

# BERITA NECF

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF MALAYSIA

VOLUME 12, NO.4

PP5872/12/2000

August - October 2000



EDITORIAL



## The Unfinished Task

*NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong attended the Amsterdam 2000 conference held from end-July to early August. Following is his report.*

AT the invitation of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, some 10,000 evangelists, theologians, mission strategists and church leaders from more than 200 countries assembled in Amsterdam recently to listen, pray, worship and discern the wisdom of the Holy Spirit for the unfinished task of world evangelisation.

The association is founded by Dr Billy Graham, who has, for the last six decades, led millions of people around the world to God through his evangelistic preaching. He believes the calling of the evangelist is one of God's greatest gifts to the church, and is as important as the ministry of the seminary professor or pastor. At the same time, the church should recognise and dignify the gift of the evangelist. From this deep concern came Amsterdam 2000—a platform that Dr Graham created for evangelists and church leaders all over the world to have their first formal training in evangelism.

The conference was able to provide an excellent opportunity for the children of God from diverse ministries to celebrate His workings through evangelists around the world. The participants were encouraged and lifted in the Holy Spirit to preach Christ more widely and earnestly than ever before. The plenary and workshop sessions helped to equip evangelists for better, accelerated outreach in a world of rapid technological change and increasing plurality.

Once again, we were able to affirm our evangelical distinctives with love and humility. The special meetings of the church leaders, theologians and missions strategists were able to strategise methods and ways to reach the multitudes, who stand on the shore of a new millennium.

A strategic and dynamic international network was created to communicate together how to accomplish deeper, more effective evangelism through sharing of information, methods, prayer requests and spiritual victories.

A significant outcome of the conference was the Amsterdam Declaration, a charter for evangelism in the 21st Century. It was presented as a joint report of the three task groups of mission strategists, church leaders, and theologians. It is commended to God's people everywhere as an expression of evangelical commitment and as a resource for study, reflection, prayer and evangelistic outreach. (See page 3.)

The 21st Century has become a challenging milestone. We are confronted with the responsibility of fulfilling the unfinished task of the Gospel. The 20th Century has ended with over 1.6 billion individuals completely unaware of Christ, Christianity, or the Gospel. Even with the accelerated programmes of church planting and evangelistic thrusts of various forms, we are far from completing the task.

If the evangelistic goals at the beginning of the 21st Century are to be achieved, the Church of Jesus Christ needs to review its priority and emphasis. The global church today, according to Luis Bush, is a sleeping giant. Through the national churches, we now have the manpower and primary ministry resources needed to complete the unfinished task of world evangelisation. The Church and Christians need to be mobilised and the available resources fully deployed for the completion of the task. Then only will we see His return. ■

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## Editorial

### *Editor:*

Rev Wong Kim Kong

### *Assistant Editor & Writer:*

Ong Juat Heng

## Address

32, Jln. SS 2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya,

Selangor, Malaysia

Tel: 603-772 78227, 772 83157

Fax: 603-772 91139

E-mail: [necf@po.jaring.my](mailto:necf@po.jaring.my)

Website: [www.necf.org.my](http://www.necf.org.my)

# The Urgency Of Evangelism

By Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam,  
NECF Malaysia Chairman

JOHN 3:16 says: "God so loved this world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". The Bible says the wages of sin is death. We have been separated from God because of our sin which has made us prisoners. The Gospel is telling people that Jesus Christ is the sin bearer, and all those who have sinned will be forgiven if they put their faith and trust in Him. There is nothing greater than having eternal life in Christ Jesus.

We need to quickly sound this out near and far because time is short. Time is short not just because Jesus will come soon, but because we do not even know if we will have a tomorrow. Death can come knocking on our door anytime, any day. The good news is that Jesus saves and the world urgently needs to hear about this.

Very often, we take Missions and Evangelism for granted. We attend worship services, give a missionary offering and do some evangelism from time to time. Through the years, these can become routines we perform automatically. We can become complacent with this monotony. As a result, the urgency of getting across the message of eternal life in Jesus can easily diminish.

There are three things we must realise and be reminded about missions and evangelism.

Firstly, missions begins with your neighbour. "Missions" does not necessarily mean "abroad" or "overseas". It is anywhere from across the street to across the sea. We need to reach out to those that need the gospel both at home and abroad.

Secondly, missions and evangelism involve sacrificial giving. Reaching out to a lost world cost God His only Son. It cost Jesus His life. What will it cost you? Sin robs you. Sin takes away what you have and messes up what is good for you. Sin brings pain, heartache, sorrow, anguish and shame. Are you ready to share what is yours with the person that is lost to sin? Will you reach out even if it costs you?

Thirdly, missions and evangelism must be motivated by love. Believers must not only see the need and the urgency; they must be willing to reach out in love and take action. Believers must reach out in love to point the lost to the love of Christ that will save them. The world does not see the spiritual hurt and suffering. It is our responsibility to reach out and touch these people for Jesus Christ.

There are many today who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of these people are living in our homes. They are close to us and they are still bound in their sin. Somebody has to get to them and tell them the good news. If not, they will die in their sin and be eternally separated from God. If they do not know about Jesus and if they do not come to receive Jesus, there is no other hope.

If we do not tell the Gospel story, we will be accountable for those who are lost because we had the opportunity and did not do so (Ezekiel 33:8). We need to see the urgency to proclaim the message and we must!



## A Charter for Evangelism in the 21st Century

*THE declaration comprises three parts: A Charter of Commitments, definitions of key theological terms used in the Charter, and a prayer of supplication. The Charter of Commitments is a statement of tasks, goals and ideals for evangelism in the 21st Century. Following is a summary of the subjects covered in the charter and the pledges made after each subject.*

**Mission Strategy and Evangelism** At its heart, the mission of the church is world evangelisation. Jesus made it clear in his last teachings that the scope of this work of evangelism demands that we give attention to all, including the despised and neglected of society, and those at the ends of the earth. In addition, we affirm the need to encourage new initiatives to reach and disciple youth and children worldwide; to make fuller use of the media and technology in evangelism; and to stay involved personally in grass-roots evangelism so that our presentations of the biblical gospel are fully relevant and contextualised.

*We pledge ourselves to work so that all persons on earth may have an opportunity to hear the gospel in a language they understand, near where they live. We further pledge to establish healthy, reproducing, indigenous churches among every people, in every place, that will seek to bring to spiritual maturity those who respond to the gospel message.*

**Leadership and Evangelism** We affirm that leadership is one of Christ's gifts to the church. Leaders must submit themselves in humility to Christ, the Head of the church, and to one another. The leaders' first task is to preserve the biblical integrity of the proclamation of the church and serve as vision carriers of its evangelistic vocation. Leaders must always be careful not to block what God is doing as they exercise their strategic stewardship of the resources which Christ supplies to His body.

*We pledge ourselves to seek and uphold this model of biblical servant-leadership in our churches. We who are leaders commit ourselves afresh to this pattern of leadership.*

**Theology and Evangelism** Christian theology is the task of careful thinking and ordering of life in the presence of the triune God and our theology must be measured by biblical teaching from which alone we learn God's mind and will. Evangelists and pastors can help theologians maintain an evangelistic motivation, reminding them that true theology is always done in the service of the church. Theologians can help to clarify and safeguard God's revealed truth, providing resources for the training of

evangelists and the grounding of new believers in the faith.

*We pledge ourselves to labour constantly in learning and teaching the faith according to the Scriptures, and in seeking to ensure (1) that all who preach the gospel are theologically equipped and resourced in adequate ways for the work they have in hand, and (2) that all professional teachers of the faith share a common concern for evangelism.*

**Truth and Evangelism** Under the influence of modern rationalism, secularism and humanism (modernity), the Western intellectual establishment has largely reacted into a relativistic denial that there is any global and absolute truth (postmodernity). By contrast, the gospel (which is the authoritative word of the one, true and living God) comes to everyone everywhere at all times as truth in three senses: its affirmations are factually true, as opposed to false; it confronts us at every point with reality, as opposed to illusion; and it sets before us Jesus Christ, the co-Creator, Redeemer, and Lord of the world, as the Truth (that is, the one universally, real, accessible, authoritative, truth-telling, trustworthy Person), for all to acknowledge.

*We pledge ourselves to present and proclaim the biblical gospel and its Christ, always and everywhere, as fully sufficient and effective for the salvation of believers. Therefore, we oppose all sceptical and relativising or syncretising trends, whether rationalist or irrationalist, that treat that gospel as not fully true, and so unable to lead believers into the new divine life that it promises them. We oppose all oppressive and destructive uses of God's wonderful truth.*

**Human Need and Evangelism** The Bible reveals that all human beings are constitutionally in a state of rebellion against the God who made them. We humans were made to bear God's image in an endless life of love to God and to other people, but the self-centredness of our fallen and sinful hearts makes that impossible. Therefore all human beings now face final condemnation by Christ the Judge, and eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord.

**Amsterdam Declaration:** *from page 3*

*We pledge ourselves to be faithful and compassionate in sharing with people the truth about their present spiritual state, warning them of the judgement and hell that the impenitent face, and extolling the love of god who gave his Son to save us.*

**Religious Pluralism and Evangelism** Today's evangelist is called to proclaim the gospel in an increasingly pluralistic world. It is important that our evangelism be marked by our faithfulness to the Gospel and our humility in delivering it. We affirm that the only way to know God in peace, love and joy is through the reconciling death of Jesus Christ the risen Lord. Yet because all persons are made in the image of God, we must advocate religious liberty and human rights for all.

*We pledge ourselves to treat those of other faiths with respect and faithfully and humbly serve the nation in which God has placed us, while affirming that Christ is the one and only Saviour of the world.*

**Culture and Evangelism** By the blood of the Lamb, God has purchased saints from every tribe and language and people and nation. World evangelisation aims to see the rise of churches that are both deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. This means appropriate cultural identification while guarding against equating the gospel with any particular culture. Since all human cultures are shaped in part by sin, the Bible and its Christ are at key points counter-cultural to every one of them.

*We pledge ourselves to be culturally sensitive in our evangelism. We will aim to preach Christ in a way that is appropriate for the people among whom we witness and which will enrich that culture in all appropriate ways. Further, as salt and light, we will seek the transforming of culture in ways that affirm gospel values.*

**Scripture and Evangelism** The Bible is indispensable to true evangelism. It provides the content and authority for all evangelism. We must proclaim and disseminate the Holy Scriptures in the heart language of all those we are called to evangelise and disciple.

