

A bi-monthly
publication of the
National Evangelical
Christian Fellowship
Malaysia

Berita NECF

Editorial

A pastor bought a bus ticket for his intended destination. The cashier at the counter gave him back an exorbitant amount of change. The pastor went and sat down in his seat, looked at the change, and realised what had happened. For a moment his thought was, "Praise the Lord. God has taken care of my trip." But after a while, another thought stole through his mind, "Can my gain be another man's loss?"

He went back to the cashier and said, "You gave me too much money. Here's the balance." The cashier replied, "I knew I gave you too much money. I was in church last Sunday, and I heard you preaching on honesty. I just wanted to see if you're for real."

Thankfully, this pastor passed the test – he's 'for real'. But supposing, by a far stretch of imagination, that the change he got from the cashier was a lot, lot more – enough to cover all his ministry expenses and set him up comfortably for the rest of his life (we did say "by a far stretch of imagination"). Will he still be able to resist the temptation?

What is the amount that will break his resolve to remain true to

Staking MY LIFE on MY WORD

his principles?

There's a saying – "Every man has his price."

Is this true? Do we have moral standards that are flexible, depending on the situation? Do our principles dictate our actions or do circumstances dictate our principles? Are we willing to set aside our fleshly desires for the sake of those standards we claim to believe in, just like the pastor in the story above did?

The bottomline – Do we have integrity?

What a load of questions! But there's one more: What is this 'integrity' that we hear so often?

According to the on-line Encarta Dictionary, integrity is the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high

moral principles or professional standards.

Simply put, integrity is doing what you say. It is keeping your word, fulfilling your promise.

Perhaps, integrity is best described by Jesus, "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'". (Matt. 5:38) In other words, people will believe whatever you

say because you have proven yourself to be honest and true to your words in the past.

Someone added that integrity is doing the right thing when no one is looking.

Contrast this with the world's view that you are only guilty when you are caught. So, as long as no one knows and no one sees, you can carry on with your merry dirt in the dark.

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Chairman's Message



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

A Conspiracy of Good Works

Of all peoples, it should come naturally to the people of the Book. For we are taught *that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

Eugene Peterson says that we are to *join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.*

"We had better be doing" – I like the way he said it. For too long we have taken doing good works as optional.

How many churches around us are involved in good works? Do our churches have any projects or programs that help the poor or needy?

Judging by the level of good works being done by the Church as a whole, it would seem that the only Scripture verse on good works that a Bible believer knows about is that we are not saved by them (Eph. 2:8–9)!

Many Christians appear to adopt an attitude of apathy and prove Pareto's law to be true, that is 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people.

Georga Barna, in his book "We have seen the future: the demise of Christianity in Los Angeles County," states that in spite of the appearance of large and very visible churches, the local church has gradually ceased to influence the secular community around it.

Paul, in writing to Titus, stressed the dynamic effect of God's saving grace: "For the grace of God that brings

salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works.**" Titus 2:11–14 (NKJV)

Not only do good, but be zealous ... for good works.

Paul further counseled, after having got the assurance of our acceptance in Christ, we are to "be careful to **maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.**" Titus 3:8b (NKJV)

Church, it is time we step up our efforts in doing good works. "Zealous for good works" hardly describes most of us. And we cannot maintain what we have not begun.

As we celebrate 52 years of nationhood, let us ask ourselves, "How are we as believers contributing to making this nation a better country?"

The reality of God's grace to save will be understood by others as they see a people redeemed by Jesus, zealous for good works.

The communities around us must see churches involved in charitable works and community betterment, for charity and social responsibilities are a logical extension of spiritual values.

Simply put, Nation Building is a conspiracy of good works.

...from front cover

Unfortunately, light has a way of seeking out the darkest corners.

Take for example our very own PKFZ scandal. For a long time, the robbing and fleecing went on in the dark, unseen by the public until the amount rocketed to an astronomical RM12 billion. That's our hard-earned money, paid to the Government in the form of taxes to be used for the welfare of the nation. Instead, the money has surreptitiously traveled to the bank accounts of greedy individuals.

But as we've said, light has a way of seeking out the darkest corners.

We commend the Government for wanting to get down to the root of this monstrous scandal as part of its declared battle to weed out corruption.

But here comes the RM12 billion question – will the Government uphold its pledge to fight corruption by nailing the people involved in the scandal? Will the Government keep its word?

Integrity. Men who hold to uncompromising standards are sorely lacking today. Even many Christians who boast of high moral standards and extol their righteous character have abandoned their conviction when compromise is more beneficial and expedient.

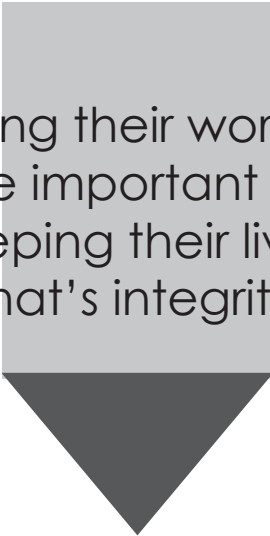
Christians are supposed to be the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” (Matt.5:13)

Ezra's example

One great biblical example of integrity in the Old Testament is Ezra, a scribe and priest who set out to lead a group of people back from Persia to

rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The trip home was treacherous through hundreds of miles of foreign towns and villages. Before Ezra set out from Persia, he made the following preparation.

“There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.



Keeping their word was
more important than
keeping their lives.
That's integrity.

I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, “The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.” Ezra 8:21–22

Ezra's integrity was important to him. He had told the king that God would protect them, so he couldn't ask for soldiers. He was not going to say one thing and then do another (unlike our many politicians who spout unity on one breath and scream racial hatred at the very next).

Ezra was willing to stake his life and the lives of his people on his declaration that “the gracious hand of God is on everyone who looks to him.”

And who can forget Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego who, when told to bow down before

Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue on pain of death, defiantly said, “...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Daniel 3:17–18

The three young men did what they said. They did not bow to the statue and were thrown into the furnace that was heated up seven times hotter than usual. God could deliver them, but would he?

