

BERITA NECF

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

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

PP5872/12/2002

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2002

E D I T O R I A L

From Vision To Mission

Christian groups working among the Orang Asli (OA) communities share a common dream of ultimately establishing indigenous OA churches. That dream may soon become a reality, if the aspirations articulated at the recent OA leadership training in Port Dickson are crystallised into concrete plans of action.

Arising from this training event is the realisation of the need for a wider and bolder vision: **To build an OA Church that will spearhead efforts to holistically transform the wider OA community in line with Vision 2020.**

The event gathered the nation's OA pastors, leaders, church workers, and the many non-OA involved in the OA ministry. It was organised by the NECF Malaysia OA Ministry Commission – a fraternity of at least eight denominations and Christian groups – which has, since its set-up three years ago, been encouraging and providing a platform for OA churches of various denominations to work together.

The increasing inter-denominational participation of the OA churches in the activities planned for them is proof that the OA churches are moving towards their desired unity and cooperation. The apprehension, fears and suspicions that have long dominated the various churches involved in helping the OA community are slowly giving way to healthier, friendlier, more relational and mutually beneficial interaction.

This trend is certainly a promising prelude to the emergence of a united OA Church that could well be a catalyst to improving the lot of the OA community – an increasingly urgent need considering the rapid pace of development in the nation. It is imperative that the Church-at-large understands the spiritual, political, economic and social needs of the OA. Only then can it play an effective, proactive role in addressing critical issues relating to land ownership and development, religious freedom and education.

Transforming the OA community

Historically, the ministry among the OA peoples is a competitive one, fraught with claims of 'ownership', pride, individualism and selfish motives. This has allowed the 'divisive syndrome' (at times dictated by doctrinal stands and 'territorial' claims) to prevail, thereby limiting any meaningful contribution to fostering unity that is so crucial to self-sufficiency and restoration of dignity.

The OA church leaders have voiced their conviction that a self-financing, self-managing and self-propagating OA Church could, as an effective change agent and advocacy entity, impact more effectively the economic, social and spiritual wellbeing of the OA community.

Apart from fostering a healthy working relationship with

Built with our own hands ... OA Christians have an intimate sense of ownership of their churches because they are personally involved in building the churches. Often, the church building becomes the village's community centre, a testimony of the church's influence on its surroundings.



development agencies – such as the Department of Orang Asli Affairs – the OA Church can engage itself in pursuing a multi-prong strategy of redemptive ministry, advocacy on justice issues, development of a viable resource data bank, planning skills, and spiritual enhancement programmes.

To date, the OA community has yet to be brought into the mainstream of national development. Thus far, the OA's participation in the civil service has been dismal, contrary to Article 8.1 of the Federal Constitution which legitimise discriminatory legislation in favour of the OA community.

To improve the lot of the OA peoples, there must be a greater citizenry participation in the democratic process of electing a government. An elected OA representative, in addition to appointed senators "capable of representing the interest of the aborigines" – Article 45(2) – will spell better representation for the OA at decision-making levels. The OA concerns will then be placed in the national agenda, thereby halting any erosion of their existing rights to land and resources. The effectiveness of existing agricultural and livestock and forest resource-related projects can then be enhanced to benefit the larger OA community.

The OA Church can become a credible force among its own people – a community church where brethren dwelling in unity (Psalm 133) take their community from its present plight to greater economic, social and spiritual heights.

Wholesome training in skills and leadership for development of both the OA church leaders and community will generate a greater degree of self-reliance and total involvement in community development. The deep-seated sense of insecurity experienced by the community will then give way to a sense of sustainable competency and confidence.

see page 2

NECF MALAYSIA COUNCIL**Chairman**

Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam

Vice-Chairman

Rev. Dr Eu Hong Seng

Honorary Secretary

Elder Kong Yeng Phooi

Honorary Treasurer

Mr Samuel Ang

Committee Members

Rev. Eddy Ho

Rev. Dr Dexter Low

Rev. Dr John Nagamuthu

Rev. Lim Soon Hock

Rev. Kalip Basar

Dr Khoo Kay Hup

Mr Chua Keng Seng

Miss Goh Poh Gaik

Advisor

Mr David Boler, K.M.N.

NECF MALAYSIA STAFF**Secretary-General**

Rev. Wong Kim Kong, J.M.N.

Personal Assistant cum Executive**Secretary (Public Affairs)**

Chandrasekaran Sabapathy

Confidential Secretary

Ching Bee Gaik

Executive SecretariesAnn Low (*Prayer*)Kathryn Tan (*Finance*)Lim Siew Foong (*Research*)Leong Yew Lai (*OA Ministry*)Lai Moo Him (*Special Projects & Church Relations-North*)Ong Juat Heng (*Communications*)Alfred Tais (*Bahasa Malaysia DAWN*)Patrick Cheng (*Administration & Church Relations*)**Administrative Secretaries**

Adeline Koh

Frances Lee

Sangan Mutang

Administrative Assistants

Ritha Andries

Gordon Kwong

EDITORIAL**Editor**

Rev. Wong Kim Kong

Assistant Editor & Writer

Ong Juat Heng

ADDRESS

32, Jalan SS2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor, Malaysia
Tel: 603-7727 8227
Fax: 603-7729 1139
E-mail: editor@necf.org.my

Preach the Gospel in the Garb of the People

By Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam,
NECF Malaysia Chairman

THE command of Jesus to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mk 16:15) is urgent in the light of the world’s events that point to the return of our Lord Jesus for His Church. Hence, it is to be obeyed by all believers.

Why Must We Preach?

We preach because the Bible declares that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and “... there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Man’s only hope is the forgiveness of sin, which is the cause of all man’s problems and the world he lives in. The world may look like it is getting better in medical, technical and materialistic comforts of life here, but sin is growing and destroying man both physically and spiritually.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians Christians said, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8–9).

No other religion offers God’s forgiveness by grace. The Bible says, “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you” (Acts 13:38). John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as “the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world” (1 Jn 1:29). Therefore, the Gospel is the good news that God will forgive us because of Jesus. “Those who believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

How Are We To Preach?

Paul said, “To the Jews, I become like the Jews to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law ... to the weak, I become weak, to win the weak. I have become all

things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:20, 22). Did he mean that he would behave like they behaved? No, by this Paul meant that he would take all pains to relate with the people and seek to communicate the gospel in a way that they would understand. In short, “preaching the gospel in the garb of the people”.

Every person lives and grows within a cultural context. This encompasses language, race, colour and all nations. It has been said the message is sacred but the method by which we communicate is not. Missionary anthropologist Paul G Hiebert reminds us that human beings can only receive and respond to the gospel when it is presented in “their language, symbols and rituals”. The preacher must therefore ensure that the message is biblically sound and that his delivery is relevant and effective in the context of where he lives.

The task is great and challenging but to those who will obey the command, Jesus said, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you” (Lk 10:19).

The Command To Preach

After the resurrection of Jesus and before He ascended, He said, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mk 16:15–17).

Let us “work while it is still day” (Jn 9:4).

From Vision To Mission: from page 1

A united OA Church, apart from upholding our national ideology (Rukun Negara) and nation-building initiatives, will uphold godly principles of collaboration, cooperation and corporate community enterprise in line with the Lord’s command

in John 13:35, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples ...”

This is our vision, not only for our Orang Asli brethren, but also for the Orang Asli community.

WHO ARE THE ORANG ASLI

The Orang Asli (OA) are not a homogenous group but comprise 19 ethnic subgroups. Their total population as given in the latest census is 132,800, only 0.6 percent of the population of Malaysia.

The term 'Orang Asli' as used in government official documents or scholarly literature refers only to the indigenous minority peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, and does not include the indigenes of East Malaysia. Another term 'Orang Asal' is often used to refer to all the indigenous peoples of the whole of Malaysia.

