

beritaNECF

EDITORIAL

The Lord's Prayer

BY the time you read this newsletter, the general election would be over. Now is the period for the newly-elected government to set its house in order, and we can expect some political jostling in the forming of the Cabinet and of new state governments.

Of keen interest to political observers, and I'm sure to Christians as well, will be whether our elected representatives and their coalitions will be able to keep their promises under their party's manifesto.

Be that as it may, the church will also need to engage in "post-election" mode. During the GE, many Christians were involved by being polling and counting agents and election observers, but all that has come to rest. The question remains, what will be the posture of the church after elections? Perhaps, St Luke's record of the conversation between Jesus with his parents offers us a hint. When Jesus was questioned as to his whereabouts, he replied with a startling answer, "I must be in my Father's house". What does being in "my Father's house" imply? It would naturally mean being about my Father's business.

Here, New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright suggests that the Lord's Prayer may be used as a paradigm for Christian engagement in prayer. Hence, the prayer also sheds light on what it is to be about our Father's business. Taking the cue from Wright, how does the Lord's Prayer serve as a model and guide for the church in the post-election era?

Our Father in heaven...

The word "father" is 'abba', which expresses the idea of an intimate and loving relationship. God, the creator and king of the universe, is also our Father and requires us to acknowledge that the intimate relationship we now enjoy is due to the work of Jesus Christ in our lives. As we relate to God in the context of this intimate and loving relationship, we also recognize that God has the right to true and filial obedience from us as his children.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done...

Having this intimate relationship requires that we work towards having God's rule established and come to its ultimate consummation on this earth. This expression is a plea that God's will be unveiled so that all on earth may see Him as the holy, almighty king He truly is. The church, therefore, needs to align herself in heart and mind to God's agenda. The church must seek to do that which He desires done on earth - the transformation of creation with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Give us this day our daily bread...

Bread in the Gospel of Matthew is a Jewish idiom for food. In making this petition, we acknowledge that it is God's intention as our Father to provide for our every need. It recognizes God's ability to provide in all circumstances. By praying this, we

Continued on next page...

What's Inside?

- 3 *Chairman: Punching Holes in the Darkness*
- 4 *Salt and Light in Lahad Datu*
- 5 *NECF Secretary-General*
- 6 *Making Disciples in the CF*
- 7 *Nation Building and Personal Discipleship*
- 10 *The Church Post-GE 13*
- 12 *Prayer Calendar*
- 13 *Malaysia MyHome*
- 13 *40-Day Fast & Prayer: Thy Kingdom Come*
- 14 *On "Allah" and the Scope of the Civil Courts*



Main feature: 'Nation Building and Personal Discipleship' on page 7, 8 & 9.

NECF members, have you paid your membership subscription? Please contact us!

Berita NECF is a quarterly publication of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia.

For more regular updates, follow NECF at Facebook and Twitter today.

Download this e-newsletter at www.necf.org.my/html/berita_f.htm

...continued from front cover: *The Lord's Prayer.*

express our total dependence on Him. Thus we are assured that we will always have enough in the task of bringing the Gospel to the forefront of Malaysian life.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive others...

In teaching us to seek forgiveness from the Father, we are reminded that the God we serve is a Thrice holy God. In contrast, we are sinful creatures and unworthy vessels before God. On our own, we have no merits to be counted as worthy. We therefore need to be cleansed and touched by the Holy God before we can be used as His instruments. Only then, do we have the integrity and confidence to be engaged by God in the work of transforming the nation through the local church.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us...

In the task of missions, we are called to be vigilant and alert. We should be reminded that our struggles are not merely against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces who seek to thwart the designs and purposes of God. We therefore need to depend on God's grace to persevere against the trials that come our way in our work and not fall into temptation.

The Lord's Prayer is indeed instructive and may serve as a paradigm for Christian engagement and prayer for our nation, especially in this season. May we as God's people, whether as pastors and leaders or as members of the congregation, continue to ensure our relationship with the Lord is ever strong. May we strive to accomplish His will on this earth in total dependence on Him, always mindful that we are sinners who constantly need God's forgiveness and His grace and mercy to prevent us from succumbing to the trials, temptations and challenges confronting us in our call to bring the gospel to every part of the nation and in the transformation of Malaysia.

NECF Malaysia Welcomes New Members

Ordinary Members

1. Hope Kota Bahru (BM), (Ps Nick Resien Mitin)
2. SIB Kuala Terengganu (BM), (Ps Stayphan Robbie)
3. Gereja Gelang Patah Holy Word (Chinese), (Rev Lui Peng Huat)
4. Christ Baptist Church (Iban), Kuching (Ps Greman Ujang Slat)
5. Ijok Baptist Church (Chinese), Batang Berjuntai (Ps Andrew Hoong)
6. City Harvest Christian Fellowship (Chinese), Sarikei (Ps Ngu Tai Seng)
7. New Covenant Sanctuary (Tamil), Rawang (Ps Ravichandran Veedybil)
8. Charis Word Centre Ampang (Tamil), Ps Sagain Daniel)
9. Emmanuel Church Kota Kinabalu (Eng/Chinese), (Chairman Ezra Chin Jiyh Ping)
10. Celebration Church Malaysia (Eng), Subang Jaya (Lindon A.S. Mawoyo)
11. Penang Harvest Church (Eng/BM), (Ps Samuel Ebenezer)
12. Pusat Baptist Shalom (Chinese), Penang (Ps David Saw Guan Hee)
13. ECF Gereja TUTA Holy Word (Chinese), Skudai (Rev Chia Len Choon)
14. Emmanuel Bread of Life Church, Kota Kinabalu (Ps Walson Oloh)
15. Petros City Church, Kota Kinabalu (Ps Chong Jin Shih)
16. Revival Fire Church, Taiping (Ps A. Arulpakiam Asiah)

NECF MALAYSIA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chairman

Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Vice-Chairman I

Elder Kong Yeng Phooi

Vice-Chairman II

Pr Tay Wah Seng

Honorary Secretary

Rev Elisha Satvinder

Honorary Treasurer

Dr Khoo Kay Hup

Council Members

Rev Dexter Low
Rev Ng Kok Kee
Rev Simon Chandran
Ms Ee Joo Lian
Pr Samuel Surendran Krishnan
Elder Thomas Lim
Rev Datuk Jerry Dusing
Rev Peter Mutang
Rev Chin Lee Yean
Pr Chomy Ching Choon Mee
Samuel Ang

NECF MALAYSIA STAFF

Secretary-General

Eugene Yapp

Executive Secretaries (Commissions)

Katryn Tan (Finance/NECF Foundation)
Daniel Loh (Tamil)
Alfred Tais (Bahasa Malaysia)
Larry Lee (Youth)
Andy Chi (Prayer)

EDITORIAL

Editor

Eugene Yapp

Assistant Editor & Writer

Debbie Loh

Artwork

Cmate Communications

**NECF
MALAYSIA**

ADDRESS

32, Jalan SS2/103,
47300 Petaling Jaya
Selangor, Malaysia
Tel: 603-7727 8227
Fax: 603-7729 1139
Email: berita@necf.org.my
Website: www.necf.org.my

Printed by

Akitiara Corporation
1&3, Jln TPP1/3,
Tmn Perindustrian Puchong
Batu 12, 47100 Puchong, Selangor



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Punching Holes in the Darkness

It is timely in this post-election period to look at the Bible's models of people who served under authority. Like some of these Bible characters, some of us today are called to be in the market place, while others to the public square.

