacy with Father God must read the Psalms - over and over, again and again. The major

reason why this book is so powerful is because it tells how a man exposed his heart to God - it is about 'deep calling to deep.' It is about the depths of a man reaching out for the depths of God and vice versa. Let us not forget that the man who wrote these prayers had gone through extreme situations in life and he was often close to breaking point. He had gone through all of life's ups and downs. This is why every spectrum of human emotion is found in the Psalms - fear, discouragement, distress, depression, discontentment, lust, jealousy, hatred, guilt, anger, humiliation, a sense of worthlessness or low self-esteem etc. God had indeed taken this man through them all!

Can a man really go through so much in life and remain sane? Can a man be

Anyone who wants to learn intimacy with Father God must read the Psalms - over and over, again and again.

walking on the edge of a precipice and not fall over? Not only did David remain sane, he continued to remain in constant praise and maintained a spirit of thanksgiving! How did he manage and how did he keep his sense of equilibrium?

David's secret is INTIMACY WITH FATHER GOD. Yes, David's ability to release and relieve himself in God's presence kept him above the floodwaters. It gave him the ability to go through great adversity with great dignity.

The Psalms taught me other truths about intimacy with God. They are:

4. Reminisce about the goodness of God.
5. Commune with yourself or be willing to 'soul-search.' ■

Pastor Susan Tang is an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God, Malaysia. The present focus of her ministry is Station of Life, Lahad Datu, which she founded in 1993.

This is an extract from her latest book Spiritual Intimacy. Available from Christian bookrooms.

On Being Spiritual Pilgrims

by Dr Lilian Koh

This is what the Lord says, "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls"

Jeremiah 6:16.

I BELIEVE that the term "spiritual pilgrims" defines who we are as Christians. Becoming a Christian (our conversion) is not the end point of our spiritual lives. A. W. Tozer addresses this misguided notion in his book, *The Pursuit of God*:

"Everything is made to center upon the initial act of 'accepting' Christ and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him we need no more seek Him."

Conversion is merely the start of a "life of faith" - a journey that will take us to the Promised Land. It is a journey of ever deepening restoration of our brokenness and of continual reconciliation with God. God is leading the way all the time. All we have to do is open ourselves to be led through times of blessing as well as times of apparent darkness.

The soul's highest end

What is the goal set before us? What is our soul's highest end? Surely it is communion with God and likeness to Christ. As we start a new relationship with the God who is greater than any of our human experiences, yet who is also closer to us than we are to ourselves, we embark on this great adventure in our journey of faith. Ever since I have been convinced of this, I have tried to have the journey's end before me to remind myself that I am not to be static but to be on the move. On this journey we do not have the security of mapping out the route beforehand. It is certainly not easy to let go of our human tendency to cling to what is comfortable and safe and what

we have control of. Instead, God calls us to be vulnerable and to trust Him, believing that He has our best interests at heart.

We often want to have God in our lives on our own terms. I realize how difficult it is to truly surrender my plans and my wisdom for my loved ones and for myself and to allow God to have His way. It seems I live life in a tension, pulled between "Thy will be done" and "My will be done." At the end of each struggle, I am reminded gently and lovingly by the Lord, that He desires to transform me into the image of His Son. I then grow in my desire to love God with all my heart, with all my strength and with all my mind.

Whatever we do for others in His name will be of spiritual worth only if we serve with the heart of Christ. We need to be aware that the chief rival of devotion to Christ is service for Him.

**Whatever we do
for others in His
name will be of
spiritual worth only if
we serve with the
heart of Christ.**

God has called us first and foremost to a relationship of love with Him. Jesus said, *"I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything I have learned from my Father I have made known to you"* (John 15:5).

Listen to God

Are we working for God or are we allowing God to work in and through us? We have to be willing to let Him transform us. This is not easy because most of us find it easier to use our natural giftings and professional skills to serve

**The term "pilgrim"
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the Lord than to let Him work on our weaknesses and to shape us into the likeness of His Son.

The term "pilgrim" suggests that in our spiritual lives, we are always on the move. As we travel, the seasons and landscapes change. If we let Him, each particular route will be chosen by the Lord. God desires to do so much in our lives. He wants "to form the whole person so that the nature of Christ becomes the natural expression of our souls, bodies and spirits." This is what the term "spiritual formation" means. It is an ever deepening conversion of our inner selves.

On this journey, we learn to listen to God in the situations we find ourselves in. In this way, we learn to submit and to surrender to His purposes for our lives. The losses we suffer in our lifetime - be they emotional, physical or material - may never be fully recovered in this life. But our trust in God will grow when we see these difficult circumstances as part of God's redemptive work in our lives.

Purification of love

Henri Nouwen writes in his book *Reaching Out*:

"It is a sign of spiritual maturity when we can give up our illusory self-control and stretch out our hands to God. But it would be just another illusion to believe that reaching out to God will free us from pain and

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On Being Spiritual Pilgrims: *from page 11*

suffering. Often indeed, it will take us where we rather would not go. But we know that without going there we will not find our life. Jesus said, 'whoever loses his life will find it.'

The purification of love comes not in times of wealth and health but in times of poverty and sickness. Listen to what Mother Teresa says about trust:

"One thing Jesus asks of me is that I lean on Him and surrender myself to Him unreservedly. Even when I feel like a ship without a compass, I must give myself completely to Him. I must not attempt to control God's actions. I must not desire a clear perception of my advance along the road. The emptier we are, the more room we give God to fill us. Even God cannot put anything into what is already full."

