BenitaNECF

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Chairman's Message

Hear This... Pay Attention... Listen!

his year 2017 commemorates five hundred years since Martin Luther first posted his Ninety-five Theses on the door of All Saints' Church and other churches in Wittenberg, Germany.

Luther taught eternal life is not earned by good deeds but can only be received as a free gift by God's grace through the believer's faith in Jesus Christ as Redeemer from sin. He also taught that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge from God and opposed sacerdotalism by considering all baptized Christians to be a holy priesthood.¹

As we celebrate 500 years of Protestant Reformation, it is timely the Malaysian Church be reminded of the need to return to the centrality of God's Word.

Christians backslide when they neglect the Word - its reading, studying and meditation thereof. Children cannot grow spiritually when they do not feed on a steady diet of the Word. Churches lose their cutting edge when the Word ceases to be their foundation. And when the Word loses its priority among workers, leaders and even pastors, vitality and zeal for ministry would eventually be compromised. It is most unfortunate that few give attention to the public reading of the Word these days.

Prophet Hosea's appeal to "hear this... pay attention... listen"² echoed through Israel when the nation sank to its lowest, embroiled in deep idolatry in the Old Testament.

Although the prophet's words were directed primarily at the Northern Kingdom, these same charges were also made against Judah. According to 1:1, Hosea's prophetic ministry coincided with

"Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen, royal house! This judgment is against you: You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor. (Hosea 5:1)

the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Jeroboam.

In this instance, it was clear that when the Word was neglected, not only were individuals affected, the family, the church and even the nation suffered judgment.

The economic and political climate of the northern kingdom deteriorated because God's hand was against the idolatry in the land - where unfaithfulness and apostasy became rampant as the Israelites participated in Baal worship.

It was one step, followed by many others down the slippery slope. They rebelled v2a, turned to prostitution v3b, became corrupt v3c, did not acknowledge the LORD v4b, became arrogant v5a, stumbled in their sin v5b, became unfaithful, giving birth to illegitimate children v7a, and instituted new moon festivals v7b. All these were recorded in Hosea chapter 5.

When the Word ceases to be our guide, and our actions cannot be said to be "according to your Word", the "one sin" and mere neglect can *transmute* to become "sin, iniquity and transgressions" (Psa 32:5 NIV)³.

In Hosea, we are warned that the man who refuses to hear, pay attention and

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Mentor Gen Muda

East Coast Pastors' and Leaders'

Retreat @ Suria Resort Cherating

February 9-11

13-15

April

24-25

June	
3	Global Missions Convention For
	Tamil Young People
6-10	Hunger for God Conference @ GA611
	Bread of Life Centre
12-14	Chinese Prayer Altar Training
August	
7-31	40-Day Fast and Pray
28	Tamil Young Pastors & Wives
	Conference

March **Child Safe Training** Merdeka Day Assembly 12-15 Prayer & Planning with Dr. John Mulinde 21-22 National Youth Convention @ Full Gospel Tabernacle

Septemb	er
1-15	40-Day Fast and Pray (cont)
15	Malaysia Day Prayer Rally (Chines
16	Malaysia Day Prayer Rally & Pray
	Conference
16	Malaysia Day
25-27	Chinese Pastor's Care Retreat

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-10	Contending for the Faith Training @
	Full Gospel Tabernacle

CFM 10th NCC & BGC

December 25 CFM High Tea

...continued from front page:

"Hear This... Pay Attention... Listen!"

listen, becomes guilty of the utter rebelliousness of humanity. God further indicts the Church of Hosea's day, "how long will they be incapable of purity?"4

I pray year 2017 will be the year of the Bible for you. Let the trumpet be on our lips, calling all to return to the Word of the Lord (Hosea 8.1a).

Adopt a reading plan. Aim to study consistently. Attend any Bible study your church might conduct. Take Sunday School seriously. Begin a Bible memorization program. Set aside time to meditate. Ask God to help you honor and love the Word again. Never attend church without bringing your Bible.

A story is told of a young man preparing for ministry in a communist regime where Bibles were not freely available. He read the whole Bible once every month, so that he could have the Word "inside him" to prepare himself in case he had no access to a physical Bible. What commitment! What determination!

Yes, it's time to make the Word paramount again. It's time to hear, pay attention and listen.

¹ Wikipedia

Hosea 5:1 NIV

³ Very much akin to a man who lies in the hospital with an assortment of illnesses, with cancer affecting his many organs because he did not want to seek early treatment for his sickness.

⁴ Hoséa 8:5b NIV ⁵ Psalms 119:11 (NKJV) 11 Your Word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.



Trainers Learn About Developing An Altar Building Strategy

By Tan Poh Kian

Dr John Mulinde, founder of World Trumpet Ministry, talks on how to develop a two-year strategy for altar building at the Training the Trainers seminar held last year in Genting.

ECF conducted the Training the Trainers seminar specifically for those who had participated in the previous prayer altar training sessions led by Dr John Mulinde, the co-founder of World Trumpet Ministry.

Among the 92 participants who had signed up for the training from 17 to 19 October last year at Peacehaven, Genting, two were Thais and three were Sri Lankans. Dr John shared how he had come to understand God's perspective about the nations before he was fully released into his call and ministry for the nations. He highlighted that every one of us has to be accountable to God at the end, and we will either be judged as a goat or a sheep when Jesus returns to glory to set up His kingdom as stated in Matthew 25:31-46. The sheep are blessed by God the Father and given an inheritance. The goats are cursed with eternal hell-fire because unlike the sheep they had opportunity to minister to the Lord, but they did nothing. It is indeed God's divine will that all knees shall bow and all tongues confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and that all nations become the nations of our Lord!