Some are called to be a "quiet guest" like the spider in the king's palaces¹, while others are emboldened to speak up – like John the Baptist, at the cost of losing his head.

We also have the likes of Nehemiah – who was destined to navigate the Putrajaya of his days. He had his share of Ibrahim Alis – who were then called Sanballat and Tobiah.

Moses was undoubtedly an outstanding model – he went to the courts and spoke to Pharaoh. Oftentimes we forget he and his people encountered many "restrictions" – for instance, the condition to worship "not afar off"² and on another occasion, "without the children"³. Then again another prohibition - this time without the herds and flocks, a ploy to ensure that they do not worship properly without animal sacrifices as was prescribed in the early Abrahamic days.⁴ The modern day Malaysian Church is not without similar examples as we face numerous restrictions being promulgated time and time again.

But Moses did not shy away from meeting the Pharaoh to protest. Being in the Pharaoh's court is no indication of acquiescence with the ruling party.

Then we have Daniel - our model for civil disobedience. In his day, there were laws to prevent him from praying. Yet, he unashamedly opened his windows and prayed and everybody could see he was not bowing to the powers in his day.

Daniel, Esther and Joseph and others in the Bible – they all lived out and modeled for us their challenges in different ways.

When Daniel heard of the dream the wicked Nebuchadnezzar had of the great tree being chopped down, he lamented, "let it be true of your enemies" (*paraphrase mine*)⁵.

Such response or kindness shown by any modern day Daniel to any wicked leader, politician or ruler today would likely be castigated as ungodly, misguided and naïve. No man of God today would be able to escape such caustic denunciation by the modern day Church.

Joseph shared the secrets of his dream (the equivalent of the Old Testament 'ETP') and turned Egypt's potential financial crisis around for a wicked Pharaoh. Such a man would have been considered a traitor of the Church today.

They all had the opportunity to bring honour and glory to God under heathen rulers. They sought the good of their nation even as they served under the ungodly kings of their times. God used them to change the system and society regardless the ruler or the government of the day. These men of God were content to leave regime change to God to do so in His time.

Regardless of whether we approve of the character and deeds of those whom God has placed in authority over us, we must be agents of change in our nation for the better. Regardless of whether they respect our Bible or restrict our worship, we are to remain salt and light.

As a boy, Robert Louis Stevenson, was intrigued by the work of an old-fashioned lamplighter who went about with a ladder and a torch, lighting the street lights for the night. One evening, as Robert stood watching with fascination, his parents asked him "Robert, what in the world are you looking at out there?" With great excitement he exclaimed: "Look at that man! He's punching holes in the darkness!"

Stevenson, the author of *Treasure Island*, lived in 19th century Scotland and came from a long line of prominent lighthouse engineers. With that one statement, he summed up Jesus' miracle and teaching on spiritual blindness. While Jesus accomplished many great and miraculous wonders, his primary purpose was to punch great, gaping holes in the darkness that shrouds us.

We, too, are in the business of lighting up the dark as the different Bible characters serving under authority did in their time. Let us learn to respect the different models of service, being careful not to denounce a different style as an ungodly approach.

Together, we can punch more holes in the darkness.

NECF Chairman, Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, was elected Chairman of the Christian Federation of Malaysia at the CFM Biennial General Conference on 22 April 2013.

¹ Proverbs 30: 28 (NKJV) The spider skillfully grasps with its hands, And it is in kings' palaces.

² The 4th plague – Exodus 8: 28. So Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.

³ Exodus 10: 11 – only the men were allowed to go.

⁴ Exodus 10: 24 – this time without the flocks and herds. Incident of the 9th plague

⁵ Daniel 4: 19 (NKJV) Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!"

Salt and Light in Lahad Datu

Contributed by Pastor Daniel Chong, Calvary Charismatic Church, Lahad Datu



Ps Daniel Chong (middle), with Ps Chin Chi Kiong of Likas Baptist Church, Ps Michael Kuin of SIB Lahad Datu, Ps Alex Ongkili of Likas Baptist church and Rev Francis Jelina of St Mark's Church Lahad Datu. Behind them are other pastors and leaders from the inter-church fellowship. – Photo courtesy of Daniel Chong.

A pastor in Sabah reflects on the Lahad Datu invasion and the role of the church in a time of crisis.

When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away. – Luke 21: 9-10

The verse above had new meaning for churches in Lahad Datu which has seen some frontline action since early March 2013 after Malaysian security forces moved in on armed Sulu invaders who had come ashore and taken over Kampung Tanduo village a month earlier.

While Lahad Datu town is about two-and-a-half hours by road from Kampung Tanduo, panic and fear was still felt by all around, especially on 5 March when Malaysia launched an air strike in “Operasi Daulat” against the invaders. Rumours spread like wildfire among the residents of Lahad Datu and schools were closed for about a week. Parents were afraid for their children – there were real fears that kids would be kidnapped and used as hostages in this “war” – and many people left the area to stay with relatives or friends further away. Some simply fled the town hastily while others rushed to the few shops that were opened to buy as much rice and food stuff as they could.

The above verse came to my mind, and I thought to myself, are we seeing scripture fulfilled before our very eyes? If the end “will not come immediately”, then what is the extra time for? Is God giving us more chances to prepare ourselves for more of such days to come?

Over the next few days, I also thought, who among us here really have the peace of God, as well as the God of peace?

Our church decided that our activities and services must carry on as usual. We held our daily prayer meetings, Sunday worship and also organised a prayer gathering for pastors from seven churches in the area. Some concerns were expressed when we said we would carry on with our Saturday youth meetings, but we went ahead, although attendance was lower.

At the inter-church prayer meeting for pastors, we held fast to this verse, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" from John 16: 33. We felt convinced to stay put and hold fast, because the crisis had presented churches the opportunity to manifest the God of peace in a time of trouble!