They did not know, but they were willing to die to keep their word. Keeping their word was more important than keeping their lives. That's integrity.

You can live without fame, you can live without wealth, you can live without health, you can live without everything, but you cannot live without integrity. Without integrity, you will rot from the inside out. Without integrity, we will be soul-less creatures wandering the face of this earth.

In this world of shifting goal posts and flip-flopping standards, we need to be a people of integrity so that when we proclaim that Jesus is the true and living God and the Messiah, no one will doubt us.

For your prayers

The PKFZ investigation requires much prayer. Pray for the people involved in the investigation. Pray God gives them deep insight and wisdom into the debacle; and strength and courage to expose the truth.

May this case spark off a new era of honest and righteous dealings within the Government and business quarters, where integrity reigns in the hearts of people responsible for public funds.

It's only a cow's head. Or is it?

NECF Malaysia's response to the Shah Alam's cow-head protest



On 28 August 2009, three days before the 52nd Merdeka celebration, a sacred religious symbol was brandished against the Hindu community. That such an incident could occur at this juncture of our history and amidst the Prime Minister's 1Malaysia pledge is indeed appalling and shocking.

On that fateful day, a group of some 50 people claiming to be residents of Section 23, Shah Alam, placed a cow's head on the gates of the Selangor state secretariat building in protest against the proposed relocation of a Hindu temple to the Muslim-majority area. Some protestors even stomped and stepped on the cow's head.

The chairman of the committee that is objecting to the relocation, Ahmad Mahyuddin Abdul Manaf, said that the proposed relocation site was within 160 metres of the residential area, where Muslims made up 70 per cent of the residents, and also close to the Al-Jannah surau in the housing estate.¹

Subsequently, in a twist of events, Mahyuddin denied that the Section 23 Residents' Association Action Committee was involved in the cow-head incident.² However, in a seemingly contradictory stance, a police report lodged by the residents said the parade of the cow's head was not to insult Hindus but "meant to be a symbol of the stupidity of the state government and it was not intended as a religious insult".

Several concerns that have grave implications for the social harmony and state of religious liberty in the country have arisen.

- If every religious community were to accept the reason given for the protest, the consequence would be that no religious shrine or place of worship could ever be located or constructed in Muslim-majority areas.
- Implicitly, non-Muslim minority's interests will be made subservient to Muslim majority's say. This appears to be a 'tyranny of the majority' – where the majority begins imposing restrictions against the other religious communities.
- Brandishing a cow head in apparent protest against the decision to relocate the temple in the midst of the controversy is utter disrespect to another

religious community and will only invite contempt. Condemning the incident, Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin asked the protestors, "How would you feel if the proposal to build a mosque in a non-Muslim area – which is already happening – leads a group of non-Muslims to burn and stomp on the Quran?"³ Borrowing from his analogy, will it be right then to say that the burning of the Quran was not meant to insult Islam but merely to demonstrate the stupidity of the authorities?

The Attorney-General has laid the sedition and illegal assembly charges on 12 of the protestors. Nonetheless, the incident has demonstrated that there is an ever widening gap in terms of trust and acceptance within the various cultural communities. It appears that the implicitly secular-multietnic character of Malaysian society is moving towards

the 'desecularisation' of a more 'Islam-centric' way of life and a more fundamentalist outlook on religious pluralism.

Not surprisingly, the MCCBCHST has issued a statement calling for peace and order in Malaysia and that consistent, fair, just

and rational measures should be applied to all Malaysian regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture, gender or political connection (see next page).

In moments like these, the call for the Malaysian Church is not just to confine ourselves to our private quarters and pray, but to act. To act is to be a channel and instrument of reconciliation and healing towards all religious communities who have been grieved and hurt by this devious act.

God intends to reconcile the world unto Himself and the Servant of YHWH was the means by which this reconciliation was brought forth and will eventually be brought to completion. This was the mission of God. As His followers, this is the church's mission.

Below are 'pledges' which you and your church may wish to pray over and consider as acts and as agents of reconciliation:

1. We URGE that all disputes of a religious and ethnic nature be resolved through mutual deliberation and

In moments like these, the call for the Malaysian Church is not just to confine ourselves to our private quarters and pray but to **act**.

Continued next page...

One RULE for ALL Malaysians

There must be one rule for all Malaysians, asserted the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) in response to the Shah Alam cow-head demonstration against the relocation of a Hindu temple to the area.

The council noted the authorities' double standards in the overall handling of the case.

"MCCBCHST is concerned that whereas in the 28 August 2009 Shah Alam incident the police had stood by while the demonstrators desecrated the cow's head and made seditious speeches, the police acted strongly against would-be candlelight vigil watchers in the vicinity of Dataran Merdeka on 5 September 2009," it pointed out in a press statement released by its president, Rev. Dr Thomas Philips.

"Also, *malaysiakini* has now been warned by MCMC (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission) to remove from its website the video showing the terrible act of the Shah Alam incident. Thinking Malaysians will rightly raise the question: Which comes first – the act or the video

which exposes the act? How do we as a country go about resolving our problems? In this case, stopping the video of the act will not unmake the act. We must surely first prevent the act and the video would not have existed."

The council called for consistent, fair, just and rational measures to be applied regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture, gender or political connection for the good of all Malaysians and peace and order in Malaysia.

The council also highlighted the Home Minister's action in seating the organisers of the cow-head demonstration to his right and left during a press conference. In so doing, Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein appeared to have honoured the perpetrators of a gravely offensive event where seditious speeches were made accompanied by the stomping of the cow's head.

"What signals would this send to the people?" the council asked, adding that all who incite ill feelings among religious communities, denigrate any religion, desecrate the religious symbols of any religion or threaten to commit violence against others be promptly deterred and

held accountable.

The council called on Malaysians to respect our neighbours and endeavour to learn about their beliefs, customs and sentiments. It is upon such understanding of others and what is dear to them that our nation can be firmly rooted and grow strong and united.

"The way to manage our differences is not by creating enclaves whereby Malaysians will be segregated and separated from one another but through understanding and respect.