Dr John taught "discipling nations" as the heartbeat of God's Great Commission. He illustrated it through Paul's mission in Ephesus and how he turned the city upside down through the transforming power of the Gospel. He also shared about the "seven pillars" of the Kingdom of God (God's will, God's destiny, God's indwelling presence, God's prevailing presence,

the spheres of society such as government, education, family and economy, discipled nations and the Day of the Lord). By Knowing God's will we know God's full counsel and we do His will in accordance with His instructive words. We were admonished to always live with a vision of the Day of the Lord in our minds and hearts, so that we will not live carelessly and aimlessly.

On the last session of the training, Dr John shared about the journey he had gone through with the Taiwanese churches as the Lord directed him. God's work is evidently prevailing in the land since the Taiwanese pastors responded by building corporate altars across Taiwan. Using the example of what effect and impact the gospel had on the city of Ephesus, he invited the participants to reflect upon steps to be taken by churches and intercessors in the context of Malaysia, in order to see changes taking place in our nation and to further ponder on whether we are ready to position ourselves spiritually for the warfare ahead.

Participants were also divided into groups according to their geographical regions to discuss questions that were given as well as to share about their progress and encounters in altar building. Rev Looi Kok Kim of NECF's Prayer Commission then shared a two-year strategy in altar building and the participants were requested to fill up a response form expressing their willingness and commitment to build and champion prayer altars for the next two years.



Tan Poh Kian is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Prayer Commission, NECF.



Humanism Beliefs And Agenda

Standfirst

This is a reprint of an article in the November/December 2016 issue of the magazine, *Barnabas Aid*. It is reproduced here with permission from Barnabas Fund, the publisher of the magazine.

ifty-three years ago, Harry Blamires wrote in *The Christian Mind* (London, SPCK, 1963) that Christians no longer thought in a Christian way. Not only had society in general been secularised, but so had Christians themselves. He predicted that in the following half century British culture would grow more consciously and outspokenly secular, like the Soviet Union, and that Christians would react by becoming more consciously Christian and aware of their difference from society at large. The worst case scenario that he envisaged was that Christians would withdraw from society to cultivate their personal morality and spirituality, without challenging the godless materialism around them.

Blamires, who celebrated his 100th birthday in November last year, must have been heart-broken to see how differently things turned out from his prediction. As he expected, secular humanism is now the dominant influence in British society and also in many other Western societies. Where previously these societies had rested on a Christian foundation and Biblical principles, now a new civic religion with its own theology, ideology and morality has gradually eroded not only faith but also the Christian moral basis of society. However, contrary to Blamires' expectations, the Church has not been strengthened by facing this challenge. Rather, the Church has all but succumbed as it follows society's lead. Christians are neither challenging the secular system around them, nor withdrawing from it, but seem to have surrendered to it, leading lives that are barely distinguishable from those of humanists.

The collapse of Christian morality in society has been orchestrated and intentional, subtle yet aggressively effective. Humanists have deliberately sought to cleanse society from all religious influence, especially Christianity.

The Core Beliefs of Humanism

Atheism

Humanists do not believe in God. They feel that religions -- or any belief in a god -- are dangerous to society and hinder the development of humans as a species.

Naturalism

Humanists believe that the natural world is all that exists. They do not believe in God, the supernatural, an afterlife, heaven or hell.

Evolution

Humanists do not believe that there is a creator. Instead they believe that all life was started by a natural event without the influence of a god. Organisms, including humans, have evolved over millions of years. Humans, the pinnacle of this evolutionary process, are merely biological and do not have a soul or any

spiritual component.

Ethical Relativism

Humanists do not believe that there are any moral absolutes or ethical standards. Morality depends on situations, and each individual can and should decide what is right and wrong for them. People should not rely on any religious instruction or values.

Celebration Of Humankind

Humankind is celebrated as the highest being in existence. As God does not exist, humans should not call upon Him to intervene in the world or in the lives of individuals. Seeking salvation is seen as a waste of energy and a distraction from attempting to solve the problems of the world. Humanists argue that the survival of the human race is the responsibility of humans and it is up to each individual to do something as there are no messiahs or saviours in this world or the next.

Utopia

Humanists are striving for a perfect world which is not divided by borders. They aim for a new world order, which should be socialist, where resources are shared equally, capitalism is eradicated and there are no travel restrictions.

The Humanist Agenda

To an uninformed observer, humanism may appear quite harmless, but the effects it has had on society have been dramatic. It is actively promoting a society where morality is negotiable and Christian values are questioned, challenged, or even rejected.

Individuals pursue pleasure rather than righteousness. Behaviours that are contrary to God's guidelines and to Christian values are at first permitted, and then celebrated. Some, such as support for gay and lesbian behaviour, are even enforced by governments on their societies or, through economic pressure, on other countries. We are now seeing the destruction of the divine image in humans, as the transgender movement seeks to remove distinctions that God has created - to the point where some describe themselves as "nonbinary" i.e. not exclusively male or female. The process in which Western countries seek to impose their new ethical values on the rest of the world can be viewed as "ideological colonisation".

All this can have damaging consequences. Families are broken. Substance abuse, depression and suicide are rife. People are isolated from each other, and communities are breaking down. Humanism has become so firmly embedded into society that people do not have to be followers of humanism or even know what it is to have been influenced by it.

Humanism supposedly promotes freedom. Yet many freedoms, especially religious freedom, are being removed from society. In countries where humanism is strong, people trying to live out a Christian life according to the law of God are increasingly being marginalised, harassed or even persecuted. Christian groups have been sued or had criminal proceedings initiated against them for practising and promoting Christian values.

