

Berita NECF

Editorial

How to Cruise through a Crisis

“When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the Lord your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today. For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful! Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfil the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath.”
– Deut. 8:10–12, 18 NLT

A global financial crisis (GFC) both causes and is caused by a crisis of confidence in people, institutions and practices. There is no longer faith or trust in one’s words, agreements, legal contracts and so forth. It destroys not just savings and investment, but also the economy, social relationships and, often, whole nations.

A GFC happens when people forget the Deuteronomy 8:8–18 injunction!

The current GFC is an extremely serious event which impacts virtually everyone, though to different degrees. Like people everywhere, Malaysians are bracing themselves for the global recession

brought on by the total collapse of the international financial system as a result of years of abuse.

This economic earthquake has its epicenter in the US, and from there, the waves spread through Europe, South Korea, Australia, and all over the world. Whole countries – such as Iceland, Pakistan and Hungary – have been incapacitated and more are on the borderline of bankruptcy. Analysts have also warned that this round of recession would be worse than the 1997 crisis (which was largely confined to the Asian region), and may be even worse than the 1929 depression.

The crisis has five components: (1) large drops in asset values,

capital and wealth; (2) failure of financial institutions; (3) inability/unwillingness of financial institutions to lend; (4) sharp appreciation of safe haven currencies; and (5) contraction in demand for goods and services.

The full extent has yet to be uncovered, and we will have to live with high risks and volatile swings, at least for the next year.

Governments have so far managed to tackle the most urgent problems – financial institution failures, dollar financing and short-term financing. Will they

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

Editorial

Editor

Sam Ang

Assistant Editor

Ong Juat Heng

Address

32, Jalan SS2/103,
47300 Petaling Jaya

Selangor, Malaysia

Tel: 603-7727 8227

Fax: 603-7729 1139

Email: editor@necf.org.my

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Chairman's Message

Living & Leading in Turbulent Times

When the financial meltdown first hit the press, my immediate reaction was: "What a great time to be a Christian!"

I have an awesome God who can be trusted. I can have unexplainable peace in turbulent times. And before us are wonderful opportunities to be a testimony to the many who will be seeking answers to the woes that beset the unsuspecting masses.

Furthermore, Psalm 37 reminds us that we have the privilege of feeding on His faithfulness, delighting ourselves in Him in times like these and resting in Him because "...the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord;

He is their strength in the time of trouble." (v39

NKJV) The righteous need not fear the impending doom and gloom, and that "a little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked." (v16)

And when we have a 'bona fide lifestyle' we can provide 'authentic leadership'. Bad times are opportune times to lead. I would suggest four practical ways to lead in turbulent times:

Firstly, we must lead from His Presence. *Psalm 27:5: "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock."*

We can genuinely exude a calm that emanates from a real understanding of God's protection. Our churches can be a safe haven – a place where people can find needful counseling and practical answers because in His Presence, we have the answers.

Secondly, the Church should lead

by sowing. The Church need not be afraid – though the world is scaling down, we can continue to grow and build.

Like Isaac, let us be bold to sow in times of famine and expect to reap a hundredfold. (*Gen 26:12: "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him."*) We need not shrink back but instead move forward with faith-filled confidence that He can still bless.

Thirdly, make the shift from 'big

boys' to 'big brothers' – yes, share resources. Help 'poorer' churches with liquidity problems (tithes have been known to decline in some affected Asian countries and it will affect us). In times like these, one will discover the value of

relationships, connectivity and being 'covered'.

Yes, it's time the big churches share the strength we have often boasted of with our brethren. We must also look outside our church doors. It's time we move from cheque-book philanthropy to hands-on charity. Not only do we share our resources, but are involved in the lives of the suffering. Good works must increase in bad times.

Lastly, provide the eschatological perspective of tumultuous times. Sustainable encouragement comes only from understanding God's long-term



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

It's time we move from cheque-book philanthropy to hands-on charity.

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The Role of Medical Practitioners and Treatment

NECF Malaysia Statement to Pastors and Church Leaders

NECF Malaysia observes with increasing concern that certain quarters are counselling those who wish to seek divine healing to refrain from any form of medical treatment.

These well-meaning Christians view divine healing and medical treatment as mutually exclusive and diametrically opposed. For them, divine healing is secured through the operation of faith and Christians who seek the help of medical practitioners are considered to have denied the healing power of God. These individuals also teach that sickness is the result of evil and that medical practitioners are 'doing the work of the devil' by detracting from God's power.

While we do not want to disparage these Christians and at the same time, acknowledge their positive contribution to the growth of God's Kingdom in other ways, we nevertheless are concerned that some may be confused or dismayed by this teaching.

The nature of the problem

All Christians should have faith in God. An important facet of this is an understanding of His nature and the removal of any doubt and unbelief about His love and purposes for us. Since we do not know all the ways in which God will work, however, it is critical that we do not adopt a faith that limits the ways in which He can work.

It is equally important that faith does not cease even when He does not appear to work in the way we think or expect. Faith is more than just one's struggle to believe; it is an intimate knowledge of God and His relationship with us.

In the matter of divine healing, the consequences of adopting a teaching against medical treatment include, among other things, the fact that it:

- Pressures the sick and their loved ones to delay or reject medical

treatment even when it is available and has a high curative rate;

- Creates a sense of guilt and worthlessness among sick Christians who resort to medical treatment;
- Causes those who are not healed to believe that they have no faith or have problems with sin where this is not always the case;
- Can worsen the physical condition and increase the suffering of those who are sick, even accelerating the process of death;
- Leads non-believing family members to feel angry and aggrieved, and misunderstand the teachings and stand of the evangelical Church; and
- Brings the Christian faith into disrepute by rejecting the role of modern medicine and medical doctors.

