

# BERITA NECF

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## EDITORIAL

# Dousing the fire of hatred

**T**ERRORISM is the response to a build-up of grievances, whether real or imagined. Therefore, one cannot hope to purge terrorism without first dealing with the grievances that lead to it.

The recent national conference on terrorism organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) concluded that the main root causes of terrorism were:

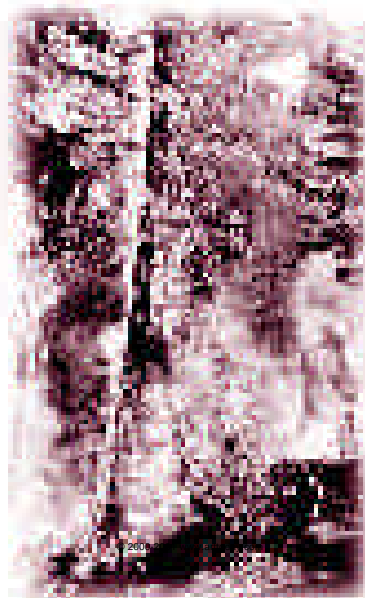
- The continuous conflict between Israel and Palestine.
- America's foreign policy on the sanctions against, and occasional bombings of, Iraq 10 years after the Gulf War.
- Muslims' feelings of humiliation and fear as a result of the many conflicts between Muslim countries and the West.
- Painful memories of the past religious crusades.

The Muslims' natural reaction to this oppression – often viewed as rational and justified – is retaliation. But does the principle of retaliation based on 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' maxim resolve these ongoing international feuds?

If we examine Scripture carefully, Jesus clearly says this method is not a licence for revenge. But often, an offended person will over-react to the offence and hit back.

How then shall we Christians respond to atrocities against others and us? In what way shall our faith in Christ make a difference?

First, we should not be provoked and retaliate, but practise Christian conduct of patience so that evil will be overcome by good. We should continue to emulate the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 6:38-42: *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to*



*Like forest fires, hatred spreads fast. Quench it early before it gathers speed.*

*borrow from you."*

Christians need to trust God to bring some good out of the evil of current events according to Romans 8:28: *"In everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose."* We have already seen how the tragedies of Sept 11 have turned the "me now" generation in America to turn to God and to each other. Also, the arrest of Christian relief and development workers "for preaching Christianity" in Afghanistan has shown the world, including the Muslim World, the extent of Christian involvement in social works among Muslims.

Next, the Church needs to prepare for the increased human need among the Afghans resulting from the military invasion on Afghanistan. We should continue to provide relief and assistance to rebuild the shattered innocent lives.

We have the advantage since most Christian organisations have offices all over the world. However, the organisations may require more non-Western Christians if anti-American and Western feelings develop in Afghanistan because of the military assaults.

Christians need also to become more knowledgeable about Islam and Islamic history to help moderate Muslims reason with extremists. We must share with governing Muslim authority that their Prophet Muhammad allowed the presence of churches, even in the most orthodox situations, so long as the Christians remained loyal to their inhabited countries.

Ultimately, it is moderate Muslims who can best deal with extremism in our midst, and therefore ensure the continuance of religious liberty.

In the Luke verses quoted earlier, Jesus challenges His followers to grace and integrity. Imagine the effect we Christians will cast if we always overcome evil with good; overcome vengeance with grace; and overcome hatred with love. This is our Lord's principle. Will we take it up? ■

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# Courage to Face

C h a l l e n g e s A h e a d

By Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam  
NECF Malaysia Chairman

“BE STRONG AND VERY COURAGEOUS. BE CAREFUL TO OBEY ALL THE LAW MY SERVANT MOSES GAVE YOU; DO NOT TURN FROM IT TO THE RIGHT OR TO THE LEFT, THAT YOU MAY BE SUCCESSFUL. HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU? BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE TERRIFIED; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.” (JOSHUA 1:7-9)

**A**S we face the 21st century, I sense the Word of the Lord to Joshua coming alive for the Church of Jesus Christ today. I would like to point out some similarities we have with Joshua.

Joshua was given a mandate from the Lord to go and claim the promise. He was also given the assurance of God’s presence (Joshua 1:3-4). Likewise, the Lord has given us a mandate and His assurance that He will go with us (Matt. 28:18-19). It seems the challenge brought fears, doubts and uncertainties. The Scriptures plainly show me that God was addressing these feelings when He said, “Be strong and courageous ...” and then proceeded to tell us how. There are at least three distinct instructions.

First, “Be careful to obey...” The apostle said, “...Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). God has called us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading and be obedient. This is the way to be strong and courageous.

Second, do not turn from what God has said. Beware of compromising, substituting and sidestepping the truth for obedience. Obedience is needed in fulfilling

the Great Commission. There is no necessity to interpret God’s mandate. Remember the mother of Jesus who told the servants when they ran out of wine at the wedding in Cana, “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5).

Third, “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night.” This is what the Psalmist said, “I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11). He also said, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105). The Bible also says: “... your Word is truth” (Jn 17:17). “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (Jn 6:63). The work of the Holy Spirit is also to quicken the Word of God in us. Therefore, we cannot be strong and courageous without the Word of God in our heart and mouth.

The Lord said to Joshua: “Then, you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 11:8). The result of obedience, keeping on course and living the Word of God is success. We can be strong and very courageous to meet the challenges of the changing world and end times. We can be sure of peace, protection and victory. ■

## C O N D O L E N C E S

**N**ECF Malaysia extends its deepest condolences to the family of the late Hwa Chien, who went home to the Lord last Nov 24.

Hwa Chien, 50, passed away shortly a car accident.

He was serving his second four-year term as President of Trinity Annual Conference (TRAC) – the governing body of the Methodist churches in Malaysia – before his demise.

The Chemistry graduate from America went into full-time ministry in 1977 after completing a Masters in Divinity course from the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, USA.

Hwa Chien was highly regarded and widely known for his passion in upholding fundamental Biblical truths. He left behind wife Kim Guat and three children (two sons and a daughter). ■

# Marching to maturity

The BM ministry in Peninsular Malaysia is flourishing but there are just not enough leaders to cope with the rapid growth



**B**ahasa Malaysia (BM) church strategists are urgently looking at long-term solutions to resolve the leader-shortage problem, which is critical enough to impede the maturity and growth of the BM ministry.

According to NECF Malaysia BM Commission Executive Secretary Alfred Tais, the reason for the problem lies in the profile of the congregation – the majority are factory workers and students from East Malaysia, and foreign workers such as maids and construction workers. Their young ages – 19 to 24 years – compound the problem.