It is helpful to bear this distinction in mind when we read or talk about the OA. Otherwise, we will miss seeing the unique needs and situation of the OA and fail to understand their concerns and aspirations.

Unlike the Malays and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak, the obligatory provisions for special privileges and protection of the OA's special position are not clearly defined under Article 153 of the Constitution.

The assurance that their classification as 'Bumiputera' qualifies them to benefit from the 'affirmative action' programmes of the government is insufficient to allay their dissatisfaction and insecurity about their position in our Malaysian society.

Distinguishing the OA from the East Malaysians will ensure that the needs of the OA ministry will not be neglected because of ignorance. At one missions meeting, when asked about the needs of the unreached peoples among the OA, the speaker replied that the OA was considered reached. He added that there were many strong churches and leaders among them; they even have their own bible schools. He was probably referring to the East Malaysian churches.

This misinformation was the result of including East Malaysians

under the label 'Orang Asli'. Hopefully, this is an isolated incident. However, if a missions speaker, who was trying to increase awareness of the status of the unreached peoples, could be misinformed, who then can help bring the needs of the OA ministry to the attention of the Malaysian Church?

The reality is that eight ethnic subgroups out of the 19 have either no known Christians or no church-planting work among them. For another four of the subgroups, churches have been planted among them only less than three years ago.

There are three bible training centres catering specifically for the training of OA Christians for ministry. These have trained workers for other churches besides their own. Only one of these three centres is run by the OA themselves. Most churches working among the OA have their own in-house training. Besides the Semai, none of the other groups has any portion of the Bible in their languages. The Semai have had some portions of the Bible translated into their language, but these have not been widely used.

A brief description of the current status of the OA ministry will be incomplete if we fail to celebrate what God is doing among His people.

We must also give thanks for those who have been toiling faithfully among them, some for at least two decades.

In spite of the hardships and hindrances, the OA Church is growing. We can rejoice in the fact that today, there are Semai Christians serving among other tribes, including the Jakun, Orang Selitar and the Jahai. Some OA Christians have even been to Indonesia for ministry.

It is His plan that the OA will not only be the recipients of church-planting efforts, but also become the labourers sent forth to build His Church. ■



Worship services are always joyful occasions for the OA Christians, despite their hardships.

Revival Comes to a Village

A teacher posted to a *kampung* shares how God sent revival to a nearby Orang Asli (OA) village through the Chinese church she attended

It was an unplanned ministry that began one Saturday evening at a Mandarin worship service when three OA men showed up. One asked for prayer over his bleeding intestines and was subsequently healed of the ailment.

At the next service, he showed up with 14 OA men. 'Coincidentally', it was an evangelistic meeting and the church leaders made an on-the-spot decision to interpret

the message from Mandarin to BM. At the end of the service, all the OA men – including two *bomoh* (traditional healers) – went forward to confess their faith in Jesus.

The church was stunned by (and unprepared for) the response. Nevertheless, it plunged into the work of serving their new OA brethren and reaching out to their community. Within six months, they baptised 65 OA.

It has been three years since that blessed Saturday evening and the ministry is still growing. Even the village headman has openly 'accepted Christ', though he has stopped attending church because of pressures from certain quarters.

Reaching out to the OA community has not been a smooth-sailing course, but the faith of those involved in the ministry has

see page 6

No Squatting Over Still Waters

Focus: Orang Asli

It is critical to understand the customs of the Orang Asli (OA) if we are to be effective in ministering to them

By Rev. Lieow Meng Kuang

The OA are steeped in superstitions and taboos that have been developed and preserved for generations through adverse circumstances. Although many new things have been introduced into their life, for many, their mindset and way of life have not changed.

Understanding their customs means knowing their mindset. I am tempted to write about their many dos and don'ts as being aware of them have helped me during the 20 years of working among them. However, I will just dwell on one.

Among the major OA tribes, there is a long-held belief that squatting over still waters to 'do your business' will open the way for the 'spirit of water' to enter their stomachs, thereby causing



Serene scene of an OA village ... the OA's idyllic kampung life belies their deep bondage to fears of spirits.

their stomachs to swell. This may lead to a gruesome death.

This belief has been held rigidly for generations and so strict is it that whoever breaks the rule will be fined to appease the spirit.

No squatting over still waters means no toilets, so they go to

see page 5

Gathering the Tribes

There is now a more concerted effort to reach out to the Orang Asli in the peninsula with the set-up of the NECF Malaysia OA Ministry three years ago.

Not only has the commission brought a semblance of unity and cooperation to non-OA workers reaching out to the OA, it has also helped to bring together the OA workers and Christians from various tribes.

And, like their non-OA brethren throughout Malaysia who are clamouring for unity, the OA workers are calling for

oneness. Said OA worker Pr Miun Amat: "I hope the commission will open the Orang Asli's eye to see the need for unity and greater cooperation."

Added Pr Silvanus Tan: "I sincerely hope the commission can unite the OA churches to work together towards achieving the common goal, that is to be an independent OA Church."

Both Pr Miun and Pr Tan – founder members of the commission – are currently pastoring OA churches. Since getting involved in the commission, they have gained a greater appreciation and respect of the diversity in approach to ministry by the various denominations.

The few seminars and conferences have provided ample opportunity for them, and others, to work together and fellowship – an opportunity not available in the past as churches held their own training for their own congregations.

"The OA leaders from various denominations are now able to sit at the



Pr Miun

same table and discuss matters without being suspicious of each other. We feel comfortable with each other each time we meet," observed Pr Tan.

Besides pooling resources and exchanging ideas, the joint meetings have motivated and encouraged them to press on in their ministry, according to Pr Miun. That is because they are now able to share their personal struggles with each other, he explained.

The increasing cooperation and unity among the churches and workers involved in the OA ministry have greatly encouraged the commission to be even more proactive in its role as a facilitator. ■



Pr Tan

Focus: Orang Asli

Not Lost in the City

DR S.K. TEOH shares how his church in Ipoh reached out to the Orang Asli who have migrated there

Link Gospel to Culture

“Our people place great importance in our culture. If we present the Gospel without linking it to some of our cultural traditions, they may not accept it readily because they may think that we are preaching a kind of Western religion to them. So, for them to receive Jesus, we need to present Him in the Orang Asli manner. We need to ‘blend’ the Gospel with our culture.”

*Rev. Balahu Hassan
Full-time OA minister for the past
32 years*

No squatting over still waters: from page 4

the rivers. The Health Department officials are not happy with this because we take our drinking water from the same rivers. Hoping to resolve the problem, the department built toilets for them but they end up as stores for firewood. Termites help to hasten the stores’ destruction. The department has given up on the OA and left them to their habits.

This toilet belief is so deeply ingrained that we have had OA children attending our Vacation Bible School dirtying our campsites to avoid going to the toilets. I have heard an OA said, “I am not going to camp because there is a lot of good food there. After getting used to eating, my stomach will grow big. When I return home I have to find more food to fill it.” I am sure he was also worried about having to move his bowels!

They are not only afraid of stomach problems, but also offending the ‘guardian spirits’ and their elders.

Actually, this ‘toilet’ belief has some good in it. Stagnant water is breeding ground for malaria-carrying mosquitoes and a person squatting over the still water may get infected by the parasite and die as a result. So, there is a medical explanation to this but the OA, of course, think it’s all because of spirits and their fears have bound them.

Medicine may help to convince them of their errors, but only the power of the Truth can dispel their fears. And only when we understand their superstitions and fears can we know precisely how to help them overcome their fears. ■

(Rev. Lieow is the NECF Malaysia OA Ministry Chairman.)

According to a recent newspaper report, there are 132,000 OA in the country and over half of them live on the outskirts of major towns and cities. Over the last 15 years, many Orang Asli (OA) have migrated from their villages to towns for work or studies.