We believe that this form of teaching on divine healing is erroneous and misleading.

To state that Christians who resort to medical treatment are "weak in the faith" and "wrong in their understanding of God's wishes" is presumptuous and flawed.

NECF's Position

Our stand on the role of medical practitioners and treatment comprises the following:

1. God is omnipotent. He can and does heal but whom He heals, and when and how He heals is a matter of His sovereignty.
2. Divine healing is the restoration of health by the direct intervention of God. Healing can also be accomplished through human intervention. Throughout the Bible, God demonstrates that He uses man to accomplish His purposes besides His direct involvement.
3. All good things come from one ultimate source: the Lord God Almighty. This includes modern medicine. If a curative treatment exists, it can be

embraced, and we can rest assured that its origin is from the Supreme God who made us in His image.

4. Medical practitioners should take their abilities to be instruments of healing as a God-given gift and responsibility. Our Lord Jesus himself recognises the value of doctors when He says that it is the sick who need doctors (Mark 2:17).

5. Some physical illnesses can have spiritual origins. Advances in medical science today reveal that there is strong evidence of 'soul-body' relationships. It is important that as one receives medical treatment, he is also attended to through prayer and the Word of God.

6. Those who refuse medical treatment for their illnesses are at liberty to do so. But ministers of the Gospel must exercise care in their counsel, i.e. the sick should have access to and must act on the best professional advice. Where the sick is unable (medically) to make sound judgments as to his own state and course of action, cognizance of the wishes of the immediate families or guardians must be taken.

7. Where there is no ultimate healing, grace should be extended to the parties involved. Ministers should avoid judgmental evaluation of the decisions taken either by the sick or family members.

In the Old Testament, the life of Elisha reveals that even the man of God dies from illness (2 Kings 13:14). Jesus Himself (in John 9:1-12) does not apportion blame on 'sin' as the cause of illness.

May He grant us both wisdom and discernment as we seek to be a blessing to His Church.



NECF appoints new Sec-Gen

The NECF Malaysia Council has appointed Sam Ang as NECF Secretary-General with effect from Nov. 11.

After a diligent search and due process of interviewing various candidates, the Council unanimously agreed that Sam remained the choice candidate for the position, taking into consideration his passion for nation building and years of pastoral experience and leadership at the national level.

Furthermore, the preferred candidate should have been actively involved in the activities of NECF at various levels and one whose heartbeat resonates with NECF's vision and mission. As such, the Council felt that Sam should be empowered so as to be effective to do the ministry.

The Council is appreciative of Sam for his willingness to take up the weighty task of championing NECF's vision and mission, and covets members' prayers and support to help Sam bring NECF's vision to fruition.

Sam has had a long relationship with NECF, beginning in 1990 when he took up the position of Honorary Treasurer. In 2004, he moved on to be the Honorary Secretary until he was invited to be Acting Secretary-

General in May 2008.

Besides being involved with NECF, Sam is also a member of the executive committee of Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) and a co-opted member of The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBHST). He also serves as Council Member of Scripture Union Peninsular Malaya and was SU's General Secretary from 2000 to 2003. He is also a director with Pustaka SUFES.

Commenting on Sam's appointment, NECF Chairman Rev. Eu Hong Seng said, "Having personally worked with Sam for many years, I believe he is well able to articulate our vision of 'transforming the nation through the local church'. Under his leadership, NECF will continue to be a blessing to the nation."

He thanked all NECF members and partners for their past support and asked for their continued prayers for Sam and NECF "as we labour together for His glory in Malaysia."

Meanwhile, Rev. Wong Kim Kong continues to serve as Executive Advisor.

From Acting to Actual

Sam Ang shares his transition journey and his heart's concerns

On why he agreed to take up the Sec-Gen position...

Having conducted two seminars on nation building in JB and Penang, I realised that in some ways, we have lost some contact with the churches in the various states.

Both events were well attended and the attendees were very appreciative of our presence and the updates we gave on NECF's work and current issues.

I realise that we must increase our deputation work to the smaller towns to share, not just the vision of NECF, but to keep our members posted on the important issues sweeping our nation that are affecting our faith. Moreover, a national organisation needs stability and as long as the head is just playing the 'Acting' role, it will be more difficult to steer the ship. There is so much that NECF needs to do now to accomplish our mission and we cannot afford to take a stroll in the park. Our country is undergoing so many challenges and we must seize this moment to do as much as we can.

Taking on the SG post will also help NECF to relate more authoritatively and decisively with the government agencies, other NGOs and para-church organisations.

His immediate tasks for NECF..

Firstly, to encourage team effort within the various commissions. We have seen this happening with the Tamil Commission when six of the commission members travelled nationwide on their roadshow to visit 18 pastors fellowship comprising 133 pastors from 150 churches.

We would like to do the same for both the Chinese and Bahasa commissions.

Secondly, we would like to give NECF more visibility through the National Church Conference scheduled next August 25 to 27 at FGA KL. This is a very important event for NECF as it will be a gathering of evangelical leaders of all levels and all forms of ministries from all over Malaysia.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need to stabilise the financial situation of NECF in the midst of the economic meltdown. We already had a deficit in 2007 and it will be the same in 2008. We need to arrest the slide.