“Actually, we have many potential

leaders from among these people but they lack training,” says Tais.

The Commission is therefore intensifying its leadership-training programme to close the gap. In the months to come, trainers will span the length and breadth of the Peninsula to conduct training workshops aimed at grooming leaders who are able to take on the fresh challenges of the new millennium.

A leader must be strongly rooted in the Bible but a competent leader must also ‘know’ and understand the times he is living in; otherwise he will not be able to minister effectively, Tais says.

“That’s why our training programme is geared towards raising thinking leaders who are in touch with the times.”

To better reach the prospective leaders, the Commission has decided to regionalise the training instead of holding it in the Klang Valley, as is the tradition.

Training workshops will be conducted in bigger towns, such as Ipoh and Johor Bahru, thus facilitating travel and scheduling plans for those in the surrounding smaller towns.

By localising the training, the Commission hopes also to strengthen ties among pastors and leaders from the various churches in each area.

“We hope that as they gather to learn and fellowship, they will be motivated to also work together,” Tais says.

He adds that another change in the programme is the use of local trainers, who will enhance the training with contextualised course contents.

Previously, foreign speakers were invited to share their methods but the Commission has found that some of their ideas were not applicable here because of culture and other differences.

The BM church is poised to grow significantly in the near future. Training is a long-term ongoing plan to prepare for the imminent growth and to help the BM Church break free from reliance on the more stable English- and Chinese-language churches. ■

## Primers to Promote BM in Churches

Thinking of getting your church into the BM ministry? It’s really not that difficult, says gynaecologist DR TEOH SOONG KEE, Chairman of the West Malaysia Anglican Diocese Committee on BM. He shares some tips on how to begin.

**T**he BM language is easy to learn as the pronunciation is standard and the grammar has very few rules. There is no need to learn a new script and many English words have been incorporated into the vocabulary.

- The most acceptable way to get started is to introduce a few Christian songs in BM, using both the translated versions of popular English songs or even better, the original BM songs mainly from Indonesia. Many Christians have remarked how lively and meaningful these songs are.
- Conduct some parts of the Worship Service and other meetings in BM, for example, Scripture reading, short prayers, parts of service orders, and common recitations such as the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles Creed.

- Print some of the common BM terms in the weekly bulletin. Learn a few new words a week.
- Occasionally, have a bilingual Worship Service in BM and the current language.
- Ministry among the youths and children can easily be carried out in BM as they should be familiar with the language.
- Small BM fellowships can be started with those who are ready and keen.

The idea is to encourage the usage of BM in our churches. Church leaders need to be encouraged to consider the BM ministry as an important response to fulfill the Great Commission to all the people groups. ■

# Craving Silent Cry for Help

Pastors of BM churches share their problems

**L**ETHARGY and low self-esteem – these are the main ailments plaguing pastors of BM churches in the Peninsula, according to NECF Malaysia BM Commission Executive Secretary Alfred Tais, who has been visiting BM churches to find out how they are faring.

But it's not all gloom; in the midst of their 'challenges', the pastors remain faithful and continue to persevere. Tais detects too their sincere love for the BM Church in the Peninsula and their earnest desire to see its growth.

Tais estimates that about 75 percent of the pastors serving in the BM churches in the Peninsula come from East Malaysia where they had been successful and effective in their ministries.

However, most of them are facing difficulties here because of the different culture and lifestyle.

"In East Malaysia, life is more relax and they can take their time to build up their ministry. Here, they find the pace of life very fast and modern. Their congregation members are more educated and even the factory workers are more knowledgeable.

"Oftentimes, they feel discouraged when they do not meet their senior pastors' expectations. As a result, they lose confidence," Tais observes.

"There have been cases where pastors went up to the pulpit to preach or say something, but when they got up there, they panic and said nothing for a while."

Such experience drags the self-esteem further down and they end up feeling even more inadequate. Because of their personal negative perception, they have a tendency to misunderstand or misread what their senior pastors or others say, and this creates relationship problems.



*Tolong anak jalan ... Alfred Tais' pleads on behalf of BM churches.*

Many BM pastors revealed that they lack support and understanding from their senior pastors. While this may be true in some cases, Tais thinks the truth is that most pastors only imagine it because of their poor self-image.

Whatever the reasons are, Tais calls for greater understanding, patience and encouragement for these BM pastors, especially from the senior pastors, to gently push them along.

In helping them, they are helping the BM Church to grow and achieve independence. "*Tolong anak jalan* (help the child to walk). Once they can walk, you can let go," he says.

At the same time, he urges the BM pastors to help themselves by joining the pastors' fellowship where they can find support. In addition, they must keep in touch with current issues in order to be able to minister effectively to their flock, especially the younger generation, who are attracted and tempted to adopt the world's values.

Tais says the other problems that the BM churches are facing are:

- Lack of financial support – the majority of the congregation are from the lower-income group (factory workers and foreign labourers).
- Insufficient training materials – most of the materials available are from Indonesia. The terms used are not easily understood here. Tais hopes churches that have good BM training resources will share their materials with the other BM churches.

Generally, BM pastors desire a stronger networking and prayer fellowship among the BM churches.

Spurred by the sharing of the BM pastors, Tais will continue to make regular visits to the BM churches throughout the Peninsula. Besides promoting unity and networking through the visits, he hopes to identify new grounds for the BM work. ■

A l l D e n o m i n a t i o n s W e l c o m e d



**T**HE NECF Malaysia BM Commission is calling for the partnership of all BM churches from all denominations to promote the BM work in the Peninsula.

"Occasionally, we encounter pastors who think that our Commission only works with selected groups. The fact is we have to work with all churches from all denominations if we are to advance the BM ministry. We cannot work alone," says NECF Malaysia BM Commission Executive

Secretary Alfred Tais.

He explains that the Commission's main concern is planting churches – especially in new areas – in Peninsular Malaysia. Through working together, the BM churches will form a strong network, which will in turn boost the BM ministry.

Among the denominations currently working with the Commission are Anglican, SIB Semenanjung, Presbyterian, Methodist, Assemblies of God, Baptist and some independent churches. ■

# From 'Supermarket Fellowship' To Church

An English-speaking church bravely took up the challenge of starting a Bahasa Malaysia fellowship specially for supermarket workers who finish work after 10pm. Today, the fellowship has grown up – it is now a church.

**W**HAT do you do with Christians who cannot attend normal church meetings because of their odd working hours? That was the question posed in 1998 to Kuala Lumpur's Bangsar Gospel Hall (BGH), situated near the bustling TMC Supermarket where many East Malaysian Christians worked.