Our inter-church fellowship raised some funds with the help of the NECF Commission on Sabah Affairs (COSA). COSA representatives pastors Chin Chee Keong, Daniel Chin and Alex Ongkili joined the Lahad Datu churches in presenting relief goods to the Malaysian security forces on 14 March (see photo). It was only energy drinks and energy food bars, but it was our gesture of moral support and prayer for our policemen and soldiers in the battlefield.

For the locals displaced by the crisis, we collected used clothes and food items which we gave to the villagers who were housed in a temporary relief centre. We channelled the relief items through the Lahad Datu District Police Headquarters.

Things are winding down now although the security forces still maintain their presence and the displaced people will need to rebuild their lives. We are thankful to God for His guidance and protection. But what wisdom and understanding have we gained from such an experience?

I personally see all this as a form of spiritual warfare in the heavenlies. After years of sowing in prayer for Sabah, a harvest is being reaped as churches move among those affected by this crisis. I also believe a cleansing process to expose wickedness and evil is taking place, and this is the moment churches must seize to bring deliverance and freedom to those in bondage and under oppression.

This episode has also stirred the churches to be more watchful and prayerful. Churches throughout Sabah, Sarawak and the Peninsular were united in prayer over the Lahad Datu siege. I consider it a good wake up call for all of us. Who would have thought that such an event could happen? We have enjoyed peace for such a long time that we have taken it for granted.

The lesson is that it is far better to pray consistently before disaster strikes than to be fervent only after it does. When chaos erupts, it might be too late, or the fast pace of events might leave us confused, unfocused and not knowing how to pray.

Lahad Datu has been covered by so much prayer during this time. We feel blessed that we are not alone to face the challenges, but have the body of Christ throughout the nation standing with us in prayer. Pray that we will know and do the will of God at a unique time like this!

NECF Secretary-General



THE NECF Council has confirmed the appointment of Bro. Eugene Yapp as Secretary-General of NECF, effective 1 April 2013.

Eugene had, since January 2013, been the Acting Secretary-General. We are thankful that he will continue to serve in this capacity.

Eugene obtained his Bachelor of Laws from the University of London and was a legal practitioner before joining NECF. He also holds a Masters in Christian Studies from the Malaysian Bible Seminary and now worships with his family at the City Discipleship Presbyterian Church, Subang.

We praise God for this time of smooth transition and we covet your continued prayers and support for our work.

*Rev Eu Hong Seng
Chairman
NECF Malaysia*

Making Disciples in the CF

IN this era where church youth groups are often seen as the hub of youth ministries, the role of school Christian Fellowships (CFs) in discipleship is often overlooked.

School CFs remain important for establishing a Christian presence in the public realm and for the grooming of student leaders. School CFs reach youths who are believers, but who may be barred from attending church by their non-believing parents. And for many non-Christian children, the school CF is often the first point of contact they will ever have with the body of Christ.

So is your church near a school? Then there's a ministry field right there waiting for labourers!

The Christian Work in Schools Seminar on 16 March 2013 looked at, among other areas, how churches can partner with Scripture Union (SU) and the Teachers' Christian Fellowship (TCF) to help start and nurture CFs in schools. The seminar was co-organised by SU, TCF, the Malaysian Christian Schools' council and NECF Malaysia.

While a few churches around the country do already have ministries in this field, there is much to be done for many other schools around the country.

Churches can help by providing speakers or bible study facilitators to CFs. Or they could help CFs by sponsoring the cost of undertaking certain projects that will bless the school community. They may provide a temporary venue for CF meetings while waiting for the school to approve the use of a room. The guidance of pastors and youth workers will also be invaluable in mentoring and developing students to lead the CFs. And the over-worked school teacher who serves as the CF adviser will certainly treasure the spiritual covering that a church can provide.

Continuity of student leadership is also a key challenge given the many co-curricular activities that vie for students' attention. School CF leaders will eventually leave after Form Five. Stories abound of CFs dying out after a vibrant leader graduates.

A missional church, however, will groom its teenagers not just to serve in its internal youth ministry but start them young in the public square by serving as leaders in CFs! A missional church will also get parents of teenagers to support the formation of school CFs.



Photo courtesy of SMK Damansara Jaya CF.

School CFs continue to face many challenges even though the Education Ministry has given them permission to exist. A ministry circular dated 18 March 2011 allowed schools to set up religious clubs or societies, albeit with caveats and subject to the discretion of the school principal.

Therein lies some of the challenges. Some CFs operate in "hostile" environments under an uncooperative school administration. The fellowship and support of churches nearby becomes even more crucial.

Churches that want to get involved in ministering to school CFs should remember, however, that the school CF is not an extension of a church's youth ministry. It is an inter-denominational setting and different styles of worship and prayer ought to be acknowledged. Hence, pastors and church workers should work closely with SU and the CF teacher-adviser who would know the do's and don'ts of the school context better. Churches interested should contact Scripture Union at 03-7782 9593.

The survival of school CFs is essentially a freedom of religion issue. The right for Christian students to meet in schools is the result of a hard-won battle. Wouldn't it be a waste not to use it?

Be salt and light! Ideas for your school CF:

- ☺ Give out free drinks on sports day (get your church to sponsor!)
- ☺ Borrow jet spray cleaners and wash the school toilets
- ☺ Organise a "Clean our school canteen" day



Nation Building and Personal Discipleship

By Mable Leong and Eugene Yapp

Nation building isn't just going to vote once every few years for a government. It will require more of us as disciples of Christ.

A trademark characteristic of human nature is to build. Whether it is building a name for one's self, or a monument or legacy for future generations, building is part of the creative nature God has endowed all humans with. Building or creating is a noble attribute and among those whom society regards highly today are those who have built on pathways unmarked and in territories uncharted. For example, we laud Mark Zuckerberg for revolutionising the way we communicate and for building his own company and brand at a young age. We admire the art of Cesar Pelli, the architect renowned for designing the Petronas Twin Towers, not only creating a name for himself but making Kuala Lumpur famous.

What about nation building? This is a term that can't be defined simply. Finding a definite explanation for nation building would be like gathering a group of different people to survey the Grand Canyon and expecting all of them to describe it in exactly the same way.

Continued on next page...

...continued from page 7: Nation Building and Personal Discipleship.

One message, different meanings

We did a random and informal survey among Christian young adults in their twenties and early thirties, asking them what they thought about nation building. Here is what some of them said:



"Malaysians have to learn to respect each other, [as individuals] and as communities of various ethnicities and faiths."



"[Nation building is] where everyone is given an equal opportunity to have a sustainable livelihood."



"Until conflicts between races are resolved, it would be difficult for us to focus on nation building."



"Though I think everyone can contribute to nation building by living out your frontline calling, I do think people in leadership have a far greater responsibility to make changes as their influence will bring ripple effects to their subordinates."



"Reforming the education system is the key to nation building."