*We pledge ourselves to keep the Scriptures at the very heart of our evangelistic outreach and message, and to remove all language and cultural barriers to a clear understanding of the gospel on the part of our hearers.*

**The Church and Evangelism** In established congregations, regular teaching for believers at all stages in their pilgrimage must be given, and appropriate pastoral care must be provided. But these concerns must not displace ongoing concern for mission. Further, we affirm that the formation of godly, witnessing disciples is at the heart of the church's responsibility to prepare its members for their work of service. The church must be made a welcoming place for new believers.

*We pledge ourselves to urge all congregations in and with which we serve to treat evangelism as a matter or priority at all times, and so to make it a focus of congregational praying, planning, training and funding.*

**Prayer and Evangelism** God has given us the gift of prayer so that in his sovereignty he may respond in blessing and power to the cries of his children. Prayer is an essential means God has appointed for the awakening of the church and the carrying of the gospel throughout the world. At special times in the history of the church, revivals and spiritual breakthroughs have been preceded by repentance, prayer and fasting. Today, we need a deeper dependence upon God and a greater unity in prayer as we preach

the gospel to all the unreached people groups.

*We pledge ourselves to pray faithfully to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest field. We also pray for all those engaged in world evangelisation and to encourage the call to prayer in families, local churches, special assemblies, mission agencies and trans-denominational ministries.*

**Social Responsibility and Evangelism** Although evangelism is not advocacy of any social programme, it does entail social responsibility for at least two reasons. First, the gospel proclaims the kingship of the loving Creator who is committed to justice, human life and the welfare of his creation. Second, when our evangelism is linked with social concern, it reflects the compassion of Christ and may gain an acceptance it would not otherwise receive.

*We pledge ourselves to follow the way of justice in our family and social life, and to keep personal, social and environmental values in view as we evangelise.*

**Holiness and Evangelism** The servant of God must adorn the gospel through a holy life. But in recent times God's name has been greatly dishonoured and the gospel discredited because of unholy living by Christians in leadership roles, particularly evangelists. The church should foster structures to hold evangelists accountable and ensure that those whose lives dishonour God and the gospel will not be permitted to serve as its evangelists. The holiness and humility of evangelists gives credibility to their ministry and leads to genuine power from God and lasting fruit.

*We pledge ourselves to be accountable to the community of faith for our lives, doctrine and ministry, to flee from sin, and to walk in holiness and humility.*

**Conflict, Suffering and Evangelism** The records of evangelism from the apostolic age, the state of the world around us today, and the knowledge of Satan's opposition at all times to the spread of the gospel, combine to assure us that evangelistic outreach in the 21st Century will be an advance in the midst of opposition. Current forms of opposition include secular ideologies that see Christian faith as a hindrance to human development; political power structures that see the primacy of Christians' loyalty to their Lord as a threat to the regime; and militant expression of non-Christian religions that are hostile to Christians for being different. We must expect, and be prepared for, many kinds of suffering as we struggle not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

*We pledge ourselves ever to seek to move forward wisely in personal evangelism, family evangelism, local church evangelism, and cooperative evangelism in its various forms, and to persevere in this despite the opposition we may encounter. We will stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer persecution and even martyrdom for their faithful gospel witness.*

**Christian Unity and Evangelism** One of the great hindrances to evangelism worldwide is the lack of unity among Christ's people. We cannot resolve all differences among Christians because we do not yet understand perfectly all that God has revealed to us. But in all ways that do not violate our conscience, we should pursue cooperation and partnerships with other believers in the task of evangelism.

*We pledge ourselves to pray and work for unity in truth among all true believers in Jesus and to cooperate as fully as possible in evangelism with other brothers and sisters in Christ so that the whole church may take the whole gospel to the whole world. ■*

# AD 2000 REALITY CHECK

## SOME NEW FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EMPIRICAL GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY TODAY

- ✚ Christians produce enough evangelism around the world for every person to hear the gospel for one hour every other day all year long.
- ✚ Despite Christ's command to evangelise, 64% of all humans from AD 30 to the present day have never even heard of his name.
- ✚ Since AD 33, 75% of all Christians have ignored Christ's Great Commission; only 25% have actively sought to obey it.
- ✚ 650 million Christians today are active in Christ's world mission; 1,350 million Christians ignore it.
- ✚ Out of 650 million Great Commission Christians, 70% have never been told about the 1.6 billion unevangelised individuals in the non-Christian unevangelised world.
- ✚ 50% of all Christians today have no contact of any kind with the world's four billion non-Christians.
- ✚ From only three million in AD 1500, evangelicals have grown to 540 million worldwide, 70% being Non-Whites.
- ✚ The country with the fastest Christian expansion rate ever is China, now at 20,000 new converts every day.
- ✚ Non-Christian peoples have 200 million copies of Scriptures in circulation in their midst.
- ✚ 124 million new souls begin life on earth each year, but Christianity's 4,000 foreign mission agencies baptise only four million persons each year.
- ✚ 97% of all Christian outreach/evangelism targets other Christians in the Christian world (that of church members and professing Christians), cities, peoples, populations or situations.
- ✚ 500 unevangelised ethnolinguistic peoples have never been targeted by any Christian agencies ever.
- ✚ 98% of all foreign missionaries work among existing churches; only 2% work where no church exists.
- ✚ 40% of all the church's entire foreign mission resources are being looted by 30 oversaturated countries already possessing strong citizen-run home ministries.
- ✚ The three least cost-effective countries over one million population for Christian outreach are Japan, Switzerland and Denmark.
- ✚ The three most cost-effective countries over one million in population for Christian outreach are Mozambique, Ethiopia and Tanzania.
- ✚ Each year, 180 million Bibles and New Testament are wasted, lost, destroyed or disintegrated, due to incompetence, hostility, bad planning or inadequate manufacture.
- ✚ Everywhere on earth can now easily be targeted with at least three of the 45 varieties of effective evangelism methods.

*(Source: T. M. Johnson and D. B. Barrett, World Evangelisation Research Centre Briefing)*



## RECONCILIATION THROUGH THE CROSS

**'Billy Graham of Australia' out to mend cracks.**

THE church has always been inundated by "party spirit" that has caused many splits and created tension within the Body. Today, the dissenting spirit continues to plague the church, sowing discord particularly between the charismatics and the conservatives.

Paul denounced the "I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos" cries in Corinthians; evangelist Dr Bill Newman goes a step further and calls party spirit the "biggest sin in the church". He likens such bickering Christians to the soldiers at the foot of the cross, gambling and distributing Jesus' garments while He hung dying behind them. "That's what a lot of Christians are doing in the churches today. They care only about what they can get out of Christianity, forgetting the cross," Newman says.

While most evangelistic crusades today are accompanied by signs and wonders, Newman, who is renowned as the "Billy Graham of Australia", believes that God has called him to just preach the cross. "It's the cross that unites and we have to get back to the simple preaching of the cross," he urges.

While the cross reconciles the lost with God, it also unites the Body. So, apart from a deep burden for the lost, Newman longs to bring the Body together,

particularly the charismatics and the conservatives. There is beauty and strength in each group—the conservatives' deep love for and knowledge of scriptures and the charismatics' fire and zeal—and Newman hopes to bring healing to the Body by helping both groups to appreciate each other. After all, "at the foot of cross, the ground is level," he reminds.

Newman appreciates the evangelistic style of the charismatics where signs and wonders occur but cautions Christians to remember the prime objective of all evangelistic outreaches—to save souls. "Reinhard Bonke once said, 'It's good to get someone healed but he can still go to hell.' So ultimately, it's the person's soul," he says.

Newman, who is an associate of Dr Billy Graham, was one of the speakers at the recent Amsterdam 2000 conference. Well-known throughout Australia as a dynamic evangelist, he has appeared on his own television specials and had been heard on more than 50 radio stations across Australia. The founder of Bill Newman International (BNI), an evangelistic association, the interdenominational evangelist has also authored several books and contributed to a network of Australian newspapers.

Evangelism without proper follow-through care is like a broken net, he says, and follow-through care will ensure that "decisions are turned into disciples". Training, is therefore essential for the Great Commission work to go on and BNI has designed a series of studies to train Christians to effectively share their faith. "An evangelist brings the spirit of evangelism to an area. If I have a big crusade, that's the cream of the cake but my work is to equip the saints for the work of ministry," he says. "Shepherds don't produce sheep. Sheep produce sheep. Mass

evangelism is just the platform to personal evangelism," he adds.

Besides being an evangelist, Newman is also a popular management trainer in the corporate circle in Australia. Some may charge him with having one foot in kingdom ministry and the other in "secular" work. To this, Newman explains: "I use my motivational talks like a 'trojan horse' where they took it inside the city and let out the soldiers from the secret compartment. I have the opportunity to share my faith through the biblical principles that I teach. I also believe that our Lord worked in every area including the secular world."

Newman was in Kuala Lumpur recently to meet pastors and church leaders as a prelude to the evangelistic crusade and School of Evangelism that he will be conducting here in November. He encouraged them to continue to boldly proclaim the cross and to preach 'Christ and Him crucified', just as Paul did.

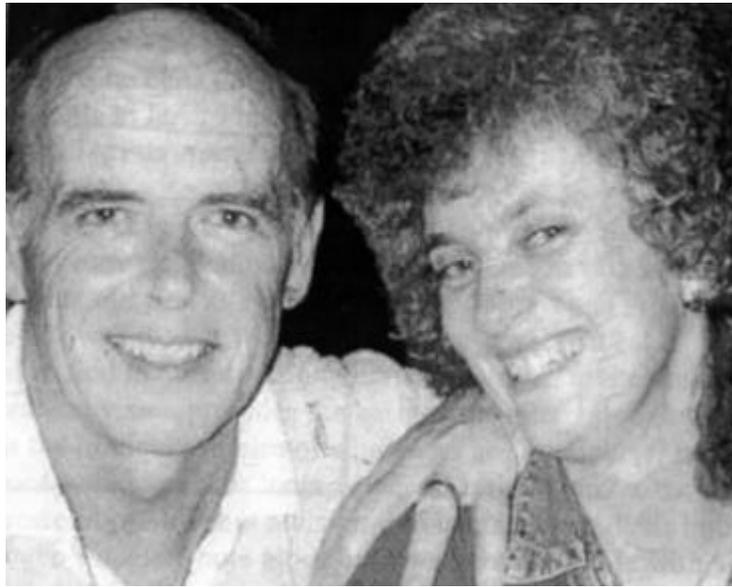
He urged them to continue 'fanning the flame' and not lose the fire. "Our lives should attract people to the fire. If we are not excited about living for Jesus Christ, how can we expect to lead others to have the fire?" he asked.