His long-term goals for NECF..

Firstly, nation building is the long-term goal. Any evident results from our labour can only be seen two to three years down the road because of the current fluid economic situation. We will constantly need to review and realign our plans to suit the times.

Secondly, we need to consciously, conscientiously and intentionally raise younger leaders in the NECF Council to lead the organisation.



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and can they continue to prevail over markets especially in the longer term? Unfortunately, they face many problems and have not addressed most of them.

Right now, the most pressing problem is how to continue to grow the economy (or avoid falling into deep recession) without adding debt and worsening financing imbalances.

How does the GFC affect Malaysia?

Malaysia is a small trade-dependent economy. Thus, it is highly unlikely that it will escape the GFC unscathed.

In the months to come, demand and output growth are likely to decline, and the outlook for investment returns is dim. Open unemployment may rise only marginally but employment demand is likely to be low or negative. Interest rates of medium- to long-term tenures are rising while bank loans for businesses and corporate deals may be more difficult to secure.

Meanwhile, political demands for income redistribution are expected to increase alongside, social and family tensions as people are forced to make major lifestyle adjustments.

Cruising through the hard times

Churches and para-church organisations too are very likely to face financial difficulties as offerings and donations dip.

Amidst these challenges, let us remember we have a Father who “will supply all our need” (Phil. 4:19). However, since His Word promises that He will meet our “need”, this is a good time to review and make radical changes in our lifestyle, to trim the fat.

Pray for the government, for it is an institution ordained by God – for the fear of God to be upon the people in positions of authority that they will not misuse public funds for selfish gains; that all economic measures implemented during this time will benefit everyone, especially the poor and needy; pray against all forms of greed and corruption among the authorities and against any wastage.

Pray for companies and organisations. Pray that bosses will exercise prudence in their business and honour in their contracts.

Pray for families to hold together in tough times and for Christian families to be good testimonies of prudence and calmness.

Pray for churches: to reach out with Christ’s compassion to those in need – whether materially, emotionally and spiritually; and to educate church members on godly financial management and prudence.

May God give us, His children, the wisdom to know what to do, and give us the strength to make the necessary changes in our lifestyle (Phil. 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”); and to be good stewards of His money.

Staff Movement

NECF Malaysia has appointed Eugene Yapp as Executive Secretary (Research). He takes over from Lim Siew Foong who will be leaving the organisation at the end of the year.

A lawyer by profession, Eugene has already been serving NECF as a member of the Legal Commission. He holds a Masters in Christian Studies from Malaysia Bible Seminary and has an active preaching and teaching ministry to the Brethren assemblies. Eugene also sits on the Bible Society Malaysia board where he formulates and oversees

the policies and overall running of its office. Eugene and his family worship at Setapak Gospel Hall.

We also take this opportunity to introduce Jeff Chok, an IT specialist who joined us in June. Jeff had worked with Hewlett Packard for over 9 years before taking a breather from the marketplace.

He is responsible for the efficient running of the office’s computer system and our website. He worships in PJFEC and serves in the youth and creative arts ministries.

Life-long tips to adopt that will take you through any storm . . .

- 👉 Practise prudence at all times, not just during down times. Be careful in managing your resources so as to provide for the future.
- 👉 Establish a positive budget.
- 👉 List everything you own.
- 👉 List everything you owe.
- 👉 Establish a clear debt repayment schedule.
- 👉 Control the use of credit card.
- 👉 Don’t be governed by fear, but constantly look to God and place your trust in Him.
- 👉 Counsel those affected.
- 👉 Reach out to the unsaved and continue to plan for church growth.
- 👉 Intercede for the country.
- 👉 Give to missions.
- 👉 Remember to help the poor and needy as they will be more affected by the crisis.

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plans for His people. The psalmist reminds himself that he would have lost heart unless he had believed that he would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (*Psalm 27:13*). No church, no leadership, no man of God will be exempt from the tempest of the storm, and unless one has an eschatological understanding, he will not possess the necessary edge in leading in these times.

The financial storm may hit hard at our markets and churches, but the spiritual reality is that we shall be “set high upon a rock” (*Psalm 27:5*).

This is not the time to be afraid.

Aliens in their Own Home

They are like ghosts who have been roaming the land for a long time. Born and bred on Malaysian soil, they have been called “invisible Malaysians” and “stateless folks”, simply because they do not have identity cards (ICs). And the fault lies not in themselves, but in the incompetence and apathy of the National Registration Department (NRD) whose bureaucratic system has allowed its officials to ride roughshod over the human rights of these people.

Since a person’s identity hinges upon his national identity, it is entirely inhumane to deny a person his citizenship merely on technical grounds – e.g. lack of documented evidence, inability to trace the father, administrative errors, etc. Without recognition as a person before the law, one is virtually shorn of his human dignity, basic rights and life prospect in his own country.

Many stateless people are therefore denied access to education, healthcare, employment and housing. Critics have maintained, and rightly so, that their situation is worse than that of the immigrants. Immigrants, at least, are recognised for their nationality of origin and their rights as lawful immigrants, whereas these wretched stateless Malaysians are practically deprived of their rights, privileges and duties as lawful citizens.

Cases of incompetence

The NRD’s inefficiency is apparent in several cases highlighted by the press. Stateless Rani’s seven years of efforts in securing documents to prove her place of birth went down the drain in just five minutes at the NRD when it made some errors in the forms that were issued to her. She had to start from the beginning in her application.

(*NST*, 27/8/07).