"Nation building is a process of engaging all citizens in building social cohesion, economic prosperity and political stability in an inclusive and democratic way. It is a process through which all people have access to and control of structures and mechanisms that govern their lives."



"Young people are a crucial segment of a nation's development. Building a nation means equipping the younger generation with godly values. The government and society have equal responsibility to [equip the youth to] bringing about a matured and responsible population for the coming generation to lead a better life."

Indeed, nation building is all of the above and more. But how many of us understand exactly what it takes?

Slowly, like yeast

Today, our nation faces crises of culture, of failed institutions and eroded trust in authority. Increased ethnocentrism and dominance of one religion, a shackled press, corruption, abuse of power and resources - all these combine to produce an unhealthy and uncertain environment for the rakyat. Most severely affected are the poor and marginalised, who are the least powerful in society.

Under these circumstances, what does nation building look like for Christians in Malaysia? The words of Charles Colson, a Christian author, activist and former US presidential adviser to Richard Nixon, come to mind when he says that God cares not only about redeeming souls, but also about restoring His creation. Our job is not only to build up the church but also to contribute to the transformation of the nation for the glory of God.

The cardinal principle of loving God with all our minds and with all our souls means that we work towards actualizing God's ordinances and principles in all of creation. This applies to the natural world, societies, business, school, science, art and government. As recipients and stewards of God's saving grace, we are called to sustain and renew His creation. We are called to uphold and redeem the created institutions of law and order, politics and government, family and society, science and technology, scholarship and excellence, works of art and beauty, and to be bearers of good news to those suffering from the results of the Fall.

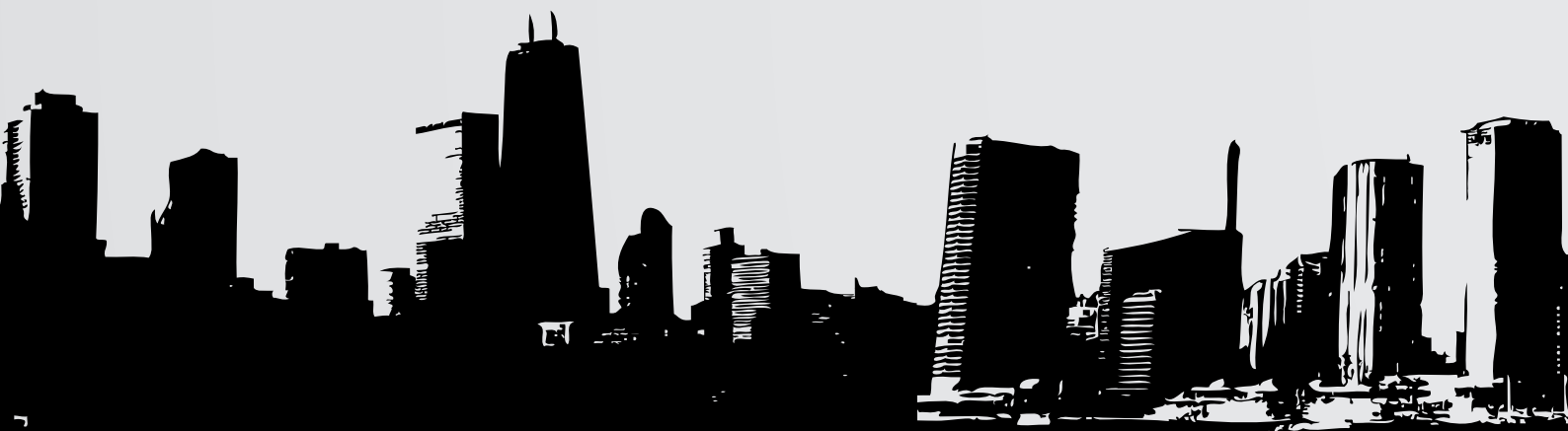
But, this is a huge task. How are we going to do all that?

Our entire beings

The temptation is to look for quick "solutions" - sign a cheque to feed the hungry, send money to missions, give a dollar to a homeless person. Or focus the fight in the spiritual realm, engaging in warfare through intercessory prayers. Well and good; such activities have their place. But true nation building is more than just giving money or praying against a problem. It involves our entire being and living.

When it comes to transformation, the scripture never speaks of immediacy, but of a slow, abiding influence akin to yeast working on the dough.

In other words, the church is not to adopt a spiritual-



social platform as its message, but to be a social transforming movement precisely because Christians are redeemed sinners who are called to live out God's calling in following Christ faithfully.

The Gospel is not a message of social salvation, but it does have social implications. The Gospel demands that Christians debate the proper and most effective means of organizing political structures, institutions and economic markets for the good of all. The Gospel is not and must not be tied to any political system, regime or platform. The Gospel is righteousness and righteousness is our concern precisely because it is God's concern and emanates from the very character of God himself.

Can the church meet these challenges? 1 Corinthians 12: 4 informs us that the church is given "varieties of gifts" with "many members", yet, is still "one body" in Christ. The body of Christ is best reflected when we each exercise our various gifts. In doing so, the Gospel can shine into the dark corners of neighbourhood, society and the public square. Then it will be the power of God unto salvation bringing about the earthly changes that are in accordance with His will.