Prayer is the key to winning souls and Newman also shared a programme called 'Friends Bringing Friends' which his ministry uses to prepare Christians to identify and pray for their friends before his evangelistic crusades.

*(The training seminar will be held from 23 to 24 November followed by two nights of evangelistic crusade. Both events are organised by NECF Malaysia in partnership with local churches. For more details, contact NECF at tel: 03-7727 8227; fax: 03-7729 1139; and e-mail: enquiries@po.jaring.my)* ■

# 'SHALOM' WAY TO IMPACT THE WORLD

IMAGINE this: Six committed Christian families living together on a one-third acre land. They share a common recreation and laundry area and eat together once a week in a common hall, filling the table with vegetables from a shared garden. Yet, they each have their individual homes where they can retreat to for family privacy. In this small community, the aging parents also live here, helping to look after the young ones while the adults go out to work. In Seattle, a similar home would cost US\$250,000 and this would have jumped to half a



Tom and Christine Sine

million dollars by the end of a 30-year loan period. But for these six families, their homes only cost US\$70,000 as they were built by a wealthy Christian man who sells them at cost. The generous man even allows the families to re-pay him over a seven-year period without interest. So, at the end of the period, the six families have settled their debt and are freed to work fewer hours. They now have more time to serve their church and community, which is the main reason why they chose to live this way in the first place.

This concept of cooperative community seems like a dream but Dr Tom Sine believes that this is the kind of witness needed to challenge the 'McWorld' culture that is assaulting the world today. ('McWorld' refers to a globalised world and its materialistic values.) Sine calls this the '*Shalom*' way of life that God originally intended for His people to lead. This radical whole-life faith lifestyle of corporate giving and caring will set us apart as a distinctive people and attract people to our faith.

"We are not effective in evangelism because we're so much like the modern culture around us. We are not distinctively different. One reason for not living this whole-life faith is that our first allegiance is the aspirations and values of the modern culture. We have allowed the McWorld dream to power our lives.

"We need to find in Scriptures an alternative dream to the dream that powers McWorld. The *shalom* vision provides the basis to the alternative dream," Sine said. *Shalom* is the biblical promise of wholeness and its Hebrew meaning is closer to the English word 'wholeness' or 'completeness' rather than 'peace'. "*Shalom* is God's vision of restoration. It is not a vision for isolated individuals but for the whole community. We aren't made whole alone but we are made whole with all the people that are streaming up to God's mountain," added Sine's wife, Christine.

"In God's *shalom* there is a sense of unity, harmony and peace

between God, mankind and His creation. The vision includes a whole new political and economic system based on justice and mutual care. It was a vision lived out of the freedom of a transforming relationship to a loving and personal God."

The wholeness of *shalom* can only occur in a loving, caring community where all are working for reconciliation to each other, to God and to His creation.

In today's McWorld, the young people of the post-modern generation are looking for whole-life faith and they seem to be finding it in other

spiritual faiths such as the New Age Movement. Sine urged Christians to re-invent their lives and embrace a lifestyle that revolves around their faith and reflect God's purposes.

Tom and Christine Sine were speaking to about 200 people at the 'Mega Trends' seminar in August organised by the NECF Malaysia Research Commission. Tom is a consultant in futures research and planning for both Christian and commercial organisations. He is also an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary where he teaches Christian worldview. Christine is a doctor and helped developed and directed the healthcare ministry for YWAM's mercy ships.

During the seminar, Sine gave an overview of the mega trends currently sweeping the world. The world is changing at blinding speed and the church needs to pay attention to the changes so that we can find creative ways to meet the challenges ahead. Church leaders must prepare the young people to face a world of high technology and booming consumerism.

"The only way to keep this new boom economy is for all of us to consume like never before," Sine said. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves and particularly, our children, in terms of stewardship.

Sine called on the church leadership to take the young people (those under 35 years old) seriously. In the West, the church is rapidly losing the young people and one reason for this, according to Sine, is that they have not been given the opportunity to lead. Recognising this problem, some churches in Great Britain are putting their young people in their councils and mentoring them in leadership roles. "We have to give our young people a sense of ownership," Sine said. ■

(Audio and video tapes of the talks are available from Praise Book Centre.)

# MERDEKA!

## JESUS IS LORD

*Christians throughout the country unite in prayer at the largest National Day Prayer Rally ever organised by NECF Malaysia.*

THUNDEROUS shouts of 'Jesus is Lord' boomed across the grand hall of Wisma MCA, Kuala Lumpur, on the stroke of midnight at this year's *Merdeka* Day Prayer Rally. Raising their fists in the air, the 1,400 participants stood proudly and resolutely declared His lordship each time the MC (master-of-ceremony) of the rally called out the name of a state.

Fourteen times the crowd shouted, one shout for each state. Then comes the climax—the MC called out "Malaysia" and the crowd broke loose all restraints, proclaiming with all heart and voice that Jesus is the lord of our blessed nation.

Soon after, the participants dispersed for home, physically exhausted from the four hours of worship and intercession but recharged with a greater sense of unity and deeper commitment to pray for the country. Earlier, just before this lordship proclamation, the participants had joined thousands of Malaysians in shouting "*merdeka*" three times.

Throughout the evening, the participants thanked God for His mercy on the nation. The attitude of gratitude was further impressed by NECF Malaysia Chairman Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam who said in his exhortation that the country's present peaceful and prosperous well-being was a result of constant intercession. In the midst of the political unrest and economic ills plaguing some of our neighbouring countries, God has blessed Malaysia with stability and the liberty to practice our faith. Pastor Prince urged



*The cross being raised just before midnight—Prayer Rally at Kota Kinabalu. Archbishop Datuk Yong Ping Chun is holding the microphone.*

Christians not to take God's blessings for granted but instead, to continually pray for His mercy to protect our land and liberty.

The rally began with a joyous and emotional celebration of worship which included a rousing performance of 'Handel's Messiah' by the Renewal Lutheran Church choir. Excitement rose as the clock ticked towards 10 pm, the designated time to begin tele-conferencing with prayer groups in the other 13 states including Sabah and Sarawak.

The organising committee had originally planned for all prayer groups to hear each other simultaneously but what turned out was a confusing array of sounds and

cracklings. Finally, the technical team manning the tele-conferencing facilities saved the night by connecting to only one group at a time. Thus, the participants gathered at the MCA hall were able to clearly hear reports from representatives in Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Melaka, Alor Setar and other cities.

In between the reports, different representatives led the participants in prayer for the different states. To add focus to the prayers, the flag of the state was raised when the state was being prayed for. NECF Malaysia Vice-Chairman Rev. Dr Eu Hong Seng closed the intercession with prayers for the nation. What followed was a solemn candle-lighting procession led by Elder Timothy Phua. Representatives, who had earlier led in the intercession for the states, lined up on the stage, each holding a lighted candle to symbolise our commitment to be a light to the nation.

In line with the rally's theme of 'Lighting Up Our Nation', Christians all over the country also participated in community projects on *Merdeka* Day. Carnivals were held in Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam and Kajang; *gotong royong* projects were carried out in Dungun, Alor Setar, Kota Bahru and Kuantan; and food parcels were distributed in Rawang, Subang squatter homes and the Kangar general hospital. In Kuala Terengganu, Christians visited a children's spastics home while in north Kuala Lumpur, another group visited the lepers colony. Another group distributed stationery to children in Kampung Berembang, Ampang.

*see page 13*



# The Emptying

by Lucy Chua

## PANIC ATTACK

WHEN the time came for our children to leave the nest, there was a growing unrest in my heart. What type of careers would they take up? Would it be our choice or theirs? What if they made a wrong choice? Have we taught them all that they need to know? Will they continue to walk with the Lord? Who will they marry? What surprises are we going to encounter?

As always, these questions were put before the Heavenly Father. His promises in Isaiah 49:25 and 54:13 calmed my anxious soul. I realised afresh that I had no control over the future of my children. I could not guarantee that they would continue in the things that we had taught them or follow the God we worship. God is the only one who can follow them to the end of their days and my job now is to pray them though.

## A DIFFERENT GENERATION

Looking at the branded clothes, expensive shoes and the preoccupation with their friends, I wonder what had happened to all the training we had instilled in them when they were young. We had set the pace for the children during their primary days. We had taught each of them to observe Ecclesiastes 3 and instructed them to make time for everything, especially in the areas of mental, physical social and spiritual development (Luke 2:52). We were conscious that collecting "A's" could become an obsession. The policy in our home, therefore, was to allow for only two hours of homework per day. Six hours in school was sufficient for all the schoolwork then. We did not believe in tuition at that stage. They played ball, cycled and went for family picnics after school. They had time to tidy their rooms,

wash dishes and do odd jobs around the house during weekdays or holidays. They observed a complete day of rest from work even if there was a test on Monday. Tithing started when they received regular pocket money. Although they took over their own time management in secondary school, chose their areas of interest and got involved with different activity groups, the boundaries were still set by us – the "curfew" limit at night, monthly expenses and outside involvement. From the "asking permission" stage, they have now moved on to the consultative and discussion stage. We now allow them the freedom to make decisions and the mistakes that come with them.

Our regular family meetings have been a good vehicle for interpersonal communication. These meetings are usually called before the start of a new year, the new semester/term or the end of term. They facilitate the planning for holidays and the synchronizing of our different timetables. We agree on expenses, household duties, laundry days (each child is responsible for his/her own room and laundry), off days, individual and family times etc. A notice board serves to update daily whereabouts and phone messages. Thus they have been ushered into the adult world of responsible living!

It is frightening, at times, to see that the more freedom we give them, the more they pull away from our lifestyle. I have restrained myself, many times, from commenting on the things they buy and the hours they keep. It is not that they are irresponsible; the reality is that we belong to two different generations. We were thrifty, moderate, and desired a simple lifestyle. On the other hand, they were born in times of plenty and have never lacked any good thing. How then will

they live? Although we have given them the basic foundations, how they build on these foundations will depend on them and their individual walk with God.