In September, 33 year-old Ragu, an odd-job worker, sought the help of Perak’s Sultan Azlan Shah after several failed attempts to obtain an IC. Despite years of trying, the NRD was not satisfied with his birth certificate and sworn affidavit. The Sultan later ordered the department to issue Ragu a temporary identification document pending his MyKad application (*NST*, 27/9/08). Ragu has no knowledge of his parents or relatives as he had been taken care of by the Welfare Department since he was four.

Another case of the NRD’s gross incompetence is that of Yong Lee Hua, a 78-year-old Sino-Kadazan in Penampang, Sabah, who lost her original IC in May 2007. She was ‘demoted’ to permanent resident (PR) status when the department issued her a red IC instead and told her to re-apply for citizenship (Malaysian citizens hold blue IC). Because of that, her bank account was frozen. Yong holds a native certificate issued in 1963 and has a valid Malaysian passport and driver’s licence (*The Star*, 27/9/08).

Her case sparked an outcry in Sabah and the NRD was fiercely rebuked for infringing the rights of Sabahan natives. Some believed that its action was a breach of the Malaysia Agreement, while others were (and still are) worried that there might be many more unreported cases of Sabahans who have lost their citizenship without the due process of law (*Daily Express*, 3/10/08). There have been calls to completely overhaul the Sabah NRD (*NST*, 6/10/08) and appoint a Sabahan to head the state’s NRD. Yong finally got back her Malaysian citizenship after the public’s outcry.

Alice, born in Singapore in 1956, returned to Sabah when she was three

years old. Her Malaysian parents have failed to obtain citizenship after several appeals.

Similarly, Stephen, born in Brunei in 1956, returned to Sabah in 1958. Both now hold PR status. Stephen has been applying for citizenship since 1975 and was recently told that his application is now with the police and the process could take a year.

Public’s suspicions

Questioned why the process is so painfully long, the normal response by the authorities is that they must “safeguard against foreigners who might use the chance to register for citizenship” (*The Star*, 21/1/08).

Commenting on the rejected cases, Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the NRD was not empowered to investigate the claims of the stateless people and those affected would have to contact the ministry directly (*NST*, 22/10/08).

These responses have stirred resentment among the public who have been lamenting the ease with which immigrants obtain citizenship compared with the stateless Malaysians.

The NRD has been accused time and again for issuing MyKad to illegal immigrants through dubious means, resulting in the grave migrant problems in Sabah. Recently, the Sepangar MP had a rude shock when he found that his identity was shared by an unrelated Filipino illegal immigrant (*NST*, 4/10/08).

The Sarawak state government is reportedly setting up a taskforce to look into the problem of rural folks who do not have identity cards or birth certificates (*The Star*, 21/10/08).

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The Great Commission & the Creation Mandate

Leong Tien Fock, Ph.D

The Great Commission as presented in Matthew 28:18–20 is usually read in isolation, not even in the context of this very Gospel itself. When we do not read a text in its immediate and larger contexts we will likely misunderstand it. Among evangelicals, Matthew 28:18–20 is often confused with world evangelisation, when evangelism is not even mentioned (only implied) in this version of the Great Commission (for the other versions see Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

The kingdom of God and the Creation Mandate

Since the Kingdom of God was promised in the Old Testament, we need to understand what the kingdom or reign of God means in that context to fully appreciate the meaning of the Great Commission (note: the Kingdom refers to the eschatological Kingdom, while kingdom refers to kingship or reign in general).

In order not to miss anything, we need to go all the way back to the very first commission given to the human race: the Creation Mandate (Gen 1:28). It was before the Fall and in the Garden of Eden that God blessed Adam and Eve, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Thus the mandate to fill and subdue the earth and rule over the creatures was given when Adam and Eve were in direct fellowship with God and before there was a need for world redemption. This mandate must first be understood in this context before we can relate it to the Great Commission.

When the earth was first created it was “formless and void” and God had to do some major renovation on the earth and the solar system before life on earth was possible. Then he created plant and animal life and finally human life (Genesis 1). God further developed (a small portion of) the

earth by planting the Garden of Eden and placed the first human couple there to “cultivate it and keep it” (Gen 2:15).

It is in this context that the Creation Mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill and subdue the earth (outside the Garden of Eden) was given. What did it mean to Adam and Eve?

John Walton (2001:186) in his Genesis commentary explains:

If people were going to fill the earth, we must conclude that they were not intended to stay in the garden in a static situation. Yet moving out of the garden would appear a hardship since land outside the garden was not as hospitable as that inside the garden (otherwise the garden would not be distinguishable). Perhaps, then, we should surmise that people were gradually supposed to extend the garden as they went about subduing and ruling. Extending the garden would extend the food supply as well as extend the sacred space (since that is what the garden represented).

The Garden was a “sacred space” because it was within this space that God dwelled with Adam and Eve. And

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The NRD will join force with the Immigration Department to unravel “the bureaucratic knots thousands of undocumented Malaysians find themselves tied up in” (*NST*, 22/10/08). The *NST* also reported there was an estimated 30,000 stateless individuals in the Indian community. This figure stands in sharp contrast

with the paper’s earlier report that some 40,000 Indian children did not have birth certification in the state of Selangor alone (*NST*, 21/1/08).

The government’s decision to sort out the problem, though long delayed, is not too late. We pray for the authorities to diligently carry out their duties with honesty, impartiality and efficiency; and for the stateless Malaysians to soon enjoy their rights,

privileges and duties as citizens.