The humanist agenda is laid out clearly in various manifestos, declarations and organisational constitutions. The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) strives for a humanist and secular world, in which human rights are respected and

everyone is able to live a life of dignity. Its long-term strategic aims are to:

- promote humanism as a non-theistic life stance throughout the world
- represent humanists within the international community
- defend human rights and the rights of humanists develop organised humanism in every part of the world build a strong and effective global organisation

The IHEU is an international organisation that represents the global humanist movement with 116 member organisations from over 50 countries, both in the West and elsewhere. One national organisation is the American Humanist Association Strategic, which states in its 2007 Plan: The American Humanist Association seeks to foster a profound change in American culture, promoting a society more strongly aligned with humanist values and displacing the influence of religious fundamentalism and dogma.

Stages Of Humanism Expansion

Humanists use well established and successful methods to advance humanism in society. For example:

Stage 1: Tolerance

Humanists first urge society to tolerate or accept a humanist idea, value, belief, ideology or behaviour that would be largely seen as contrary to cultural norms, values or religious beliefs, especially those of Christianity. This is done through popular media, advocacy, legal action, media campaigns, demonstrations and appeals to governments and international bodies.

Stage 2: Equality

Humanists then put pressure on authorities and society to recognise these humanist beliefs or behaviours and place them on an equal level with those of the current society or Christianity.

Stage 3: Reversal Of Norms

Humanists then work to make the previous norms and values of society and Christianity seem abnormal, silly, backward, evil or a threat to human progress. Humanists would argue that previous norms and values are restrictive and against human rights. Christians are often labelled as irrational, bigoted, prejudiced fundamentalists for holding on to their beliefs and values.

Stage 4: Aggressive Action

The final stage is an effort to make the previous norms and Christian values illegal by bringing legal action against groups who uphold these values and beliefs. Christian groups have found themselves having to defend values and beliefs that were previously widely accepted or even celebrated within society.

Conclusion

The humanist, civic religion has permeated many societies, not just in the West but in many other contexts, and has become firmly entrenched in modern culture, even in the Church. Christianity is in danger and in a state of moral crisis.

God is very clear that He will judge a society which has turned morality on its head. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." (Isaiah 5:20)

BM And OA Pastors Refreshed At Pastor@2R Retreat

By Rev Samuel Surendran Krishnan

he Bahasa Malaysia and Orang Asli pastors had their third retreat at the Grand Kampar Hotel in Kampar, Perak from 28-30 November last year. The main purpose of the retreat was to enable pastors to relax and be refreshed, hence it was named Pastor@2R (Relax and Refresh).

The retreat had a different flavour this time as the spouses of pastors were also invited to attend. The decision proved to be good because a spouse-inclusive programme provided a holistic ministry and interaction for the participants. We were able to do more family-and-marriage-based activities which are always needful for a successful ministry and family life.



Pastor@2R was intentionally designed to provide a time of restoration and refreshment for pastors who need a good time to laugh, eat, play and enjoy good company with their peers. Pastor@2R was never meant to be packed with sermons, teachings and heavy programmes but filled with fun-based programmes to help pastors de-stress. Pastors had experienced dryness in their work and ministries and the retreat was necessary to encourage them to continue to serve with joy and passion.

A total of 57 participants attended the retreat. The overall feedback was very positive and encouraging. There is indeed a great need to gather pastors and their spouses with the purpose to encourage, refresh and renew their lives and ministry calling.

We want to praise God for good sponsors who have enabled us to hold the retreat on an annual basis. There was a request for this retreat to be organised again and for a longer duration.



Rev Samuel Surendran Krishnan is the chairman of NECF's Bahasa Malaysia and Orang Asli Commissions and Senior Pastor of Excel Point Community Church, Penang.

REEP Made Progress In Implementation For 2016

By Jack Cheah



he first training of volunteer tutors for The Rural Educational Empowerment Programme (REEP) in 2016 was held at the Sungai Way Methodist Church (SSMC), Petaling Jaya, on 9 April. Following the training, SSMC implemented REEP in May with the Orang Asli (OA) children at Kg Sg Rasau, Puchong. English and mathematics classes were also conducted weekly. The classes lasted up to 40 minutes for each subject. About 20 to 28 OA children attended the classes and attendance has become more regular.

SSMC has another tuition programme with Malay, Indian and Indonesian children at Pusat Penyayang, Kg Sg Kayu Ara and it started using REEP materials in April last year. 50% of the tuition classes are using REEP materials and this accounts for 10 out of 20 sessions every week. Different classes use different levels of the materials for both mathematics and English.

Wesley Methodist Church Klang, which attended the training at SSMC, implemented REEP with the OA children at Kg Kechau, Semenyih in May last year. It only started the lessons in mathematics to children aged 7 and above. The total attendance is 15 children but it varies every week.

Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) Terbol, near Jerantut, which attended the training at the Christian Training Centre, Mentakab, Pahang on 9 April last year, implemented REEP soon after from 30 April. This is a village church near Temerloh which comprises mainly OA members. Presently managed by 3 OA kindergarten teachers and assisted by other volunteers, REEP's introduction to the village saw a participation of 32 OA students from the nearby school hostel.

The training of REEP volunteer tutors in East Malaysia was held for the first time at SIB Tudangan in Ranau, Sabah on 30 April. SIB Kibbas, which also attended the training session, implemented REEP by holding its first tuition session with 19 children on 20 May. The programme is presently run by 3 volunteers with the assistance of 2 others.

Kean Tao Baptist Church, which attended the REEP training at the Kuantan Presbyterian Centre on 22 June last year, started REEP in July. SEA Park Baptist (Chinese) Church, which attended the training at SSMC on 9 April, is assisting by providing volunteers. Attendance at the Kean Tao Baptist Church's tuition centre in Kg Wawah, on the way from Kuantan to Segamat, is made up of 5-6 OA children. Level 1 English and

mathematics lessons have been completed and Level 2 began after Christmas.