Some of them continue to commute between their villages and the towns, not just because of the higher cost of living in the towns, but more so because they did not find acceptance with the other communities in towns.

Some OA confess that they feel out of place in the urban churches because of the wide disparity in educational and socio-economic status. Language is also another barrier to settling down.

Generally, urban churches have not extended their fellowship to their OA brethren, not because they do not want to, but because they do not know how to. Meanwhile, existing OA churches confine their ministry within their villages and are reluctant to work with the urban churches – even with those within the same denomination – to serve their people in the towns.

Reaching Out St Peter’s Anglican Church, Ipoh, (where I worship) started its first Bahasa Malaysia service seven years ago by first reaching out to policemen, many of whom were Orang Asli. The congregation grew from 15 to 70 as their relatives and friends joined in. Church leaders were invited to visit the *kampungs* (villages) where they came from to minister and reach out to their fellow villagers.

Soon after, another BM church was planted in Gopeng to serve the nearby villages.

To help our BM-speaking brethren – mainly OA – the churches provide transport (vans and schoolbuses) to ferry them to and from church meetings.

The Gopeng BM church even opened a *kedai ekonomi* (grocery shop) to supply sundry goods at reasonable prices, mainly to the OA. An OA part-time staffworker runs the shop, which is well-stocked like others, but without liquor and cigarettes.

Prices of the goods are generally 20 per cent lower than its competitors, thanks to a

volunteer who buys the goods from wholesalers. Clothes and kitchen utensils donated by church members are also sold there at nominal prices.

To help the OA integrate into the church, we encourage them to join the rest at the coffee fellowship in-between worship services. When the church holds dinners on special occasions, subsidies are given to the OA to enable them to participate. We also arranged for them to join several combined-churches celebrations in the city.

At the beginning of each year, the church donates RM50 each to 10 OA children to help with their school fees. Reading materials, used clothes and toys donated by church members are given to the OA. In addition, some church members give free tuition in English for OA students, while several OA adults have been given jobs by church members.

These are just some of the practical ways the church has taken to help the OA. But we have to help the OA look ahead, and that’s where our leadership training comes in. We are training them to lead their people and be self-reliant. ■

(Dr Teoh has his own gynaecological practice in Ipoh. He is deeply involved in the BM ministry and currently serves as a member of the NECF Malaysia BM Commission and Chairman of the BM Committee of the Anglican Church in West Malaysia and Congregation Leader of the BM Ministry in the church.)

The BM congregation of St Peter’s Anglican Church, Ipoh, comprises mainly the OA who find the church a good meeting place in the city to ‘hang out’.



Thanks to the Kedai Ekonomi, OA Elizabeth Wah Kiah now has a regular income.



Let My People Grow

Four OA pastors – from both sides of the generation – share their concern and hopes for their people



REV. BALAHU HASSAN is a veteran in the OA work, having served his Semai people for the past 32 years.

He is honest about his people's weaknesses and says candidly that they still have a dependent mentality, due largely to their low self-esteem which, in turn, results from their low level of education.

He believes the OA are not stupid but are, in fact, 'rich' in many ways. However, they have not learned to utilise their resources due to their ignorance. Another problem with the OA is their complacent attitude towards life, sighs Rev. Balahu. "All through the centuries, our people have led simple lifestyles in their villages. They are not open to changes. Coming out to the towns to work is a big problem. Staying on in one particular job is a headache to them," he laments.

Nevertheless, he still harbours hopes that his people will one day become self-sufficient and that they will be on par economically with the other races. His greatest hope, though, is that they will all come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

PR BAKAR MOGOT is happy that with the setting up of the NECF Malaysia OA Commission, there is progress in efforts to build an indigenous OA Church. However, he is disappointed that there are



still some churches which do not see the need or are reluctant to work together. The Commission Vice-Chairman longs to see the emergence of OA leaders who will be recognised and respected not just by their own people, but also by the Body of Christ.

While he appreciates the help and concern of churches working among the OA, he urges them to entrust OA Christian leaders with the responsibility of making decisions for their own communities. Pr Bakar is from the Mah Meri tribe and has been serving full-time among his people since 1993.



Like any faithful shepherd, **PR HASIN PIEH** is protective over his flock. He wants his members to know their enemy (1 Pet. 5:8-9) and constantly reminds them that their battle is not against "flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). He yearns to see OA youths committed to God and serve Him. They need to see that the church is not just the pastor's responsibility, he says.

A loyal supporter of the commission, he has been encouraging his congregation in the area of tithes and offerings, in preparation

for the day when they will be weaned from financial dependence on their mother church. Coming from the Temuan tribe, he has been serving full-time for seven years and currently oversees three lay pastors.



PR RAMIM TOYOM serves as a lay pastor because he knows his church is not able to pay him sufficiently to meet his family's needs. He is content

with the arrangement but is concerned that the lack of finance can deter young people from stepping into full-time ministry. A Temuan, he has been working alongside Pr Hasin and hopes that theological schools will design special programmes for Christians like him who desires training but do not have the academic qualifications to enter the seminaries. ■

Rev. Balahu was the first superintendent of the Methodist Sengoi Mission Conference. He has since stepped down from that position, but still commands much respect among his people. The other three younger pastors are the emerging leaders and they attributed their spiritual growth and leadership development to the support of their mother churches and senior pastors, who have entrusted them with responsibilities, given them the freedom to make decisions, and allowed them to make mistakes - key ways that have spurred their growth.

Revival comes to a village: from page 3

enlarged with each hurdle crossed. The church received threats; faced an attempt to disrupt a meeting; endured a road blockade to their van that was ferrying OA members to church, among other problems.

An unexpected hurdle came from the mother-church, who was initially hesitant about the ministry, but thankfully the doubts have cleared and the leadership is now totally committed to the ministry.

Along the journey, the church learned that the rougher the road, the more visible was God's guiding hand. "Whenever we needed manpower, people would just turn up at the needed hour to serve. When we encountered problems, by the grace of God, somehow the problems were solved. And we were never short of funds throughout these three years," said the teacher who declined to be named.

Not only did they witness God's providence and grace, they

saw too His power through signs and wonders. "Mark 16:17 - 20 came alive to us," she enthused.

She added that the ministry had changed their lives. "For me, I began to know a little more of what it means to take up the cross and follow Jesus. For the first time, I was confronted with counting the cost of discipleship. The ministry could have affected my career but I felt I needed to pursue it at all cost."

They experienced, as a team, God's outpouring of His love and compassion for the OA into their hearts, and found they could love people who are so different from them. "It was really a privilege that God has let us serve in this ministry. Often we felt that we had done nothing. We were there just to see what God was going to do," the teacher said.

A fitting reminder, indeed, that we can be useful vessels for Him so long as we are willing. ■

I S S U E 6 3

Women to Women



Till we have faces: THE SEARCH FOR PERSONHOOD

By Wong Ming Yook

In speaking of personhood, it's very difficult not to tackle the issue of gender. For women, particularly, it is near impossible not to consider how notions of gender limitations have affected the way they look at their own sense of self and personhood. My own understanding of, and struggle with, personhood has had much to do with gender too, although the quest doesn't end there. The best place to start is thus at the beginning – our upbringing, our childhood, and family relationships mark our later attitudes indelibly. I invariably walk down the avenue of my past.

The Perilous Journey into the Past; or Freudian Thoughts

When I was young, I had little conception of gendered difference except the most obviously biological of ways. I had a sister and a brother, so presumably, I knew what was what. My parents were rather careless and remiss about such things, and forgot to mention that being a girl, XX, I was expected to behave differently from my brother, the XY at home.