"Let us live together next to one another rather than to live apart. Each succeeding generation of Malaysians should grow closer instead of being pulled apart," the council said.

It urged Malaysians to reject the view of thinking about Malaysians as majorities and minorities, and majorities versus minorities as this works against national integration.

"Those in authority at the community, religious and governmental level must be firm to unequivocally reject unreasonable, unfair and anti-social behaviour and demand," it stressed.

...from previous page

- peaceful means and never in an extreme manner.
2. We do not **CONDONE** any act to humiliate and intimidate any ethno-religious community and in particular, the irreligious and irresponsible display which may cause anguish and pain to any religious community.
 3. We **SUPPORT** and will take active participation in all initiatives and efforts aimed at promoting racial and religious harmony in the land and decry any words or acts that threaten this harmony which could lead to violence or threats of violence which must be thoroughly delegitimised.

4. We **CALL** on all Malaysians to strive together and usher in a Malaysia which cherishes the values and virtues of peace, reason, justice, freedom, equity and inclusion for all Malaysians irrespective of race, creed, colour or standing, thereby preserving the diversity and rich cultural heritage Malaysians possess as a nation.

NOTES

¹ www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/news_lite.php?id=436667

² www.nst.com.my/articles/14regis/Article/index_html

³ www.nst.com.my/articles/14regy/Article/index_html

NAVIGATING THE CHURCH THROUGH THE STORM



Malik making a point. Next to him are Patrica and Haris.



Pr Jerry (left) talking about the problems in Sabah. Beside him are Baru Bian and NECF Religious Liberty Chairman Lim Heng Seng who moderated the session.

“NAVIGATING THE STORM” depicts a ship trying to navigate to safety through a rough storm that is threatening the lives of its occupants.

This illustration aptly sums up the feeling and sentiments of Christians in Malaysia as they weather the stormy state of affairs in the nation. We need God’s help to navigate us through the perils and the often subtle ‘dangers’ that come our way.

But to know how to navigate through the storm, we must first know what the perils are. It is with this in mind that NECF Malaysia recently held a half-day seminar based on the theme “Navigating the Storm”.

The seminar provided participants an understanding on how events in the country are shaping and impacting the Christian community and the nation.

The speakers were Dr Patricia Martinez (University Malaya Associate Professor), human rights lawyers Malik Imtiaz and Haris Ibrahim (also a civil liberties activist), Pr Jerry Dusing (SIB Sabah President) and lawyer Baru Bian from Sarawak who is actively involved in customary land rights cases.

Patricia kicked off the first session

phenomenon is already impacting Malaysian society and communities.

Next, Malik spoke about the need to zealously guard our fundamental liberties and rights which are being encroached upon by political Islam. He highlighted the several so called ‘apostasy’ cases to make his point.

Haris concluded the session by urging Christians to stand up and be counted to act on behalf of those who are victims to and oppressed by political Islam.

At the next session, Pr Jerry shared the problems faced by Sabahans with regards to the ongoing Islamisation process that began in Sabah during the time when Tun Mustapha was the Chief Minister.

Baru Bian then gave the Sarawak side of the problems, which are not unlike those in Sabah although there are some marked differences.

At the end of the session, the obvious and notable plea by the two East Malaysian brothers was: the Church in Semenanjung, blessed with rich resources, need to extend a helping hand to the struggling East Malaysian churches.

by giving glimpses into the contextual realities facing Malaysians with regards to the ascendancy of political Islam and how this

If the Christian voice is to be heard throughout the land, the East Malaysian churches must be nurtured to grow and expand. Kairos Research Director Dr Ng Kam Weng in his summary reminded participants that the Church is not the kingdom of God but merely a witness to the kingdom of God – the reign of God manifested in the ‘already’ but ‘not yet’ complete rule of Christ on this earth.

To witness effectively on this term and through the storm, an urgent sense of the times need to be inculcated in the Church. There must also be a change of current mindset to look externally beyond our own concerns to the plight of wider society.

Efforts should also be made to reach out to the needy in East Malaysia. In this respect, more co-ordination should be made together with a greater understanding and appreciation for church relations between the churches in West and East Malaysia.

In the end, the seminar left participants with the hope that the Spirit-empowered Church is able to wrought transformation in wider society. However, she must be willing to count the cost and invest her efforts in community ministries. Given this scenario, the congregation heartily sang the song,

*Ya Allahku, nyatakan kemuliaanMu,
Ya Allahku, nyatakan curahan kuasaMu
Di tanah tercinta, negara Malaysia ...
Malaysia bagi kemuliaanMu!*

God bless Malaysia!

In death do we unite

Shah Alam Roman Catholic and Protestant churches unite to secure Christian cemetery

BURIAL LAND FOR CHRISTIANS IN URBAN AREAS is scarce these days, but when churches work together and present themselves as one voice to the authorities, the nigh impossible can happen.

Of course, a dogged determination is also essential to ensure the vision materialises, as in the case of Shah Alam churches who waded through nine years of paperwork and countless meetings with the authorities before the Shah Alam Christian cemetery came to life.

What was interesting too is that the Protestants and Roman Catholics (RC) worked in unison to secure the cemetery. Death certainly is a powerful unifying force.

The two-acre cemetery which houses 1,000 burial plots is scheduled to begin operations on October 1.

Berita NECF digs out the skeletons from Pr David Tham and Teresa Chan, two people at the forefront of the project. Pr David is a Protestant while Teresa is a RC. Both have

witnessed a strengthening of ties between the Protestant and RC churches in Shah Alam to the extent that they now hold inter-church activities, such as futsal and badminton, and organise the yearly Unity Celebration where Shah Alam churches gather for worship and for the all-time Malaysian favourite past-time – food.

Says Teresa, “I work with the other churches with an open mind, to be able to see the goodness of each church and not having pre-conceived prejudices against them. Though we cannot compromise on the uniformity of our faith, we can, however, unite as a body to stand up for the rights of our Christian brothers and sisters in Shah Alam.”