REEP ended the year with training sessions at the Living Word Tabernacle (LVT), Kajang on 3 December and Emmanuel Methodist Church (EMC), Petaling Jaya on 10 December with 14 participants attending each venue respectively. Both churches have decided to adopt the REEP curriculum for 2017. LVT plans to conduct REEP in a decentralized manner at the homes of volunteer tutors rather than centralize it at the church premises. The rationale behind this move is logistics as it will involve more personnel, cost and time to transport the children from their homes -- which are far away -- to the church premises. It also offers more flexibility as the lessons can be conducted on week days -- and not just on weekends -- at the nearby tuition homes.

EMC plans to use REEP materials in English first at its English Tuition Centre (ETC) at the Community Hall in Kampung Cempaka. Its search for an effective, well-structured and complete teaching syllabus for English tuition classes ended with the discovery of REEP. It started using REEP materials when it resumed classes for 35 students at the ETC on 7 January this year.

The implementation of REEP by churches that have attended the training sessions is of utmost importance to gauge its effectiveness. The NECF, which initiated the programme, will ensure that training is provided to churches that have caught the vision and the spirit to undertake REEP. It is better to start small with a few churches that are ready to implement it and then reap success, rather than beginning in a big way with many churches but with doubts whether the programme would take off. The NECF has planned a two-prong approach to ensure REEP's success. It will introduce promotion/awareness programmes to enable churches to catch the vision and spirit to adopt REEP and it will equip churches through training to implement REEP. The former will be carried out by NECF staff whilst the latter will be carried out mainly by special trainers.



Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF.

Stories From The East Coast: A Vision To Start A Church In Kota Bharu Bears Fruit

By Pastor Nick Resien

y journey to start a church in Kelantan began when I was working in Kuala Lumpur. At that time, I was actively involved in the Hope Church Kuala Lumpur, serving in its Bahasa Malaysia ministry. At one meeting, the church's pastor challenged all his leaders to a missionary calling to plant churches in other parts of Malaysia. I immediately thought then about Cameron Highlands due my interest in the Orang Asli work. However, God gave a vision to my wife, Lifes Tumi, and put a burden in both our hearts to build a Bahasa Malaysia-speaking church in Kota Bharu.

We decided to move to Kota Bharu in 2007 to start Hope Church there. In the early years, East Malaysian students from universities, colleges and schools in Kelantan would come to the church which was held at my apartment. Every Friday, I would drive to the Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Polytechnic College to take them to the church. The church began with 9 students at its first service, but attendance increased to 20 students within 3 months. As a result, we had to rent a bungalow to conduct the services. The church grew to 40 people within a year and we had to move to new premises in the second year.

At first, although the new premises were not equipped with air conditioners, everyone would still come and worship God passionately. Thank God that through our prayers, He has provided us with not only air conditioners but also a good sound system, chairs and carpets. Renovations have been

made to expand the church building with additional rooms and facilities. The church has grown beyond 100 students now and, indeed, God has blessed us with more and more committed members who are actively involved in the church ministries and communities.

It was in 2012 that God challenged the church leaders and members to learn full reliance on Him to run His church by turning it independent. After much fasting and prayers throughout the year, by early 2013, the church leaders decided to take the step towards making the church an independent one. As a result, Faith Sanctuary of Glory (FSOG) church was officially formed on April 2013.

We have witnessed God's faithfulness to us in adding souls and in the growth of the church as we carry out the vision to share our faith and to build His church. We now have 8 care group ministries covering all the public universities, colleges and a school in Kelantan besides the family and working adult groups. We are also supporting the Orang Asli work in Gua Musang and Kuala Lipis as well as the Rhema Centre in Kuala Krai.

I believe that under the divine leadership of God, FSOG will continue to grow and be an instrument that glorifies Him by extending His kingdom in the East Coast, especially in Kelantan.



Pastor Nick Resien is the Pastor of Faith Sanctuary of Glory, Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

A Wet New Year By Rev Andy Chi

n 6th January this year, the NECF delivered 24,000 units of bottled water to the Civil Defence for distribution to the existing flood relief centres in Kelantan and Terengganu. Present to receive the cartons of bottled water was Lieutenant-Colonel Zahri of the Civil Defence Department. The handover took place at the Civil Defence Department, Jalan Padang Tembak, Kuala Lumpur. Also present were members of the Lions Club, represented by Dato' Ong Theng Soon, the District Chairperson for Lions Alert Region 5, Phillip Chay, chairman for Lions Alert of Lions Club of Subang Jaya, Lee Teck Leong and Belinda Chow, who handed over another 24,000 units of bottled water from the Lions Club of Subang Jaya (9,600 units), Lions Clubs International District 308B2 (9,600) and Associate Officers of the Civil Defence in Wilayah Persekutuan (4,800 units).

The floods occurred on the eve of the new year after continual rain fell in the east coast. While there were sporadic flash floods before December 31, the waters that brought the current floods started on the eve of the new year beginning in Kuala Krai, followed by Temangan and then to the rest of the affected areas.

Unlike the floods of 2014/2015, the floods appeared to be the normal monsoon floods that occur annually. In 2014/2015, we saw over 118,000 people fleeing to the various relief centres. This time round, it was recorded that only about 23,000 persons

needed shelter. The states that are affected by the latest floods are Kelantan and Terengganu. Pahang is largely spared as well as the Orang Asli areas in the interior. For Terengganu, these floods were the worst in 30 years and it caught many by surprise. The last major floods in Terengganu were in 1986. So far there has been no record of any loss of life due to the floods.

Rain clouds have since moved towards the sea. Rainfall has reduced dramatically and the waters are beginning to recede. Some people from the relief centres have returned to their homes. Now begins the second phase of the relief and recovery process. Many would return to homes that are soaked and damaged. We have dispatched a field assessment team to the east coast to access the damage and needs requirement there. Once a report is obtained, an action plan will be put in place.