The solution: it started a weekly late-night Bahasa Malaysia (BM) fellowship at 10.30pm in the church premises. (BM is the most widely spoken language among East Malaysians.)

It was the church's first foray into the BM ministry and lacking the experience, it sought the help of the NECF Malaysia BM Commission to start the fellowship. At the first Wednesday meeting, some 30 workers promptly showed up, tired after a long day's work but excited nevertheless. Most of them have not been to church for a long time.

News of the fellowship spread quickly to other East Malaysian Christians working in the TMC Supermarket branch in Kelana Jaya, Petaling Jaya, and they too wanted to attend the night meeting. Another problem cropped up: they had no transport to BGH.

Again the church stepped in. Church members volunteered to drive the workers from Kelana Jaya to Bangsar and then send them home. It was no small sacrifice for these volunteers considering that they had to be at the supermarket at 10pm and send them home in various directions after the meeting. Often, by the time they dropped off the last passenger, it was way after midnight.

Soon after, East Malaysian Christians working in the Giant Supermarket at USJ, Subang, heard about the meeting and asked to attend. (All the three supermarkets are owned by the same company.) More volunteer drivers were

recruited to ferry the workers to and from the church.

At the weekly meetings, members were provided with, not only spiritual food, but physical food as well, thanks to a group of ladies from the church who figured that the workers must be famished since their last meal was many hours ago. Thereafter, the involuntary growling of empty stomachs ceased.

Today, in addition to the Wednesday meeting, members also meet on Mondays and Thursdays for Bible Study. Sunday Worship Service is held from 7am to 8am to allow those working in the various supermarkets enough time to get to work.

Last October, BGH officially designated the fellowship a BM church and re-located all meetings to a rented shop lot within walking distance to the Kelana Jaya TMC Supermarket.

Now called Pusat Injil Kelana Jaya (PIKJ), the 'supermarket fellowship' has outgrown its sector to include workers from a nearby car accessory shop and university students.

As the mother church, BGH financially supports PIKJ. Overseeing the church is BGH deacon Dennis Lee, a pioneer and



*Not only has the 'supermarket fellowship' grown up into a church, it has outgrown its sector to include workers from a car accessory shop and university students.*

prime mover of PIKJ.

According to him, the congregation has remained the same size because of the high turnover of members who leave for further studies or better jobs. "What is important is that we keep them in the family for the six to 12 months that they are with us. At the same time, they are spiritually fed so that when they leave, they are strong enough to stand," he says.

Dennis shares that the fellowship started from the urgings of his church members, a husband-and-wife team – both East Malaysians – who worked as supervisors in the Bangsar TMC Supermarket.

*see page 6*



*After a long day's work at the crowded noisy supermarkets, it is good to be in the house of God.*

# VIEW BM MINISTRY

## SERIOUSLY, CHURCHES URGED

NECF Malaysia BM Commission Members share their hope for the future of the BM ministry in Peninsular Malaysia



**PR RICHARD SAMPOROH**, Chairman of NECF Malaysia BM Commission and General Secretary of SIB Semananjung

"I would very much like the BM churches in the Peninsula to make the Great Commission their utmost priority. The immediate harvest field are the many thousands of East Malaysians, as well as others living here (West Malaysia) who are more comfortable using BM.

House groups of BM-speaking Christians need to be formed, for these small groups will eventually become the nucleus of a local BM church in that vicinity, reaching out to students, working adults, and families.

There is a need for a BM Bible training school in the Peninsula. This will also benefit the Orang Asli Christians and ensure the continuity of the BM ministry. With the expansion of the BM ministry in the Peninsula, I wish to see the BM churches become self-supporting, or at least actively moving towards this objective. They will then move on to be self-governing and self-

strategising in her mission."



**DR TEOH SOONG KEE**, Commission Member and Chairman of the West Malaysian Anglican Diocese Committee on BM

"I grew up in a non-BM speaking environment and during my schooldays, I studied the language for just three hours a week. After school I did my medical education in Bombay. However I realised the importance of BM to fulfill the increasing needs of the Christian community.

In the last 30 years, all our children have been educated in BM for at least nine to 11 years and most of them have become more fluent in the language than in other languages. In the next 10 to 20 years, I expect the majority of Christians will be more conversant with BM in their daily activities and they should not find the church an alien place where BM is hardly used.

In Peninsular Malaysia, BM is the mother tongue of 55 percent of the population. Although there are stringent

legal and social restrictions now, I believe there will come a time when God will break down the barriers. Will the Church be ready then to spread the *Berita Baik* (Good News) to those who speak BM?

Also, the greater use of BM will help to dispel the impression that Christianity is a Western religion and get it more readily acceptable to the local people.

The experience of churches which introduced BM has been great. Our BM ministry in St Peter's, Ipoh, has led to five new churches and about 300 baptisms in just five years."



**PR HARUN SIDIN**, Commission Member and Pastor of Kebaktian Bahasa Malaysia, Gereja Agape Presbyterian Kluang

"My vision is to have as many BM churches planted in the Peninsula as possible. I also wish for a training centre to be established to raise up more BM evangelists and pastors."

From 'Supermarket Fellowship' to Church: from page 5

"Douglas and Ruby were facing problems with the East Malaysian workers, problems such as absenteeism and alcoholism. As their supervisors, they had to counsel them and occasionally sack the unrepentant workers. Most of them were churchgoers before but had stopped because

of their odd working hours.

"God impressed on their hearts to start this fellowship and that's how we began."

Douglas and Ruby have since left their jobs and are now pursuing theological studies in America.

Running PIKJ demands a great deal of sacrifice for Dennis and his BGH team, who attend all the meetings (three late nights and one early morning a week). Their commitment springs from their love and compassion for these workers, and backed by their church (BGH), they have found the ministry very fulfilling indeed.

# ISSUE 60 Women to Women



*"family first"*  
**bringing the heart home"**

Mrs Lydia Loh and Dr Cheah Soo Ngoh attended the International Family Conference (25 – 28 October 2001) held at the Renaissance Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. Read on for their responses.

## LOVE WISELY

By Mrs Lydia Loh

I HAD no idea as to what to expect when I decided to attend the International Family Conference. The conference was organised by the Ministry of Women & Family Development Malaysia together with the National Population and Family Development Board. It was encouraging to see the Minister, Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, attending almost all the sessions. Focus on the Family also made its presence strongly felt by setting up exhibition tables and providing several plenary and workshop speakers. During the four-day conference, a host of issues on the family and its challenges were presented. Hopefully, new government policies will come forth to enhance family life in our nation. Unfortunately, out of the 700 plus participants, only about 20 per cent were men.