## DADDY LEADS THE WAY

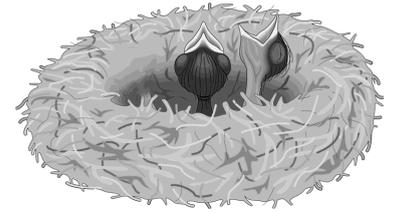
From the start, my husband has always set the directions for the family and I carry them out. He insisted that we should worship in church as a family (I had to handle three squirming toddlers with no help from him because he was the speaker!). I protested because it would have been easier to leave the babies at home on Sundays. But looking back, I have come to see how important those times were. When God spoke to the church we wanted our children to be there to hear Him. My husband also wanted the family to eat at least one meal a day together. This was a real hassle when the children were young. It would have been much easier to let the children eat at their own convenience so that I could have some peace and quiet when he came home. But this family tradition has enabled us to share our day or pray and read the Bible together after each meal. Now when the children come home once a month or term, we look forward to sharing that meal together. My husband also instituted the once-a-year family getaways where we climb mountains, visit places, play games, holiday with good friends or family members. Mind you, those family holidays were no holidays for me! (Mothers never seem to get their rest during the holidays!). Again, on hindsight, I am glad that I gave up fighting with him over these matters. It turned out that such family times were indeed precious. Presently, with differing college semesters, it has become increasingly harder for the family to have a meal, much less a holiday together.

*see page 10*



# A Tale of Two Nests

## By Goh Poh Gaik



OBJECT lessons grab the attention of young learners. Attention grabbers aside, they also make excellent teachers. Children's Church and Sunday School manuals abound with examples. For object lessons, props could call for a straw broom, a battery-powered action toy, ice cream and bibs, a mouse trap. The possibilities go on and on. It all depends on what truth you wish to impart. There's no knowing what Object the creative teacher has selected, stashed away in her bag when she walks into class.

OBJECT lessons aren't only good for young learners. They grab the attention of older learners too. Attention grabbers aside, they also make excellent teachers.

I know because just a couple of months back, I went to class. My Teacher used carefully chosen Objects. Believe me, I sat up and took notice. And I learned.

### NEST IN THE GARDEN

It was in the month of June. My housemate and I discovered this sizeable Bees' Nest in our garden. I don't know when the bees first started to build. The garden is small and just about everything is in clear view. Up till this point I had not heard the buzzing of bees in activity. Bees buzz their presence but not this particular colony. But there it was – clearly a Bees' Nest. Heart-shaped. Careful scrutiny showed the Nest seemed to be hanging on one of the palm fronds, not exactly the strongest of structures to build on. The Nest was pulsating with hundreds of bees all packed close together and clinging to the Nest. Over the next few days we checked it out daily, until it dawned on us that the Nest could spell harm and danger. What if the bees were disturbed and became agitated? That palm tree happened to be the one our dog, Krissy, loves to circle to sniff for creatures and stuff of interest to her. Agitated bees could well go on a stinging spree and we had no desire to be the recipients of a few hundred stings. Neither did we desire to see Krissy fall victim to hostile bees.

We would have to get rid of it. This heart-shaped Bees' Nest. Alive with hundreds of bees carrying hundreds of stings. And stings carried poison. It was

potentially hazardous to keep it there in the garden. More bees were being added by the day and the Nest was getting bigger. When we contacted the Fire Station in our neighbourhood, we were told they do not do bees. However, they kindly contacted Bandar Raya for us. Apparently there is a squad that handles bees. To our very pleasant surprise, the team of four men arrived promptly. We were curious as to how they would go about the task. Don protective gear? Complete with masks? Not at all! They tied a big piece of gunny sackcloth to a long stick, doused the cloth with kerosene and set it on fire. The blaze was big enough to engulf the whole Nest and in one quick action, they torched Nest and all. It was over in a few minutes. We were left to clean the mess. Branches, leaves and bees, some burnt, some singed, had to be removed.

### THE FIRE OF GOD

The Object - a Bees' Nest. The lesson – I need the Fire of God to burn up the Bees' Nest(s) in my life. Bad attitudes, wrong priorities, a whole lot of me that is still unsanctified and unsundered. The appalling ugliness of my heart. Etched memories of hurts the recall of which brings stinging pain. This is poison to my whole system. It was not a coincidence that I was then going through a season in my life where the Holy Spirit was birthing a desire for holiness. My cry: "O God, my sin! My sin!" *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"* (Matthew 3: 11-12). The fire must come lest the bees break loose in frenzied attack and leave a trail of casualties.

### ANOTHER NEST IN THE GARDEN

A few days later, we found another Nest in our garden! Barely 50 metres away from where the Bees' Nest was, Vicky made a startling discovery when she was giving the plants a drink. A Birds' Nest!

Beautifully crafted and perched on the rather fragile-looking branches of a bamboo plant. The two baby birds were scrawny, skimpily feathered but definitely well and healthy. Mistaking our rustle for the parent bird, they had their mouths wide open for tasty morsels to be dropped in! This second Nest became my delightful preoccupation over the next few days. I watched the mother bird fly, food in beak, to the Nest to feed her babies, I watched her shield them with her body when it rained. My attempts to help scared her away but she would hover on a nearby branch and return to the Nest once she felt the intruder (me!) had gone away. The father stayed nearby encouraging his little family with melodious twits and chirps. I peeped ever so often and watched the little birds grow. This was a Nest we were not going to destroy. The baby birds stood for new beginnings, for new life. I prayed for the safety of the babies and the parents. Then one morning I heard a chorus of chirps. Both Dad and Mum were on the bougainvillea tree near the Nest. Suddenly I heard a loud rustling. Sensing this was going to be a significant moment, I grabbed Krissy and sent her into the house. When I looked into the Nest I was greeted by two fully-feathered baby birds standing up in the Nest. They were the two darlinest birds I had ever seen! The next moment there was a swish of wings and a cacophony of chirps. And then I saw the babies fly out of the Nest! One faltered for a while, clinging to the wall, before it took flight. My heart did cartwheels as I watched the family fly off into the wide blue sky.

### CLASS IN THE GARDEN

Two Nests. One had to be destroyed with fire, the other nurtured and treasured. My own attempts to destroy the first one will be futile; I have to ask for the fire of God. Any day I'd rather have the Birds' Nest in my garden. It speaks of life and love, hopes and new heights to reach in the Lord.

So, I went to class in my garden. The Master Teacher selected Two Nests for the Object lesson He wanted to teach me. ■

# Addressing Abuse of Women An Evangelical Responsibility

by Winnie Bartel, Executive Chair, CWC

THE problems of abuse against women have been around for centuries. The evangelical world, as a whole, has not wanted to 'believe' that this perpetration existed in the 'Christian' home. Preachers have not spoken about this issue from the pulpit, and leaders, as a whole, have not been willing to discuss this element within their sphere of influence. However, at the World Evangelical Fellowship's 10th General Assembly in Canada, May 1997, the issue surfaced, and this time it was brought to the attention of the WEF-Commission on Women's Concerns (CWC) by various men in leadership. They admitted to us that within their countries, within their churches, their husbands even those in pastoral leadership, were abusing women. These men were genuinely troubled and showed grave concern. It was at this occasion that the CWC made the decision to address this issue. As international leaders representing every region of the world and over half the nations of the world, CWC felt that they were in a perfect position to be the body to take this project on. Since that meeting, CWC has organised a Task Force On Abuse Against Women – a global endeavour to address one of the most horrific and proverbial issues and concerns that women face in the 21st century – ABUSE.

## THE 'FACES' OF ABUSE

While attending the national Association of Evangelicals (NAE) Convention in the USA in 1998, I spoke on the abuse and injustices women experience. After my speech, a WEF leader commented to me stating, "I just can't believe that abuse is going on in the homes of Christian leaders today." As we were talking, a woman came up to us and expressed her gratitude to me for my presentation. She broke down in tears as she continued to express to both of us, the immense amount of physical and emotional abuse she was experiencing from her husband (an evangelical leader).

In our modern world women are increasingly filling significant roles in business and society, as well as in the church and home. However, along with

these greater responsibilities has come a proverbial onslaught of all forms of abuse.

What I have seen since this Task Force was started two years ago has changed my life forever: the stories-emails-letters-news prints-faxes-counselling sessions-photographs and videos-almost more than I can bear-women brutally beaten up-cut up-burned-dead-bodies mangled-breast cut off or dismembered-females being circumcised as a religious 'rite'. And then there is the immense amount of sexual trafficking around the world. The flesh trade markets in Asia alone are so horrific; I hardly could bear the sight of girls-ages 8 to maybe 18-being forced to sell themselves as sex objects. These girls were 'purchased' or kidnapped for sex trafficking. Over half of them never reach the age of 20 due to illness, murder or suicide.

There are millions of women, sitting in silent abuse: those who live in bondage to religious oppression-in all faith communities. For example, Christian women sitting in the pews do not want to expose their abuse because their husbands are church leaders and it would not 'look good.' Whether a country is civilised or not, abuse and injustice still abound. Our research indicates that one out of four women is abused each day. This factor does not change, even within the Christian home.

Why am I so passionate about this issue? Because I too am a victim of abuse. At the young age of ten during my fifth grade year in school, my male teacher took what he felt were his liberties, and performed violations on my body. He would take me out of class informing me that I had 'misbehaved.' He would then take me to the back part of the school where there was a very secluded 'janitor's closet.' There, he would lock the door and proceed to violate my body. He would then threaten me not to say anything. I dared never say a word because this man was a leader in my church. A year later, this teacher was caught while molesting another girl. However, nothing was ever done about it other than he 'quietly' moved out of town. It was all covered over and the church never dealt with it – neither did

the school.

## THE WORLD WANTS TO RESPOND: BUT IS THE CHURCH READY?

However, the world IS ready to address this abuse problem. Many secular organisations as well as mainline churches have approached me to partner in our Task Force endeavours. Several leading Senators and Representatives in Washington DC asked my assistance in addressing this global atrocity.

Now, what is the Church's response? Is the Church ready to address this? Perhaps there is resistance by Church leadership in acknowledging the fact that this problem exists. Leaders have made numerous suggestions as to what 'women' can do about the abuse problems never giving suggestions as to their responsibilities. My earnest hope and prayer is that WEF and its leaders would be the body to begin addressing this critical sin issue so that God can pour out His blessing on the Church.

## HOPE GIVERS

At a recent global consultation, I expressed my pain in being abused by a church leader as a young woman. At the conclusion of my presentation, one of the WEF leaders shared with the entire consultation his desire in asking me for forgiveness and making a public apology for what another church leader had done to me. That incredible expression made a remarkable impact on me. I felt a sense of release that I didn't even know I needed. It seemed to make my past experience so much less painful. It was so 'healing' to know that the leadership in the Body of Christ had compassion, interest and concern for a woman who had been abused by one of their counterparts. Oh, if the church leadership would only realise the influence and power they hold in their hands to help the hurting and broken lives of abused women around the world! ■

*This article was first published in the International Women's Concerns Newsletter Jan-Apr 2000.*

**Emptying Nest:** *from page 7*

When they were younger, the children called more on me than on Daddy. But now, with courses to choose, college fees to settle and computers to buy, my husband finds himself getting more involved in their lives. He also finds he has a lot of catching up to do. The tendency to see them still as "little children" frustrated and impeded growth in their relationships. I often ended up being the mediator between them. His solution to this problem was to build individual "bonding" with each of the children (accompanying him on trips to outstation meetings etc). This is paying off in both ways. They now talk, share and work through their differences. This increasing input has given the children a more balanced view towards life.