While the rain has momentarily stopped, we have been informed there could be further heavy rainfall until March. Other parts of the country have been experiencing heavy rainfall too. The latest area to experience severe flooding is in Pitas, Sabah. As the weather patterns have become more and more unpredictable and the occurrences of floods have increased, we have to always remain vigilant and be ready to face the unexpected.



Rev Andy Chi is the Assistant Secretary-General of the NECF.



Implications Of The Falling Ringgit On The Nation And Churches

his article broadly recapitulates the events that triggered the weakening of the ringgit. It examines the general implications of the falling exchange rate of the ringgit on our nation's economy, businesses and churches. The intended audience of this article is Christians, and their roles and obligations during this challenging time of an economic downturn are deliberated and outlined as useful action points. Further reflection on specific areas will be necessary, and therefore this article intentionally keeps them open-ended for more in-depth discussions as well as to invite readers to contribute their views and comments.

Brief Overview Of The Performance Of The Ringgit

The sluggish performance of the ringgit in the last 18 months has been worrying investors, business communities and parents sending children overseas for further education. The situation reflects the Malaysian economy, which is on the decline, and foreign investors' confidence in the country's leadership, which has dwindled. This has caused people to feel vulnerable and to raise their concerns, and it has sparked anger among many. It is a burning issue impacting every aspect of Malaysian society.

Since August 2015 and until now, the ringgit has been among the world's worst performing currency. Falling oil price that once dropped to below US\$39 per barrel is a major factor that has brought down the strength of the ringgit. The

unsettling political situation, scandals and series of events underlining our country leadership's ability to manage its affairs have shaken investors' confidence and have put the already under-pressure ringgit into further decline. Today, we are seeing the ringgit hovering around RM4.45 to the US dollar – the weakest level since the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis – and the lowest against the Singapore dollar in 31 years and lowest against the USD in the last 17 years.

Although Bank Negara has been zealously intervening in the currency market to prop up the ringgit, its efforts have been futile. Consequently, Bank Negara has depleted a significant amount of foreign exchange reserves, now standing at below the psychological US\$100 billion mark, and that has spooked the market. Withdrawal of US\$ investment continues as foreign investors divest their holdings in Malaysia's bonds and equities. The guesstimated amount of foreign funds exiting the country in the last 12 months is as high as US\$85b. A Bloomberg report stated that the government is "already under fiscal pressure" and the central bank may be willing to accept the ringgit weakness to boost other exports to offset the drop in oil prices.

Historically, the Malaysian ringgit reached an all-time low of RM4.885 in January, 1998 and a record strength of RM2.1 against the USD in October, 1978. The graph below shows that the USD to MYR was traded at RM4.471239 on November 27, 2016.

The Ringgit -- A Barometer Of Malaysian **Economic Health**

I) External factors

Oil and gas exports account for nearly 16 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), earning the largest income for Malaysia. This sector has been hardest hit by falling crude oil prices. At the lowest point of US\$35 per barrel, the Malaysian government faced a revenue shortfall of RM40 billion. It is a humongous task for the government to find another source of money to fill this revenue gap. Oil prices continue to be volatile in search of market equilibrium, as supply has been exceeding demand, mostly due to the high production of shale oil in the United States. Conversely, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) has been obstinately reluctant to cut back on their oil production. In June 2015, Bloomberg reported that the world was facing its longest oil glut in three decades.

On 11 August 2015, China announced her decision to devalue its currency - a step necessary for the country to remain competitive in exports and to manage their exportled economy that is slowing down. The devaluation of the yuan, however, strengthened the dollar. With the dollar gaining strength, all other Asian currencies suffered. The event pushed the ringgit further down in its exchange rate to become the worst performing currency in the Asia Pacific region. Recently, the US Federal Reserve increased its interest rates by a quarter point and this event alone has further suppressed the ringgit from recovering. The upward revision of the current US interest rate is signaling that a potential hike could come next year faster than expected.

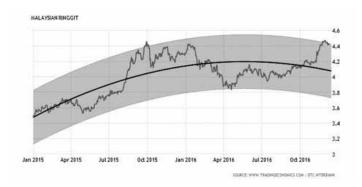
II) Internal factors

If the ringgit is weakened purely by external events, theoretically, it should cause more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow to Malaysia - it would be cheaper for multinational companies to establish their base here. But, the negative vibes from Malaysia's domestic scandals and politics are widely known and reported overseas. Such sentiments are likely to continue to stifle the ringgit's performance. In the political arena, the embattled Prime Minister has through many means fortified his position via a cabinet reshuffle, sacking of his deputy and the securing of PAS as a trusted UMNO ally etc. His political manoeuvres, however, did not produce much impetus to regain investors' confidence to turn around the dwindling economy.

The impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on

announced in early October last year that the Royal Malaysian Customs Department collected RM54.867 billion in GST for the first nine months of the year. While the news portrayed that the government has increased her revenue, the underlying truth is that the GST has curtailed the citizens' spending power. Although the 6% GST may appear to be inconsequential, it has effectively shrunk the consumption of goods and services - this is evidenced by a reduction in consumer spending at hypermarkets and retail stores. The resultant effect of declining consumer spending may lead to the downward economic spiral to stall the country's GDP growth. Thus, the ringgit exchange rate will remain weak as a reflection of the real strength of the economy.