I was very impressed by one of the plenary speakers who spoke on 'Managing Family Stress'.

Dr Huang Wei Jin, a clinical psychologist from Northwestern University, USA, spoke with passion and a touch of humour. He was very practical and compassionate. He pointed out that the number one buffer for stress was to nurture meaningful connections with other people through love. He said, "Love is either conditional or unconditional. If I love with conditions, I am only offering an exchange." He exhorted family members, especially

spouses, to love wisely. He gave a personal example of how he loves his wife wisely – he makes the bed in the morning. In this way, he said, his wife felt very much loved. He repeatedly stressed the importance of spreading out



"filled-grace" to the whole family and community. One of the ways to do this is to love your spouse even more when he or she makes mistakes.

Dr Huang also touched on how one should maintain one's identity and yet still stay connected to one's spouse. He pointed out the need to balance care-giving with self-nurturing. One can be so immersed in giving care at the expense of neglecting one's need for growth. He concluded by reminding the participants of the need to

learn to be grateful.

Dr Huang's workshops on 'Is there a Secret Recipe for Marriage?' and 'Infidelity and Divorce' were very popular. I decided to keep to the choices I had made at the time of registration. During the workshop on 'Strategic Neighbourhood Assistance Programme' I was made aware of local happenings. A video presentation showed how dwellers of the San Peng Flats had reclaimed their community centre from drug pushers and had then turned it into a place of learning and recreation. The other workshop on 'What do Grandma and Grandpa Think?' helped us see that grandparents are living stories and links to the past. The speakers shared success stories on grandparenthood. I did wonder about grandparents who have no success stories to tell. Could something



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be available for them too? A father and a mother spoke in the workshop on 'Preventing Violence in the Family' and proposed measures to be taken that would nurture harmony in the family. Another speaker reminded us that children also had a right to feel safe at home.

I enjoyed the evening session at the Youth Round Table. The young people articulated their thoughts on sex, lifestyle and the rights of youth. Earlier in the afternoon, about 300 youths from all over the country had met and brainstormed on these issues. Their contributions were hilarious, matter-of-fact, touching, and some were heart-rending. The youths played a key role throughout the conference. Dressed in black T-shirts and pants, they worked as volunteers to help the Conference run smoothly.

The Conference closed with a sumptuous lunch hosted by Nestle and each participant brought home matters and issues to chew on. Irrespective of our race or religious beliefs, each one of us is greatly concerned about the attacks on the family in the times we live in. All in all, it was a beneficial Conference. ■

*Mrs Lydia Loh is a fulltime homemaker. She is married to Rev Loh Soon Choy. They have two daughters, Debbie and Miriam.*



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'Speak life  
not death'

By Dr Cheah Soo Ngoh



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**S**TRONG families are the key to building a prosperous, peaceful and stable community. Today, drugs, crime, violence, abandonment, infidelity, divorce and changing values are tearing families apart. The need for strong families has never been greater. The International Family Conference aimed at drawing together people from all walks of life who are working on the strengthening of families.

During times of change and transition, families need proven strategies for success that will help to improve the quality of family life. The Conference showcased successful programmes, case studies and practices that had been implemented at local, state and national level in many countries across the world.

The speakers came from many countries from all over the world. The local participants were mainly professionals in the areas of family and child welfare, and social services. There were academicians and students.

The Minister of Women and Family Development Malaysia, Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, gave the keynote address and she was personally present throughout most of the conference.

This was indeed a great encouragement to the participants.

Certainly, Malaysia is stepping out and taking the lead globally in putting resources, information, and people together to assist,

promote, enhance and strengthen the most important social building block in any civilization – the family. We hope that out of this conference nations around the world will take this as a proactive, groundbreaking, pacesetting model on how to strengthen a nation and secure the future – which is our children and our children's children – through building strong and healthy families.

All the speakers gave very enlightening talks. I would like to highlight one of the sessions done by Dr Larry Keefauver, parenting and family seminar leader and author of numerous books and curricula.

Dr Larry gave us 21 Laws of Family Communication. Communication is a vital ingredient for strengthening family relationships.

1. Family communication requires:

- a. taking notice
- b. talking and listening
- c. truth
- d. trust
- e. togetherness
- f. touch
- g. thanksgiving
- h. time
- i. teaching

These are the nine Ts for effective family communication.

2. Answer 'why?' early to save sorrow later.
3. Speak life not death (negative comments) to one another.



4. Use 'I' messages instead of 'you' messages.
5. Only say what GOD tells you to say, only do what GOD tells you to do (listen to the highest authority).
6. Talking at children is a monologue with the parent doing all the talking and listening.
7. Want a child to talk? Listen! Willing silence without interruptions primes a child's flow of communication. Be quick to listen...slow to speak...slow to anger.
8. Your family is not a garbage can – no dumping!
9. Share feelings, not just opinions. Take responsibility for your own feelings.
10. Believe the best about one another, not the worst.
11. Focus on affirmation instead of criticism.
12. Discuss differences without angry name-calling, shouting and put-downs and with much patience.
13. Make your non-verbal communication open, transparent and inviting.
14. Open communication takes effort.
15. Allow communication with nothing to lose, nothing to fear and nothing to hide.
16. Refuse to rehash past failures and conflicts.
17. Say 'I love you' often; say 'I'm wrong, forgive me' quickly when needed.
18. Don't go to bed with anger.
19. Communicate with your love languages:
  - gift giving
  - acts of service
  - quality time
  - words of affirmation
  - physical touch
20. Use good communication skills: paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, describing behaviour, self-disclosure (honest about inside of self).
21. Take the initiative to communicate. Don't expect the others to always go first.

Personally I believe that if we were to follow all these 'laws' when we communicate with each other in the family, we will definitely encourage each other and foster better relationships amongst family members.

It's never too late to start. Make this a year of effective family communication and strong family relationships. ■

*Dr Cheah Soo Ngoh, a dentist, is a member of the NECF Women's Commission. She is married to Tang Thin Sue and they have four daughters.*

# Grace for Grace

AMY CARMICHAEL

Surely if Jesus could give everything He had, she could do no less. And so in 1895, Amy Carmichael embraced an unusual mission, one that would last for the remaining 56 years of her life. The Dohnavur Fellowship would become, under her loving guidance, a place of sanctuary for more than one thousand children who would otherwise have faced a bleak future.

Amy Carmichael's service for God also extended to the printed page, as she wrote nearly three dozen Christian books. Her life was characterised by obedience, total commitment, and selflessness and serves as an example to us today.

The following is an extract from her book entitled 'IF'.