My sister was more the typical girl of the family being rather given at a young age to hankering after pretty dresses and the like. My regulation costume, out of school, was a pair of shorts and a striped yellow T-shirt that I wore to death. Incidentally, when I was 11, I was a nifty sprinter, and the only one in class who could do cartwheels (ahh, the pride of life...). I also climbed a lot of trees, and hung upside down from many a branch, to the dismay of my best friend's parents, who were trying to instill lady-like qualities in their daughter. My favourite book characters were The Famous Five, The Naughtiest Girl in School, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and a most annoying schoolboy called Jennings. You see here the beginnings of my downfall. My friend will attest to the fact that my one ambition, at 11, was to be a sailor; she



admired me tremendously for that. For someone who didn't have sea legs, that was overweening ambition. But never did I imagine that that was something I could not do because I was a girl.

When did I first learn sexist ideas and language? In spite of my 'liberated' childhood, perhaps the confining moments did begin there after all. They probably

started with my sister's Domestic Science classes, when the uncomfortable thought of things only girls did began to impress itself on my young mind, till then *atabula rasa* in sexism. When she was 13, my sister had to learn Domestic Science. Every week, she came back with some unidentifiable food, and in order not to discourage her tragic efforts (there were copious tears shed...),

my brother and I were enjoined to eat the stuff...It was her custard caramel that did it for us. By the time I got to Form One, my parents happily relinquished me to the commerce teacher. I guess my childhood was not really the place where the battle of the sexes was properly conducted, although the Domestic Science tragedy was a foretaste (bleah!) of things to come. I only truly enrolled in Sexism 101 when I entered the precincts of the church.

The Chapel Perilous

I didn't understand personhood for a long time, in spite of Jesus demonstrating to me what 'free to be' meant. The first church I seriously walked into was a Pentecostal church near my house. To give them their due, the only sexist thing they did was to keep calling me 'sister' (hallelujah!). Later, when I got 'seriouser' and 'seriouser', I encountered other stranger Christians who kept shoving wok and broom in my direction. I had great trouble wondering what domesticity had to do with my working out my faith. For some inexplicable reason, my spirituality was inextricably tied to my apron strings. Yet I knew I was called simply to be a person before God. I was a sinner saved by grace; it never occurred to me that my category was 'female sinner' (and Eve was deceived; but Adam was not!). Those were the days of my Great Rebellion, when I was angry with God and His church for these confinements to my person. For a moment, I almost believed that transformation lay in utter denial of my essential self.

I have since learnt that personhood involves (r)evolving ideas of the core self gathering and growing its inner resources to itself. (Imagine a dust ball growing bigger and more substantial the more it rolls about). It involves words like 'integrity', 'the authentic self', and 'inner and outer weather'. These seem like big words, but they are not. Integrity refers to your inner thoughts (inner weather) matching up precisely with your outer manner and actions (outer weather). Only an affirmed person of strong self worth is a person of integrity. Against this is the hypocrite character whom Jesus strongly denounced. The hypocrite is the person who has allowed his authentic (true) self to atrophy and encouraged his false self to project itself to the world. In ancient Greek drama, actors wore theatrical masks to suggest the character/part they were playing. These masks were called *personae*. Little wonder that the word 'hypocrite' in our modern

understanding derives from the original Greek word for 'actor': *hupokrites*. Once upon a time, I thought mistakenly that I had to be the masked *hupokrites* to be Christian. For a while, I was almost persuaded.

Past the Gates of Folly: *Imago Dei* on the Gilded Plains

Pop psych proposes that we can find ourselves, renew, restructure and reinvent ourselves according to the configurations of a desired blueprint that we can come up with. This is the 'wholeness' and 'healing' often offered to genuinely hurting individuals the Oprah Winfrey way! Basically, we just want to embody the ideal image of ourselves. Popular psychology has many supposed Christian leanings that make it attractive and appealing, but for one thing: How do we balance this with Christ's injunction to crucify ourselves? Can we achieve the ideal image while ramming the nails into ourselves?

But this is precisely where our Christian distinctiveness lies. Yes, we have the good news of Jesus to proclaim, but it is anchored not in our introspection but in a decided looking away from ourselves towards God. Our longing for self-discovery and fulfilment is dependent on our yearning after God, first of all. And our search for identity and personhood delves into our very heart's search for the heart of God. It is only when we see Him that a strange thing happens: we also see ourselves! Personhood becomes suddenly not a fluttering notion, a remote possibility, but concrete truth in the mutual gazing that goes on between God and us. It is a breathlessly renewing restoration of not just our 'ideal image' of ourselves, but God's vision of us as the *imago dei*! And when God confronts us, breaking through the stale layers of our inherited and imprisoning ideas, He is purified air entering our deprived lungs for the first time ever, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In psalmic vocabulary, God's *yeshuwah* reaches down and delivers us by snatching us out of a cramped enclosure and setting us down in a broad room. He remakes us anew.

Repentance or the return journey to God's embrace began again for me as I worked out these same realisations for myself. It was when I finally put aside every other consideration and turned to gaze on God alone that I gained in substantiality, and in an anchoredness that has not left me. I don't know what healing exactly God wrought in the recesses of my complex and complicated being, but He did all that was needed in creating a safe harbour for me. I

have come to understand and appreciate how deeply my personhood affects God. I am reminded that I am indeed *imago dei*, as we all are, 'creatures made in the image of God.' And it is liberating.

'Till We Have Faces': The Knightly Prize

The Christian understanding of *imago dei* is no clearer than in C. S. Lewis' book called *Till We Have Faces*, in which he describes the Human Soul's struggle to become. The achieving of the goal was in the character, Psyche's losing and then regaining her face and features after countless trials in the Underworld. During the perilous time, she is a cipher, and a blank space confronts us where her face should be. She carries a bowl of water to reflect this blankness to herself. On the day she sees her face looking back at her, she knows that her trials are at an end. For me, this is the journey that God takes us all through in our quest for personhood. Particularly, He wants the stamp of His character on us; if in the process, this requires a painful taking apart of our false selves (facelessness) and recreating our authentic selves, God will do it. But at the end of the Quest Perilous lies our pristine and beautiful face, sculptured and crafted by the only hand which knows how. This face is no *persona*, or mask, and we are no *hupokrites* who must play a part to hide our blankness. This is our true face that God sees when we look upwards to return His healing gaze.

In Conclusion: 'Unafraid to Be'

It will take our lifetime to truly discover all that God meant us to be. Our quest for personhood does not end when we first become Christians, in fact, so much of our struggle for authenticity and realness begins right after the point of conversion. The joy and the struggle of being, and the agony and the ecstasy of learning to embody God's great vision of/for me, are the encompassing experiences laid out for me in my life, in spite of the fact that personhood has not come easily to me, or that realising the substance of my Christian faith in my self has not been achieved without great cost. I am simply grateful that I have become 'unafraid to be' most truly human and most alive. ■

Wong Ming Yoot teaches English Literature in the English Department of Universiti Malaya.

This article was first published in the June 2002 issue of Kairos Publication. Reprinted with permission. Enquiries: kairos@tm.net.my.

W O M E N T O W O M E N
Networking Tea

Date : Saturday 19 October 2002
Time : 3pm - 6pm
Place : NECF Conference Room
Cost : RM5.00 (Tea will be served)



What are women doing in church? How are women's fellowships ministering to women? What are some pressing concerns? Come to learn, to share resources, and to network with women from different churches.

Representatives from

different churches/ministries will share what they are doing. We'll exchange information, ask questions ...and, of course, we'll chat and have tea together.

Who Should Attend: Women leaders in church, wives of pastors and church leaders, leaders of women's fellowships, and ... if you are a woman

and you desire to grow and to serve the Lord, you are welcome.