Pr David adds, “Once a while, the leaders would have dinner or tea. This has really helped to foster our relationship. We believe if we can have fun together, we can also work together. Through it all, we hope that Jesus’ prayer for unity amongst all believers in John 17 will be answered.”

How did the Shah Alam Christians manage to secure the land and the authorities’ approval?

The idea of applying for a piece of cemetery land was mooted way back in 2000 when the Catholics residing in Shah Alam were told that they couldn’t be buried in the Klang Christian cemetery.

Majlis Perbandaran Klang (MPK) had given order that the cemetery was meant for Klang residents only. Father Raymond Pereira, the then parish priest of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang, made an effort to get all the churches in Shah Alam to come together to apply for a piece of cemetery land for the Christians in Shah Alam.

The churches came together and formed the Association of Shah Alam Churches (ASAC).

Meanwhile, we applied to be registered with ROS. However, our application was rejected because none of the churches’ premises (in shoplots) had permits from Majlis Bandar Shah

Alam (MBSA) to operate as a church.

After five years of communication with MBSA, nothing concrete came out of it. The cemetery was nowhere in sight because MBSA didn’t recognise ASAC formally and it was not taken seriously as a body. ASAC then enlisted the help of Christian Federation of Malaysia and MBSA finally replied our letters. The rest is history.

Who will operate the cemetery?

ASAC and CFM rejected the privatisation of the Christian cemetery. After many rounds of meetings and three mayors later, MBSA finally agreed to take over the management of the cemetery. ASAC is assisting MBSA to verify the validity of Christian residents in Shah Alam.

Who are eligible to “use” the cemetery? The cemetery is said to be used by only Shah Alam residents. How can you confirm the validity of the buyers’ status?

The burial lot is not for sale per se.

Only when a death occurs can the burial lot be purchased for burial purpose.

The churches in Shah Alam will help to verify their own deceased members. The onus is on the priest/pastor/elder of the respective churches to confirm if the deceased is their member. At the moment, ASAC is formalising the policies and guidelines on the use of the cemetery.

How much does a burial plot cost? Are there any other charges?

MBSA is revising the rates but prior to September 1, the rates were:

- An adult lot is RM80 while a child lot is RM40
- A hearse costs RM20

Besides these, there are other charges such as services of the grave diggers and payment to MBSA. ASAC intends to charge a minimal fee of RM50 per burial for administration.

The next of kin of the deceased will have to fork out around RM1,400 for the tombstone.



Pr M.S. Maniam knocked out during prayer time. On his knees is Sam Ang, NECF Secretary-General.

(Photos below) Philip Mantofa is a man of action, even when he is preaching.



Time to repent and move out into the community.



Off

Philip Ma
looks every
an Asian r
megastar with his fla
look, well-proporti
frame and dazzling s
However, his
mission is not to ente

but to thunder God's scorching message of repentance wherever he goes. This he did with seismic impact at the NECF Malaysia Klang Valley Merdeka Prayer Rally on Aug 30 at FGA Kuala Lumpur.

Not one to mince his words, the Indonesian evangelist bluntly told the crowd of some 3,000 people from the English, Mandarin, Bahasa and Tamil churches to stop praying, get out of the closet and ACT.

Controversial message indeed, especially since the rally was the climax of the annual NECF 40-day prayer and pray. But seen in the context of this year's theme "Love Our Neighbour", his message actually hit the nail on its head. For prayer, like faith is dead without works, he roared.

Philip, who pastors a group of churches totaling some 30,000 disciples in Surabaya, Indonesia, recalled the time when he prayed six hours a day for some



Out of the Closet, to the Community

Then, one day, God told him to stop praying, to get out of his closet and start getting things done.

“Our prayers should stir us to action but too many intercessors pray too much and do too little,” he said.

He told the attendees to see themselves as “giants in the Lord” and if we wanted to see our nation transformed, we have to rouse the “sleeping giant” within us to act and do good to our neighbours.

As he emphasised the need to reach out, he also stressed the need to be prepared for the harvest. Are we ready to minister to the many converts when they come through our doors?

The bottomline: Action must accompany prayers, just like action must accompany faith. Now, if every individual Christian turns his/her prayers into action, transformation will soon sweep the nation.

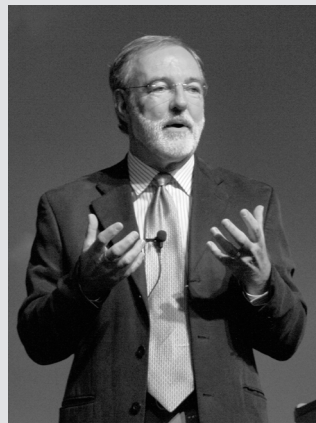
Many were seen wiping away tears as Philip strutted the length and breadth of the stage and gestured energetically to make his points.

Following his blistering message, the crowd spent time praying and repenting with loud wailings throughout the main sanctuary and the overflow rooms.

There was a strong feeling of resolve to get out of the holy comfort of the church walls into the community to “love our neighbour”.

Taking a cue from an advertising slogan

When it comes to serving the community, Christians need to step out by faith and “JUST DO IT”, as one advertising slogan says. We can start engaging wider society at the place where God has placed us in and not just wait around for all the planning and working out of all the details before making the first move.



This is the sum total of the messages Rev. Barry Boucher (left pix) brought to participants at the two-day National Church Conference themed “Transformation – Leading with Conviction and Creativity in Times of Crisis”.

Organised by NECF Malaysia and attended by over 200 participants, Rev.

Boucher’s messages were a call to the Malaysian Church to seize and act on the NECF nation-building agenda – Transforming the Nation Through the Local Church.

Rev. Boucher has many years of working experience in community transformation through Mission Ottawa, which he helped to establish in Canada, a network where pastors in Ottawa gather regularly for fellowship, prayer support and combined ministry to the community.

Personal Transformation First

He shared that before we even start to pray and work towards the transformation of community and society, God needs to first transform our lives and attitudes in terms of our worldview and outlook to make us effective instruments.

Before Nehemiah started to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he engaged in a prayer of transformation that set him out for the challenging task ahead.