**LET US TALK**

We were very conscious of the growing maturity of our children. From the time they could reason, we invited their contributions to the family "dos and don'ts". Wrongdoings and disagreements were talked out in private. Reconciliation was made immediately after discipline. Mediation from a third party was by invitation.

At a recent end-of-year family evaluation meeting, we did two exercises together. The first was to share two ways each family member has been a blessing to each of us. This brought some surprises. The second was to share two incidents in which each member has been a "pain in the neck." (We were not allowed to rebut or justify our actions. We were just to listen.) It was an eye opener for all of us. We spoke the truth in love and we forgave and prayed for one another. It has brought us to a new level of communication.

As the children begin to form deeper relationships outside, we are sharing more

openly our struggles and differences with them. We used to shield them from our personal or church conflicts so that they would not be forced to take sides. But this is changing. They now sometimes have the chance to be our mediators and counsellors! Hopefully this will help them to better manage their own relationships in the future.

**MEMORIES AND MONUMENTS**

God told the Israelites to erect "stones" which would serve as reminders of His great works to enable their children to pass down their faith to future generations (Joshua 4:21-24). Photographs have become for me far better than stones. We have made an album with simple annotations of all the important instances of God's leading in our individual as well as family lives. These include our call into full-time training and ministry, definite guidance for our marriage, the births of the children, the spiritual significance of their names, God's protection and provision at crisis points, and the many answers to prayer. We also started individual albums for each of the children covering events since birth. As they grow, they have continued to collect their own photographs. These "monuments" will be a lasting spiritual legacy that they will be able to pass on to their children.



**LUCY CHUA** is a teacher by training and a graduate of DTC Singapore and MBS. She is married to REV JOHNSON CHUA, a Presbyterian minister heading the Open Door Ministry in Malaysia. They have three children:

*From Right: EUSOFFE (22) is completing his 3rd year in MMU, MARIA (19) is doing her 1st year in Alif College of Graphic Design, YOSHUA (20) is doing his 1st year in Monash University Sunway. They live in Klang and serve in the Presbyterian Church.*

**PARENTS ALWAYS**

When our son faced the truth that the course he had chosen to pursue at University was not what he wanted as a career, he was devastated. He even felt he could not sit for his exams. He had been an "A" student all the way to college. This was a great blow even to us. We went back with him to the drawing board, testing aptitude, interests, God's guidance, and available courses. He finally decided to finish the course even though it was not his particular interest.

Mistakes, failures, and wrong choices may be some of the costly lessons for our children at this stage. It brings home the fact that their leaving the nest does not spell the end of our responsibilities as parents. We have become their sounding boards and eventually will act as their friends in an adult world. The fact that they are spaced within three years of each other means that the empty nest will be a reality for us all too soon...

Meanwhile I shall get on with the things I had wanted to do but were unable to when the children were young. I shall also take time to stay in tune with my husband after all these years of "interruptions." The nest may soon be empty but our relationship will continue to grow and deepen. ■

**WOMEN to WOMEN**

Adviser/Co-ordinator : **GOH POH GAIK**

Women to Women, a project of the NECF Commission on Women's Concerns, is a bimonthly supplement to Berita NECF. It has the broad objectives of :

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

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

Send to :

*The Co-ordinator, WOMEN TO WOMEN*  
NECF, 32A, Jalan SS 2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

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

**Merdeka! Jesus is Lord:** from page 8

## JOYFUL CELEBRATION IN THE OTHER STATES

THE Prayer Rally was also held simultaneously in the other 13 states throughout the country. Except for Sarawak, representatives of the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission were present at all the prayer locations. The representatives reported exciting news of a greater sense of unity and bonding among the churches that participated and a deeper desire to work together for the Kingdom.

In **Seremban**, 410 people from 15 churches representing at least seven denominations gathered at Agape Gospel Assembly. There was a "very strong sense of unity and togetherness and the participants were very earnest in affirming the prayers", reported **Charissa Giam**. The participants were specially burdened to pray for their people, who are working elsewhere, to return to their state to work.

In **Ipoh**, more than 500 people from the English, Chinese and Tamil churches experienced the power of praying in one heart and mind. **Pr Irene Lee** reported that "there was a great sense of unity in one spirit and one mind among the participants." **Pr Clement Wong**, in his message, urged Christians to be united so that God's glory may be manifested to the city. The night's meeting at Canning Garden Baptist Church was conducted in English with interpretations into Cantonese and Tamil. Participants prayed especially for the stamping out of social ills plaguing the city (immorality, drug abuse, gangsterism and others) and for the churches in Perak to be united.

In **Kuantan**, the rally held at Wesley Methodist Church was attended by about 500 people from 14 churches, according to **Jennifer, Bee Leng and Dai May**. Prayers focused on unity and fellowship among churches. There was great joy and pride of being one in the Body. The next morning, about 100 Christians met in Teluk Cempedak to clean up the beach and its vicinity.

In **Penang**, **Patrick Cheng** reported that the turnout was overwhelming. The hall at Safira Club, Seberang Jaya Prai, was too small and "there was no place even to stand!" Many left and in the end, about 800 people including some 20 pastors and church leaders were packed inside to celebrate God's goodness over the nation. There was an air of festivity and jubilation throughout the night as the participants danced and worshipped. At midnight, participants held up neon-lighted straws as they shouted "Jesus is Lord" 14 times. Church unity and godliness in the Body were among the major

prayer points.

In **Sabah**, about 500 people representing some 25 churches attended the rally at Christ Church, Likas in Kota Kinabalu. **Irene Chew** reported a "powerful presence of the Lord" amidst the joyful and 'noisy' worship filled with whistling and shouts. Despite the poor tele-conferencing

reception, the participants remained exuberant and continued in their celebrative mood. Just before midnight, the hall was darkened and several men raised a large wooden cross on the stage. At the stroke of 12, the participants all shouted and shone their torches at the cross, symbolising that Christ is the light of the world. The young people danced and continued 'partying' well after the service was over. Present at the rally was Archbishop Datuk Yong Ping Chun, the Archbishop of the Anglican Province of South East Asia.

In **Kota Bahru**, about 280 people from nine churches and three para-church organisations met at St Martin's Church. **Pr Ronnie Yeap** observed, from the prayers of the pastors, a sincere desire to work together in unity and help each other. Joy filled the air as hearts united in worship and prayer. There was great excitement when the telephone was connected to Kuala Lumpur and Rev. Wong Kim Kong's (NECF Malaysia Secretary-General) voice came on air loud and clear. When the clock struck midnight, there was an "awesome presence of God" when the pastors and leaders on stage lighted their candles and the participants' candles. The meeting was conducted in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Tamil.

In **Johor Bahru**, the attendance was astounding with 1,300 people packed into Full Gospel Church, reported **Ruth Lee**. There was great excitement and joy in the worship and at times, the young people broke out in dancing. During prayer time, many moved to the aisle and linked hands as a sign of unity. Glow sticks in green, orange, purple and pink shone through the darkened hall, creating a stunningly beautiful effect. Various pastors prayed for unity among the churches. Already, the JB organising team is thinking of holding next year's



*Young and old cleaning up part of Teluk Cempedak in Kuantan on Merdeka morning.*

rally in a stadium!

In **Kuala Terengganu**, **Devadas Dorairaj** reported that 80 people representing nine churches and nine denominations attended the rally at Lifeline AOG Church. There was a "real sense of unity not experienced in the past." A major praying point was the unity of churches in KT. The next morning, about 30 people from eight churches visited Sinar Harapan, a government-run spastic home.

In **Kangar**, 100 people from six churches gathered at Kangar Baptist Church, reported **Pr Ron Hee**. There was intense intercession as the participants broke into groups to pray over the city and nation. Ron observed an earnest love of the people for the nation. There was a good sense of unity among the participating churches and a desire to come together. The next morning, 90 Christians participated in the state's *Merdeka* parade and gave the church a visible presence in the community.

In **Alor Setar**, 300 people from six churches shouted "their hearts out" at the Trinity Baptist Church, according to **Pr Leonard Lim**. As they cried, they felt the invisible walls (separating the churches) coming down.

In **Malacca**, **George Martinez** said 180 people met at Bethel AOG church. Though disappointed that the telephone link-up was not successful, the people stayed on and had a meaningful time of intercession and worship.

In **Dungun**, the people gathered celebrated with dance and joyful songs. The children presented a tambourine dance and flag procession. Though only 53 people were present at Dungun Elim Church, there was a sense of togetherness and unity, reported **Josephine Lu**. The people prayed that the Christians there would rise and shine in their community. ■

## MISSIONS MANIA TO HIT OUR YOUTHS

YOUTHS smitten by the Great Commission bug. Organisers of the National Youth Missions Camp hope that each camper will be stung by the time they break camp in end-October.

“We want to inspire youths to have a deep passion and commitment for the Great Commission. The challenge will be for each camper to live their lives around fulfilling the Great Commission,” says Alex Lim, Chairman of the NECF Malaysia Missions Commission which is organising the camp.

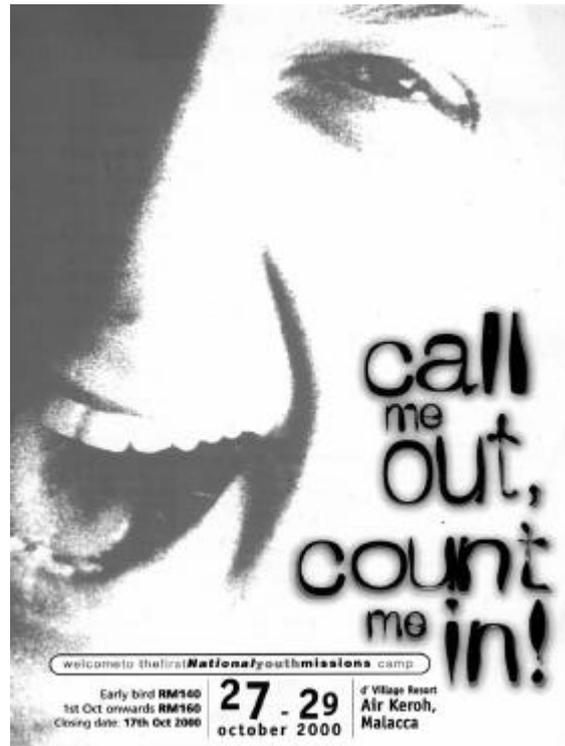
For the first time, various mission agencies are joining hands to rally the nation’s youths to missions. Although there is no restriction to age, the camp is targeted at youths aged between late teen and those in their 20s. “This is the ‘action group’. They have fewer commitments and are ready for action anytime,” Alex explains.