Enquiries/Registration:
Poh Gaik 012-326 3100
Shireen 016-338 7171
NECF 03-7727 8227

Please register on or before **16 October** to enable us to make arrangements for tea. Thank you.

The Pain of Rejection

By Elisabeth Elliot

A hundred years ago a man's experience of desolation gave birth to a hymn which has been for me and for many the balm of heaven. George Matheson went blind shortly after becoming engaged. His fiancée broke the engagement.

Perhaps there is no more bitter loneliness than that of rejection. Not only must one learn to do without someone he had come to feel he could not live without, but he must endure dagger-thrusts to the heart, such as: You deserved to be rejected. You are not worthy to be loved. You will never be loved. Who would want you? You are condemned to loneliness forever, and nobody cares.

Fear and anger arise. If I turn to God He might reject me. How can I turn to Him anyway? He could have prevented this from happening. What else is He likely to do to me?

The devastating conclusion is reached: I am alone.

Matheson's grief, instead of turning to bitter resentment against the lady who had caused it, was *transformed*. Totally transformed. These profound and simple words show how that happened:

*O Love that will not let me go,
 I rest my weary soul in Thee;
 I give Thee back the life I owe,
 That in Thine ocean depths its flow
 May richer, fuller be.*

*O Light that followest all my way,
 I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
 My heart restores its borrowed ray,*



*That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
 May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain,
 I cannot close my heart to Thee;
 I trace the rainbow through the rain,
 And feel the promise is not vain
 That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head'
 I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
 I lay in dust life's glory dead,
 And from the ground there blossoms red
 Life that shall endless be.*

What, exactly, did Matheson do? He gave back his life, restored the light of his life, opened his heart, laid down life's glory. That spells surrender, which can only come of trust.

His blindness and rejection proved to be for George Matheson the very means of illuminating the Love of God. He may have asked the age-old question, Why? But God's answer is always *Trust Me*. Matheson turned his thoughts away from the woman he had lost, away from the powerful temptations to self-pity, resentment, bitterness toward God, skepticism of His Word, and selfish isolation which might so quickly have overcome him, and lifted up his 'weary soul' to a far greater Love – one that will not let him go.

In the words 'I give Thee back the life I owe' Matheson

understood that there was something he could do with his suffering. It was the great lesson of the Cross: surrender. If Jesus had been unwilling to surrender to humanity's worst crime, humanity's salvation would have been impossible. But at Calvary the Lord of the Earth surrendered Himself into the hands of evil men. Yet, paradoxically, no one took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own will, offered Himself to His Father, 'poured out His soul unto death,' became broken bread and poured-out wine for the life of the world. We live because He died. The power of the Cross is not exemption from suffering but the very transformation of suffering.

Christianity is not a complete coverage insurance policy. Jesus suffered 'not that we might not suffer' wrote George MacDonald, 'but that our sufferings might be like His.'

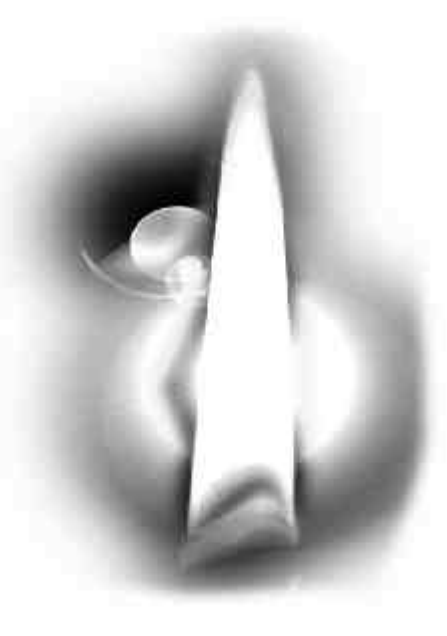
The Way of the Cross for George Matheson was heartbreak. God's power could have spared him that, but God's love chose instead to give him something far more precious than the happiness he had lost – the Oil of Joy. God gives that oil to those who need it, to those who mourn. Its price, in other words, is mourning. If he had not entered the lonely wilderness, George Matheson would not have found his sweet treasure. Would you say the price of that was too high? Your answer depends on where you set your sights – on the short range or the long one. Think what Matheson would have missed. Think what the world would have missed had he been given the form of happiness he hoped for. Denied that, he looked for something better. God never denies us our heart's desire except to give us something better.

With what misgivings we turn over our lives to God, imagining somewhere that we are about to lose everything that matters. Our

hesitancy is like that of a tiny shell on the seashore, afraid to give up the teaspoonful of water it holds lest there not be enough in the ocean to fill it again. Lose your life, said Jesus, and you will find it. Give up, and I will give you all. Can the shell imagine the depth and plenitude of the ocean? Can you and I fathom the riches, the fullness, of God's love?

In his blindness, Matheson must have thought a great deal about light.

*O Light that followest all my ways
I yield my flickering torch to Thee.*



A flickering torch – must he sacrifice his single source of light? He yields. When his heart 'restores its borrowed ray' what happens? In place of his own dim torch he is given God's 'sunshine's blaze.'

Because the thing that he longed for, the joy of his life, was gone, he cried out in his desperation to another joy, to the Source of Joy itself:

O Joy that seekest me through pain.

I wonder if, for a moment or two, he might have felt as I sometimes do. I will not relinquish this misery, not right now. God has taken away what I most wanted. I have a right to feel sorry for myself. I have been wronged. I will refuse, for a while at least, any offer of comfort and healing. Don't speak to me of joy. You pour salt in my wounds. Let me lick them for a while.

If any such quite natural thoughts entered Matheson's mind, God understood, for He too had been a man. In His mercy He helped him to put them away and to write,

I cannot close my heart to Thee.

That is the response of a humbled heart, one that admits its poverty and recognizes the gentle Love that waits, the Joy that is seeking him precisely because he is in such pain that he can hardly seek anything but death. Then, although he is blind, he sees with the eye of faith, and what he sees, through the mist of his tears, is a rainbow. He comes to believe that the promise is true: Tears are not forever. There will be a morning without them. His faith lays hold of the promise and, mysteriously, he finds that pain has been exchanged for joy. If he had closed his heart and indulged his feelings, he might have found some miserably meagre happiness, but he would have forfeited the joy.

'If God loves me, He'll make me happy.' Well, yes and no. Happy isn't the word, really. It's joy, a far better thing. Not sentiment, not mere 'feeling good,' but something that can never be taken away.

Love, Light, Joy. There is yet something else that the God who is Love and the Father of Lights and the Source of all Joy wants to give him. It is the Cross. Will he accept that? It can always be evaded, but if it is, the result is endless loss. His answer:

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee.*

By this time he understands what he would be rejecting. With both hands, as it were, he takes it, says YES, surrenders, lays everything he holds dear – 'life's glory' – down in the dust.

And what happens? Is that the end of the story? No. A thousand times No. Out of that sterile dust springs a miracle:

*And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.*

Taken from Loneliness by Elisabeth Elliot

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.

Counsellors Are Not 'Mediums'

Christians counsellors should not play 'medium', but instead re-direct their counselees to seek God directly for resolutions to their problems.

"Since every believer is a priest, he has direct access to God," said Dr Neil Anderson at the recent Freedom and Revival conference organised jointly by NECF Malaysia and Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ.

Speaking on the topic *Praying in the Spirit*, he stressed that Christians facing problems should take responsibility for their problems and pray. He clarified that Christians should petition for others but "intercession should not replace your responsibility to pray (for yourselves)."

Counsellors, who direct their counselees to seek God, are also helping them to bond with Him. The potential problem of counselees forming emotional bond with their counsellors is hence minimised, if not, removed.

While on the same topic, Dr Anderson also affirmed that silence is a natural part of being in God's presence. Silence indicates we are comfortable with Him, just like good friends going on a long drive together can remain silent for long without feeling uneasy.