The Church has done much to reach out to the migrants in our land. Likewise, she ought to reach out to the unfortunate stateless Malaysians, particularly the children, with genuine love. We covet your unceasing prayers for righteousness to prevail in the NRD, and for the Malaysian Church to extend its hand of compassion to the ‘alien Malaysians’.



within this space God's will was to be done perfectly ("on earth as it is in heaven"). And when they sinned by not submitting to His will they were driven out. In other words, the Garden was where the kingship of God was fully realised, and to expand the Garden by filling and subduing the earth was to expand the kingdom of God. It was thus the pre-Fall version of the command to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (Matt 6:33). The Creation Mandate came with the assurance of the availability of food in the Garden (Gen 1:29) just as the command in Matthew 6:33 came with an assurance of the provision of food (and other basic needs) through a promise. The implication in both cases is that the need to "make a living" is no excuse for not fulfilling the mandate or the command to extend God's kingdom.

But how would the multiplying of human beings and the filling and subduing of the earth actually work out in history?

Albert Wolters has answered it well:

When God rested from His work of creation (and renovation) on the seventh day, this is not the end of the development of creation, however. Although God has withdrawn from the work of creation, he has put an image of himself on the earth with a mandate to continue. The earth had been completely unformed and empty; in the six-day process of development God had formed it and filled it – but not completely. People must now carry on the work of development; by being fruitful they must fill it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more. Mankind, as God's representatives on earth, carry on where God left off. But this is now to be a human development of the earth. The human race will fill the earth with its own kind, and it will form the earth for its own kind. From now on the development of the created earth will be societal and cultural in nature. In a single word, the task ahead is civilization (1985:36).

Thus the Creation Mandate is to develop a civilisation that would spread to the whole earth. But what kind of civilisation would this be? The first human civilisation was that of the ungodly Cain and his descendants. They did build a city and develop agriculture, industry and the arts (Gen 4:17–22). But they did not call upon the name of the LORD (cf. Gen 4:26). And Lamech not only practised polygamy; he boasted about killing a boy for hitting him and, unlike Cain, had no fear of the consequence (4:23–24). It was a godless civilisation that eventually led to the Flood, which destroyed the world except Noah and his family.

The Creation Mandate was given before Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God. And they were in direct fellowship with Him. So the civilisation was intended to be distinctly (but not completely) different from that developed by Cain and his descendants. The difference

would not be in the building of the city and the development of agriculture, industry and the arts. All this is part of the mandate to "fill and subdue" the earth. The distinct difference would be that the civilisation is developed in obedience to, and in fellowship with, the Creator. Hence, the civilisation is to be an expression of the kingdom of God. In other words, the kingdom of God is to be expressed through a civilisation. What then is this civilisation supposed to be like?

The kingdom of God and the nation of Israel

The book of Exodus gives us a clue.

The nation of Israel was called to build a civilisation based on obedience to God and in fellowship with Him.

Like the Garden of Eden, the Promised Land was a sacred space in which God dwelled with His people through the tabernacle and later the temple. And like Adam and Eve, to remain in this sacred space the nation must obey God. They are to build a civilisation based on the Ten Commandments. When the nation failed to do so but instead followed the ways of her neighbours, and after much chastisement through various calamities and numerous warnings through the prophets, the nation was exiled.

The Ten Commandments constituted what we call the Constitution of the nation. The specific laws in the Old Testament were mostly culture-bound elaborations and applications of these commandments. The various institutions – the state (and the monarchy), the judiciary, the economy, the family, education and the priesthood – are all governed by the relevant laws. This means all the institutions, including the government, answer directly to God by submitting to the Ten Commandments. By studying how the respective laws (in light of their historical and social contexts) were supposed to shape these institutions, we can get some idea what the civilisation God intended would be like. For instance, the law that required farmers, when harvesting, to leave something behind in their fields for "the alien, the orphan and the widow" to glean (Deut 24:19–21) means, in generic terms, that the economy must somehow cater to the needs of the marginalised. But this is not in the form of free hand-outs – even the widows had to work with their own hands.

The priesthood was needed because this was not the Garden of Eden. Priests were needed to serve in the tabernacle and administer the sacrificial system. The tabernacle and the sacrificial system were needed because human beings are now fallen and cannot keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. The tabernacle provided the setting needed for God to dwell with fallen human beings





and the sacrificial system provided the (temporary) means for the Israelites to receive forgiveness of sins (note: all sins are forgiven on the basis of Christ's death; the sacrificial animals anticipated this ultimate Sacrifice and merely served as "credit cards").

When Israel failed in her calling in developing a civilisation that manifests the kingdom of God it was not because she failed to keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. She failed to repent and seek forgiveness when she violated the commandments. She was stubborn in following the ways of her neighbours.

Israel was to be motivated and thus empowered to keep God's commandments (and confess, repent and seek forgiveness whenever she fails) by fearing Him for who He is (Deut 10:12-14) and by loving Him for what He has done for her (Deut 10:22-11:1). Due to the fallen human nature, only some Israelites, but not the nation as a whole, were able to do this. The Babylonian Exile showed that a new and additional source of empowerment was needed.

On the eve of the Exile in 586 BC, God promised through Jeremiah and Ezekiel that He would do something new. Ezekiel gives the most details on this new work of God: He will not only cleanse the nation of her sins but will also give her a "new heart" and a "new spirit" as well as "put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Ezek 36:25-27). All this is to enable God's people to keep God's commandments to fulfil their calling.