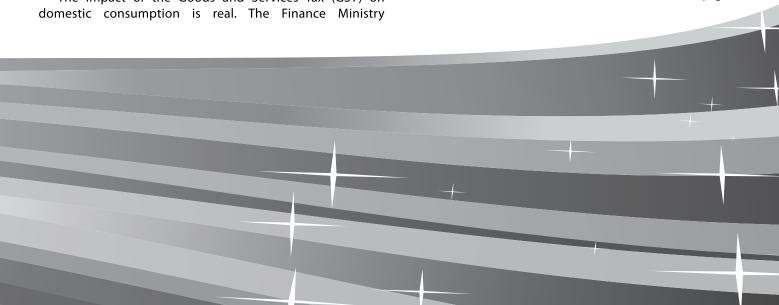
The reality of the fallen ringgit and declining GDP may continue into the unforeseeable future. According to the Trading Economics Global Macro Models and analysts' expectations, the ringgit will remain weak and is expected to trade around RM4.43 by the end of December 2016. Looking forward to the next 12 months, the ringgit is estimated to trade around RM 4.57. Please refer to the graph below.



Implications Of The Falling Ringgit On The Nation And Churches

The weaker ringgit against the US dollar has brought about inflationary pressures on the costs of imported goods and materials, ranging from fresh produce and processed food to durables. Higher costs of imported raw materials have eroded the profit margins. The probable scenario to sustain profitability is to raise prices to cushion the inflationary cost impact. As consumers cut spending, the market is expected to shrink. Businesses will find it more difficult to achieve a breakeven point and, thus, become unprofitable to operate

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"Implications Of The Falling Ringgit On The Nation And Churches"

with the mounting losses.

The ringgit's volatility may have resulted in cash flow problems for many local companies. The majority of local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) do not have access to full banking facilities on loans and import guarantees for their financing needs. So they depend on their overseas suppliers for credit terms. It is harder to continue such credit arrangements during the economic downturn. The depressive consequences have led them to cease operations. Bankruptcies are on the increase with the Ministry of Finance reporting 18,457 cases for the year 2015, over 20,000 bankruptcies last year and a forecast of 22,000 bankruptcies cases this year. According to the Deputy Minister of Finance, until the end of 2015, the total household debt was RM1.03 trillion with 80% of the banking system and 20% of non-bank financial institutions constituting 89.1% of the GDP.

The impending nightmare presented by the current economy has been preached by economists and analysts but as yet no significant attempts made by the government have been seen to revive the economy. Their efforts seem to focus on rescuing 1MDB. The existing political turmoil, scandals, corruptions and macro-economic issues continue to plague the recovery of the ringgit. There is no fairytale solution available to reverse Malaysia's economy within the near future - Malaysians should be prepared to ride the waves of this economic upheaval. The crunch will probably come sooner as the government imposes an austerity drive on civil servants and the general public. Depending on what the country's leaders might do, EPF, other retirement funds, pilgrim fund, etc may be used to prop up the country's liquidity. How long will the current recessionary conditions continue and how deep will it cut into citizens' savings? These are certainly some pertinent anguishing questions that present no answers at this juncture.

The reality of the economic downturn will lead to job losses. Some companies have been quietly laying off their staff and closing down operations. In October last year, the number of people unemployed hit the highest peak of 534,700, according to the Department of Statistics.

Despite the negative happenings in Malaysia, the weak ringgit could present some good opportunities for Malaysia to regain its competitiveness and bring back FDI. Malaysia could reposition itself as a lower cost country to attract foreign investors to relocate their operations and production facilities here. Since almost all exports from Malaysia are denominated in US\$, the weak exchange rate will boost the country's income in ringgit terms. The additional income through foreign exchange gains will give more room for discounting on goods and services. But, it may only be a short term gain, as overseas buyers will start to demand a lower price. Nevertheless, this is the time for local SMEs to promote their goods overseas because of the weaker ringgit.

Churches must be vigilant in light of the country's economic condition, focusing especially on the failure rate of businesses and the unemployment rate. Within their congregations, some members may have been retrenched and some may have shut down their businesses. The main sources of churches' income from tithes and offerings will

be affected. Churches, as pillars of society, should gear up to help their members in need and be watchful for the immediate community in dire straits and be ready to assist them. As the cruel reality of the economic downturn depletes people's savings, the number of people in need of help will be plentiful, but resources available could be running low – nonetheless, be prepared to help.

The Christian Response

Churches should assume the leadership role in such a challenging environment to engage people in dire need. Congregation members should be prepared to be more resilient to face turbulent times. Besides preaching the right sermons in churches, the key requisite rests on initiating formidable actions to get people out of trouble. Churches and the Christian community may have to launch community projects by involving people close to them. The intended projects should aim to gear up congregation members to survive the economic nightmare.

As indicated earlier, the major issues causing the ringgit to fall are the country's political turmoil and a major scandal. Since Christians are praying for Malaysia, their attitudes towards politics should not be one of unconcern or disinterest. They should actively participate in the affairs of the nation, lend a voice and take a stand whenever necessary. It is important for Christians to seize every opportunity to do good works and glorify our Father in heaven. For businessmen, this is a stressful time to keep businesses afloat, as fewer projects and deals are available. Hence, Christian businessmen should compete with integrity and by upholding moral values and reverence to God, exemplify honesty in business dealings and attempt to amplify God's message all the time.

Summary

As a summary to the abovementioned discussion, the Malaysian economic recovery is uncertain in the next 12 months. The timing of the ringgit regaining its glorious strength of RM3.14 (in October 2011) is unknown. Going forward in the near-term, investor confidence in our country's economy and political leadership have to be restored. A change in the country's leadership may be necessary for the introduction of new ideas and approaches to administer the country. Christians should continue to pray hard for God's intervention.

All Christian businessmen must participate in trade associations, professional bodies and NGOs and pursue the leadership role. With their involvement in the relevant organizations, they could champion good corporate governance and ethical business conduct and practices. They should meet regularly to share insights and champion new corporate initiatives, lead in expanding the digital business footprint and trade delivery models to reduce costs. New norms on how businesses should run could take precedence. Priority should be given to innovate on products and business processes. Continuous investment must be made to keep the best employees as they are the real assets of business.