Jesus trusted His Father with an unshakable trust and this is what we are called to do. His trust was the fruit of His intimate knowledge and love of the Father.

I share these thoughts not because I have already arrived at the destination. We embark on similar journeys and will encounter different seasons and landscapes along the way. I am on my journey. I walk the path, sometimes with ease, sometimes I stumble and do not see clearly but always I know deep down in my heart that God's love will not let me go.

We are the body of Christ. We are called to be a community to lend support to each other, to encourage each other and to allow our true selves-in-Christ to

To be a pilgrim means:

- To be on the move slowly
- To receive beauty instead of trying to capture it
- To gaze upon, to reverence and adore
- To notice your luggage becoming lighter
- To be seeking for treasures that do not rust
- To be comfortable with your heart's questions
- To be moving towards the holy ground of home with empty hands and bare feet

(Macrina Wiederkehr)

emerge that we may bring His light into the world.

Let us join in the prayer of the pilgrim on his way to Jerusalem:

*"Happy are those who find refuge in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrim roads.
As they pass through the Baca valley,
they find spring water to drink,
also from pools the Lord provides water
for those who lose their way.*

*They pass through outer and inner wall
And see the God of gods on Zion."*

(Psalm 84: 6-8)

*Lilian Koh is a medical practitioner.
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Petaling Jaya, where she serves in the
lay counselling ministry.*

THE RECOGNITION OF MY PERSONAL SELF

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 10:39).

We have to recognize that the personal life is meant for Jesus Christ. The modern jargon is for self-realization - "I must save my life" - Jesus Christ says, whoever "loses his life for My sake will find it." The cross is the deliberate recognition of what our personal self is for, namely, to be given to Jesus, and we take up that cross daily and prove we are no longer our own. Whenever the call is given for abandon to Jesus Christ, people say it is offensive and out of taste. The counterfeit of abandon is that misleading phrase, *Christian service*. I will spend myself for God. I will do anything and everything but the one thing He asks me to do - give up my right to Him. But surely Christian service is a right thing? As soon as we begin to say that, we are off the track. It is the right person, the Lord Jesus Christ, not the right thing - don't stop short of the Lord Himself: "for My sake." The great dominating recognition is that my personal self belongs to Jesus. When I receive the Holy Spirit, I receive not a possible oneness with Jesus Christ, but a real, intense oneness with Him. The point is, will I surrender my individual life entirely to Him? It will mean giving up not only bad things, but things that are right and good. (cf Matthew 5:29-30). If you have to calculate what you are willing to give up for Jesus Christ, never say that you love Him. Jesus Christ asks us to give up the best we have got to Him - our right to ourselves. There is only this one crisis and in the majority of lives it has never been reached; we are brought up to it again and again and, every time, we go back. Self-realisation must be renounced in order that Jesus Christ may realise Himself in us. ■

Oswald Chambers in *Conformed to His Image*

WOMEN to WOMEN

Adviser/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 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, 32A, Jalan SS 2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

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

NECF MALAYSIA 7th BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING

All the present members of the NECF Malaysia Council have been re-elected for another two years, with one new member added as follow:

Chairman	: Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam
Vice-Chairman	: Rev. Dr Eu Hong Seng
Hon. Secretary	: Mr Kong Yeng Phooi
Hon. Treasurer	: Mr Sam Ang
Committee Members:	Dr Khoo Kay Hup
	Rev. Dr Dexter Low
	Rev. Eddy Ho
	Rev. David Ramayah
	Pr Gerawat Maran
	Mr Chua Keng Seng
	Ms Goh Poh Gaik
	Rev. Dr John Nagamuthu (new)

The meeting also unanimously agreed to increase membership fees with immediate effect in view of the expansion of the ministry. Under the new fee structure, Ordinary Member and Associate Member will pay RM250 and RM60 respectively compared with RM180 and RM40 respectively before.

Altogether, 36 Associate Members and representatives of their churches/organisations and two observers, including NECF founding member Mr David Boler, were present.

The Council Chairman, in his opening address, thanked members for their commitment and support in the projects carried out to help fulfil its vision and mission. Rev. Guneratnam also assured that NECF would give its fullest support to the initiatives of local churches and organisations.

The meeting was informed of major inroads made to facilitate churches in problem areas concerning church premises and immigration permits and visas. These successes were the result of several meetings with government leaders. ■