The commandments can be summarised to two: to love God with one's heart, soul and might (Deut 6:5); and to love one's neighbour as oneself (Lev 19:18).

Alternatively, they can be summed up as: "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8). It is significant that "to do justice, to love kindness" parallels "love your neighbour as [though your neighbour were] yourself." For injustice is least obvious at the giving end and most obvious at the receiving end. If we are to do justice we must put ourselves in the shoes of those on the receiving end.

The Creation Mandate and the mission of the Church

Obviously this is the same salvation that the Church is called to bear witness to, whether as "light" (through loving one another and others) or "salt" (through influencing others). In fact, citing Isaiah 49:6, Paul said "The Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth'" (Acts 13:47), indicating that Christ's mission to bring "justice-salvation" to the earth has now been given to the Church. Therefore to fulfill the Great Commission is to fulfill the Creation Mandate to develop a civilisation in which human relations and human institutions are shaped by justice and kindness and are thus submissive to God's reign. We need to take a look at the Great Commission in this light.

This Commission is thus obviously much more than evangelising the world or even "saving souls" and is really about "saving" the world by helping to bring it into the order God intended. Saving souls and teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded is only the means to this end. Saved souls have "eternal life" (the emphasis of John's Gospel) because they have entered the eternal Kingdom of God. Just as the eternal Kingdom is "already" and "not yet" their eternal life is also "already" and "not yet." The "already" aspect is a foretaste of the "not yet" eschatological salvation in the new heavens and new earth. Thus Christians cannot really talk about eternal life without thinking of the eternal Kingdom.

If Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth, He already has authority over every nation, institution and person. Those in every nation who willingly respond to the Gospel of the Kingdom are to bear witness to it in and through every area of their life, so that they will make a difference in and to the institutions of which they are a part, whether the family, church, economy, or even the state. In this way they seek to bring their nation into submission to the reign of Christ. Of course this reign will never be universal or perfect until Christ returns. In other words, Christ came to bring "justice-salvation" to the nations; He has left us, but has sent us the Holy Spirit, to continue from where He left off; and He will return to consummate what He and we have been called to do.

This is an extract. The full article will appear in Forum VI to be published by the NECF Malaysia Research Commission.

NECF MALAYSIA Financial Statement January – October 2008

	RM
Income Gifts & Donations	354,610
Subscriptions received for 2008	168,510
	523, 120
Less:	
Expenses for the same period	608,100
Deficit to date	(84,980)

We anticipate the deficit will be close to RM200,000 by year-end. We solicit your prayers and support to help us meet our obligations for the year 2008.

The Mission to Reclaim Mission Schools



By Chan Geok Oon
& Lim Boon Hock

THE EARLY MISSIONARIES SET up schools in our country not too long after they arrived. They were actually the pioneers in establishing schools in Malaysia. Quite a number of our national leaders were groomed and trained for leadership positions in these once prestigious mission schools where quality education was carried out by dedicated and well-qualified teachers.

A few luminaries of mission schools are Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Aziz, Mercy Malaysia president Datuk Dr Jemilah Mahmood, our Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah, and even our Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had his Form Six education in a mission school in Penang.

We believe good practices and traditions carried out during the early decades of mission schools need to be revived and new ideas tried out. If mission schools have the responsibility of administering and selecting their own principals and teachers, and are able to inculcate high standard of moral values amongst the pupils through good moral and Religious Knowledge classes, and even weekly chapel services for non-Muslims students as done in the past, they may be able to once again produce men and women with high moral standard and calibre for the betterment of Malaysians.

Unfortunately today's mission schools are no longer as effective as it used to be partly because of the shortage of dedicated Christian teachers; and in this regard it has lost its cutting edge.

Bridging the Racial Divide

It is hoped that the Education Ministry in conjunction with mission school boards could look for ways and

means to rebuild mission schools to their former standard, if not higher, so that their role in providing quality education to all the races in the country can be enhanced. As a matter of fact, of all the existing local schools in the country, it is the mission schools that still have a good composition of various ethnic groups in their student population. This cannot be said of the Malay religious schools, Chinese schools, Tamil schools or even the national-type schools.

Therefore, mission schools are ideal places to forge inter-cultural communication and racial harmony in a multi-racial society. It has to be communicated to teachers and students alike that if Malaysia is to have a place and a future in a globalised world, it certainly requires full participation, contributions and cooperation of all races.

Polarisation in the Malaysian society will not be to our advantage when we have to face stiff competition in the outside world. Unity within is strength, while racism, disunity, polarisation and strife can only lead to the weakening, decline and destruction of any society. Ultimately, the entire nation spirals downhill and all people groups in the nation suffer as has happened in the case of Afghanistan.

Can mission schools once again model a multi-racial and multi-religious community of loving, caring, God-fearing diligent people where race or religion is never an issue? Where everyone is helping everyone else to progress regardless of race or creed, realising that every human being is worthy of due respect? This is the kind of progressive caring society that will be a blessing to all and is pleasing to God. We believe it is God's desire to bless Malaysia and to see it fulfill its God-given destiny, which is to be a model 'rainbow nation for Asia' and

regions beyond.

Mission schools can certainly play a more proactive and effective role in inculcating racial harmony in children from a young age, besides promoting the universal values of compassion, kindness, justice, peace and integrity. Racial pride and hatred should never be encouraged in a multi-racial community. Our young people must be taught from young in homes and school to respect and care for others irrespective of race or creed.