Next, Nehemiah engaged himself in authentic relationships where he was able to build trust and confidence in the people he worked with. He was thus able to mobilise the people to complete the massive building project in 52 days. This is a model for us; we need to form authentic relationships with our co-labourers in the Lord.

In his task, Nehemiah displayed intentional mission by focusing on building the walls of Jerusalem despite ridicule and opposition from various parties. Similarly, the Church in Malaysia must have an intentional mission; however, the

Continued page 10...

NECF Malaysia National Church Conference 2009

Statement of Intent

(Adopted by churches aligned to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ)

TRANSFORMATIONAL PRAYER

- A commitment to pray for personal transformation of ourselves before others
- A commitment to pray for not just our church but for the concerns of wider society – social, political, economics et cetera

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP

- A pledge to be accountable and transparent to each other as fellow believers and servants of the Lord
- A pledge to build relationships with fellow believers and servants of the Lord through quality interaction

INTENTIONAL MISSION

- A resolve to be engaged and work in social engagement ministries in wider society
- A resolve to inspire, nurture and empower our congregation to be ministers wherever God has placed us to His glory

A CALL FOR ACTION – JUST DO IT!

- Eph.2:10: We are created for good works – the “we” – all of us
- Is. 6:8: Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?
- Are you waiting for the ‘red carpet’ – an invitation committee in order to be sent? Is.6: 9 – Here am I. Send me!

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focus must not be just evangelism but forming authentic discipleships that empowers our congregations to impact that part of society where pastors or lay-leaders cannot reach.

The challenge thrown to the Church is: How are we to mobilise our churches towards this end? Are we intentional or serious enough with ‘biblical discipleship’ or just discipleship for its own sake?

During the conference, participants also attended workshops on social works ministries such as drug rehabilitation centres, a dialysis centre and children’s welfare homes. There were nine workshops and 10 display booths which provide insights and information on how churches may begin to do social ministries within their communities.

The workshops were an eye-opener for the participants on why and how social ministries ought to be done and an encouragement to them that they could do it. Now, that’s one slogan we can adopt – “You can do it!”

From Conversion to Discipleship to Community Transformation

Prior to the conference, Rev. Boucher shared with NECF staff on the importance of developing disciples that will lead to community transformation.

Most of our programmes are centred on growing our congregations in terms of numbers. But have we been so

focused on growing big that we have neglected the part about growing deep?

We all know Jesus’ charge to “Go and make disciples of all nations”. Truth is, we do better in making converts than making disciples, simply because the latter requires effort and time for care and follow up, and we just can’t afford those. Why? Because we are busy with making more converts!

If we are to make disciples, we need to build relationships, he said, pointing to Jesus who gave us a relational model where His life and ministry revolved around relationships with people.

Rev. Boucher shared an incident in his church where the leadership re-looked at all the church’s programmes and discarded those that were not contributing to making disciples. There were too many church meetings but few relationship-building opportunities that led to disciple making.

One of the decisions the leadership made was giving the church staff additional holidays so that they could have more time with their families. For example, during summer when the schools have their long break, they get an additional day off during the week. For Christmas, they get two weeks paid holiday and for Easter, it’s a week off.

Dare any of our churches make such a radical move?

Relationships that lead to discipleship that leads to action and transformation – something for Malaysian churches to chew over.

Just An Ordinary Man

By Sam Ang

Some of us have our Bible superheroes and for many, the Prophet Elijah would be listed as one of them. But the way he is described in James 5:17 – “Elijah was a man just like us” – seems to suggest that James had not acknowledged him for the awesome work he did.

Surely there must be something special in him that ‘qualified’ him for the miracles and earth-shaking feats. Was it a courageous streak? A fearless nerve? An intrepid attitude? Perhaps.

But I believe that ‘special something’ was simply his willingness to do God’s bidding.

There’s a song that goes like this:

*Just ordinary people
God chooses ordinary people
He chooses people just like you and me
Who’ll do as He commands
God chooses people that will give Him all
No matter how small your all may seem
to you
Because little becomes much when you
place it in your Master’s hand.*

Reading the account in 1 Kings 18, we will notice that God raised an ordinary man in extraordinary times. In one of the darkest periods of Israel’s history, God intervened to show Himself as Lord of lords and God of gods through a man “just like us”.

The life of Elijah can help us to lead with creativity and conviction in times of crisis. And we do dwell in dark times when we are assaulted on almost every front – economically, socially and politically.

A time to mourn

God sent Elijah to the widow of Zarephath where he would be

supported by her during the next two years even though she was poor. During his stay, there was a crisis when the widow’s son became so ill that he died.

She said to Elijah, “What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?” Those words must have confounded Elijah for he immediately took the boy and cried out to the Lord, “O Lord my God have you brought tragedy upon this widow I am staying with, causing her son to die?”

As we struggle with pain over our family, community and nation, expressing our sorrow will help to release the pressure inside us and help us to become more useful to others. This was what happened to Elijah, for God heard his cry and the boy’s life returned to him and he lived.

As our nation faces difficult times like these, we Christians need to be on our knees, crying out to God for His divine intervention. Many of the events that have happened, and will happen, are beyond our control.

But in the midst of the many distressing events, we see God raising Christians in the public square to stand up for the truth.

Like Elijah cried out to God on behalf of the widow, let us cry out to God on behalf of our nation. And when God hears our cries, others will echo the Zarephath widow who said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.” 1Kings 17:24.

A time to work

For Christians, every disaster is a call

to action. That was what happened to Israel and God was using the prophet Elijah to turn the nation back to Him.

On behalf of the God of Israel, Elijah confronted the people for their double-mindedness with a direct question: “How long will you falter between two opinions?” Then he challenged them that they had to choose: “If the Lord is God follow Him, but if Baal follow him.”

As the story goes, God displayed His power when fire fell from heaven and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. The people fell on their faces at the sight of God’s power and



acknowledged that Jehovah alone is the God of Israel.

Elijah knew that the odds were against him, yet it was time to work and turn the nation back to God. The truth was not to be settled by a majority vote but by God’s Word. He was sincere

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How much should your pastor be paid?