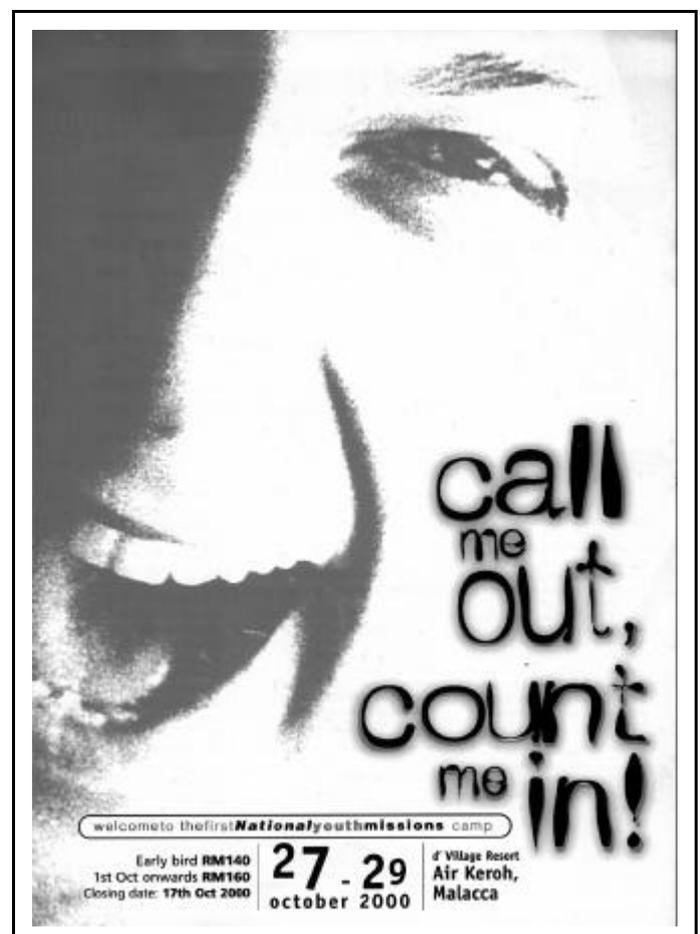
UNITE FOR CHANGE, BM CHURCH LEADERS TOLD

Consistent unity in prayer and evangelism is the key to changing the spiritual climate of a town or city, according to Dr Jeff Hammond, a missionary and Bible teacher who has worked in Indonesia for many years. He was addressing a gathering of pastors and leaders from Bahasa Malaysia churches and Christian organisations at a leadership seminar in May.

The main thrust of the seminar, themed "Changing the spiritual climate of your town", was to make church leaders aware of their position and role as fellow "elders" of their community, regardless of which church or denomination they came from. All are in the body of Christ with the same goal and destination, Dr Hammond reminded.

He also said that the unity of Christians should not only be demonstrated during big national evangelistic rallies but even on small-scale events. Most of the participants expressed deep satisfaction in the exposition of God's Word, especially in equipping leaders, pastors and evangelists in their ministry.

The seminar was organised by NECF in partnership with SIB Petaling Jaya. Altogether, 26 churches and Christian organisations were represented at the seminar. ■





The Use and Abuse of Science and Technology in the Last Days

By Dr Living Lee Chai Peng

EVER since early man discovered fire and began to make and use tools which enabled him to control rather than be controlled by his environment, he has apparently stopped evolving physically but progressed technologically. Great advancement in technology has enabled him to utilise the raw material in the world around him to produce goods useful to himself and also enabled him, up to a certain extent, to modify and control not only the environment in which he lives but also the creatures within it including his fellow man.

By learning to till the ground instead of just hunting and gathering, he was freed to stay and develop communities in one place instead of wandering in search of food. This was the Agricultural Revolution which was soon followed by the Industrial Revolution when the invention and use of machines enabled him to produce much more than he could ever have before. He has also learnt the sophisticated use of language which enabled him to transmit his ideas to others, thus freeing him from the tedious process of reinventing the wheel or learning by personal experience for every generation.

This was, of course, greatly accelerated by the use of computers ushering in the Information Age. He is even now tampering with the basic building blocks of life itself in genetic engineering to try to meet the needs of the hungry world whose resources will not be enough to feed its fast-growing population as well as provide other necessities such as medicine and clothing.

John Naisbitt (1990), in his book *Megatrends 2000*, has gone on to say that while physics has furnished the metaphors and models for the mechanistic industrial age, the metaphors of biology (for example, feedback system, computer virus, cell groups) are increasingly used today to help us understand today's dilemmas and opportunities. We are poised on the threshold of a great era of biotechnology and the next major step forward in humankind's history could well be the Age of Biology.

Science the deliverer?

So far, science and technology have seemed to deliver man from impending disasters such as food and energy shortages by helping him to keep one step ahead before we run out of these and other resources. This has falsely led many modern men

to assume that science and technology hold the answers to all our problems and will enable us to face and overcome the challenges that will come our way to threaten our existence on planet earth..... given enough time!

Hence, we are engaged in an accelerated race against time to try to use science and technology to meet all projected needs to ensure our survival. In this race, we often throw caution to the winds and it is more like "do it first and sort out the ethics later" as exemplified by the recent rush in cloning and genetic engineering. The practical dominates the theoretical or ethical.

Walsh and Middleton (*The transforming Vision, 1984*), sum it up quite well in their critique of scientism and technicism (the worship of science and technology), by writing these words: "While scientism holds out the promise of omniscience, technicism offers us omnipotence. Modern humanity has come to believe in the unlimited (and thus abnormal) advance of science and technology, regardless of the consequences—social, environmental or psychological. We have come to believe that if it can be known, it must be known; and if it can be made, it must be made."

Roles of science and technology in the last days

Where is this leading us and what will be the potential contributions of science and technology to the events of the last days?

A look at some common elements of the end-time scenario as given Matthew 24 and other passages in the Bible shows that it will be a time of chaos and calamities brought about by the conjunction of a series of natural, supernatural and man-made disasters. In the confusion that ensues, people will become increasingly fearful and suspicious of each other and wickedness will increase because of the heightened need for self-preservation and survival. Many will fall prey to false prophets of not just the religious kind with their wonders and miracles, but also to those dressed in white lab-coats who keep reassuring them with "Do not fear, science and technology have the answers. We shall overcome."