A culture of polarisation, prejudice, mistrust and hatred was unheard of when the mission schools were run by dedicated Christian pioneers and administrators in the early days. Let mission schools bridge the racial divide once again.

Having a clear policy

Whatever our misgivings or reservations about mission schools, the fact remains that they were brought into being through the prayers and sacrifices of the godly pioneers and missionaries. These schools have been entrusted to our stewardship, and there is a very real sense in which we will be held accountable. Our response needs to be more than just a simplistic 'give them up' or 'take them back from the government'.

Perhaps we can start with a clear articulation of a policy for education in our mission schools. Since the mission schools agreed to be run as government-assisted schools in 1971, they have lost much of their original character and ideals.

In his paper 'Christian Schools in Malaysia' released in 1986, (the late) David Boler outlined three distinct phases through which the mission schools have passed. The

...Continued on next page

first phase, which Boler called the 'Pre-Merdeka Era', was when the Christian missionaries who established the schools also administered them.



Next, came the 'Unified Teaching Service' which was implemented following the Razak Report (KPM, 1956). Here, each school was responsible for selecting its own teachers through its Board of Governors.

The third phase came with the recommendations made by the Aziz Commission (1971) where teachers would now become government servants and their appointment and deployment determined by the Teachers' Service Commission.

Boler's analysis helps us understand better how the Christian ethos and traditions in mission schools have gradually eroded over the years. The loss of this original sense of identity of the mission schools has been so keenly felt that many of the mission authorities have begun rethinking the future of mission schools (Malaysian Lasallian Education Council, 2007).

Realising that there is a gradual deterioration of educational standards in the national schools, the Ministry of Education seems to be more open to new ways of solving problems, and this may provide our mission schools the opportunity to play a

more relevant role. Again, with the current policy of teaching Mathematics and Science in English, and a general awareness of the importance of the English language, mission schools may have better opportunities to raise their profile once again if the government gives its full support and encouragement.

Although there have been many calls to 'reclaim' our schools, we need to be clear about just what it is we want to reclaim. Related to that, we need to ask the more basic questions like: What is our vision and mission? What is the underlying philosophy with regards to education in our mission schools?

Even more challenging to each mission authority will be the issue of how our mission schools may adapt to the current socio-political situation, and be sensitive to the contextual realities of our national education system. How, for example, can our vision and mission statements be explicit about maintaining our Christian ethos and traditional values whilst taking into account ethnic and religious sensitivities?

This is an extract from the article, "Reflections on the Education of Children in Malaysia – Some Issues and Challenges, in Particular Relating to Mission Schools". The full article will appear in the NECF Malaysia Forum VI.

They came... they saw... they build mission schools

THE ANGLICANS WERE THE FIRST TO start a mission school in Malaysia. In 1816, Rev. Robert Hutchings opened Penang Free School (Gomez, 2004a). It was later handed over to the government to administer.

Next came the Catholic mission which established the St Xavier's Institution (Secondary) and St Xavier's School (Primary) through the La Salle Brothers in Penang in 1852 (Brown, 1997). Over in Sabah, the Catholics also opened their first primary school in 1883 – St Mary's Primary in Sandakan. Indeed the majority of mission schools we see today are those established by the Catholic mission, for example, Convent Light Street in Penang, St John's Institution in Kuala Lumpur, St Paul's in Seremban, and many more.

Methodist mission schools had their beginnings in the 1880s when Rev. William F. Oldham started the Anglo-Chinese School in Singapore on 1st March 1886. Five years later, the Anglo-Chinese School was started in Penang (Ho, 1964).

Mission schools were also established by the Presbyterian Church, the Brethren Church, the Borneo Evangelical Mission and the Seventh Day Adventists.

Currently, there are 227 mission schools in Peninsular Malaysia and 235 in East Malaysia, making a total of 462. Of these, 338 are primary and 124 are secondary schools (Gomez, 2004c; Pillay, 2003).

For a brief and concise history, and other interesting information about mission schools, check out the series of articles which appeared in *The Star (Education)* on 4 July, 2004. They may be accessed online from the Malaysian Mission Schools News Archive on the Assunta Alumni website (for e.g., <http://assuntarian.com/media/040704a.html>).

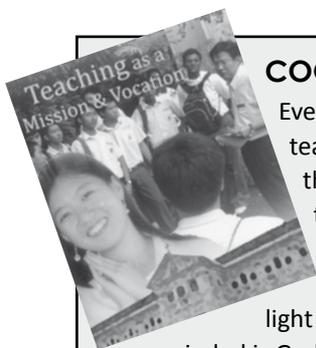
COOL TO BE A TEACHER

Every school and every concerned citizen is crying out for good teachers but where are they coming from? The good news is – they are in our midst. The hard-to-swallow news is – we have to offer our youths, or at least, strongly encourage them to seriously consider teaching as a vocation.

"Churches must see the teaching profession in the same light as local or overseas missions. Every teacher who is mission-minded is God's powerful missionary or youth worker in our schools," says Yap Kok Keong, chairman of the Malayan Christian Schools' Council (MCSC).

To promote teaching as an eternity-bound vocation and mission, the MCSC has produced a booklet and DVD set that will help to change the negative mindset towards the teaching vocation. Every church should get a set and disseminate the information to its congregation, parents and youths.

To get a set, call MCSC at 03-7956 5310 or e-mail Ms Yin Kam Yoke (MCSC Honorary Secretary) at kamyokeyin@yahoo.ie



Touch **NOT** the Lord's Anointed!