“Youths are the ones most vulnerable to the pressures of their surrounding, such as materialism... They have also become the constant target of intense advertising and marketing efforts. As a result, we could ‘lose’ this generation to values and lifestyles they acquire from their environment. Alternatively, we can impact their lives with a higher purpose and passion for the Kingdom,” adds NECF Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong.

While only a few will be called to ‘go’, the rest can play the significant role of sending by committing financial, emotional and prayer support. The organiser hopes that through the camp, the youths will also see the symbiotic relationship of both parties.

The camp will be held at de’ Village Resort, Air Keroh, from 27 to 29 October. The speakers—Dr James Hudson Taylor (the great-grandson of the legendary Hudson Taylor), Dr Ed Pousson and Pastor Christopher Long—will infect the campers with their love and zeal for missions.

For more details, contact NECF at tel.: 03-7727 8227; fax: 03-7729 1139; and e-mail: enquiries@po.jaring.my ■



### OUR PERSECUTED BRETHRENS

November 12, 2000 has been set aside to remember and pray for our suffering brethren all over the world. Join forces with Christians in 130 countries to uphold our persecuted partners. The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church is organised by World Evangelical Fellowship in partnership with Open Doors Malaysia and NECF Malaysia. For more information, check out the website [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)

## CHINESE RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS

*Chinese participants journey back to their ancient past with the help of a 76-year old former pathologist and an ex-Hare Krishna leader.*

THE recent ‘Return to Your God’ seminar was an eye-opening experience for many in Penang, Ipoh, Taiping and the Klang Valley, who turned up to hear former pathologist Dr Ethel Nelson and ex-Hare Krishna leader Samuel Wang. Both are renown researchers and authors of books proposing that the Chinese characters, culture and classics contain Biblical prophecies, stories and truths. Among their books are *God’s Promise to the Chinese* and *God and the Ancient Chinese*.

In each place, except for Taiping, the seminar was held for two days followed by an evangelistic dinner the next day. By the time the event was over, the organiser reckoned that about 10,000 people have witnessed the speakers’ ‘evidences’ that long before Buddhism and Taoism came to China, their forefathers worshipped Shangti—the God who created the heavens and earth.

And, according to Nelson, this Shangti is not one but a Godhead of three Persons! The clue to this disclosure was found

in the oracle bone writing (the most ancient form of Chinese writing) for the character Shangti where three small triangles formed part of the character, said Nelson.

Other proposals include: Jesus was the manifestation and representative of the Godhead based on the character ‘Holy Man’ that Confucius and Lao Zi spoke about; the character ‘disobedience’ depicts two trees while the character ‘die’ depicts two hands, two mouths and a tree, thus pointing to the first disobedient act in the Garden of Eden.

The seminar, conducted in English and Mandarin, was organised by the partnership of NECF Malaysia, Shangti E Movement, Baptist Theological Seminary and local churches.

While Nelson delved into the Chinese characters and painstakingly interpreted them in biblical perspective, Wang dug into the ancient Chinese classics and tried to establish the link between the classics and the Bible. Their lectures were extracted from their books (mentioned above) which are available from Canaanland bookstore.

*see page 15*



# The Battle for Truth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## How postmodernism came about

*By Dr Leong Tien Fock*

ONE of the great hymns exhorts us to 'give of your best to the Master' by following the example of Jesus to 'join in the battle for truth'.

Although prayer is indispensable, the spiritual battle we are called to fight is ultimately about and over truth (2 Cor. 10:35). Sure enough, as we move into the 21st Century the battle is not just over 'What is the truth?' but also 'What is truth?' Is 'truth' objective and thus absolute, that is true for and hence, binding on all people? The response is negative for more and more people in the West, and soon in the East. Increasingly people are saying Christianity may be true to the Christians ("good for them!") but it need not be true to others ("leave us alone!"). This new 'spirit of the age' is often called postmodernism.

### **Before Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is 'post' to modernism. It is an (over-)reaction to modernism. Modernism is the ideology that evolved in the West, especially in the 18th Century, which captured and captivated Western thinking until the second half of the 20th Century. This ideology basically assumes that human reason and the senses alone are capable

of discovering, understanding and thus explaining every aspect of the universe. This means science can discover and explain every aspect of reality. This further means that whatever science cannot discover or explain does not exist. Modernism rules out the existence of God and other spiritual realities such as heaven and hell.

But the basic assumption of modernism cannot be proved philosophically or scientifically. In fact modernism has had its (non-Christian) philosophical critics right from the beginning. In the first half of the 20th Century, relativistic and quantum physics have shown that human reason cannot understand or explain much of physical (let alone spiritual) reality. But sound philosophical arguments and valid scientific evidence did not bring down modernism (something else did). This shows that once a false and even harmful idea is entrenched in the mind as a stronghold, no argument and evidence can dislodge it.

No wonder Paul said in 2 Cor. 10:35 that he had to use spiritual weapons in the battle for truth even at the individual (let alone cultural) level. In the case of the battle for truth against modernism at the

cultural level, the Church basically lost it without really a fight. In fact modern Christianity is itself in some ways built on modernist thinking. (As we shall see, the complaint that the modern Church is "materialistic" is one way of saying it is modernistic.) If the Church had won the battle against modernism, there would be no postmodernism today. Unless the Church in Asia acts fast enough, postmodernism will be a worse enemy than modernism. The Western Church is already experiencing this.

So what brought down modernism in the West? And what can we learn from it so that we can better fight the remnants of modernism and prevent postmodernism from becoming a stronghold in the East?

### **Modernism and Materialism**

As a result of modernism having captured the Western mind in the 18th Century, modernisation or industrialisation has been underpinned by this atheistic ideology. Thus, atheism is assumed not only in modern science and technology but also in modern academic, professional and economic pursuits. Modernity—the physical and social environment as well as the way-of-life that modernisation brings

*see page 16*

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### **Chinese return to their roots: from page 14**

Wang believed that China was even mentioned in the Bible in Isaiah 49:12 as the 'land of Sinim'. He earlier said that the Chinese originated from the Qin dynasty and in Hebrew, Qin was phonetically translated as 'Sinim'.

Throughout the lectures, the participants were repeatedly reminded that Christianity was not a Western religion and that the ancient Chinese worshipped the Creator God of Genesis.

The enthusiastic response to the lectures showed that generally, Chinese Christians are interested in their cultural and religious roots. More importantly, they have a genuine desire to learn how to evangelise more effectively to their own people, particularly their unbelieving family members. This is also evident from the speed at which the dinner tickets for the evangelistic banquet were snapped up.

Though some have difficulty following the lectures and

questioned the controversial issues raised by Wang, almost everyone agreed that the seminar provided them with interesting 'conversation starters' to sharing the gospel with their non-believing Chinese friends.

From this seminar, the organiser hopes to spearhead in Malaysia an evangelistic movement using the Shangti approach. Explains Steve Oh, who helped to bring in the speakers: "The aim of the Shangti E Movement is to awaken and equip God's people to help the Chinese return to their original God through Jesus Christ."

Among the proposed activities of the Movement are: Produce well-researched papers on Chinese cultural issues and the Christian response; organise international symposiums to present the findings; and develop and maintain a website and provide a reference point. ■

**The battle for truth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: from page 15**

about—is thus an incarnation of modernism and atheism.

Under the condition of modernity, unlike pre-modernity, God and spiritual realities seem and feel awkward. Modernity is energised by a materialistic mood, an emotional impulse that drives modern people, including Christians, to live as if all that matters in this world is material abundance. In capitalistic modernity, greed, even unrestrained greed, fuels 'economic progress'. When greed rules, God is dead, Self is king, and immorality of all kinds flourishes openly. Thus in late modernity, not only does God feel unreal, He cannot be allowed to be real.

But unrighteousness hurts, not only emotionally and psychologically but often physically too. Also, humans cannot live as if there is no spiritual reality. Modernity leaves people spiritually high and dry; a pervasive sense of emptiness and meaninglessness haunts modern people. No amount of material pleasure can soothe these emotional and spiritual pains. This set of pains, together with the disillusionment of World War II, led Western culture to begin questioning modernity and finally to reject modernism. A vicious lie, an anti-God stronghold, unless dislodged by spiritual means available to God's people, will have to run its full tragic course before it will be recognised for what it is.

If the rejection of modernity involves only rejecting reason and the senses as the only valid means to absolute truth, then people (like those in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China) would be most open to the Gospel. But in the free (capitalist) world, modernity has itself

engendered postmodernism, which goes to the other extreme of rejecting reason and the senses altogether as a valid means to absolute truth. This means there can be no absolute truth; this belief immunises people to the absolute claims of the Gospel. New Age spirituality becomes the only attractive spiritual option. But why only in the free world?

**Truths Become Relative**

Under communism, even though modernism and atheism reigned, there was no personal freedom. Greed was under control and immorality was not allowed to flourish openly. So what used to be considered wrong, such as cohabitation and homosexuality, continued to be viewed as wrong. But this is not the case in the free world, where personal 'freedom' is considered sacred. When immorality such as cohabitation becomes common open practice, it is no longer felt to be wrong by those who practise it as well as those who do not.

Consciously or unconsciously, what was felt to be wrong before no longer feels wrong anymore. Cohabitation may be wrong in a pre-modern village but not in a modernised city such as Kuala Lumpur. This means morality is not absolute but relative to time and place. This is the first step towards accepting the idea that there is no absolute truth.

For if there is no absolute moral truth there should also be no absolute religious truth, as the two go hand-in-hand. In the free world, we also find people of all religious backgrounds living together and openly professing their faith. Partly prompted by the feeling that morality is relative, this consciously or unconsciously creates the feeling that religious truth is

also relative.

When moral and religious truths are felt to be relative (and since this suits fallen human nature well) the next step is to justify this feeling rationally. But to be intellectually consistent, this requires one to first justify that all truth is relative. Hardcore postmodernists have been trying to do this. However, they face insurmountable difficulties, one of which is that nobody can live as if scientific truth (say, gravity) is relative. Most postmodernists will not go so far as to deny absolute scientific truth. But to deny absolute moral and religious truths without also denying absolute scientific truth is intellectually inconsistent. Then again, who says an ideology needs to be intellectually consistent or even true to become a stronghold in human minds? Modernism was a case in point.