The subject of salaries is taboo for most people. Perhaps it's because of the general perception that a worker's worth is hinged on his paycheck – the higher his salary, the more valuable he is, and vice-versa.

In the marketplace, this is usually true but should this apply to those in the pastoral ministry? Years ago, the popular saying was “Keep them (pastors) poor, keep them humble.”

Though uttered in jest, the saying has a ring of truth, for wealth tends to puff people up. Then, entering the pastoral ministry despite full knowledge of the material sacrifices one has to make seems to be the ultimate test that the person is truly ‘called’.

We Christians profess God to be our provider; however, very few are willing to enter the pastoral ministry. Is it because of the low salary?

With the rising cost of living, attracting Christians to the ministry and keeping them and their families afloat pose a real challenge to most churches, especially the rural ones where the salary package is generally lower compared with that for city churches.

Times have changed. Today, with more affluent churches and Christians accustomed to a better quality of life, expectations have risen. Many churches have thus come to recognise the need to properly compensate pastors for their work.

The Bible's call to “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour (compensation), especially those who labour in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17)” is slowly replacing the old “Keep them poor, keep them humble” saying.

In light of this, the NECF Malaysia Leadership Commission is studying various salary structures so as to come up with a recommended salary scale for pastors in Malaysia.

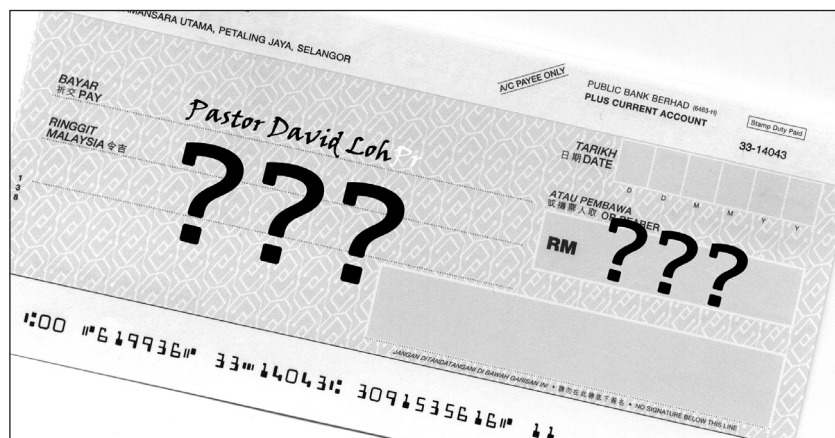
The question is: On what basis should pastors be remunerated?

For example, the Singapore Campus Crusade for Christ paid its three top executives below \$100,000 each in its last financial year. The group provides Christian

counselling, training and Christian publications.

They base their workers' basic salaries to social workers' pay (between \$2,000 and \$2,700 for a fresh graduate) and use this benchmark since the nature of their work is similar to that of social workers – serving the needs of a community.

For Malaysia, the Commission is looking at the possibility of using the government schoolteachers' salary structure as the model since the nature of



teachers' work is similar to what pastors do – teaching, training and developing people.

A fresh graduate teacher starts out with just over RM2,500; likewise a fresh seminary graduate pastor's starting salary should be in that region.

While the Commission has listed a seminary degree as the starting point, there can be other equivalents, such as previous work experience in the marketplace and Bible School training, which the church has to decide.

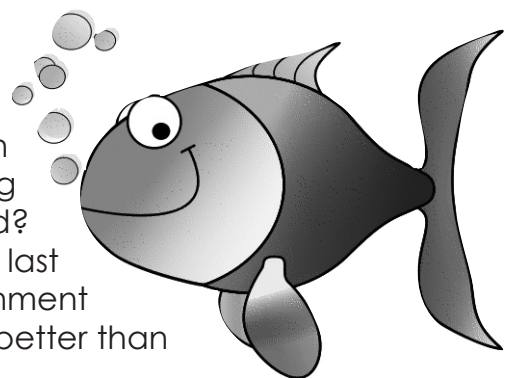
The assumption is that once the church recognises and appoints the person as its pastor, the starting pay should be at least that of a fresh graduate.

Of course, the salary range may vary in accordance with work performance, the increment policy within the church and job requirements, and further advancement dependent on taking on more job responsibilities scope and growth in expertise.

Every church has its own method of remunerating its workers. What the Commission hopes to achieve is to propose a salary structure that duly ensures pastors are decently paid in tandem with the times so that they can fully concentrate on their ministry.

Fishing where the fishes are

What is stopping Christians from taking up the teaching profession in government schools? Or Christian parents from encouraging their children to become school teachers? The heavy workload? The not-so-glamorous job? The salary? Most probably it's the last one – salary, or the lack of it. But surprise, surprise. A government schoolteacher actually earns a pretty decent income. In fact, better than a lot of other professions.



Teaching is now a profession of top choice, according to Indy Kannaya, the national coordinator of the Teachers' Christian Fellowship.

At a recent youth forum, she revealed why thousands of people – including lawyers, accountants and engineers – apply to be teachers each year and thousands are rejected. For example, this year, out of the 80,000 people who applied for the Bachelor in Education programme for the training of primary and secondary teachers, only 6,000 were accepted.

The five-and-a-half year programme is for trainees who come after their Form 5 or 6. Meanwhile, for the one-year post-graduate teachers' training course for degree holders, there were 100,000 applicants. The intake was only 5,000!

Some 200 participants representing over 50 organisations from 11 states attended the September forum, which was organised by NECF Malaysia, Scripture Union, Malayan Christian Schools' Council and TCF to enhance the ministry to school students.

Urging parents to release their children into the teaching profession, she assured them that they won't die of starvation! "Many people think that teachers are so poorly paid and so badly treated. True, they may not be in the category of Bill Gates and Donald Trump but I assure you that they will have more than enough to live

comfortably for life," she said.

The huge number of people applying for the teachers' training courses is strong indication that the remuneration is attractive. Indy agreed that teachers' salary has indeed improved tremendously and is now comparable with the private sector. In fact, it may be better if you compare the number of hours they work. In addition to a good basic salary, there is housing, cost of living, hardship (for East Malaysia rural areas) and many other allowances.