Science has and will be used to offer a false sense of security to those who choose not to believe in God and the Bible. While we cannot deny that science and technology have brought about much good to mankind and helped him solve many of

his problems, they have also made him arrogant so as to even deny God's existence in preference to naturalism. This has led mankind down the road to destruction in the belief that might is right (the dogma of survival of the fittest based on atheistic evolutionary belief of origins) and there are no absolute morals because there is no God. This potent mix of the power he wields because of his mastery of science and technology and the absence of accountability to anyone but himself has brought man to the height of his arrogance and the brink of his destruction.

Science is mostly morally neutral in the sense that it is just systematised knowledge in understanding the natural world. Technology or the application of science to improve our lives needs more guidance as its misapplication can unleash forces that can cause tremendous and even irreparable damage to the earth and its inhabitants. There is, for example, a very real worry among some scientists that splicing genes from animals to plants to produce genetically modified foods could result in "rogue genes" which could escape our control and plague us with unnatural new diseases we do not know how to treat.

It is interesting to observe that several of the signs of the end-times will probably be brought about by the power put into our hands by science and technology. Matthew 24 can become reality very swiftly in our modern world through their contributions. Large multinational companies have been accused of trying to control food production through the introduction of genetically modified food produced by single generation seeds which could only be purchased from them. The control over food will put into the hands of the future One-World Government control over individuals just as the control over economy in the One-World Economic System will give it control over all the nations.

The rapid transmission of information by modern telecommunications is of particular significance in its contributions to ushering in the events of the last days. False prophets and false Christs can now reach and control many more followers via the television, Internet and air travel. Wickedness will increase as corruption of morals through the spread of pornography, occultic and other evil practices via the electronic and other media become widespread and easy.

We have become such an interconnected community in the global village that the effects of famines and earthquakes will not only be confined to where they take place but would be worldwide (for example, a major earthquake in Tokyo can collapse the economic system of the world and trigger off worldwide panic and chaos). Wars and rumors of wars can likewise be spread faster and wider than ever before (and so will the gospel). We have more than enough weapons to bring about a nuclear holocaust to fulfil the end-time scenario of the destruction of the heavens and the earth in 2 Peter 3:10.

Bizarre weather phenomena coupled with man-made as well as natural disasters will add to the great distress felt by the inhabitants of an increasingly unstable world. They will be driven to seek refuge in the promises of deliverance and escape

by the hoards of false prophets doing spectacular miracles many of whom will be aided, no doubt, by illusions cleverly created with the help of science as is done in magic shows today. Even now, many cults and new age practitioners are using "science" to endorse their practices and gain credibility by having scientists within their ranks to promote their cause.

The greatest of the false prophets—the Antichrist—will gain control over all of mankind, except the true believers, with his promise to take care of all their problems if they surrender control of their lives and possessions to his central command. This is achievable, perhaps, with the advent of the personalised biochip that would be implanted in all who surrender to the One-World Economic and Political System. All those refuse will be pursued and persecuted relentlessly while many will be killed. When all have received the mark of the beast in order to be able to buy and sell, the Antichrist will institute his One-World Religion by making them bow down to his image. Even the staunchest of believers in any previous religion will be hard pressed not to submit when his very existence or that of loved ones is threatened.

Finally, the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will see Him and mourn. This used to be dismissed as an impossibility by skeptics because only half the world will be able to see Jesus coming in the sky at any one time. They did not reckon that with the advent of satellite television any event can be easily transmitted worldwide immediately and so make this possible.

Be prepared for His sudden return

The rapid progress of science and technology has brought us closer to fulfilling some of the signs of the last days before Jesus' return. It has made possible what was previously thought impossible. Does that mean that we Christians shouldn't be involved with and contribute to the progress of science and technology?

Certainly not, for we shall continue to hasten towards His second coming no matter what happens and there is much good that we can do with the products of science and technology in ministering to a world in need. Science and technology can help us do a better job in caring for the needy and the poor and in spreading the gospel. We need not fear or stay away from them but should develop and use them for God's purposes even as the unbelievers are seeking to use them for profit and to gain control of others.

It is just a matter of time when all the conditions are right for the events prophesied about the end-times to take place. While many Christians are tempted to guess the date of His return, which even He did not know (Matthew 24:26), Christ tells us to prepare for it by being faithful and wise servants doing what the Master has entrusted us to do until He returns. It will be business as usual like in the days of Noah and many will be caught unawares for He shall come like a thief in the night! ■

Book Review

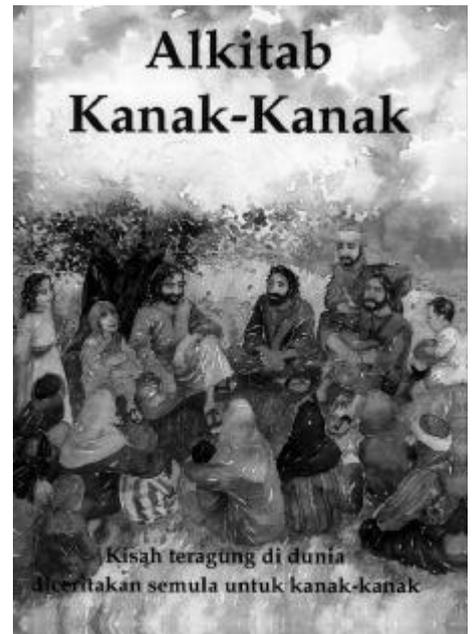
BAHASA MALAYSIA ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BIBLE

THE first ever children's Bible in Bahasa Malaysia, the *Alkitab Kanak-Kanak*, a joint production with Lion Publishings, London, is finally available in Malaysia.