In the West, postmodernism is already a stronghold. In the East, some places (like Singapore) are ahead of others (like Malaysia) in postmodernisation. This time around, will the Church play its role as salt and light and fight the battle for truth against postmodernism? Or will it let postmodernism run its full (and more) tragic course? Will the Asian Church fight modernism in the East and stop the pendulum from swinging to the other extreme of postmodernism?

Understanding how postmodernism develops out of modernity is crucial to fighting this battle. This article thus supplements the more comprehensive 'The Battle for Truth in the Last Days' published in NECF Malaysia's Watchmen's Forum 2. ■

*(This article is a contribution of the NECF Malaysia Research Commission.)*

**Sharing Resources****WATCHMEN'S FORUM 2**

A compilation of articles on current issues with an eschatological perspective written by NECF Malaysia Research Commission members. Topics include postmodernism, science and technology, mass deception and the New Age Movement. Available at the NECF office at RM10 each.

**HANDBOOK ON MISSIONS AGENCIES**

A local resource booklet containing

information on the mission agencies operating locally. The first of its kind in Malaysia, the handbook also has some statistics and data on the state and needs of missions worldwide. Published by NECF Missions Commission and available at the NECF office at RM8.00 each.

**OTHER BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM NECF MALAYSIA**

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

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

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

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



## BOOK REVIEW

# THE MATURE CHRISTIAN MINDSET

Author: Lee Chin How

THE current rhetoric is all about self-improvement. Buzz words such as “re-inventing” and “re-investing” in oneself are bandied about. Underlying this secular aspiration is an avowed belief that knowledge is power. And so the game of ‘one upmanship’ is selfishly played out with the current obsession with computer technology as a power tool towards more knowledge and social leverage. The battle is, as always, ongoing for the mind.

It is therefore timely that Bro. Lee Chin How’s scholarly thesis “The Mature Christian Mindset” is published. Based on his extensive research, this exposition of Paul’s epistle to the Philippians encourages believers—then as now—to adopt a new mindset as Christians. This paradigm shift is especially cogent as our nation is being propelled into the 21st Century after the recent millennium send-off. The modern Christian needs to know how to think and act accordingly at such a time as this.

Chin How’s special contribution is to unlock Paul’s masterly treatise on right thinking. The key is found in Paul’s chiasmic use in presenting his arguments. Once this framework is established, the main thrust of Paul’s argument is evident: the attitude of concern not only for self becomes pivotal, a worldview that Paul himself encourages in Phil. 3:15: “All of us who are mature should take such a view of things”. And it is easier to see how this main view is obtained—through identification with Christ as the role model for ourselves and others. Maturity is thus not measured by a believer’s age or the accumulation of Biblical knowledge; it is a believer’s ability to think and to act as Christ would—selflessly in the interest of others in true *agape* love.

To obtain this new mindset, Paul encourages the practice of several spiritual disciplines such as:

- Praying for others (1:3–8). Praying for oneself is thus relegated to a secondary basis; and
- Discipling and mentoring believers in their spiritual growth (1:9–11). Experience is the best teacher, and in Phil. 1:9, Chin How carefully points out that the word for knowledge used here is ‘EPIGNOSIS’ in Greek which means experiential knowledge, and not ‘GNOSIS’ which means intellectual knowledge. True knowledge of God’s love is pro-active—sharing it freely with others.

In his final comment on knowing Christ (3:1–14), Paul sums it up that to really know Christ is to participate in His sufferings and resurrection (3:10–11). This is borne by his own missionary experiences, and serves as a culmination of his teaching—that it is Christ’s resurrection power over the physical and spiritual world that enables us to overcome adversities.

The ultimate mature Christian is one who lives as Christ did with His mind and heart set on a heavenly and eternal perspective. Christ-likeness, concern for the things of Christ, and knowing Him intimately are the goals of a mature Christian. Then only can true love be shared and given to others.

Thanks to Chin How’s exposition, the timeless advice in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians is repeated not just in the Malaysian context but from a world-view perspective. I cannot think of a better exposition to counter the polemical barrage of the relentless media.—Reviewed by *Pr Chris Choo*



## FOREIGN NEWS

### Animated Jesus Film Goes National in The USA

FOR the first time, the story of Jesus is being portrayed in a full-length animated feature film, with national cinema release.

The *Miracle Maker* is a 90-minute film showing Jesus’ ministry from the point of view of Jairus’ daughter. It features the voices of William Hurt and Julie Christie among others. Archbishop of Wales, the Most Rev Dr Rowan Williams, described the film as a “superb dramatisation of the gospel narrative. Accessible, theologically literate, and often quite moving. An outstanding vivid and authentic script.” He added, “The first century detail is excellent.”

More people flocked to the cinema

to see *The Miracle Maker* than *Love’s Labour’s Lost* on the weekend when both films opened. *The Miracle Maker* ranked 11th while the other movie ranked 12th in terms of revenue from ticket sales – even though *The Miracle Maker* was showing at 100 cinemas compared to 200 for *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. —*Renewal* ■

### Prayer Revival in Britain

CHRISTIANS across Britain are literally making room for prayer. But they’re not just juggling their diaries; they’re setting up places for intense intercession. Anything from a simple room to a huge purpose-built centre will do. It’s not a new phenomenon. But the past couple of years have seen a growing interest in houses or rooms for prayer. Linked to that is increasing involvement of Christian organisations and churches in 24-hour prayer initiatives.

“There is an increasing number of networks committed to both general and specific prayer,” said Brian Betts, Resident Director of the Ashburnham Christian Trust. In parallel with this—and on a worldwide basis—God seems to have put in people’s hearts the vision to establish ‘houses of prayer for all nations’.

That’s a key concern for Sunderland church leaders Ken and Lois Gott. They had a vision for a 24-hour prayer room on the top floor of their building, Crown House, with intercession for revival around the clock. The room overlooked the North Sea and the European continent, and was adorned with maps and flags of the world.

Ian Cole has a vision of establishing a prayer centre similar to that of the World Prayer Centre at Colorado Springs, USA. Son of an Ulster minister, Cole helped launch Birmingham-based ministries Cornerstone Christian Charity and Pray for Revival. His dream is for a 60 million pound World Prayer Centre – possibly built on sought-after land near the NEC serving as

**Foreign News:** *from page 17*

the nation's heartbeat of prayer. The centre's main focus would be to encourage and develop corporate and individual prayer. The latest communication and information technology would be used to link to other initiatives, including the Colorado Springs centre.

Pete Greig of Revelation Church, Chichester, has been discovering many Christians are prepared to pray – even for 24 hours. He organised a one-month prayer movement and set aside a room for the prayer meeting. The initiative lasted three months but it did not stop there. Word spread about Revelation's non-stop prayer. Other churches wanted to follow suit. Suddenly a separate wider movement was being born. A professional designer drew up a website free of charge. Now the 24-7 initiative has become a massive, non-stop prayer meeting across many nations and Christian traditions, focused on young people. Participating groups pledge to pray 24 hours a day in a fixed location for anything between a week and a month. "We have now filled every hour of this year with non-stop prayer – all linked by the website," said Greig.

Betts added: "There does seem to be across the nation a new awareness and a new commitment to prayer."—*Renewal* ■

## Hell Isn't Obsolete, Brits Say

The reality of hell, and the teaching that it is "occupied to some degree," is reaffirmed in a 140-page report published in April by the Evangelical Alliance of the United Kingdom.

The report, produced by a five-member working group, was prompted by the increasing number of those inside and outside the church who regard the doctrine of hell as "indefensible and obsolete." The report also responds to an ongoing argument among evangelical theologians on whether those in hell are subject to eternal punishment or eventually annihilated. Both are legitimate positions, the report says, although the latter is a minority view.

But hell "is more than mere annihilation at the point of death. Rather, death will lead on to resurrection and final judgment to either heaven or hell," the document emphasises. It also cites the growing popularity of Eastern doctrines of reincarnation, and the humanist rejection

of any life after death, as requiring a reaffirmation of Christianity's traditional view of hell.

British evangelicals commend "sensitivity and discernment" in presenting the message of hell, "particularly to those for whom commitment to Christ is uncertain or unrealised." Because redemption is guaranteed only by Jesus, the report adds, "It is inadvisable for us to pronounce unequivocally that a specific person is in hell."—*Religion News Service* ■

## OSCAR Links Missions Overseas

A new Internet-based service has been launched for missionaries. Called OSCAR (an acronym of the One Stop Centre for Advice and Resources), the website is billed as "the UK Information Service for World Mission".

OSCAR is part of a resource project set up in cooperation with Global Connections (formerly the Evangelical Missionary Alliance) to look at new and different ways of resourcing missionaries. Mike Frith, who has spent the last 10 years working as a pilot with Mission Aviation Fellowship, manages the project. You can visit OSCAR at [www.oscar.org.uk](http://www.oscar.org.uk) — *Renewal* ■

## Persecution in China

LEADING relief agency Release International has announced that Christians in China are facing a fresh wave of persecution from the authorities within the country, according to *Renewal* magazine. Although the United States recently submitted an article to the United Nations, calling for China to be censured on account of their continued abuse of human rights, Chinese pastor Li Dexian has again been arrested for "illegal preaching" of the Gospel.

Pastor Li Dexian, pastor of a growing church in Hua Du, has now been detained 13 times during the past six months. In spite of persecution, he is determined to see the Christian message preached. He told Release International, "I want to continue to tell people of the love of Jesus. I do not wish any harm on the people who have arrested me but I know I must follow God's calling to preach his Gospel."

Meanwhile, *World Pulse* reports that China's government has sharply revised upward the number of Protestants in the country. A January Religious Affairs Bureau meeting estimated the total at 25

million. According to Compass Direct, the Public Security Bureau estimates there are 35 million Protestants. These latest figures far surpass the state-sanctioned Three South Patriotic Movement estimate of 13.3 million. Some China watchers put the true figure at anywhere from 30 to 60 million or more. ■

## Discipleship Classes for Ex-guerrillas

IN 1999 alone, over 300 Colombian churches were forcibly closed and over 45 pastors murdered by rebel guerrillas in Colombia. Open Doors teams working in the worst affected areas report vast numbers of refugees flooding into the cities as people flee the violence.