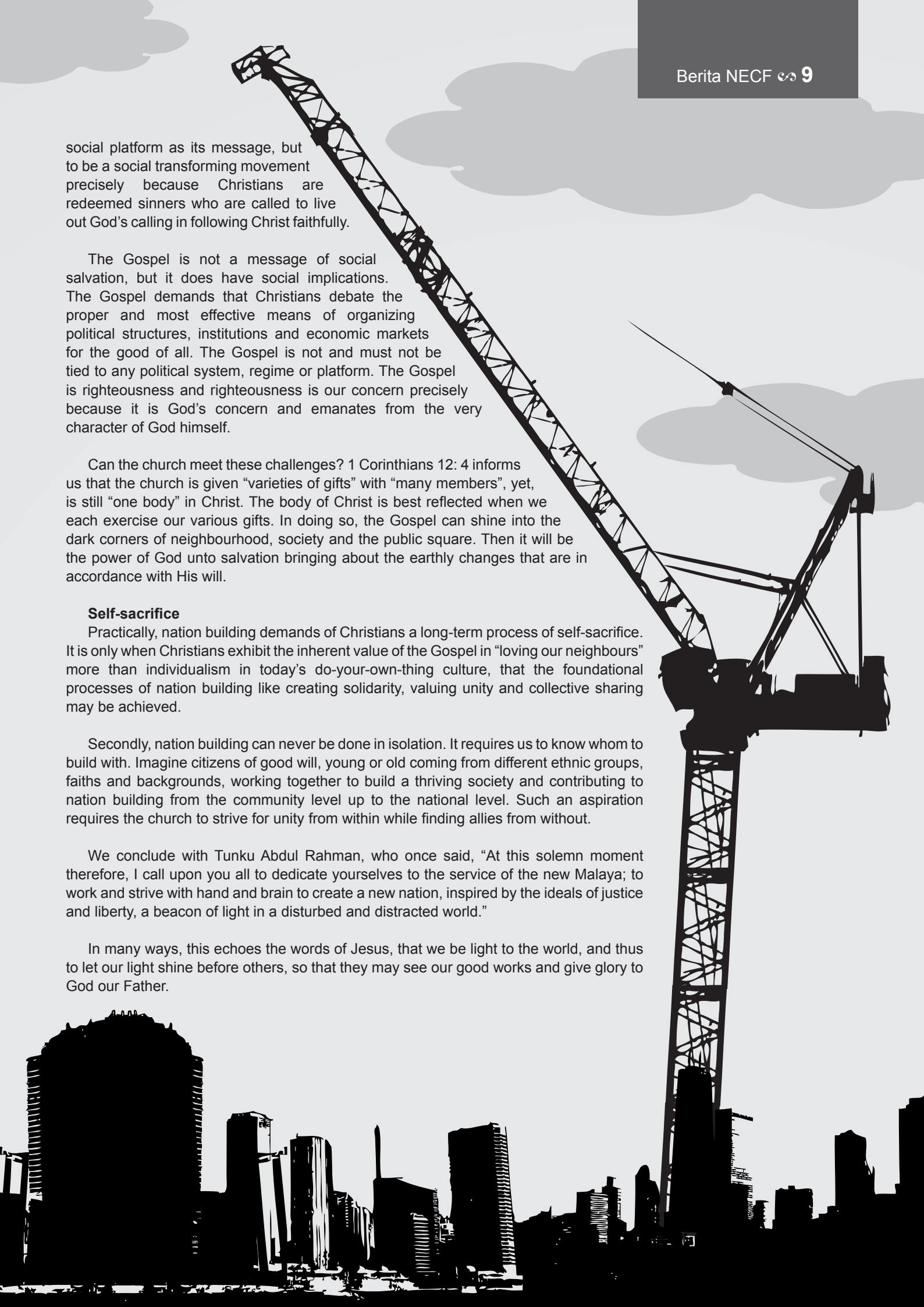
Self-sacrifice

Practically, nation building demands of Christians a long-term process of self-sacrifice. It is only when Christians exhibit the inherent value of the Gospel in "loving our neighbours" more than individualism in today's do-your-own-thing culture, that the foundational processes of nation building like creating solidarity, valuing unity and collective sharing may be achieved.

Secondly, nation building can never be done in isolation. It requires us to know whom to build with. Imagine citizens of good will, young or old coming from different ethnic groups, faiths and backgrounds, working together to build a thriving society and contributing to nation building from the community level up to the national level. Such an aspiration requires the church to strive for unity from within while finding allies from without.

We conclude with Tunku Abdul Rahman, who once said, "At this solemn moment therefore, I call upon you all to dedicate yourselves to the service of the new Malaya; to work and strive with hand and brain to create a new nation, inspired by the ideals of justice and liberty, a beacon of light in a disturbed and distracted world."

In many ways, this echoes the words of Jesus, that we be light to the world, and thus to let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to God our Father.



The Church Post-GE 13

The 5 May 2013 general election is over, and whatever the results, there is still a nation to build. The moment is now for Christians and the Church to be a positive influence in determining Malaysia's future. Berita NECF asks three pastors – Dr Daniel Ho, Senior Pastor of DUMC, Rev Ong Sek Leang, Senior Pastor of Metro Tabernacle and Rev Datuk Jerry Dusing, President of SIB Sabah - for their views on the Church's role after the election.

1. What is the Church's role after the general election?



HO: The Church is to continue being concerned about truth, justice and righteousness and whether society, the people and the nation's leaders reflect these fundamental values – which are the foundation of God's throne (Psalm 89:14). Yes, the Church should be deeply burdened about preaching the Word of God and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. But she should equally be burdened about reflecting the values of the Kingdom of God in all spheres of society and pointing every person and institution in that direction. A society or nation built on the values of the Kingdom will be a strong nation and a great society. Any kingdom, throne or nation that is not patterned after God's design will never last. That is why the Bible touches on at least six or seven empires that have come and gone because they do not reflect these values of the Kingdom. The Church must be deeply concerned about nation-building so that she is relevant in every age and situation. Otherwise she is relegated to being a museum piece.



ONG: We need to continue to uphold the godly objectives that we have been praying and pushing for - a just and free society, freedom of religion and more, in our prayers and continue to make a stand for them at every forum available. Christians need to see themselves as being a "planted sovereignty" by God in Malaysia and overcome the impulsive and human tendency to migrate because they fear the future. We must be a "healing balm" to our nation by speaking, praying and sending the message of peace, helping our members to close ranks with those of opposing sides, have respect for and submission to authority, teaching our churches to work with whoever is in authority for the good of the nation. There was a lot of "mud slinging" in the election and there is a great need to teach what it means to be respectful.



DUSING: The Church must be a healing balm for the nation. In this election, in particular, many groups have had great expectations and some may be

disappointed with the outcome, perhaps the faith of some Christians may even be shaken. The message of hope in Jesus Christ which the Church is tasked with proclaiming must be the shining light before us and transcend the election.

2. What should be the Church's relationship with those in authority?



HO: Submission in Romans 13:1 is not a case of blind submission because there are two crucial roles that those in authority are to play in the same passage of the Bible. Firstly, the authorities are God's servant; three times they are called God's servant. That word "servant" (Greek: diakonos) is also translated as "minister" or someone involved in the work of God. So, the elected representatives that form the government must know that they are there to fulfil God's work: to ensure that there is truth, justice and righteousness in all that they do. They are to serve the interests of the people and not themselves. Secondly, they are there to maintain law and order (Romans 13:3-4). The governing authorities are placed by God to punish wrongdoing and commend those who do right. Once they fail in that role, and worse still, do the reverse, they disqualify themselves and their rule. God calls them to account because they are His servants.

The Church is therefore to play the dual role of commending authority when it does right and calling authority to account when it does wrong. That was why kings in the Old Testament were often called to account for their rule or misrule (e.g. 2 Chronicles 26:16-18). The Church must maintain her distance with the authority and not be aligned to any faction, power or party, whether within or without the government. She is the body of Christ and must remember that she belongs to Jesus Christ and to no other. But the Church must be concerned about how a nation is governed. There is never in the Bible the spiritual and secular dichotomy. In other words, the Church is political because politics is simply about the governance of people and the land and the Church must be deeply concerned about that. Though the Church is political, she is non-partisan and she plays her role best by educating her members to be the conscience of society.