Over 200 people attended the two-day conference held at the reconstructed First Baptist Church, Petaling Jaya. Several people came from outstation to listen to Dr Anderson, a renown author whose bestselling books *Victory Over Darkness* and *Bondage Breaker* have helped many Christians find their identity in Christ – an essential understanding to a victorious Christian life. One such

participant was Dr Lam Pan Nam from Gereja Grace Batu Pahat, who closed his clinic in Batu Pahat and drove several hundred miles to attend the conference.

During the conference, Dr Anderson also urged Christian counsellors to "take the time to do it (counselling) right." Like a responsible surgeon who opens the wound and then closes it, a counsellor should ensure that all open wounds are closed before sending the counsellee away.

"You don't just spend 15 minutes with a counsellee and tell him to come back next week. Will a surgeon open a wound, go away and come back another time to close it? So, to be a good counsellor, you need lots of patience and a big bladder," he quipped.

Dr Anderson's conference was part of the Set Free for Life conference, which also comprises another conference, Spiritual Protection for Our Children, conducted by Joseph and Kathy Wasmond. Joseph is currently the president of Freedom In Christ Ministries which is founded by Dr Anderson.

The Wasmonds spoke to over 80 participants about the various subtle ways children today are being deceived, and how they can be spiritually protected. They shared practical steps parents can take to provide a conducive environment for raising secure, Christ-centred children, and how to lead children under bondage to freedom in Christ. ■

Note: Audio tapes and VCDs of the conferences are available from Praise Book Centre. Contact Stanley Kee at 03-78062640 (tel.) or atkee@pl.jaring.my (email).

Heavier Burden After Fun Camp

Some people may balk at the idea of communicating a serious subject in a 'fun' way. But when dealing with youths, that sometimes seems to be the best manner to get the message across.

This, at least, proved to be true for the NECF Malaysia National Youth Missions Camp II which had a pressing objective – to stoke the flames of missions in the hearts of the youths. Through simulation games, which were thoroughly enjoyed by all the campers, the serious messages by the various speakers hit home.

As a result, over 60 percent of the 180 campers pledged to be directly involved in missions. For the rest, the organisers believed that God has planted the missions seed in their hearts.

Participants of the camp, held in July at Genting Highlands, came from all over

Malaysia and beyond, including the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Africa.

Guest speaker Bob Sjogren's message generated a great deal of cat-and-dog discussions among the campers and provoked them to think about living God-centred lives. In his illustration, the cat says, "You feed me, you pet me, I must be God" while the dog says, "you feed me, you pet me, you must be God." From the illustration, campers surmised that the cat is self-centred while the dog is master-centred. Thus, Sjogren, the president of UNVEILINGLORY in the US, challenged the youths to be God-centred.

Philip Chang of Intercare shared how men and women are making a difference through tentmaking in countries whose doors are closed to missionaries. This helped



Hands stretched out to indicate their willingness to reach out.

campers to think about missions in non-traditional ways.

Brian Chung of Operation Mobilisation challenged campers to consider participating in short- or long-term missions while Dr Tan Kang San of OMF clarified that everyone can be involved in missions, either as 'senders' or 'goers'.

What did the youths think about the camp? Judging from the many eager questions thrown during the question-and-answer session at the end of the camp, the two-day outing was well worth the many months of preparation. ■

MERDEKA PRAYER RALLIES GAINING GROUND

The rain, which started falling at 3pm, on Aug 30 in **Kuala Lumpur** portended the massive traffic jams in the Klang Valley. Will Christians still show up at the Merdeka Prayer Rally that night knowing that the event venue – Wisma MCA – was located right in Kuala Lumpur city centre?

Well, 1,600 Christians did, though most of them came in late. Some took two hours to reach the place. As the saying goes, "Better late than never."

The yearly rally organised by the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission was the culmination of the nationwide 40-day Prayer and Fast participated by some 60,000 Christians based on the number of prayer booklets sold.

The rally started with the screening of the video Transformation II, followed by a wonderful time of worship led by the tireless Sungei Way Methodist Church singers and dancers (some as young as six), who maintained their rhythm on stage for the next four hours. What a wonderful message that brought: Prayer rallies are for families, young and old together.

NECF Chairman Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam and speaker Rich Marshall brought messages of the need for holiness. A youth group presented a song they wrote followed by prayer for the youths in our



The scene at Wisma MCA just before midnight.

nation. Three pastors then prayed in Mandarin, Tamil and Bahasa Malaysia for the work among the three races before the congregation broke up into small groups to pray over for the nation.

One of the highlights of the night was the announcement of the 'lunch money' collected for the charity campaign. NECF Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong announced that the collection at that time stood at approximately RM260,000. The money collected would be channelled to four funds: local Christian and non-Christian charitable organisations, the Afghan Refugee Fund and Palestine Refugee Fund

Just before midnight, pastors were called to the front and each one lighted a candle in the darkened hall to symbolise the light of Jesus shining in the dark. At the stroke of midnight, master of ceremony Pr Khor Hoe Chai led the congregation in the midnight shout.

The crowd dispersed at about 12.30am, back into the crowded streets of Kuala Lumpur jam-packed with multitudes of people and vehicles for the long ride home. On seeing the crawling traffic, some participants re-parked their cars and hung out at nearby eateries until the roads were clearer.

Looking at the busy streets that night, one can't help feeling that God is also busy working out His plans for Malaysia.

Combined churches Merdeka prayer rallies were also held in all 14 states throughout Malaysia the same night.

Klang churches, for the first time, held a prayer rally, which was attended by over 200 people. After midnight, some pastors and leaders went for a prayer drive around the town.

Kajang churches, also for the first time, held three separate prayer rallies (English, BM and Chinese) attended by a total of over 700 people. The Tamil brethren here had met earlier on Aug 24.

Although the prayer rally in **Johor Bahru** was conducted in two languages (English and Mandarin), it was attended by over 1,200 people from all the four major languages. Earlier during the 40-day fasting



Pastors lifting lighted candles and flags at the midnight shout.



For over four hours, these young dancers from Sungei Way Methodist Church kept their pace right to the end at Wisma MCA.

period, the churches had held six regional prayer meetings at different locations.

In **Ipoh**, over 700 people gathered at Canning Garden Methodist Church. It was the first time the prayer rally was held in all four languages simultaneously.

The number attending the prayer rally in **Kuala Krai**, Kelantan may be small – about 60 people from two churches – but it was a significant moment as it was the first time the town in the PAS-controlled state held a Merdeka prayer rally.

The prayer rally for the Chinese-speaking churches in **Kuantan** was also a significant event, being the first ever organised by the Chinese churches. About 250 people from 11 churches and two Christian organisations attended. At the same time, about 200 people from seven English-speaking churches attended a separate rally.

In **Alor Star**, the prayer rally was attended by over 200 people from four major churches, including the Roman Catholic Church.

The prayer rally in **Penang** was organised under the Christian Federation of Malaysia banner. Held at the Geodesic Dome in Komtar on Merdeka Day, it was attended by 2,000 people from the three component groups – NECF Malaysia, Roman Catholic Church of Malaysia and Council of Churches of Malaysia.

In **Seremban**, about 400 people from several English and Chinese churches attended the prayer rally.

Over in East Malaysia, the prayer rally in **Kota Kinabalu** was the culmination of a three-day prayer conference with guest speaker Joe Ozawa. Over 1,200 people attended the rally which kicked off in prayer by Sabah Council of Churches chairman designate Bishop John Lee from the Roman Catholic Church. About 900 people signed pledges to regularly pray for their city and state for the next three years.

Meanwhile in **Kuching**, the Association of Churches of Sarawak organised a combined prayer concert where more than 200 people attended.