Open Doors runs a series of discipleship training seminars in these areas—often attended by ex-guerrillas. Fausto is a typical example. He turned up at the Open Door seminar with a Bible in his bag, explaining how he used to carry a gun around all the time, but now his only weapon was the Word of God. After the seminars, Fausto returned to his former comrades with a supply of Bibles. So many of them converted to Christianity that the rebel leaders grew angry with Fausto and had him killed.

"The end of this story is even more powerful," commented OD UK Director, Peter Cowell. "At Fausto's funeral, our Open Doors co-workers were approached by Fausto's widow and brother. They were asking us for more Bibles so they could continue Fausto's work amongst the guerrillas."—*Renewal* ■

## Euro Directive and Religious Liberties

A new EU anti-discrimination Directive is set to damage religious liberties, according to The Christian Institute. The Institute has obtained legal advice from John Bowers QC, and Mark L.R. Mullins, which argues that church schools and religious organisations will have to open up their staff posts to atheists and practising homosexuals.

The UK government has already indicated its approval of the draft directive and is expected to endorse the final version this summer. Colin Hart, Director of The Christian Institute, said: "The directive will have wide-ranging implications for religious bodies. Contrary to what the Foreign Secretary promised two years ago

**Foreign News:** *from page 18*

(November 12, 1997), church schools will have to open up their staff posts to atheists or practising homosexuals as teachers. Only the posts of religious education teachers are likely to be reserved for Christians.

“While churches will be allowed to require ministers to hold to the teachings of the church, the same will not be true of all the other posts, such as vicars’ secretaries or vergers. Churches will be forced to employ staff who reject their basic beliefs.

“Christian organisations who carry out social work such as the Salvation Army or the Shaftesbury Society will be forced to employ unbelieving staff. Hospices will be forced to employ doctors who believe in euthanasia. This is a major attack on religious liberties and the freedom of association.”—*evangelicals now* ■

## India: Tribe Took 100 Years to Find Christ

TRIBAL people in India who rejected Christian missionaries 100 years ago are ready to hear the Gospel. More than 1,500 members of the Mao tribe in Manipur professed faith in Christ during a three-day visit by five American missionaries in March. Manipur is in eastern India on the Myanmar border.

The missionaries held evangelistic meetings and services in Mao churches, Brent Knapton of Houston-based Window of Opportunity told *Religion Today*. About 5,000 people attended the daily meetings held in a large field, and 2,000 attended the church services, he said. About 900 people received dental and other medical care.

The Mao were challenged to forsake spirit worship to follow Christ. “We didn’t make it easy on them,” Knapton said. “We told them that they must renounce their old religions and that they would face persecution. We weren’t interested in having a large response, but in the eternal destiny of each person.” The team’s visit is an answer to prayer for a small number of Mao who have been asking God to bring a spiritual revival, Knapton said. In a series of ‘divine coincidences’, Knapton met Pfozhe, who took his application papers to state officials. The application was denied, but Pfozhe appealed until it reached the state’s second-highest official who is a Christian. He approved the application and, in an unprecedented move, agreed to let them travel into the mountainous area

to visit the Mao village. Additional trips are scheduled for later this year and coming years, he said.

It has been a slow awakening for the Mao. American Baptist missionaries William and Elizabeth Pettigrew first brought the Gospel to them in 1894.—*evangelicals now* ■

## Bridging the Gulf in Qatar

CHRISTIANITY is seeping subtly into Islamic countries in the Middle East. In the small peninsular nation of Qatar, which adjoins Saudi Arabia, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheik Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani has given formal permission for the building of the first Catholic church in the oil-rich country.

“Reportedly, a plot of land is expected to be allotted for use as a Christian church compound in Doha. The property would be divided by common agreement among the various Christian communities to construct individual church facilities,” states a Compass Direct news story filed in Istanbul in January. Wahhabi, a rigid branch of Sunni Islam, is the state religion; Christian witness for the purpose of converting Muslims is prohibited. However, the Gulf Times newspaper published in Qatar, reports that the government has not cracked down on Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant groups that hold private worship services after notifying state officials of their intent. An Anglican church already exists in Qatar; other non-Muslim groups meet in homes for worship and fellowship.

An estimated 420,000 of Qatar’s 600,000 population are expatriates, most of whom are involved with the country’s vigorous natural gas and oil industry. A Qatari information service reports that the population increases by 9 percent annually. Almost two-thirds of Qatar’s population lives in the capital of Doha. Many expatriate workers come from other unreached groups in Iran, Africa and South Asia.

An AD2000 and Beyond Movement report on the Arab region states that there is a notable Christian presence in the peninsula, which also includes Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. If there are evangelical Christians among the indigenous Qatari, they are silent about their faith.

“In Qatar, churches are meeting underground and Bibles are prohibited. Yet the OM ship was allowed to come. Qataris carried off basket loads of Christian

literature, and people recognised that the people on the ship have something they don’t,” states an AD2000 and Beyond report.—*Pulse* ■

## 12 Millions March on Jesus Day

RECORD numbers are believed to have participated in the last-ever global March for Jesus on 10 June. An estimated 12 million Christians took to the streets around the world to proclaim their faith.

Andy Butcher of Charisma News reports: “The largest single involvement was in Brazil, where organisers were expecting more than two million people across the country to take part. The most ambitious event staged was in Australia, where about 40,000 gathered in Sydney’s Olympic Stadium for a 24-hour celebration that included prayer, youth concerts, and reconciliation between white and aboriginal youth.

“Thirty thousand people also congregated in London—birthplace in 1986 of the first March for Jesus—for a march that ended at the famous Greenwich meridian line. Among the walkers was the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, whose closing address challenged people to be more direct in sharing their faith with others.”

UK marches also took place in Liverpool and Cardiff with Christians prayer walking through Edinburgh and gathering to praise God together in Belfast. About 5,000 people from 100 cities across Russia took part in a walk in Moscow, gathering opposite Lenin’s Museum. One of those who spoke was a former underground-church leader arrested 18 years ago not far from the rallying point, and twice jailed for his faith. One of the smallest events took place in Andorra, where about 30 Christians—about one-third of the known church in the European state—turned out despite cold and rain to pray in front of the Parliament buildings in the capital, Andorra la Vella.

About 450 events were held across the United States, with the focus shifting from celebration to collaboration. Local churches joined forces to take part in a wide range of practical-care projects from food distribution to hospital visiting. —*Renewal* ■

# For Your Intercession



## KOREA

THE amazing Church growth in Korea during the late 1900s has reached a plateau over the past decade. Few churches are continuing to increase and decline is most marked among young people. Changes in Korean society, especially in the pursuit of pleasure, has caused interest in spiritual things to plummet among young people. Those who do seek a religious experience are more likely to be attracted to Buddhism rather than Christianity, which is sometimes seen as a Western import. Pray for the Lord to revive the Korean Church again and for the young Koreans to find Christ as the real answer to today's society.

## ANGOLA

A Bible Society millennium project in Angola is resulting in 500,000 Scripture portions being distributed to children's homes. Pray for God's Word to bring help and healing to youngsters left orphaned and homeless by two decades of civil war. Ps. 119:105

## INDONESIA

ONE of the biggest challenges to Bible translation groups such as Wycliffe is Indonesia. Its 3,000 islands are home to people of 517 language groups who may need a Scripture translation—more than any other country in the world. Indonesia is in turmoil, so pray for peace, for the safety of Christians there and for more translators from among them. Isa. 6:8

## KENYA

RED, the colour of blood, is very important to the Maasai people of Kenya. The Maasai New Testament has a red cover and village elders started to fear it when it began to change lives. They noticed that when people read it they began to act differently. Young warrior stopped stealing cattle, for instance. Pray for God's red book to continue to change Maasai lives. Eph. 1:7–8

## ORISSA

THE upsurge of Hindu militism in India is largely in reaction to so many people becoming Christians. Many of the Kui tribe, who mainly live in Orissa state, are turning to Him. Radio broadcasts and audio cassettes have proved to be key instruments, while the Indian Evangelical Team has over 1,500 preachers, evangelists and missionaries dedicated to winning the Kui to Christ. Pray for the work. 2 Cor. 5:18

## MECCA

WITH a population of under a million, Mecca is hardly one of the world's largest cities, but its influence is enormous. It is the focal point of Islam and a fifth of this planet's people look on it as their most holy site. Generally, Christians are barred from Mecca. Pray for a Gospel breakthrough there. Pray for Saudi Arabia's city religious leaders and religious police (mutawa) to have miraculous encounters with Christ. Ps. 99:2–3

## SENEGAL

DAKAR is a major African city of nearly two million people. There are very few churches but missions strategy has been developed to reach poor villagers who come into the city to buy fruit and vegetables or move there to try to make money to send back to their families. Pray for these people to receive Christ—and take the Good News back to their villages.

## TANZANIA

MISSIONS can be hit financially quite suddenly—like when Tanzania's government removed the duty-free status for religious organisations importing goods, including food. Duty is now 20% plus 20% VAT for most products. Pray for the Lord's provision for missions through the world-wide Church. Phil. 3:6–7

## HANOI

CHILDREN play happily in the hillside villages around Hanoi, north Vietnam, able to smile properly for the first time. That's

because a specialist Christian Vietnamese doctor has been able to repair harelips which afflict many youngsters in the area. Finance for Operation Smile is provided by UK-based AsiaLink. Through it children and their parents are hearing about the full healing and peace that Jesus can give them. Pray for Operation Smile. 2 Cor. 3:3

## AFGHANISTAN

THERE is no visible Church in Afghanistan yet, but people are receiving Jesus as their Saviour. Letter response to FEBA's Dari broadcasts is growing. There is now a weekly programme for new Christians. Pray for the Lord to build His Church in Afghanistan—and among Afghan refugees in places like Pakistan. Matt. 16:18

## IRELAND

ONE of the poorest countries in Western Europe not very long ago, Ireland is enjoying an economic boom. People in the Republic are becoming richer and much more materialistic, breaking with traditional values. A positive side to this is an increasing openness to newer churches—and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Missionaries are finding innovative ways to help Irish people come to faith, such as Bible lectures in a Wexford hotel. Pray for evangelism in the Irish Republic.

## PUNJAB

IT is India's bread-basket and mainly inhabited by Sikh adherents. But in recent years many of them have been turning to the Bread of Life—Jesus. Pray for the Lord to build His Church in Punjab. Low caste Mazbi Sikhs and high caste Jat Sikhs have been responding to the Gospel in heartening numbers. John 6:48

## IRAN

AUTHORITIES here are determined to prevent Muslims from hearing the Gospel and forcing those who have become Christians to return to Islam. Christians have "disappeared" while others have been forced to flee the country. Pray for our brethren in Iran. Eph. 6:13