**N**o vision of the night can show, no word declare with what longings of love Divine Love waits till the heart, all weary and sick of itself, turns to its Lord and says, "Take full possession." There is no need to plead that the love of God shall fill our heart as though He were unwilling to fill us: He is willing as light is willing to flood a room that is opened to its brightness; willing as water is willing to flow into an emptied channel. Love is pressing us on all sides like air. Cease to resist, and instantly love takes possession. As the 15th century poem *Quia amore langues* says: *Long and love thou never so high, My love is more than thine may be.*

More, far more. For as His abundance of pardon passes our power to tell it, so does His abundance of love: it is as far as the East is from the West, high as the heaven is above the earth. But words fail: Love soars above them all.

To look at ourselves leads to despair. Thank God, the Blood cleanseth. *If thou be foul, I shall make thee clean, If thou be sick, I shall thee heal.*

*Foundest thou ever love so leal?*

Never, Lord, never.

SOMETIMES, when we are distressed by past failure and tormented by fear of failure should we again set our faces toward Jerusalem, nothing helps so much as to give some familiar Scripture time to enter into us and become part of our being. The words 'Grace for grace' have been a help to me since I read in a little old book of Bishop Moule's something that opened their meaning. (Till then I had not understood them.)

He says 'for' means simply 'instead.' The image is of a perpetual succession of supply; a displacement ever going on; ceaseless changes of need and demand.

'The picture before us is as of a river. Stand on its banks, and contemplate the flow of waters. A minute passes, and another. Is it the same stream still? Yes. But is it the same water? No. The liquid mass that passed you a few seconds ago fills now another section of the channel; new water





has displaced it, or if you please replaced it; water instead of water. And so hour by hour, and year by year, and century by century, the process holds; one stream, other waters, living not stagnant, because always in the great identity there is perpetual exchange. Grace takes the place of grace.' (Love takes the place of love) 'ever new, ever old, ever the same, ever fresh and young, for hour by hour, for year by year, through Christ.'

There is no force strong enough to hold us together as a company, and animate all our doings, but this one force of Love; and so there is a constant attack upon the love without which we are sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

That explains why every now and then those who want to live the life of love seem to be constrained to seek the searching and the cleansing of the Spirit of God, first (it has often happened so) in the secret of our

own hearts, and then together; and we know how graciously God has answered us, so that though our word must always be, 'not as though I had already attained,' we do, by His enabling, press on.

There is another reason why the adversary attacks love. It is this: Far out on our uttermost rim a thing may occur which is the reflection, so to speak, of something that was nourished in the heart of one who is in the very centre. I have always known it to be so. Perhaps it was never expressed in act or word, the eye did not see it, the ear did not hear it. But spiritual influences move where sight and hearing have no place; and unloved in any one of us, or even an absence of the quality of love of which we have been thinking, is enough to cause the slow stain to spread till it reaches some soul in a moment of weakness. And irreparable damage may result.



*O Lord, forgive: Thy property is always to have mercy. Give me the comfort of Thy help again. Let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me, O Lord my God.*



*If, in dealing with one who does not respond, I weary of the strain, and slip from under the burden, then I know nothing of Calvary love.*



*If I am soft to myself and slide comfortably into the vice of self-pity and self-sympathy; if I do not by the grace of God practise fortitude, then I know nothing of Calvary love.*



*If I covet any place on earth but the dust at the foot of the Cross, then I know nothing of Calvary love.*



*If I am afraid to speak the truth, lest I lose affection, or lest the one concerned should say, 'You do not understand,' or because I fear to lose my reputation for kindness; if I put my own good name before the other's highest good, then I know nothing of Calvary love.*

***That which I know not, teach Thou me, O Lord, my God.***

## 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.*

# Arson Attacks on Churches

## – CFM Urges Restraint

**M**ALAYSIAN Christians have been urged to practise the biblical virtues of patience, self-control and forgiveness in response to the recent spate of arson attacks on, reportedly, five churches.

“As responsible citizens, we urge all Christians not to be provoked and respond with retaliation, but to ... overcome evil with good,” advised a statement from Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) which was circulated last December to its 5,000 member-churches and -organisations from the mainline, evangelical and Catholic groups.

Through restraint and good works, Christians, who are committed to peace and harmony, would ensure the continuous prevalence of national stability, the statement added.

Calling for greater sensitivity towards and understanding of other faiths, it advised members to adopt a gentler and more discreet approach in sharing the Gospel in their communities. For instance, distributing gospel tracts indiscriminately without considering the feelings of believers of other religions could cause anger towards the Christian community at large.

“As Christians, we are called to demonstrate the love of God, to have compassion on those who hurt us. Indeed, we pray for conviction of those perpetrators of their wrongdoing and that they will cease to intimidate the community with violence.”

The statement also urged Christians to help contribute materially towards the re-building of the destroyed churches.

Besides the appeal to its members, the statement also implored the government and police to publicly condemn any acts of violence as well as provide greater protection to places of worship.

It also urged the government to ban the media from continuously broadcasting and publishing bias information on religious conflicts in areas such as the Middle East and Indonesia. Finally, CFM assured the government of its full cooperation in eradicating crime and extremist activities.

These appeals had earlier been presented to Deputy Home Affairs Minister Chor Chee Heung when he met seven CFM members in early November to discuss the arson attacks on churches.

This issue was again raised in a separate meeting several weeks later between Home Affairs Minister Dato’ Seri Abdullah Badawi and representatives from the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS of which CFM is a member of).

In a letter to Dato’ Seri Badawi, MCCBCHS expressed grave concern that the Government had viewed lightly the attacks against the churches. “While we recognise that some fires could be due to mischievous acts by irresponsible persons, there has also been evidence that in some cases arson was the cause of fires. Some

churches had also received letters of threat, indicating that religious extremists are involved.

“We feel that if the Government does not provide the needed confidence and protection, religious and racial harmony could be jeopardised and the consequences could be serious,” it said.

Dato’ Seri Badawi, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, briefed them on the status of police investigations and said that so far, police had found no link between the arson attacks and anti-Christian sentiments. He advised that the attacks were isolated cases with specific problems related to the churches concerned.