Prayer rallies were also held before Aug 30 to accommodate the churches' schedule. On Aug 28, the Chinese-speaking churches held two separate prayer rallies at Christian Life Centre, **Petaling Jaya**, and Confucian Private School, **Kuala Lumpur**.

In **Taiping** on Aug 29, about 200 people from over six churches attended their first prayer rally. The same night, about 100 people from six churches in **Melaka** broke fast together at Gateway Christian Fellowship. ■



Children patiently waiting for their figurine balloons at the 'Love Cheras' Community Day.

Community Projects

Churches also organised community projects in conjunction with Merdeka Day. In Kuala Lumpur, churches from the **Cheras** district organised a 'Love Cheras' Community Day at a local shopping centre on Aug 24. Among the day's programme was an exhibition of charitable projects in Cheras, health talks and medical tests, blood donation campaign, children's activities, and police talks.

Churches in the **Ampang** district of Kuala Lumpur held a charity walk on Merdeka Day to collect money for nine

charitable homes.

In **Manjung**, over 1,000 Christians from 21 churches in the district took part in a combined-churches Merdeka Day parade that ended with a prayer celebration on Aug 28. It was a historic occasion for Christians here as this was the first time they were granted the permit to hold a parade.

Seven churches in **Alor Star** collected money to buy hampers and rice for 80 needy families from various races. The goods were presented at a ceremony on Aug 31 and this was reported in the northern edition of a local newspaper. ■



Participants earnestly interceding for the country at the combined Chinese churches rally at Confucian Private School, Kuala Lumpur.

STOP PRESS

NATIONWIDE CHARITY CAMPAIGN

Collection as at Sept 17

RM470,200.41

from 148 churches

Here's our 'lunch money' from the 40-day fast ... NECF Executive Secretary of Finance Kathryn Tan (seated) spent practically the whole night counting notes and coins brought in by individuals for the Charity Campaign.



COMING UP ...

Praying for Our Persecuted Brethren

On Nov 10 through 17, churches throughout the world will observe the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church organised by Open Doors. The primary focus is intercession and citizen action on behalf of persecuted communities of the Christian faith. Intercession is also encouraged for the souls of the oppressors and the nations that promote persecution.

Here in Malaysia, NECF Malaysia and Open Doors are jointly organising the event for the whole month of November. Information for prayer for different countries, where Christian persecution is actively happening, and a programme for all-night intercession (with VCDs and videos) are available on request.

Prayerfully consider how you and your church can be part of this vital movement to sustain and empower our suffering brethren.

For more information, contact NECF Malaysia Ann Low at 013-3649239 (mobile), prayer@necf.org.my (e-mail); or Open Doors at 03-3341 8905 (tel.), odm@tm.net.my (e-mail).

Dream Malaysia 2002 Youth Conference

Over 20 youth leaders and pastors representing their churches are coming together to organise this conference aimed at setting ablaze the flames of revival among our youths and igniting their passion for evangelism.

The speakers of the two-day conference – themed *Transforming Our Nation Through Our Youth* – are Rev. Christopher Long, Pr Julie Khoo, Rev. Kenneth Chin (also Chairman of the organising committee) and Beran Kumar who will deliver the messages in the mornings. Their respective topics follow a well-planned series of reconciliation, restoration, revival and reaching out.

The afternoons are dedicated to workshops and plenary sessions. And then it's screen time (open to the public) after dinner on both nights.

The conference, which is supported by five youth movements, will be held at the Sunway Convention

Centre on Nov 28 and 29. Registration fee of RM50 per person covers conference materials and a T-shirt.

For more information, contact 03-5637 8737 (tel.) or dm2002@dreamvillage.org (e-mail).

Empowering Our Children

FamilyLife, a ministry of Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ, will hold a parenting conference at First World Hotel, Genting Highlands, from Nov 8 to 10.

Themed *Empowering Our Children*, the conference will have topics such as Building Your Child's Identity and Character, What Every Child Needs in a Mother and Father; and Releasing and Sending. The speakers are Don and Sue Myers from the US, and Teody and Evelyn Pajaron from the Philippines.

The Myers have been with CCC for the past 33 years and are currently involved in the marriage and parenting ministry. The Pajarons have served with CCC in the Philippines for 28 years and founded the Church & Family Resource Centre at Davao City. Both are heard regularly on radio where Teody co-hosts "Manhood 101" and Evelyn co-hosts "Woman-to-Woman".

For more information, contact Judy at 012-7010166 or Herbert at 019-3820277.



New Appointments

The NECF Malaysia Council has appointed Steven Wong as the new Chairman of the NECF Research Commission. He replaces Edmund Ng, who was the commission founding Chairman. Steven is the Executive Director of the Institute of Strategic Analysis and Policy Research and worships at DU Methodist Church, Petaling Jaya.

Also appointed is Dr Living Lee as the Vice-Chairman. Dr Lee is Associate Professor in the Department of Geology at Universiti Malaya. He specialises in palaeontology (the study of fossils) and worships at Peoples Park Baptist Church, Petaling Jaya.



New Members

Three more churches have joined our fellowship. We welcome:

- **Tabernacle Evangelical Church**, Penang, pastored by *Ganasan Muthu Kumaru*
- **KL Open Church**, Kuala Lumpur, pastored by *Rev. Kim Ki Hong*
- **Family Healing Centre**, Johor Bahru, pastored by *Rev. Dr James Supayah*

We also welcome four individuals as Associate Members.

Foreign News

Pakistani Supreme Court Acquits Ayub Masih

The Pakistani Supreme Court recently acquitted Pakistan's longest-serving 'blasphemy' Christian prisoner, Ayub Masih, who had spent the past six years in the Multan Central Prison.

Ayub was arrested in 1996 after a neighbour, who was involved in a land dispute with the Masih's, accused him of uttering derogatory statements against Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam. The local Muslim community was so incensed by the blasphemy accusation that they drove the entire Christian population out of Ayub's village. The aggrieved neighbour acquired the Masih's land and property.

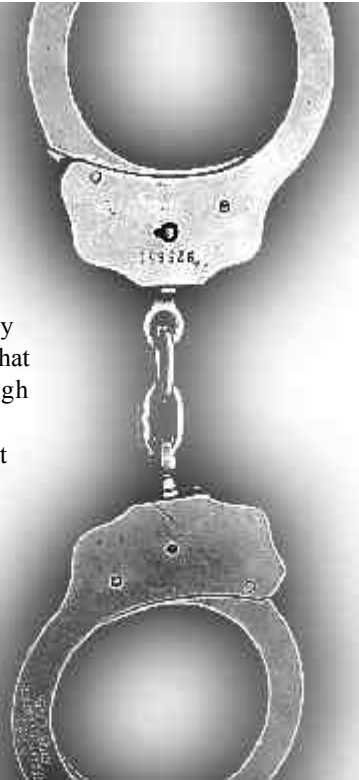
In 1998, Ayub was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death. During his trial, Muslim extremists threatened to kill him, his lawyers, and the judge if he was not convicted. On July 2001, the Multan High Court rejected Ayub's appeal, making a Supreme Court Appeal his last chance to avoid hanging.

In August 2002, the Supreme Court acquitted Ayub Masih on the grounds that the complainant had used the blasphemy charge to acquire the Masih's property. The three presiding judges resolved

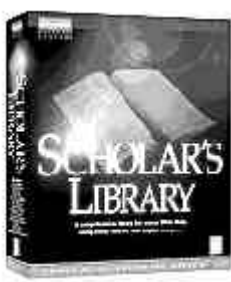
that the whole case had been fabricated for personal gain. Ayub has been taken into hiding as Islamists are threatening to kill him.

At least seven other Christians are currently in prison in Pakistan on the charge of blasphemy, including Pervez Masih, the principal of a Christian school. He was accused of blasphemy by the principal of a nearby Muslim school that was unable to compete with the high standard offered at the Christian school.