ONG: While we should support and submit to the authorities that give us laws for the betterment of society and the nation, we must also be bold to speak out when there is injustice or policies that contravene basic constitutional rights, such as the freedom of religion.



DUSING: The Church must continue to positively engage with those in authority. We may have to rebuild trust where it has been eroded. By the same token, we have to foster new relationships with those who would be newly appointed to the various offices.

3. There is the possibility of some degree of uncertainty following the elections, particularly if the winning margin is narrow. What can the Church do to be salt and light in such a situation?



HO: Prayers must continue even after the elections to ensure that truth, transparency and justice will prevail. That there will be no “horse-trading” following the elections and the legitimately elected coalition will be given the power to rule. Secondly, the Church and Christians ought to be vigilant to raise issues of injustice and unrighteousness wherever they see it. Christians should work with civil society groups and all Malaysians who love this country by acting as watchdogs in highlighting injustice, corruption, lies, misuse of resources and abuse of power and position. They should play an active role as responsible citizens.

Christians and the Church should monitor four particular areas: (1) Protection of democracy and human rights (2) Public accountability, transparency and good governance (3) Accessibility and inclusion to public services, especially for the poor and low-income in poor urban neighbourhoods irrespective of race or religion and (4) Religious freedom and inter-ethnic harmony.

Finally, the Church must dispel fear by teaching truth and exposing lies. We are not fighting against human beings, but against forces of darkness that are trying to tear this nation apart. The Church must therefore instil great faith among her members and deep love of God because it is the perfect love of God that casts out all fears (cf. 1 John 4:18). Christians and the Church always have a deep love for Malaysia. That is why they pray and speak out, even at great risk, because they are loyal to this nation and want to see the best for Malaysia. Governing authorities are blind if they don't see and recognise this.



ONG: We should be bi-partisan in attitude and emphasize unity and healing. Christians should be peacemakers and we need to be wise when writing our opinions and in forwarding the things we read, such

as in blogs, tweets, sharing on social media, etc. that have the potential to inflame sentiments.



DUSING: In the midst of fear, uncertainty and invariably suspicion, the Church must be the peacemaker. This would necessarily mean engaging the wider community where our respective churches are located.

4. What is the role of the Church in nation building, as well as in the policy and governance sphere, and how should engagement be conducted?



HO: The role of the Church in nation-building is not a recent phenomenon. She has played an extremely significant role in nation-building over the decades through her many social and community works. It is a well-known fact that the Christian mission schools have provided outstanding quality education to many leaders of the nation in various fields over the decades. In fact, the Church has been involved in nation-building for a few centuries now in this country. Today the Church spends hundreds of millions of ringgit each year, for example, in social and community work without any assistance from the government or any quarter. All these are paid for by members of the churches in Malaysia. But Christians must not rest on their laurels. The Church must continue to teach her members biblically and get them engaged in nation-building in every sphere of society. There has never been a teaching in the Church about this spiritual-secular divide. Engaging in the different spheres of society, including in the political arena, is as spiritual as gathering in the churches to worship God on a Sunday morning.

In fact, the weekly teaching from the pulpit is so important and powerful that I consider the pulpit ministry as the moral barometer of a nation. The level of preaching will determine the level of morality in a nation. That is why western nations today are in trouble because the pulpit ministry over the decades has been compromised. That is why every nation would need a strong Church to be a great nation.



ONG: On the spiritual plane, the best thing that the church can do for nation building is to win the lost and disciple believers because Christ alone can transform a person(s) and society. But the church should also rise up with greater social and political consciousness and challenge our members to be involved in and speak into these areas, and to share and write about their reflections. We should be challenging our members to take up lifelong careers in politics, policy-making and government. We need to remind ourselves after the election, what we expected, prayed for, held dearly to and want for our nation will continue to be our objectives until it comes to pass.

Continued on next page...

...continued from page 11: The Church Post-GE 13



DUSING: I see racial polarization, inequality and corruption as the greatest obstacles facing our nation. Unless policies and good governance are introduced, these will not be eradicated. Therefore, the Church must continue to engage those elected to public office. Through these engagements our hope is for our elected representatives to have the political will to see this through.

5. We have seen an increasing number of Christians enter the political arena to pursue their careers and calling. What should be the Church's relationship with fellow believers in politics and government?



HO: More should be done to mentor the younger ones in politics. To pursue politics as a career for a Christian is a noble thing. I disagree when people say politics is dirty. It is people who make it dirty. Hence, all the more that Christians need to be there, by God's grace, to redeem even the political arena. One must enter it with eyes wide open as it will not be easy. Three things one must remember before entering politics is that, firstly, there must be a call by God because the political game can be extremely taxing, ruthless and brutal. Secondly, there is a cost involved. The price at the end of one's political career is to remain a poor person for refusing to be involved in bribery and corruption. Thirdly, there must be a commitment full-time and long-term. Why is this so important? Because before entering politics one must have a vision of building a better, more prosperous, more just, more progressive and a more harmonious society and nation. To do that would require a life-long commitment. If

one does not have this kind of vision, then such a person should never enter into politics.

On the part of the Church, she must, firstly, teach biblically and clearly about Church, State and politics and how they inter-phase with one another. The Church must provide a platform for such on-going discourse and discussion. Secondly, the Church must come alongside believers in politics or the government to support, encourage, counsel and pray for them regularly. There should be some kind of accountability structure for the good of these politicians. Finally, some Christians should come alongside these politicians to offer input in different fields of expertise and assist them in public policy-making, and in enhancing the running of affairs of their constituencies and society at large.



ONG: We should seek them out like we seek to discover any other talents and gifts, to encourage them and support them practically. As a support, the church needs to give more teaching on national consciousness and civil responsibility. The church must also be educated that there will be some who, like Joseph and Daniel, whose call is to serve in the realm of politics and government.



DUSING: Churches ought to maintain ties with fellow believers in politics and government, taking a personal interest in what they are doing and have regular dialogue with them. They need prayer covering and spiritual accountability. Churches that have congregation members who are serving in politics and government could help these members by maintaining a small accountability group with trusted people.

Prayer Calendar

Save the dates for these prayer events!

Momentum GDOP Prayer Conference
"How can we build our nation together?"

9-11 May 2013, FGT Subang Jaya

Speakers: Jerome Ocampo, Julius Suubi,
and Anton Cruz

Fee: RM90 per person for group registration,
RM100 per individual

Contact: Nicole Tang, 016-223 3270

The Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) 2013
"The Season of Jubilee"

Unveiling of "Malaysia MyHome"

19 May 2013

7pm, Full Gospel Assembly KL

Info: www.gdopmalaysia.com

Chinese Prayer Conference
"Jubilee Celebration Prayer Camp"

30 May – 1 June 2013, Bukit Gambang Resort
City, Kuantan

Contact: Yvonne 03-7727 8227

NECF 40-Day Fast & Prayer
"Thy Kingdom Come"

7 Aug – 15 Sept 2013, anywhere,
wherever you are

Get your copies of adult and children's prayer
booklets from NECF.