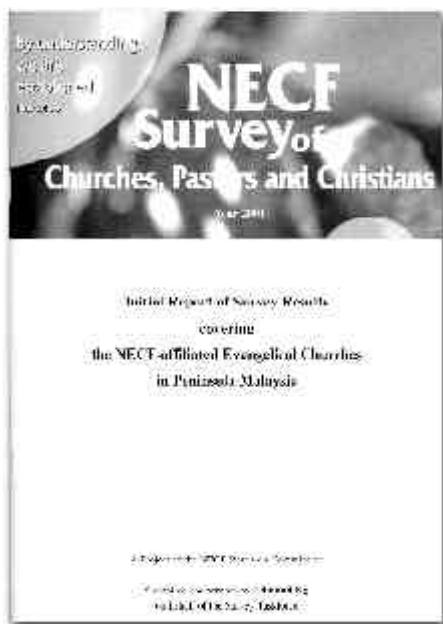
*Mangled mess – what’s left of Christ Community Centre in Subang Jaya, Selangor, which was razed to the ground in a pre-dawn blaze last October.*

Last July, the interior of a church in Kedah was completely damaged after being pelted with Molotov cocktails. In October, two other churches in the same state had their chairs burnt and windows smashed while a church in Johor was attacked with petrol bombs. Another church in Selangor was razed to the ground in a pre-dawn blaze.

Commenting on the arson attacks, CFM Principal Secretary Rev. Wong Kim Kong said in a November interview with Internet news agency *malaysiakini* that the prevalent misconception, especially in the northern region, that Christianity originated from the West was a major cause of the tension between Christianity and other religions.

The intolerance towards churches was compounded by rumours of, for instance, secret conversions of Muslims to Christianity and the Christian link to the controversial Black Metal cult, Rev. Wong was quoted as saying. ■

## CHURCH SURVEY Results Out



**N**ECF Malaysia has released the initial report of the Survey of Churches, Pastors and Christians 2001, which contains statistical data on the state of evangelical churches in Peninsular Malaysia.

The booklet covers a broad and diverse range of information on the profile of churches, the work and ministry of pastors and Christians, their attitudes and perspectives towards issues, and their spirituality and lifestyle. An index helps the reader to locate the statistics of 48 topics listed in alphabetical order from “Adults Age Group” to “Welfare of Christians”.

Churches in every state within Peninsular Malaysia are represented in the Survey, with Selangor contributing the most replies (23.2%). All denominations affiliated to NECF Malaysia are involved, plus several churches from the Methodist, Lutheran and Presbyterian denominations.

The replies came from a total of 419 congregations, of which 166 are English speaking, 124 Chinese, 65 Tamil, 32 Bahasa Malaysia, and 32 congregations of “other” languages.

The Survey findings are based not just on the feedback of several church leaders but on the collective experience of more than 4,000 pastors and church attenders from churches both in the cities (47.7%) and smaller towns.

Most of the respondents are from charismatic churches (75.6%). Some come from small churches (with 10 attenders) while some are from big churches (about 2,500). A few of the respondent churches are less than a year old while the oldest respondent church is 107 years old.

The Survey yields many interesting findings that go beyond mere ideas and perceptions of individuals about congregational life in our country. Church strategists may find the information helpful in their long-range planning.

The Survey Taskforce has decided to extend to all churches the benefits of the Survey findings: the 64-page report is available from NECF Malaysia at RM10 per copy. Add RM1 per booklet for postage. ■

## Bible Malaysia's First HANDWRITTEN BIBLE

**T**HE scribes of old had to painstakingly handcopy God's Word to reproduce more copies but the art has long gone with the invention of the printing machine.

The Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM) is reviving this ancient form through the launch of its New Millennium Handwritten Bible, a historical project that offers Malaysian Christians the opportunity to handwrite verses from the Bahasa Alkitab.

Only one copy of the handwritten Bahasa Alkitab will be produced for future public display in the coming BSM Bible Museum that will showcase the Bibles of East Asia.

The project is also an innovative way to raise funds as ‘scribes’ will have to donate RM1 for each verse and RM20 for the first verse of every chapter they write. BSM hopes to raise RM50,000 for Amity Press to buy and distribute Bibles to Christians in China.

BSM General Secretary Dr Victor Wong is calling all churches and Christians in Malaysia to come together to complete the assignment. To date, several school groups and churches have responded to the call.

“Through our collective effort, we are standing in solidarity with our suffering brethren in China, many of whom have to handcopy the Bible because they are too poor to pay for a printed copy.

“And as we handcopy the verses, we internalise God's Word, just as the scribes of old did, and affirm its sovereignty over our lives,” Dr Wong adds.

The one-year project was launched on Nov 24 by Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia, the Rt Rev. Tan Sri Datuk Dr Lim Cheng Ean; Bishop Gideon Chang of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore; and NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong. They each wrote a verse of the Book of Revelation.

More than 300 leaders from various denominations attended the launch. ■

*The last shall be first – Revelations was the first book to be handcopied at the launch. From left: BSM's Dr Victor Wong, Bishop Gideon Chang, the Rt Rev. Tan Sri Datuk Dr Lim Cheng Ean, and Rev. Wong Kim Kong.*



# COMING UP ...

## Globalisation & the Church – Jan 19



**T**HIS consultation is the second of a five-part series organised by NECF Malaysia Research Commission.

The speakers, their subjects and the respondents are:

- Dr Ng Kam Weng, *Christian Intellectual & Theological Dimensions* and Dr Lee Kam Hing (respondent)
- Dr Tan Kang San, *Challenges to Evangelisation & Discipleship* and Ooi Chin Aik (respondent)
- Pr Daniel Ho, *Pastoral & Leadership Responses* and Rev. Ng Kok Kee (respondent)

The consultation will begin at 11am and end at 4pm. The registration fee of RM30 covers lunch and materials. To register, please contact NECF Malaysia office. ■

### SHARING RESOURCES

## Globalisation Booklet

**N**ECF Malaysia's booklet on globalisation, *Engagement or Isolation: A Malaysian Christian Perspective on Globalisation*, presents a Christian encounter and perspective with globalisation.

Churches are challenged to go beyond their own agenda and private plans, to encourage one another to think and act globally because they are called to be the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-14).

Available from NECF Malaysia office at RM10 each. ■



## Devotional Guide in Asian Context

**A**SIAN Notes is the first devotional Bible reading guide written by Asian church leaders and pastors across denominations to help readers cultivate the twin disciplines of sitting in the presence of God and feeding on His Word.

It leads the reader to systematically cover almost the whole Bible in three years on a daily reading basis. A suggested schedule for those who wish to read through the Bible in a year is included in the guide, which comes in three volumes for three years' reading.

One helpful feature of the guide is the meditations for special seasons such as Easter and Christmas.