All the main stories of the Old and New Testaments are modernised in clear and simple language for children to read without diminishing God's truths. Every page is adorned with colourful, attractive illustrations to stir the children's imagination and captivate their hearts to the beautiful Bible stories.

More importantly, this book seeks to help children understand the teachings of the Bible in the language they are comfortable in. Children and even adults will certainly enjoy this hard cover book of 256 pages, affordably priced at RM27.90

The *Alkitab Kanak-Kanak* is available at: Scripture Union, 386 Jalan 5/59, 46000 Petaling Jaya; Tel: 03-7782 9592; Fax: 03-7783 1663; E-mail: sufes@po.jaring.my



Sharing Resources

Missions Handbook

A local resource booklet containing information on the mission agencies operating locally is now available. Hailed as the first of its kind in Malaysia, the "Handbook on Missions Agencies in Malaysia" also has some statistics and data on the state and needs of missions worldwide. It is published by NECF Missions Commission and available at RM8.00 per copy from the NECF office and some mission agencies.

Books Available from NECF

Preacher, Prepare Yourself! (Towards Better Preaching) by Tan Jin Huat at RM28 each.

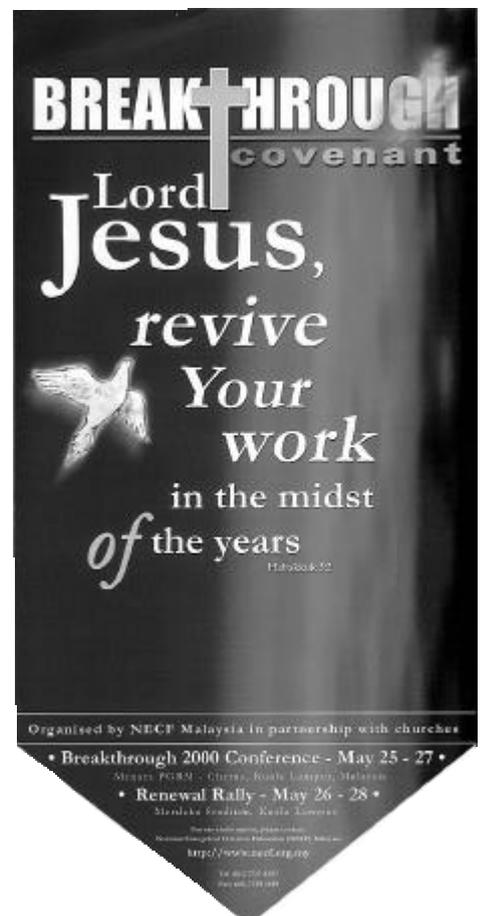
Into the 21st Century Asian Churches in Mission (a compendium of the Asia Missions Congress II) published by Evangelical Fellowship of Asia at RM16 each.

Uncharted Waters (an account of C. Hudson Southwell's work among the people of Sarawak in the early 1900s) by C. Hudson Southwell at RM50 each.

Treasure in Jars of Clay by Claudio Freidzon at RM35 each.

Breakthrough Banners and Car Stickers

These colourful and attractive materials designed to reinforce the revival cry in our land are still available from the NECF office. The 3' x 6' banners bearing the message "Lord Jesus, revive Your work in the midst of the years" are now being displayed in churches throughout Malaysia, while the car stickers reminding us to pray unceasingly for revival, are visible on the road everywhere. If you or your church have not got hold of these materials, collect them now from the NECF office.





ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mega Trends Seminar

WE are living in times of unprecedented change that is quietly but effectively moulding societal values and individual lifestyles. As Christians, we are finding it increasingly difficult to grasp the implications of these unrelenting changes on our beliefs. For example, parents are perplexed at the behaviour of their children who have been bombarded by new dimensions of the world's culture while church leaders are overwhelmed in their efforts to provide leadership to their fast-changing environment.

NECF Research Commission is organising a conference to impart deep insights into some of the dominant world trends and undercurrents presently moving around us and what God is doing in His Church today. With the knowledge and understanding, we will be better prepared to face the new challenges of the 21st century and be more effective in our personal life and ministry.

Keynote speaker is Dr Tom Sine, a consultant in futures research and planning for both Christian and secular organisations. He also works with Christian organisation to develop a holistic theology of mission. He is an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary where he teaches on Christian world view. Among the books he has written are *Mustard Seed vs McWorld*, *Cease Fire and Wild Hope*.

The conference will also feature local speakers who will cover topics such as the New Age movement, use/misuse of science and technology and post-modernism.

The conference will be held at Full Gospel Assembly, Kuala Lumpur from 9.00am to 4.30pm on 25 and 26 August. Registration before 15 August is RM60 and RM70 thereafter. The fee includes seminar materials, lunch and tea and a copy of the Watchmen's Forum 2 published by NECF Research Commission.