In April 2000, Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf attempted to amend the blasphemy laws but was forced to back down after noisy street protests led by Pakistan's Islamist clerics. Since Sept 11, 2001, Musharraf has defied the clerics through his alliance with the USA and by cracking down on terrorist groups and militant Islam. — *World Evangelical Alliance RLP*



Sharing Resources



Revolutionary Bible Software

“**T**he Logos Bible Software Series X is a tool that will revolutionise bible study.” That’s what many people, who have used the software, are saying, including renown names like Josh McDowell, Dr Bill Bright and Charles Swindoll.

NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong, who has been using Logos for the past four years, highly recommend the software. “This is one software that all pastors, Bible teachers and Christians should get. It has greatly helped me in my preparation for preaching and teaching. It contains an amazing amount of Bible-related information, and is user-friendly.”

Briefly, Logos is like a huge library containing the Bible in various versions, bible commentaries, bible resources, and

many other resource materials. So, instead of going to the library to do your research, Logos brings the library to you.

To suit different needs, the software designer has come up with four packages at different prices. Each package has different contents and among the four, The Scholar’s Library contains everything that the other three have. Containing over 230 titles, it is touted to be the most powerful and comprehensive bible study tool.

Canaanland was recently appointed the official Logos distributor in Malaysia and it is now offering the four packages at special prices. For a preview of Logos, contact Canaanland at 03-21662601/2 (tel.) or 03-77260461 (tel.) or e-mail logos@canaanland.com.my

Between Friends

It is common to hear of Christians falling away from their faith when they leave the security of student life for the workplace. The great divide between university and marketplace is not easy to bridge.

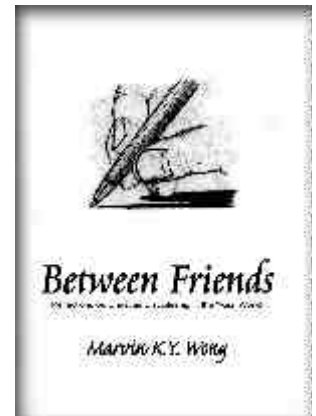
As we face crossroads and uncertainties, God may be pushed to the background, out of sight and out of mind. Our roles and responsibilities escalate at a relentless pace. Jesus’ disciples today are overloaded—without adequate time, money, energy or wisdom—to live out an authentic

faith from Monday to Saturday.

BETWEEN FRIENDS examines these challenges in the Malaysian context, blending scriptural insights, contemporary events and life stories. Through a series of reflections, author Marvin Wong offers encouragement, affirmation, counsel and correction on how to renew and recapture a more integrated and authentic Christian spirituality for the other six days of life in the ‘real world’.

In a warm and thoughtful way, the former General Secretary of Graduates Christian Fellowship examines a broad range of topics – from calling to guidance, work, rest, leisure, ambition, parents, singleness, temptations and society.

Available at Scripture Union (the publisher) at RM20 each. Call Joo Kim at 03-77829592 or e-mail sufes@po.jaring.my



FOR Your Prayers



TURKEY

While Turkey is a secular state, tension exists between religious elements that desire stronger ties with neighbouring Muslim states and others who favour European and secular politics. The government's aggressive promotion of secularism and its move to join the European Union are causing the tension to slowly and quietly escalate within elements of Turkey's 99.64 percent Muslim-majority society. In Turkey, the government and judiciary uphold religious freedom as a constitutional right. Several cases of harassment against churches are presently before the courts. Pray for God to continue building his Church in Turkey, where "the believers were first called Christians" (Antioch, now Antakya—Acts 11:26); and great spiritual wisdom and strength for Turkey's Christians, for pastors and all believers, so they can persevere in grace and not be tempted to respond out of frustration or discouragement.

EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

When Patrick Johnstone, author of acclaimed prayer handbook *Operation World*, was asked by Global Mapping, the American mission agency, to list the seven most encouraging trends of the 1990s, accelerated growth of the evangelical movement was top of his list. He believes the AD2000 movement has played a major part in the unprecedented growth of Bible believers. It has been instrumental in the birth of many mission projects, enabled church planting among a significant number of unreached people groups, and inspired new joint evangelistic initiatives. The trends include new opportunities for mission in Central Asia following the collapse of the USSR; the turning to Christ of thousands of unreached people groups; and the onward march of the indigenous Chinese Church. Meanwhile, the Church in India has seen astonishing and mostly undocumented growth, more than double the official figure. Christian media have changed the faith and worldview of millions. Outstanding examples are the *Jesus* film, SAT-7 satellite television broadcasts to the Middle East world, Christian radio in China and India, and the explosive growth in using the

Internet for evangelism and discipleship. Praise God for what He's doing around the world and pray that He will continue to use all forms of media to build His Church.

BALI

Many tourists are drawn to Bali by its scenic mountain beauty, tropical climate and colourful festivals. Eighty percent of the Indonesian island's people are Hindus. The Balinese lifestyle is centred on the religion with ornately-carved shrines in homes and temples dedicated to Shiva ('destroyer'). Around 15 percent practise a combination of ethnic religions involving spirits and magic as well as ancestor worship. Less than one percent of Balinese are Christians. Converts to Christianity are often disowned by their families. Pray for believers to be strengthened and protected and for openness to the Gospel.

BELARUS

The government of Belarus (in Central Europe) is threatening to return to Soviet-era levels of repression with the introduction of a highly oppressive religion bill. If adopted in its draft form, it would cripple, if not annihilate all small, evangelical and non-traditional religious groups – all those groups not in existence in 1982 at the peak of Soviet oppression, before Perestroika. The heads of the Baptist Union, the Pentecostal Union, the Full Gospel Association and the Adventist Church organised a prayer and fasting vigil in June to pray against the bill which was expected to be passed late that month. However, the bill was miraculously held up at the last minute and there is now a window of opportunity for more dialogue, prayer and witness before the parliament resumes again in October. Praise God for His mercy. Pray for Belarus.

ARGENTINA

Argentina is suffering economic chaos and it is estimated that 40 percent of the population are poverty-stricken. This is an added challenge to the development of the mission movement and training nationals to be part of the Great Commission. It is believed that the country has some 500

people in cross-cultural mission. The goal is 2,500 in 10 years. Pray for God to supply all the financial needs of those under training and for more churches to have a missionary vision.

ZIMBABWE

Despite the political chaos, the Church continues to grow. There are now over 20,000 churches in a country of 12 million people – one for every 600. A strategy for reaching the lesser and least-reached areas with the Gospel over the next 10 years was worked out among Christian leaders at a DAWN conference last September. Pray for unity, commitment and resources to reach this goal.

GUATEMALA

World Health Food Programme report early this year estimated that 7,000 severely malnourished children here faced imminent death, while 27,000 families had at least one child with mild to moderate malnourishment. Pray for ministries, such as America Latina, which are helping to feed the desperate youngsters.

IRAN

Whilst the public face of Iran is one of Islamic conformity, the fact is Iran is facing rapidly escalating social problems. Drug addiction, prostitution, HIV and AIDS, suicide and rejection of hardline Islam are rampant especially among the young. (More than half of Iran's 60 million population are under 20.) Muslims who convert to other religions are severely persecuted. Some have been killed and 'disappeared'. Persecution of all Christians is severe, as is the crippling discrimination. In this land of despair and desperation, witnessing for Christ is prohibited. Only eight of the 70 ethnic groups in Iran have any known believers. Most Iranians live and die unaware of the love of Jesus and the abundant life and salvation he freely offers. Pray for the faith of Iranian brethren to remain strong and for their safety; for God to reveal Himself to Iranian leaders through dreams and visions; and for God to use Iranian believers to bring blessing and hope to others.