Available from Scripture Union at RM18 per volume (for a year's reading). For more information, contact 03-7782 9592 (tel.) or sufes@po.jaring.my (e-mail). ■



## NEW MEMBERS

**N**ECF Malaysia welcome the following six churches as Ordinary Members:

- Charis Word Centre, Hilir Perak, pastored by Mathen a/l Yellamalai
- Charis Word Centre, Selayang Baru, Selangor, pastored by Daniel Benny Loh
- Kuala Pilah Evangelical Centre, Kuala Pilah, Negri Sembilan, pastored by Narayanasamy a/l Sengani
- Church of Sitiawan, Sitiawan, Perak, pastored by Ling Ngiok Chooi
- Sidang Injil Borneo, Likas, Kota Kinabalu, pastored by Jerry Dusing
- Logos Presbyterian Church, Kuala Lumpur, represented by Chua Keng Seng

We also welcome 22 individuals as Associate Members. ■

## Religious Reps meet DPM

**T**HE non-Muslim community views gravely the Government's move in requiring students to state whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims on the answers papers in the recent school examination, according to a statement by the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS).

Calling the practice a clear "characterisation of an Islamic state" and a form of discrimination, it urged the Government to do away with such practices that create unhealthy feelings.

The statement, which was presented in a meeting last November between MCCBCHS representatives and Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Badawi, also recommended that the Education Ministry provide religious education to non-Muslim students as it helps with character building.

Another contentious issue raised during the hour-long meeting related to those who had embraced Islam, either through marriage or other circumstances, and now want to come out of the faith. MCCBCHS said these people faced difficulty in getting their names changed in their identity cards.

## F O R E I G N N E W S

## Brunei Christians Freed

**T**HREE Brunei Christians arrested and jailed one year ago under the Brunei Internal Security Act for their alleged 'cult' activities have been granted conditional releases, sources close to the cases confirmed. But what those conditions are is still unclear.

Malai Taufick Haji Malai Mashor, Mohammed Freddie Chong Abdullah and Yunus

Murang were freed on Oct 18. Local media reports said the three Christians had taken an oath of allegiance to the Sultan of Brunei and "pledged not to repeat their wrongdoings" at a ceremony held at a mosque on the same day. It was not clear whether the men were forced to recant their Christian faith, although a source who later talked with Taufick by phone said he is "still strong in the faith."

Taufick and Chong are Muslim converts to Christianity and had reportedly been offered "Islamic rehabilitation" during their confinement. Yunus had received a two-year sentence for illegally importing and possessing Indonesian Bibles.

Yunus reportedly is back at work and may attend church but may not speak in public. He is not allowed to travel outside of Brunei. No information was available on Chong except for a report that his travel was not restricted. — *Compass*

## Stop Building Bigger Buildings

**T**WO mega-church pastors have called churches to stop building bigger buildings, but instead, rely on the Internet to connect decentralised home groups to the larger church body.

Cho Yonggi, pastor of the 750,000-member Seoul Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea, and Rick Warren, pastor of the 15,000-member Saddleback Valley Community, said the money saved would be put to better use in supporting world missions, according to a *World Pulse* report.

The two pastors met in California late last year to discuss church growth strategies for the 21st century. With 20,000 new converts a year, Cho said there was no way his church can match buildings to

membership. "We're so jammed that we have no way to keep growing except by going to cyberspace."

He told young people to stay home and get their teaching through the Internet. These long-distance members give regular feedback on the sermons and services, and they can give their tithe through the Internet. They stay physically connected to the larger body and study Scripture through the home groups. Cho's church offers live services Sunday and Wednesday over the Internet.

"When I want to give special instructions or teaching to the cell groups," Cho said, "then I will teach it through the Internet to the cells and apartments."

Cho says this strategy does not mean abandoning a central church building. "We need both ministries together — a strong, young church and a very powerful Internet service."

## Norway: Christian PM

**K**JELL Magne Bondevik, a Lutheran clergyman and evangelical leader in Norway is the new prime minister of Norway. Bondevik actively served as an adviser of World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission since 1999. He will step down from that position during his time as prime minister to maintain a neutral position. — *Religion Today*

## Islam in Europe

**T**HE number of Muslims in Europe is much higher than expected at 51.8 million, according to the Central Institute Islam Archives in Soest, Germany, reports *idea*. Islam is growing at an annual rate of 6.5 percent and if this trend continues, it will be the second largest religious group (behind Roman Catholics) by 2014.

The institute bases its findings on official

figures issued by individual countries. Russia, including Siberia and Chechnya, has 25 million Muslims, more than any other European country. It is followed by Turkey (5.7 million), France (5 million), and Germany (3.5 million).

In some countries — Belgium, France, Italy, Austria and Spain — Islam has overtaken Protestantism as the second largest religious constituency behind Catholicism.

It is also the second largest religion after the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Russia and Serbia. Out of the 750 million Europeans, 269 million are Catholics, 171 million Orthodox, 79 million Protestants and 28 million Anglicans.

## Palestine's Christians Persist Despite Pressures

**C**AUGHT in the escalating violence in Israel and the West Bank, Christian leaders are facing grave risks in continuing their ministries. At the Bethlehem Bible College (BBC), dean of students Alex Awad describes the atmosphere as a "pressure-cooker situation."

Although Bethlehem is under Palestinian control, life for Bethlehem's 150,000 residents remains difficult. The college helps families buy food and pay for utility bills and school tuition. "We also have a counselling programme in place to offer support for children and adults traumatised by the shellings and shootings," Awad says.

Many overseas Christian groups have stayed away, Awad says, lowering the college's income that comes from academic instruction, conferences, and donations. — *Christianity Today*

## Christian Solidarity with Israel

**C**HRISTIANS should visit the Holy Land in these troubled times as a sign of solidarity with Israel. This appeal was launched by the International



**F O R E I G N N E W S**

Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) at a convention in Emmetten, Switzerland.

Delegates from 18 countries criticised what they perceive as a pro-Palestinian bias of the international media. They were spreading half-truths, distortions and even lies about the conflict.

According to conference participants, Israel has exercised "remarkable self-restraint" in the face of "extreme provocations" by the Palestinian authorities whose activities constituted a "declaration of war", while Israel had agreed to far-reaching compromises, according to the Emmetten Resolution.

ICEJ was founded in 1980, mainly by Charismatics, to support Israel's claim to Jerusalem as her indivisible and eternal capital. It also endorses Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. ICEJ is represented in almost 100 countries. — *idea*



**India: Mass Rejection of Caste System**

**M**ANY thousands dalits rejected the Hindu caste system publicly by taking to the streets of Delhi last November to embrace Buddhism in a mass conversion ceremony, according to a report in *evangelicals now*.

Dalits are the outcast people in the Hindu community since they do not form part of the caste hierarchy. Considered to be less than human, the 300 million Dalits in India have been oppressed for centuries under the caste system.