For further enquiries, contact NECF

at tel: 03-7727 8227; fax: 03-7729 1139; e-mail: necf@po.jaring.my ■

MERDEKA DAY Prayer Wave

Intercessors often work behind the scene, waging warfare and mediating on behalf of the people. Come *Merdeka Day*, however, they will be coming out of their closet and moving into the streets all over Malaysia as part of this year's Prayer Wave celebration.

The aim is to demonstrate God's love and concern in practical ways through *gotong-royong* projects. And Christians throughout the nation are urged to join hands in impacting their surrounding communities and cities.

This is a move from the traditional yearly NECF Prayer Wave celebration which concentrates on prayer drives and prayer rallies. This year, the NECF Prayer Commission felt that, besides prayer, Christians should also work out their faith publicly through good works since the church is called to be the "light". Hence, the theme for this year's celebration "Lighting up the Nation".

Combined churches prayer rallies will be held on 30 August night across 14 capital cities and towns in Malaysia. On the stroke of midnight, all the praying saints, holding lighted candles, will shout in unison "Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!" symbolising one lighted heart.

To give a sense of ownership to the event, local churches will organise their own prayer rallies and community projects based on a programme drawn up by the Commission. ■

40-DAY FAST & PRAY OPERATION COVERAGE

Calling all Christians in Malaysia to fast and pray for the gospel to be saturated in the nation before the year ends. This 40-day fast and prayer initiative begins on 15 August. Organised by Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ, the initiative is part of MCCC's *NewLife* 2000 project

aimed at providing every Malaysian an opportunity to hear the gospel by 31 December 2000.

In conjunction with the project, MCCC will be producing an evangelistic Christmas card-cum-VCD to be given to non-believers. For more information, contact MCCC at Tel: 03-756 3610; E-mail: nl2k@pd.jaring.my

National Youth Missions Camp

- Date : 27—29 October 2000
 Place : d'Village Resort, Air Keroh, Malacca
 Cost : RM140-00 (before 1 October 2000)
 RM160-00 (from 1 to 19 October 2000)
 Speakers : Dr James Hudson Taylor III
 Dr Ed Pousson
 Pastor Christopher Long
 Objective : To rally our nation's youth to the cause of missions
 Organiser : NECF Malaysia
 Missions Commissions

ADVERTISEMENT

NECF is inviting applications for the senior post of Executive Secretary (Research). He or she must have tertiary education and preferably with theological education as well. Applicants must be competent in research methodologies and techniques in order to be able to delegate, co-ordinate and conduct research on a wide range of contemporary issues, and to be proficient in writing research reports. Please contact the Secretary-General at Tel: 03-77278227; Fax: 03-77291139 or E-mail: necf@po.jaring.my



A Religious World?

A **WORLDWIDE** poll of religious beliefs presents intriguing snapshots at the beginning of the millennium. Almost two-thirds of the world's people say God is quite significant in their lives, but much of that belief appears to be nominal, according to a survey conducted in 60 countries by the London-based market research company Taylor Nelson Sofres and Gallup International Association.

Worldwide, 87% of the people surveyed considered themselves part of a religion and only 13% said they belong to none. Believers include Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

Religiosity varies greatly by location. In West Africa where Muslims are the largest group and the Catholic church has made inroads, 99% believe in God, 12 points above average. The least religious region is East Asia, which has 77% believers. In Hong Kong, 64% said they do not believe in any religion, as is the case for 55% in the Czech Republic and 46% in South Korea.

Higher education correlates to lower levels of belief, the survey showed. Fifty-two % of college graduates are religious compared with 70% of those who completed only primary school.

Among those who almost never go to church, the survey singled out people living in Western Europe (48%) and Eastern Europe (44%). By contrast, nine out of 10 respondents said they regularly meditate or pray in solitude.

People in different cultures picture God differently. Forty-five % said they think of God as a person while 30% think of him as a force or spirit. About 14% had no image of God, eight % do not believe God exists and three % did not answer. Women, the elderly and people with lower education tend to see God as a person. The more-educated people prefer the idea of a spiritual force or reject the notion of a superior being. Men are more prone to deny God's existence.

Forty-six % said they believe there is more than one true religion and 31% think theirs is the only true faith. Ten % said there is no such thing as one true religion and 13% didn't know or gave no answer. Those who are more attached to the idea of just one religion as valid are the elderly,

women and people with primary education, and are concentrated in West Africa and Latin America. North Americans are most open-minded and Europeans the most agnostic.

Americans are largely ignorant about doctrine and lack trust in God, according to pollster George Gallup Jr.'s recent book, "Surveying the Religious Landscape" which contains information and wisdom from 70 years of Gallup-family polling. The challenge for churches is to evangelise those already attending church to help them grow deeper in the faith, Gallup and co-author D. Michael Lindsay said.—*Evangelical Now* ■

America's Top Journalists to be Tutored in the Faith

AMERICA's top journalists will be tutored in religious matters. Political editors from the TV stations and ABC and CNN as well as the newspapers Wall Street Journal and Los Angeles Times have registered to attend courses offered by the Centre for Ethics and Basic Political Issues.

According to the New York Times, the centre received a million dollars in donations in order to get one of the most godless professional groups better acquainted with religion. The money will also be used for an analysis on how the US media have handled the subject during the past 30 years.