Dr Ng Boon Beng is the chairman of the Business & Economy Commission. He worships at Full Gospel Assembly, Kuala Lumpur.

Disciple-Making Is *The* Ministry Of All Churches

BY CLEMENT TAN

ECF on December 10, 2016 had a soft launch on the "relooked art" of disciple making by organising the Disciple-Maker Seminar at Full Gospel Tabernacle Church (FGT) Subang. We had the privilege of Bishop Efraim Tendero, the current Secretary-General/CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance to grace the occasion.

In his opening address he challenged the participants with the question, "How will the gospel be proclaimed throughout the world?" In his reply, he said, "This was made possible when God chose women and men who received His love and forgiveness to do it. In short, it was a task that was entrusted by God to us."

Bishop then went on to elaborate three simple steps mentioned in Matthew 28: 18-20. The first is to follow the great authority in line with the statement of Jesus in verse 18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The second is to fulfil the great task in line with verse 19 and 20a of the same, where Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." The last is to feel the great presence of Christ himself as promised in verse 20b, "... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Bishop Tendero then went through with the participants the discipleship resources from International Evangelism Association covering the following:-

The extensive research in developing both the Leader's Guide and Student's Guide *On Becoming a Disciple-Maker*.

A DVD that will help the Leader through the teaching sessions.

Resources for the one to one sessions under the title "A Call to Joy"

NECF's objective from this seminar is to encourage the church to return to basics. Basically, it is that church discipleship is not confined to 40-day home group, a 12-week study or even Sunday school attendance. Discipleship is not a class you take; it's the course of your life.

The goal of biblical disciple-making is to enable people to conform into the image of Christ through prayer, accountability, transparency, scripture reading, scripture journaling, memorization and replication. The goal is to get people into word until the word gets into them.



When that happens, people can't stop sharing Christ with others. They will raise a holy hand in worship, serve in the church, and are more generous with their time, talents and treasures.

NECF desires to reverse the downward trend in our churches by creating and adopting a disciple making model that is simple, contextual, and reproducible for any and every church context, regardless of size or setting. Discipleship must move from being *a* ministry in our churches to *the* ministry of our churches.

The above resources will be available soon at our office. If you are interested to launch this program, kindly get in touch with Rev. Andy Chi, the Assistant Secretary-General for more details.



Clement Tan is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Research Commission, NECF.

Retreat Heals And Inspires Pastors' Kids

BY MARCUS DIP SILAS

mpact Pastors Impact Nations or IPIN organized its 4th. Pastors' Kids (PK) Retreat at Hotel Vistana, Kuala Lumpur from 10th to 12th December last year. IPIN's vision is to strengthen churches and fulfill the Great Commission by impacting the spiritual leaders of the nations. It was founded by Pastors Roland and Evelyn Seow, then pastors of FGA Melbourne. It is their strong belief that healthy pastors' families lead to healthy churches that will impact nations.

IPIN has organized retreats for pastors and their wives and kids in Malaysia, Slovakia, Vietnam and China. Last year's retreat saw over 100 pastors' kids coming from 5 different nations – Malaysia, Australia, Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia. With the cooperation of a team in Malaysia under the leadership of Grace Goh, a teacher from the Banner of Love church, Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the venue. Invitations to attend the retreat were sent out with the help of NECF through its network of churches and pastors.

The theme of the retreat was Beyond the Natural. The speakers

were brothers Solomon Ong and Joseph Ong from the Church on Higher Ground, Perth, Australia. Both are working professionals in the fields of psychiatry and management consultancy respectively, but are actively serving in their church where their father is the senior pastor. The duo brought a strong word from the Lord that connected with the hearts of many at the retreat. Engaging, dynamic and talented, the brothers also led the pastors' kids in worship. As they shared their own experiences growing up in the church, they demonstrated a significant understanding and ability to bridge ministry and the secular world. It was clear that the participants were encouraged and moved by the ministry of the Ong brothers. The other speakers included Mr Chung Siew Leng of the YTL Hotel Group, who spoke at the Sunday service, and Mr Chew Hui Guan and Mr Chin Kim Meng, both businessmen, who took the workshops.

One of the best moments of the retreat was the various testimonies given during the sessions and on the last day when the pastors' kids shared how the retreat had impacted them. Among those who shared were three pastors' kids who had attended the previous retreats – Joshua Jesudasan from HIS Church Puchong and a KL House of Prayer leader, Nathanael



Sanjeevi from Kingdom City Church, and James Lee Lacaden, a Vigan House of Prayer leader from the Philippines.

Both Joshua and Nathanael have been part of the PK retreats since the very beginning in 2010. They shared the lessons they learnt as well as their own personal journeys and how the retreats were instrumental in shaping their lives. Joshua issued a call for forgiveness which spurred many of the kids to call their parents and it reconciled broken relationships, some caused by trauma in the ministry. Nathanael shared about how another pastor's kid, John Dip Silas, a professional jazz musician from Kingdom City Church, had attended the retreat in 2011 and was inspired to pursue the supernatural and operate in the gifts of the word of knowledge and healing. John spearheaded a street evangelism gathering that was active in a famous KL red light district early last year.