While the event was advertised as a Buddhist event, it has opened the door for conversions to other faiths. The All India Christian Council (AICC) has supported the event, which also received backing from the Roman Catholics' Bishop's Conference, the National Council of Churches of India and the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI).

"As Christians we support the movement as a human rights issue. We are in solidarity with them because this is an issue of justice, of resisting oppression," EFI General Secretary Richard Howell said in an interview with World Evangelical Alliance.

EFI has initiated programmes of social justice and development in the Dalit communities, empowering them to face the challenges of living in an oppressive society.

**Philippines: Christian Villagers Arm Themselves**

**T**HE once calm, peaceful and loving people of Zamboanga will never be the same again after 200 heavily armed Muslim rebels held 81 Christian hostages last December and exchanged gunfire with the military forces that left two soldiers, four Muslim rebels and four civilians dead.

With this situation, a number of Christian families in the village of Cabatangan have started to arm themselves with firearms to defend themselves from another rebel attack. "We never wanted to arm ourselves but we could no longer depend on the military to protect us, we have no choice but to arm ourselves," the village chieftain said.

However, Dr Ben de Jesus, former President of the Alliance World Fellowship (AWF) and now President of Ebenezer Bible College and Seminary who is based in Zamboanga, said he is not for Christians arming themselves.

"If firearms respond to firearms and war responds to war, there will be no end to the violence and this would be no solution to this problem in the Southern Philippines." — *Assist News Service*



**Religious Reps Meet DPM: from page 13**

"Such obstacles imposed by the Government agencies concerned have created major problems to the subjects concerned. Even though the Government assures citizens of religious liberty, this is certainly a violation of basic human rights," the statement said and further urged Dato' Seri Badawi's help to resolve the problem.

MCCBCHS informed the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also Home Affairs Minister, of the visa woes faced by foreign

missionaries, religious professionals and students. Their statement lamented the dissolution last July of the Jawatankuasa Pas Lawatan Ikhtisas that was set up to help process applications for professional passes for these people. The system had been effective and efficient but it was dissolved without any notice.

The statement concluded with MCCBCHS's commitment to nation building and national integration efforts initiated by the Government. ■

# FOR Your Prayers



## S U D A N

**T**error has marked the Arab Islamic Government of Sudan's (GoS) rule since it decided to subject all Sudanese to the Shariah Law. The black African Christian and animist population of the South has long resisted this. The GoS uses massacre, slavery on a massive scale, torture, mutilation, scorched earth raids and mass starvation as weapons of war.

Persecution of Christians in Khartoum also has increased recently.

Mohammed Saeed Mohammed Omer became a Christian in Dec 2000 while studying in India. His own family had him arrested in Khartoum. Two other new believers, Aladin Omer Ajjabna and Nasir Hassan, 'disappeared' there four days later. Mohammed has been beaten and tortured but he has refused to renounce his faith in Christ.

Pray for divine protection for these three and many other persecuted Sudanese Christians, that they will have a strong abiding sense of God's presence; great spiritual wisdom for the pastors of the Church in Khartoum, which is suffering persecution, trauma and harassment, and the believers to remain strong in their faith and be a witness to all who see their righteousness; the long suffering people of Southern Sudan facing daily the GoS jihad; and for the international community to recognise and restrain Islamic oppression in all its forms worldwide.

## B I B L E S O C I E T Y

**"M**aking the Bible heard" is the new slogan of Bible Society. Since 1804 the Society has been translating and supplying the Scriptures all over the world. Now it has taken on a campaigning stance to shape the values that define contemporary society. "Increasingly we need to be seen to be an advocate for the position of the Bible in cultures near and far – not least in our land, where the Bible and its message lacks credibility," said Neil Crosbie, Chief Executive.

One of the ways the Society is helping people in Britain, and in other parts of the world, realise the importance of the Bible is through the Faith Comes By Hearing

project. Since its launch in 1995, over 400,000 people in over 7,000 churches in England and Wales have been getting deeper into God's Word and allowing it to impact their lives through listening to the New Testament on cassette. Pray for the ongoing work of this initiative.

## M I D D L E E A S T

**T**he year-long Palestinian uprising in the Holy Land has caused great hardship for many ordinary people. Because of the slump in the tourist industry and restrictions on travel, unemployment fluctuates between 45 percent and 60 percent, and one-third of families live on less than US\$2 a day. Praise God for the aid given to some of the poorest Christians in Bethlehem by foreign aid agencies such as Barnabas Fund. Continue to pray that aid will reach the needy and pray for an end to the suffering.



Also, pray for the ministry of Musahala, a Christian group in Israel that brings Israeli and Palestinian Christians together, mainly through desert camps. Musahala helps the needy in practical ways and Arab Christians have been encouraged by financial support from Israeli believers.

## I N D O N E S I A

**S**everal weeks ago, thousands of Christians in Central Sulawesi were on the verge of a great massacre. In Tentena, a small city with a refugee population of 28,000 was bracing itself for what seemed an inevitable slaughter.

Other Christians had also fled to the Christian interior of Central Sulawesi and

neighbouring provinces. The total number of Christian refugees was over 50,000.

A Christian leader reported: "As Dec 1 and 2 broke upon us, the women and children in Tentena were packing travel bags ready for flight into the jungles. The final assault on Tentena could be just hours away. But God had His ears open to the cry of His people.

"Within 24 hours President Megawati dispatched thousands of troops and ordered four of her top Cabinet Ministers, five Generals and the National Chief of Police to Poso and Tentena.

"In 27 years in Indonesia, we have never seen such a quick and amazing response. Within hours the jihad had been put to flight. The atmosphere of fear and danger that electrified the air had given way to a peaceful serenity that I had not known since before the conflict began at Christmas in 1998."

Praise God for the quick and stern action taken by the Government in averting the massacre. Continue to pray for God's protection on our Christian brethren in these regions. Pray also for the innocent peace-loving Muslims who are caught up in this violence. Many times they were coerced into joining the Laskar Jihad army. Please pray that God will protect and bless them. Pray they have the courage to stand up against the Laskar Jihad, who are such a minority but have a strong influence.

Continue to pray for the President and the Government, that they will act justly and compassionately.

## A F G H A N I S T A N

**P**raise God for the dramatic rescue of the eight foreign aid workers who were held captive for over three months, under threat of execution for preaching Christianity. With the pullout of the Talibans, Afghans are keen to explore the outside world via the radio and TV sets that they are pulling out of their cupboards. Pray that they will find and receive Christian radio and satellite TV programmes. Pray that God will overrule in the present chaos and power struggles in setting up a transitional government. This is a highly sensitive and strategic time to persevere in prayer for religious freedom to become a basic right in Afghanistan.