Plans are also underway for three national conferences for journalists to hear theologians and religious experts speak on religious knowledge. If however, they found their way back into church, it would be great, project leader Michael Cromartie said.—*idea* ■

Political Scandals Dictate Week of Prayer

THE political scandals in Germany have influenced the annual week of prayer organised by the German Evangelical Alliance, which represents 1.3 million Christians. Public debate is currently dominated by news of secret funds used by the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) of former chancellor Helmut Kohl and allegations of private air trips for high-ranking Social Democrats—for example Johannes Rau, now German President paid

by a West German state bank.

The 400,000 Christians who gathered in 1,250 places for prayer meetings interceded for German politicians to re-discover Christian values and acknowledge their responsibility before God. Prayers concentrated also on the wish for a spiritual awakening in Europe. Peace and reconciliation in the Balkans and in Chechnya were also high on the prayer agenda.—*idea* ■

Filling the Discipleship Gap

THE church must face the discipleship gap head-on or face a lack of church leadership in the next generation.

That was the message from international Christian leader Ravi Zacharias, one of the speakers at the International Consultation on Discipleship held in Eastbourne recently.

In the opening address, leading evangelical John Stott diagnosed the problem, saying that many areas of the worldwide church are characterised by superficiality. Speaking to 400 Christians representing 54 countries worldwide, he said, "In some places, the church is growing strongly but even there the problem is that of growth without depth. In short, the church lacks proper discipleship".

His assertion was backed by statistics from the Lausanne International Consultation on Nominalism which concluded that over 705 million (or 44% of the 1.6 billion people globally), who identify themselves as Christians, did not consider themselves members or frequent attenders of a church.

"We've done a great job of getting people in the doors of the church but we've found that too many of them are exiting the back door," said David Howard, past International Director of the World Evangelical Fellowship and Director of Cook Communications Ministries which organised the consultation.

The aim of the conference was to help participants build partnerships, share experiences and provide a centralised think-tank to strengthen discipleship worldwide.

Among the theologians, ministry leaders, pastors and lay leaders at the conference, there were 88 key pastors and denominational heads, 30 representatives from organisations such as the Billy Graham Evangelical Association, the Navigators, Youth With A Mission,

InterVarsity and Campus Crusade. Around a quarter of the delegates were women.—*Renewal* ■

UN Religious Accord

THE United Nations will host a world spiritual summit to promote peace. The Millennium World Peace Summit is the first meeting of its kind ever sponsored by the world body. It is expected to bring 1,000 religious and spiritual leaders together from 28 to 31 August, a few days before the world's political leaders gather for the UN Millennium Heads of State summit.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will give the welcoming address at the religious summit which is intended to investigate ways that the religious leaders can ease tension in zones of conflict.—*Religion Today* ■

Is Globalisation Good

MANY people see globalisation as just the next inevitable phase in the human evolution of the planet. But in his 1998 book, *False Dawn: The Delusion of Global Capitalism* John Gray, professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics, indicates some of the problems.

He argues that genuinely free markets depend on an infrastructure of law and trust in the general population. Habits such as honesty, mutual goodwill, and responsible risk-bearing are essential to the stability of genuinely free market. In the absence of such habits, it is possible to have a free market of a kind, but it will be a criminalised form of anarchocapitalism, mediated by violence.

The danger of the free market is that it can undermine the very civil values and institutions on which it depends. When businesses achieve too much autonomy from the surrounding society, when not only firms but investors are guided too much by the motive of short term profit, the market inculcates a broad uncertainty about the future and a gambler's mentality grows which disengages success from virtue and so undermines the social infrastructure.

The book, *The End of History*, by Francis Fukuyama gave the impression that with the success of Western capitalism, we have reached some kind of agreed and stable form for world economic activity. Gray questions this and says that if we do choose the totally free market route for the

future of the world, we need to be aware of what we are potentially getting into.

Those protesting at the summit on economic development in Seattle last autumn are convinced that the world is at present taking a wrong turn. Meanwhile, next autumn, the UN will convene a special Millennium Assembly as a global conference on the future of the planet. This event comes at the end of a decade of preparation to launch the new millennium on a new system of global governance.

The Charter for Global Democracy is due to be published on UN day, 24 October 2000.—*Evangelical Now* ■

'Christian Identity'

A QUASI-religious philosophy called Christian Identity has been identified as the link between many of the hate groups in the United States. A researcher states, "Adherence to it is probably the single greatest common denominator among all the various fragmented factions of the radical right wing in America. It is practiced by the neo-Nazis of the Aryan nations, by the leaders of the Militia of Montana, and by the remnants of the Ku Klux Klan in the South."

A watchdog organisation counts 272 hate groups in the Midwest, with more than a dozen white supremacist groups in southwest Missouri. An estimated 90 Christian Identity groups are operating in 34 states. Rosemary Radford Ruether of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston counts some 50,000 core adherents who call themselves Identity Christians.—*Pulse* ■

Church Growth in Italy

IN southern Italy, a number of churches are experiencing astonishing growth. There are now almost 9,000 evangelical Christians there compared to only some 200, 16 years ago. There are also signs of revival in Sicily, Calabria and Campagna—the southern Italian provinces known for their poverty, high migration rate and the Mafia. Fifteen years ago, for example, Remo Cristallo started the New Pentecost Church in Aversa near Naples, with around 40 members. Today, the church has a congregation of 2,000 and 10 daughter churches. Cristallo is also President of the Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches (FPC) which claims to be Italy's second largest evangelical denomination with between 40,000 and 50,000 members and 250

churches (the largest is the Assemblies of God with 150,000 members). Evangelistic tent meetings and street evangelism are out in Italy, says Cristallo. "People become Christians through neighbourhood meetings in private gardens, where they see a Christian film, sing some songs and hear the Gospel explained over coffee. It works marvellously!"—*CATW* ■