Teachers are paid even before they start teaching. During the training courses, they get a monthly allowance ranging from RM400 to RM1,600. The basic starting salary for graduates is RM1,695.65. Add in the other allowances and the total can come up to nearly RM3,000 – not bad for starters!

Don't forget the other perks – the pension and the gratuity after they retire, the low interest rates for housing and car loans, free medical treatments at government hospitals and others.

But beyond the material benefits, Indy asserted that teaching is a call to care for God's sheep in schools.

Fishing where the fishes are

"If you are a fishing enthusiast, where would you go to fish? Rivers? Tasik Kenyir? Deep sea-fishing? Yes to all, but definitely NOT a swimming pool!

You must fish where the fishes are," she said.

"Likewise when we think of strategies to reach children and youths, we need to think of where they are all congregated.

"We may find a small percentage in shopping malls, cinemas, football fields or in cyber-cafes at some parts of the day or night. But almost 95 percent of them are in our government schools for 195 days a year, five days a week, six hours a day. We must fish where the fishes are."

How vast is the mission field in our schools today? As at 31 January 2009, there are 5.5 million students in government primary and secondary schools. There are 265,000 teachers in the teaching force but only around five percent are Christians.

The sea is truly plentiful but the fishermen are few.

In a way, teachers are 'paid missionaries', sent into towns and *kampungs* all over the country not just to educate our children but to impact their lives. They are in positions of great influence to mould and shape the next generation who will be the future of our churches and country.

"And yet, we have so few 'missionaries' here. No wonder we lack godly influence in our schools. No wonder we are seeing problems

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among the youth cropping into our churches,” Indy lamented.

“Many of these problems are attitude-based – good attitudes could be more easily developed in schools when students spent at least 30 hours a week compared with three to five hours in a local church.”

The Christian teacher has the enviable position of having at least 5,000 lives to impact in their teaching career, Indy pointed out.

If this does not inspire our Christian youths to move out into teaching, we can still dangle the salary bait.



Marriage & Family Life Conference

26–27 October at DUMC, PJ

Organised by Alpha Malaysia and DUMC

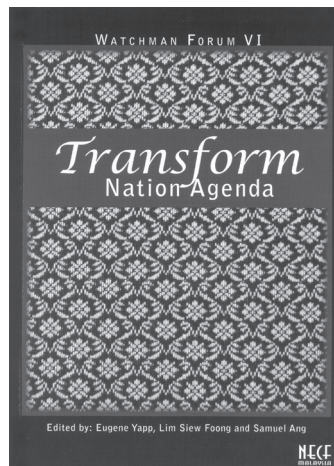
THE CONFERENCE WILL EQUIP CHURCH ministry teams and individuals with the practical tools needed to run

The Marriage Course and The Marriage Preparation Course so that they can support strong marriages among their members and local communities.

Authors and much-sought after speakers Nicky and Sila Lee from London, who are the pioneers of both courses, will address the conference.

The Marriage Course is now running in over 2,300 locations in 60 countries. Meanwhile, the Marriage Preparation Course prepares couples with strong foundations for a lasting marriage.

Both courses can be run in big or small group settings, in churches, homes and offices. There are over 40 churches in Malaysia currently running The Marriage Course for both believers and pre-believers.



Transforming Mindsets to Transform Nation

NECF MALAYSIA'S WATCHMAN FORUM VI is out and hopes to be an agent of the transformation of the Christian mind towards nation building.

Entitled “Transform Nation

Agenda”, the book has 10 papers written by 11 Christian thinkers and activists on transforming the marketplace, the church, economics, family, youths, the community, education and also our personal lives.

The book echoes NECF's overall vision and direction of “Transforming the Nation through the Local Church.” It is published by the NECF Research Commission.

For the past two years, NECF has been actively engaging churches on its Nation-Building Agenda, emphasising transformation that comes through the local church as God's appointed agent to wrought change in the nation.

Says NECF secretary-general Sam Ang, “The current social demographic and political landscape in this country have changed so much that there is now an air of uncertainty and anxiety that exists among all people and races. In times like these, the Church can no longer be inclusive nor take for granted the things she has enjoyed, such as the relative economic prosperity and racial tolerance...”

“God has opened many doors for us to look beyond our four walls and we need to be sensitive and discern what He is doing in our nation. The essays written here attempt to give us a handle to do just that.”

Get the book now at RM12 each from the NECF office or order online at the NECF website, www.necf.org.my

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and passionate in his commitment to undertake such an enormous task. What he witnessed was that God uniquely equipped him to have a huge impact upon the suffering people.

A time to pray

Few emotions can so quickly expose the frailty of men as fear. After a mountain-top power encounter, Elijah was struck with deathly fear when he heard these words from Jezebel, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so

severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like one of them.”

Truly, “Elijah was a man just like us.” Deeply traumatised, he needed to be ministered to, just like any normal man.

It is interesting to note that immediately after James recorded that “Elijah was a man just like us”, he added, “and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” James 5:17–18

The most powerful work any

Christian can do is to pray. However busy we are, individual and corporate prayer should be an important aspect of our relief operations.

Conclusion

Elijah was far from perfect. He faced the same struggles that stare us in our face. But if God could use a “man just like us” to do His awesome work, He can also use you and me. The challenge is not to pursue the great things that Elijah did but to simply avail ourselves to a great God whose desire is to work in and through us.

Ready to Run

10 October 2009, Nationwide

Eager participants signing up for the Run for the Nation (RunNat) event after the publicity blitz at PJEFEC on Aug 16 (photo below). Altogether, 34 people signed up, with the youngest at 12 years and the oldest at 69.

To date, more than 1,000 Christians in the Klang Valley have signed up for the prayer run.



RunNat is a run-and-pray event where runners run (or jog or walk) for five kilometres in teams of three to five people and pray aloud for the people in the buildings that they pass. They run along a designated route, and instead of carrying a torch, they will carry a prayer card which will be handed over to the next team at the end of their run.