James attended both the 2011 and 2012 retreats and returned this time in 2016 with a contingent from the Philippines. He shared how God used the retreats to rekindle a flame in his heart that led him back to God from a phase of rebellion. Since 2012, James has been instrumental in starting two prayer houses in the Philippines and is now leading the Vigan House of Prayer



in the Philippines, which is a leader in the prayer movement. Joshua heads the KL House of Prayer movement (also known as Tuesday Night Burn) that meets every Tuesday from 6pm to 10pm at Sentral Vista in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

Other testimonies revealed just how crucial it is to stand with pastors and their families. Many of the pastors' kids expressed their gratitude to Pastors Roland and Evelyn and the supporters of IPIN for hosting the retreat which has brought about emotional healing to many and inspiration to do great exploits for God's kingdom. The retreat is not an end in itself as after it there will be a series of regional gatherings to continue supporting and entrusting pastors and their families to God in prayer. The return of IPIN's PK Retreat after a four-year hiatus since the last in 2012 served as a great encouragement and blessing to the pastors' kids who attended and we look forward to the next event soon.



Marcus Dip Silas is a pastor's kid from Kulim, Kedah and an independent filmmaker.



Should Christians Read Through The Bible In A Year?

By Rev Andy Chi

or the next three years, NECF will be promoting 'Reading through the Bible in A Year' among her member churches. A recent LifeWay Research study in the States found only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible—essentially the same number who read it every day.

Merely listening to Sunday sermons and occasionally reading parts of the Scriptures will not make us into a complete Christian. We need to read the entire Bible again and again until it is fully inside of us. Only then will we begin to see the full effect and benefits of the Word in our lives. It is a lifelong learning that never ends.

Bible illiteracy on the other hand will lead to serious spiritual deficiencies. Among them; shallow Christians, immature believers, poor discipleship, unbiblical worldview and weak faith. Can these face the ever increasing darkness that is enveloping the earth? Can they withstand and counter the attacks from other faiths and teachings? Can they make a stand for their faith in an increasing unstable and hostile world?

To build a strong, thriving and transforming believers and churches, we need God's people to be grounded and saturated with His Word. Not merely reading His Word but to read through His Word at least once on a yearly basis. I believe it will eradicate Bible illiteracy, strengthen discipleship and deepen faith.

There are many 'Read through the Bible in a Year' resources available in the internet. One such resource is Back to the Bible – Bible Reading Plans. Whatever source of reading plans you choose, determine to start it this year the habit of reading through the Bible in a year.



Rev Andy Chi is the Assistant Secretary-General of the NECF.

Tamil Commission Lights Up Pastors' Widows Ministry And Prayer Altar Strategy

By Rev Gabriel Jabanathan



Ministry to Tamil Pastors' widows

he NECF Tamil Commission organised the 2nd annual Christmas gathering for Tamil pastors' widows on 26 November last year. Twenty three of them attended this special function, held for the second time in honour of these women whose husbands had faithfully served as pastors, some under very difficult circumstances.

This event is one of the five programmes the Tamil Commission is committed to, the other four being conferences for young pastors, seminars for pastors and wives, prayer altar seminars and global missions for young people. The ministry to Tamil pastors' widows is one of the ministries of compassion of the Tamil Commission and is one of its priorities.

The Tamil Commission operates a special fund called the Tamil Pastors'Widows'Fund. The idea was mooted by Rev Simon Chandran, the former chairman of the Tamil Commission. The fund got a kickstart with a generous contribution from the Full Gospel Tabernacle, Subang Jaya. Individual members of the Tamil Commission have since then graciously committed their own churches to support the fund on a regular basis. Currently there are 28 Tamil pastors' widows' names on the Tamil Commission's list.

Rev Andy Chi, the Assistant Secretary-General of NECF, who was the special guest for the event, brought a very inspiring and comforting word to the women. Each of the women was presented with a souvenir and a love offering. Some gave testimonies of their loneliness, pains, trials and moments of despair in the absence of their husbands that nearly shattered them. Yet in the midst of the pain, they testified of the Lord's

unfailing goodness. The Lord sent a spirit of cheer and joy over the meeting. Pastors who were present at this event went out of their way to cheer up these beautiful women. The event ended with a prayer ministry session followed by a simple lunch.

The event was a reminder to all that there is a group of women out there who need to be cared for and encouraged for they gave their husbands to the Lord for service. Now, most of them have to survive alone, but praise to the good Lord for His faithfulness! One mother was so touched by this event that she wrote back to us saying: "On behalf of the WIDOWS WITH MISSIONS (WWM), I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the love gift to each of our sisters which also covered travelling expenses that, indeed, were very helpful to us. Thank you for your thoughtfulness. The sisters of the WWM, who were present at the Christmas gathering on 26 November last year, were truly blessed and encouraged. We are truly grateful to the LORD for the Tamil Commission of NECF that has been a blessing to us. Indeed, our hearts are lifted up and our hands are strengthened. We do covet your continual prayers as we move on with the challenges ahead. Without HIM we cannot, and with your prayers, we know, HE makes all things possible".

Tamil Prayer Altar Meeting

The Tamil Commission had its first prayer altar follow-up training session on the 1st of December, last year. About 25 key Tamil pastors were present for this initial follow-up training session. Rev Dr Daniel Veloo was invited to speak to





the participants. He gave a briefing on the various aspects of the prayer altar strategy. The purpose of this strategic meeting was to encourage the participating pastors to go back to their respective churches and promote the prayer altar strategy. Rev Daniel fired up the pastors present to get enthusiastically engaged in the prayer strategy.

The meeting set a spark for the Tamil church to move the prayer altar strategy into higher gear. It is expected that the 25 pastors who came will get their churches excited about the prayer altar strategy. Pastors are already inviting Rev Daniel to conduct their own prayer altar seminars. The prayer altar fire is already beginning to ignite in the Tamil churches. Many Tamil pastors are keen to move into developing the prayer strategy. A more concerted coordination is needed to develop the strategy.



Rev Gabriel Jabanathan is the Chairman of the Tamil Commission, NECF and Senior Pastor of the Charis Word Centre Networking Churches.