Colombian Children

THE country's government estimates that more than 400,000 children have been displaced by the fighting in the country. More than 2,500 children have been killed in the civil war. An estimated 1,700 or more young people still are members of the FARC guerilla group and the other main guerilla group. Some two million children between the ages of two and 19 are said to be victims of abuse in their homes.—*Pulse* ■

Decreasing number of children

THE Christian population is decreasing worldwide. The *UK Christian Handbook* states that 28.3% of the world's population identified itself as Christian in 1990, World Vision's *MARC* Newsletter reports. The percentage of Christians will drop to 27.8 in 2000 and to 27.1 in 2010. A lower birth rate among Christian families is the primary reason for the drop.—*Religion Today* ■

Israel: Chinese Faith

CHINESE in Israel are becoming Christians. More foreign labourers are coming to Israel to work because many Palestinian workers are being dismissed for security reasons. The crews receive low wages and live in camps near the construction areas. "Christians have been visiting the labourers and telling them about Jesus Christ. Reports say that in the last two years, many Chinese workers have confessed Jesus and 300 have been baptised," a ministry worker said.—*Religion Today* ■

For Your Intercession



CHINA

Pray for the Lord's protection over house church leaders; for solid seminary field training programmes throughout China; for the Lord to raise up more overseas teachers with Chinese-speaking ability who can build up house churches into maturity in Christ; and that the Lord will sustain believers in China suffering persecution for their faith.

JAMAICA

On the surface is a paradise; white sandy beaches dotted with shady hammocks, stately manors and plantations, a literacy rate of 89% and more churches per square kilometre than any other place on earth. Yet, Jamaica is also a very violent nation, has one of the highest income disparities in the world and Christians are divided against each other. Billion dollar resorts in Jamaica attract wealthy foreigners and tourists marvel at the homes and plantations of the rich, but many Jamaicans live in shanty towns of corrugated metal, earning less than 15 pounds a week. Riots over a big tax increase, escalating gang warfare and some 240 civilians killed by police in two years have caused many Jamaicans to turn to the church for help. Pray for Jamaica.

AFGHANISTAN

It is believed that many in Afghanistan have turned to Christ through Christian radio broadcasts. But they would almost certainly be executed if found out by the harsh Islamic Taliban regime. Pray for Christians here.

TURKEY

Operation Mobilisation has spent 40 years in spiritual seed sowing and church planting in Turkey. Last year's earthquake gave teams the opportunity to help survivors come to terms with the trauma of the disasters and comfort the bereaved. Pray for

earthquake survivors to find lasting comfort and hope through Christ. The small, newly-acquired church building in Izmit, Turkey, survived the huge earthquake undamaged to become an emergency relief centre coordinated by local Christians. Many people were helped through this work and worship services attracted many seekers. Pray for the growing church in Izmit. In contrast, Christians in Ismir and Istanbul have been persecuted for gathering illegally. Pray for boldness, wisdom, protection and above all, perseverance, for these believers.

JORDAN

The months following last year's ascension of King Abdullah to Jordan's throne brought a tougher stance against expatriate Christians, with some being expelled. Pray for Jordanian churches to continue their activities in relative freedom and for Christian organisations to carry on being effective in the region.

UNITED KINGDOM

"Together for the Harvest" is an initiative in Liverpool involving conservative evangelical and charismatic churches, groups and individuals which aims to reach every man, woman and child in the city with the Good News over the next 10 years. Pray that those involved will have God's compassion for the lost and that their unity itself will be a witness to the area.

EUROPE

A sinister trend in Europe is the official labeling of evangelical churches and organisations as cults. The French government defines evangelicals as representing extreme factions of the traditional reformed church and has them on the same list as satanic groups. Pray over this.

MOZAMBIQUE

The devastating floods in

Mozambique gained world attention in March—and a large relief effort. SIM is one Christian mission involved in a long-term development programme to help people rebuild shattered lives. SIM's work with local churches in the aftermath of the disaster includes the building of simple homes and training people in the logistics of the planning and administration of the recovery and development processes. The mission's desire is that such initiatives will encourage Mozambique Christians to reveal Christ's love to their fellow countrymen.

NIGERIA

Muslim leaders in Nigeria have tried to calm Christian community fears by saying that non-Muslims would not be affected by Shariah law and would not appear before Islamic courts. Christians, however, believe that Shariah implementation would make them second class citizens. Pray for Nigeria and President Obasanjo, a Christian, who leads a federal government which includes key staff who are members of Islamic pressure groups.

QATAR

The government of Qatar has given Christians permission for the first church building to be erected in the Gulf state. Along with Saudi Arabia, Qatar had prohibited public practice of any religion except the strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Pray for the Lord to build His Church in Qatar.

JAPAN

Growth of Christianity in Japan can be likened to dandelions - they keep on propping up in all sorts of places! Even when rooted out, enough of their seeds have been scattered to transform places. This has been particularly true of students. Like wind-blown seed, the Gospel shared with them has taken root and today they are influencing every sector of society. Pray for Japan.