Contact: Usun 03-7727 8227

Malaysia MyHome

AT the World Prayer Assembly 2012 in Jakarta, a call was put out to churches and Christians to express God's love and care to their communities in tangible ways. Prayer is important, but this was a call to do more than just pray.

Thus came the idea for "Malaysia MyHome" and "My Home Indonesia" to embrace, love and bless these nations with God's presence and power. My Home Indonesia has already kicked off with participants logging activities in their communities on a Facebook page of the same name.



NECF is making the Malaysia MyHome campaign part of the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP). It will be unveiled on 19 May at the main GDOP rally at the Full Gospel Assembly KL and in other locations across Malaysia where the GDOP is held.

Just what do you do under Malaysia MyHome? Firstly, start where you are by adopting your street, area or office building premise. Form a group with other Christians and go on a prayer walk, praying for God's blessings upon your place and the people there. Then, get to know the people around you on that street or in your building. Find out their needs and extend help to those who need it. Journal your group's progress and share updates regularly on the Malaysia MyHome Facebook page.

More details will be coming up! But you can start looking for friends to do this with – a great opportunity to love our community, bring healing, exercise a prophetic act, release Jubilee and build God's Kingdom on earth! Stay tuned for announcements through your church, via NECF on Facebook and at the GDOP rally on 19 May!

40-Day Fast & Prayer: Thy Kingdom Come

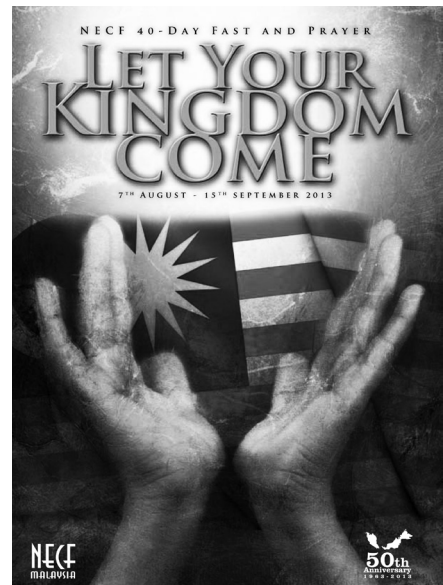
THE theme for NECF's 40-Day Fast & Pray event this year is "Thy Kingdom Come" – a fitting theme to follow through from last year's theme of "Hope of Jubilee". As we mark 50 years as the nation of Malaysia, as we pray for Jubilee blessings to unfold, as we move forward after the general elections – what next?

We want to intercede for the fulfilment of God's sovereign plan for Malaysia and for His presence and transformative power in every sphere of influence in our country. As we pray for blessings on the nation and the righting of wrongs in society, we must also remember that all this is to happen according to God's Kingdom plan. His will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

What is His "Kingdom?" In the Book of Matthew where the phrase "thy kingdom come" is found, the writer alludes to the Gospel as the announcement by which the promised rule of God is revealed. This rule begins in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Every disciple of Christ is thus a witness to God's rule and participants in His reign. For believers, it means that we are to reflect and live out this good news, this Kingdom, to those around us.

The prayer booklet is structured into parts over 40 days which explore the theme of God's Kingdom in relation to the individual, to the Family, Church, Community and finally, the Nation. The 40-Day Fast and Prayer will begin on 7 August and end on 15 Sept. A children's version of the prayer booklet will also be available.

Order copies for your church now by calling NECF at 03-7727 8227, or downloading the order form from our website at www.necf.org.my.





On “Allah”

DESPITE the 10-point solution in April 2011 allowing Christians to import and use “Allah”, caretaker prime minister Najib Razak before the 5 May 2013 election said his government supported the Home Ministry’s appeal against the High Court’s decision to let “Allah” be used by non-Muslims.

When the courts finally decide on the matter, what if the decision does not uphold the freedom of religion?

The High Court’s decision in December 2009 allowing the Catholic newsletter, *The Herald*, to publish the word, has so far been the strongest legal defence for non-Muslims in this controversy. But given our socio-political realities, there is always the possibility that pressure will be applied for a solution that pacifies those who hold conservative views on the matter.

May 8, 2013 has been fixed for the Court of Appeal to hear the challenge by six state Islamic councils (Federal Territory, Selangor, Kedah, Malacca, Johor and Terengganu) and the Malaysian Chinese-Muslim Association. The seven are appealing the High Court’s decision to dismiss their application to be interveners in the main case.

The seven Islamic bodies had contended that the matter of allowing non-Muslims to use “Allah” could only be decided

by the Malay Rulers, and not a civil court. Their basis for this is that the King and the Sultans are heads of Islam in the Federal Territories and in the states, as provided under the Federal Constitution and State Constitutions.

The High Court, however, had dismissed their application on the grounds that while the Malay Rulers were indeed the heads of Islam in their states, control over publications was governed by federal (i.e. civil) law.

This appeal by the seven Islamic bodies is different from the main appeal by the Home Ministry against the High Court’s ruling. For the main appeal by the government and Home Ministry, the Court of Appeal has fixed May 30 for case management.

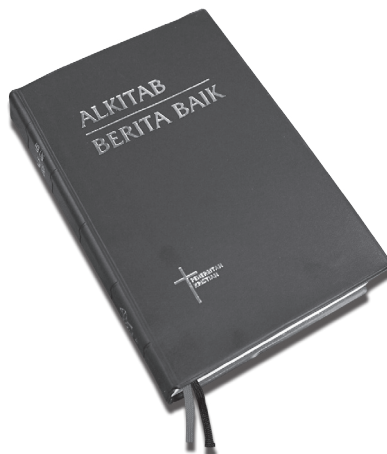
How will the appellate court decide? Would it abdicate its civil authority by upholding the argument for the Malay Rulers to decide on the use of “Allah”? This would be akin to how the Federal Court in 2007 declined jurisdiction in favour of the Syariah Court by refusing to let Lina Joy drop the word “Islam” from her identity card without a Syariah Court order confirming her apostasy.