The first team will fire off at 5.00a.m. and the last team should cross the designated finishing line latest at 10.10a.m. All the earlier runners will be at the finishing line to welcome the last team, after which they will gather for worship and corporate prayer, followed by certificate presentation and a celebration meal together.

The event is organised by Sports Partnership Malaysia with support from NECF Malaysia and prayer covering by the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) committee. The organiser aims to make this a nationwide run with Christians at all 14 state capitals running simultaneously. The response has been very encouraging, says organising chairman, Victor Chua. Through RunNat, the organiser hope to boost inter-denominational corporate prayer and inspire more youths to pray for the nation.

This year's run is also a lead-up to next year's GDOP event which will be held at Melawati Stadium in Shah Alam. RunNat is partnering GDOP Malaysia for a 10-day Olympic-style prayer run where the last team of runners will enter the stadium and run around the track to kick off the GDOP prayer concert.

For more information, check out the website www.runforthenation.com

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

EVERY NOVEMBER, Christians around the world join voices to pray for our brethren suffering persecution simply because they confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) is an initiative of the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (of which NECF Malaysia is a member of).

There are many countries around the world where Christians are martyred for their faith. Last August, the world watched in horror the unbridled violence unleashed upon Christians in Orissa state, India. In countries like North Korea, acts of persecution take place daily, but we often don't see or hear of it. Brother Andrew of Open Doors once said, "Our heroes are not with us simply because they're in prison."

This November, join Christians worldwide in prayer for the Persecuted Church. This year's theme for the IDOP is "Persecuted: Not Abandoned."

To find out more about IDOP 2009 and special resources designed to help you get involved, visit the IDOP website www.idop.org

Northern Region Tamil Pastors' Gathering (Perak, Penang, Kedah & Perlis)

Date : 28th October 2009 (Wednesday)

Time : 9.00am – 4.30pm

Place : Emmanuel Christian Assembly
Wisma Emmanuel
34, Jln Long Jaafar, 34000 Taiping, Perak

Theme : Serving God Wholeheartedly

Contact Daniel Loh at 017-8866003 for more information.

The International Day of Prayer (IDOP) is held every November to pray for our persecuted brethren. As a lead-up to IDOP 2009, following are some prayer thoughts, provided by the IDOP office, for our suffering brethren.

Communist World

Christians facing persecution from Communists and governments ideologically opposed to Christianity.

Pray that in **CHINA**, God will give its government divine wisdom in dealing with the immensely complex issues of this large and multi-cultural nation. May there be security with justice, development with sensitivity and may religious freedom be recognised throughout the nation.

Pray that God will be the refuge and strength for the vast number of believers imprisoned in **ERITREA** and **NORTH KOREA**. Pray for healing for their physical and emotional wounds and that the ever-present Holy Spirit may comfort and counsel their hearts.

Pray for continued church growth in the midst of oppression and suffering in the nations of **VIETNAM** and **TURKMENISTAN**. May Christians display the refreshing righteousness of Christ in the midst of nations struggling with corruption, dictatorship and injustice (Philippians 2:12-14).

Militant Hindu World

Christians facing persecution from militant Hindus and discrimination in the legal system.

Ask God to protect Christians in **NEPAL** and **INDIA**, most of whom are vulnerable, poor and without a 'voice'. Pray that they will not feel abandoned but rest in the peace and provision of their Father. Pray for God to awaken the people of India to the dangers of militant Hinduism and that anti-Christian propaganda will be rejected in preference for truth,

openness, harmony and liberty.

Pray for the Indian Church to grow in prayerfulness, casteless solidarity, wisdom, grace and perseverance in the face of suffering.

Pray for the people of Nepal to be united across ethnic and religious lines, and that they will find so much joy in liberty that they will not be tempted by Hindu nationalism.

Ask God to give great heavenly wisdom and courage to evangelists in Nepal and to bless their witness.

Militant Buddhist World

Christians facing persecution from militant Buddhists or legal/state discrimination.

Pray that Christians in **BURMA** will be sustained, kept safe and blessed with faith, peace, and the assurance of God's love and presence in their lives.

Pray that God will protect Christians in **SRI LANKA** from the schemes of Buddhist nationalists so that they may witness and worship with liberty and security. May God empower the Sri Lankan Church as a peacemaker to show the light of truth in the midst of long-term ethnic conflict.

Pray for God to embolden the young church in **BHUTAN** to be a wise and sensitive agent of blessing in the midst of pressure and opposition. Pray for the Spirit of Christ to soften and enlighten the hearts of those who do not know Him, turning them towards peace and progress.

Others

Christians facing persecution for other reasons.

Pray for the Christians in the precarious **PALESTINIAN** territories

where they face pressure from all sides. Pray that the faith of these believers will not be dampened by the exodus of fellow believers and that they will remain bold witnesses of Christ's love and grace.

Pray for believers in **COLOMBIA**, **MEXICO** and the **PHILIPPINES** as they risk their lives to witness for Christ in communities hostile to God. Pray that, even when rejected and pressured for their faith, they will put their hope in the Lord as the One who upholds their cause (Psalm 146). Pray for Christians facing persecution from Muslim militants, and facing discrimination in employment and the legal system.

Pray that God will intervene by frustrating the ways of the Taliban in countries where it seeks to maintain control, such as **AFGHANISTAN** and **PAKISTAN**.

Pray for God to continue moving powerfully among the people in Islamic countries so that just and upright political leaders might be raised up, prepared to serve the nation.

Pray for God to bless converts to Christianity in nations such as **IRAN** and **SAUDI ARABIA**. Ask God to enable them to be instruments of blessing (salt), transformation (yeast), and truth (light) in their communities (Matthew 5:13-16).

Pray for nations where Al-Qaeda terrorism is intense, such as **IRAQ** and **ALGERIA**, and where Muslim militants instigate violence against Christians such as **NIGERIA**, **EGYPT** and **SOMALIA**. Pray for protection, wisdom, provision and perseverance for the victims of attacks and for those who have lost loved ones due to violent persecution.