Malaysians must remember that while our country has a dual-track legal system comprising civil and Syariah law, the latter can only apply to persons professing the religion of Islam.

usia harus ditinggikan, 15 supaya
 a orang yang percaya kepada Anak
 sia beroleh hidup sejati dan kekal.
 sangat mengasihi orang di dunia
 ngga Dia memberikan Anak-Nya
 nggal, supaya setiap orang yang
 kepada Anak itu tidak binasa
 oleh hidup sejati dan kekal.
 ngutus Anak-Nya ke dunia
 k menghakimi d
 elamatkan

...and the Scope of the Civil Courts

Article 121 (1A) of the Federal Constitution states that the civil courts "shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any matter within the Syariah courts." It means that the Syariah courts can only hear certain matters of Islamic law, which are specified in the Constitution. Thus, while the civil court cannot interfere in matters that come under the scope of the Syariah courts, the latter also cannot encroach onto matters beyond its scope that come under civil law. And as noted by the High Court, laws governing publications (whether The Herald newsletter or the Al-Kitab) are under the Home Ministry and are thus, federal law.



The Syariah courts "must not interfere in any matter where the interests of any non-Muslim is affected; and they should only determine issues where persons professing Islam are involved in a dispute regarding Islamic personal, family or criminal laws which have expressly legislated upon by the State Legislature."¹

Clearly, using the word "Allah" in a Bahasa Malaysia Christian publication is a matter of interest to non-Muslims. Will the civil courts recognise it as such? The hypocrisy

of these appeals is the fact that the government has already taken the first step in recognizing the interest of non-Muslims in the "Allah" matter with its 10-point solution in April 2011 allowing the importation and use of the Al-Kitab here, as contained in a letter signed by the prime minister himself.

So, it would be a first, and a new constitutional crisis in a sense, if the civil appeals court were to hand over the matter to the Malay Rulers, for there is no constitutional provision that says the decision of the Conference of Rulers on a matter like this is binding on non-Muslims.

While a final decision on the use of "Allah" may still take some time more, all Christians, including the Bahasa Malaysia-speaking and East Malaysian bumiputra believers, should be cognizant of the workings of courts, the constitution and the law, and the implications therein. It is part of navigating the course towards the freedom of religion in Malaysia.

¹ Shanmuga, K., Article 121 (1A) of the Malaysian Federal Constitution- What does it really mean?, www.loyarburok.com, 14 March 2007.



Looking Out Looking Up

EGYPT Egypt remains unstable with economic woes, rising crime and vigilantism, and a worsening crisis of confidence with lax security against sectarian violence. On 7 April, Coptic Christians were attacked while leaving a funeral. A skirmish erupted between the mourners and a crowd outside the cathedral. Witnesses say police sided with the crowd and did not protect the mourners, even firing tear gas into the church compound. Many, both Christians and other Egyptians, are attempting to flee. Members of the diplomatic corp say embassies have been receiving requests to facilitate migration, although there are no official figures. Yet, there are still stories of hope amidst the chaos. An armed mob was about to attack a church with worshippers inside when others on the street told them to stop, because this church had provided first aid and water to Muslims for their ablutions during the 2011 revolution. Amazingly, the mob went silent, turned around, and went away. – WMM, OD



PRAY for the spiritual warfare being waged over Egypt. Pray for Egyptians of all faiths to be united in building and restoring Egypt's economy and society. Pray that Christians will remain faithful and not retaliate despite being targets of attacks.

NIGERIA A militant group called the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is planning to take up arms to protect Nigeria's Christian population. They have issued threats to bomb Muslim places of worship and target clerics on 31 May, unless Christian leaders intervene and the Islamist group Boko Haram ceases its attacks on Christians. However, MEND is also known as a group that is seeking control over oil resources in the Niger Delta, which makes it unclear whether its cause is religion or oil wealth. Adding to complications is the recent

split between Catholic and Pentecostal church leaders within the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The split was over differences in approach to dealing with Muslim extremists and in relations with the ruling government. This is the first time a split has happened in CAN's 40 years, and is a great blow to the unity of the Church in Nigeria at a time when Christians are faced with the challenge of militant Islam. – CT



PRAY against the spirit of violence and revenge in Nigeria. Pray that Christians will be peacemakers and bridge-builders. Pray that leaders in CAN will put aside differences and give up personal agendas so that Nigerian Christians will be united in dealing with threats to the Church. Pray that the government will be firm in taking action against all perpetrators of violence.

INDONESIA Local government officials bulldozed the unfinished church building of the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) in the Bekasi region on 21 March. Officials ordered the demolition because the HKBP had no building permit. Although church leaders were in the process of applying for a permit, the church's construction was strongly opposed by the mainly Muslim neighborhood. On 21 March, the 600-strong congregation met to pray that the demolition would be stopped, and they pleaded with officials to rethink their decision. Local church leaders and rights campaigners insist that the demolition was illegal under the constitution, which guarantees freedom of worship. The church's pastor said he intends to file a lawsuit against the Bekasi Regency's administration. He also said the church will continue to meet near the demolished church. – VOM



PRAY for Indonesian Christians who regularly face opposition from their local communities and district authorities to the building of churches. Pray that such tensions will not escalate further, but that peace and respect for the constitution that allows freedom of worship will prevail. Pray against extremist elements that seek to exploit the situation.

IRAN On 7 March, 28-year-old Ebrahim Firouzi was arrested on his way to

work by plainclothes police. No one in his family was notified of his arrest, and they were greatly concerned over his sudden disappearance. The arrest is seen as more evidence of a campaign to suppress Christianity and pressure new believers. Christian converts are thrown into prison and sometimes released only after long to demoralise them. Ebrahim is believed to be in Evin prison, where apostates, political prisoners and jihadi terrorists are also held. In prison, Christians are sometimes in danger of being harmed or even killed for having left their former religion. But some believers who have been freed say that such times were also divine opportunities to share the Gospel- VOM, WWM



PRAY for Iranian believers who are in prison for their faith. Ask God to help them be strong and to minister His presence and peace to them in tangible ways. Ask God to help them be witnesses for the Gospel that other prisoners may see God glorified. Pray for strong international pressure to secure their release. Pray for comfort and faithfulness for their families.

NORTH KOREA When North Korea flexed its muscles in April and threatened to launch a missile strike, leaders of the underground church here asked Christians worldwide to pray for their country in a secret letter that was smuggled out. They say the warlike atmosphere has caused hardships for the people, with food and goods prices skyrocketing as people empty store shelves to stock up for emergencies. As the country indulges in self-worship of its leader, Christians struggle with being open about their faith, since owning a Bible is grounds for imprisonment, hard labour or execution. Yet believers say they are sustained by the prayers of believers worldwide and continue to hold to the verse to seek first God's Kingdom. – OD, BBC



PRAY for courage and strength for North Korean Christians. Pray that God would be their refuge in the midst of fear and uncertainty. For safety and protection for all Christian workers and contacts who are trying to strengthen the church there. For all international leaders involved in dealing with threats of war by North Korea.