THE phrase, "Touch not the Lord's Anointed", is often tossed around when there is a leadership crisis in a church. Challengers of the leadership would be reminded to keep their hands off the 'anointed' or else... (face the consequences of God's judgment?). How did this phrase arise and how does it square with the rest of God's Word?

Berita NECF invites LOW CHAI HOK to touch on this thorny issue.

Because the ministry of the church calls for the fulfillment of an infinite mission by the painfully finite means of broken people who seem always short on resources and shorter still on the time and commitment, church leadership is tough.

It is inevitable, therefore, that differences of opinion often arise. Caught in such laboriously difficult situations, church leaders have often been tempted to shout down 'the opposition' with the demand to "touch not the Lord's anointed!"

What are we to think of this "Do not touch the Lord's anointed management approach (let's call it *Dontlama*, for short)?"

Firstly, *Dontlama* reads Scriptures the wrong way round. The foundational text for the idea of not 'touching the Lord's anointed' is the Saul-David narrative (1 Sam 24-26). In this text, it expresses David's *free and voluntary decision* not to kill Saul. Motivated by his personal sense of right and wrong, *he saw* Saul – despite his bloodthirsty advances – as the Lord's anointed.

Dontlama turns a free and voluntary decision into an *injunction* motivated either by the leader's need for recognition as the Lord's anointed, or by the presumption that he is the Lord's anointed. Instead of reading the Scriptures, *Dontlama* reads the Scriptures *to others*.

Secondly, *Dontlama* draws a parallel between two conflicts:



the leader-vs-his dissenting member and Saul-vs-David. Since the demand is made upon the dissenting member to act like David, that leaves the leader paralleled by Saul.

Yes, Saul was the Lord's anointed. He was also wrong. Rejected. And, in the end, decapitated. Now, why would any leader want to be so equated?

Thirdly, and fundamentally, *Dontlama* is spiritual ransom, falsely holding the threat of divine punishment over the heads of the dissenting members as the price for compliance.

True leadership envisions, enables, and persuades. It does not manipulate. Nothing demonstrates our lack of true leadership and the absence of the Holy Spirit and grace in our life and ministry more than our descent into machination

"Where is the servanthood if we lord it over our brethren with such presumption of being the Lord's anointed?"

and coercion.

Finally, *Dontlama* is hubris (excessive pride, arrogance and ambition), and a demonstration of our lack of faith. *Dontlama* says, in effect, "Look, I am the Lord's anointed."

If we are, truly, the Lord's anointed, will not others recognise it, and will not the Lord open the way for us, without our egging for it? And is not our Lord Jesus Christ our only "the Lord's anointed," and the rest of us mere servants? Where is the servanthood if we lord it over our brethren with such presumption of being the Lord's anointed?

Effective church leadership is an act of grace, plus a lot of miracles. "You, you shall not touch me, me – the Lord's anointed, OK?" is not one of them. Quite definitely so.

Formerly a pastor, Low Chai Hok is now an itinerant preacher and expositor of God's Word. Presently, he and his wife, Lilian, are building a home for Christians who need a place of quiet to find healing for a wounded heart, to reflect, to be alone with God or to write.

See next page for more on this issue. ➡

Growing the Prayer Network

There's much to be thankful for when the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission members and partners gather for its annual thanksgiving tea on Nov. 30.

The group will be reflecting on God's mighty working in the ministry of prayer in Malaysia over the past 10 years when a group of people gathered in 1999 to help mobilise prayer for the NECF Malaysia Emmanuel Celebration evangelistic event. It was a massive meeting held at the Bukit Jalil open-air stadium and for three nights, close to 300,000 people thronged the stadium to hear the gospel.

From this event, the seed of

national mobilisation for concerted, continuous intercession for the nation was planted into the hearts of the prayer group who felt they had to pray beyond an event.

Thus, the vision for the Malaysia Prayer Network was birthed.

The group took their vision to NECF and immediately, the NECF Prayer Commission absorbed the group and took off with a clear vision and mission. Always looking ahead and seeking ways to get churches to 'think about the nation and pray for the nation', the commission worked on many initiatives, some of which have become permanent features on churches' annual calendar.

Among the initiatives are:

- 1) Pastors' Prayer Shield – mobilising churches and Christians to pray for their pastors and leaders;
- 2) Light Up Your Nation – a 40-day prayer and fast and charity season in conjunction with Merdeka Day (Independence Day);
- 3) Yearly national prayer conferences for the four major language groups;
- 4) Global Day of Prayer – sending prayer teams to different towns to mobilise 10-day prayer for the world;
- 5) Regional prayer consultations to network churches and strengthen prayer for their regions; and
- 6) 'Love Kelantan' and 'Love Terengganu' prayer initiatives which evolved to 'Love Malaysia on Our Knees' which focuses prayer on individual states on a monthly basis.

During the last decade, several people have been actively involved in these initiatives. Though they seem to be in the forefront, leading the charge to inspire churches to be more prayerful for the nation, often times they laboured behind the scene in much prayer and tears.

Among these people is Rev. Ann Low who took up the call to be the Executive Secretary of the NECF Prayer Commission in 2000. Come January 2009, she will be moving on to new and more exciting responsibilities with the newly-formed *Malaysia National Prayer Network (MNPN).

The NECF Council thank Ann for her valuable contributions to the NECF's prayer ministry and wish her the very best in her next phase of ministry. We also thank the members of the Prayer Commission for their sacrifice and support in strengthening the prayer movement for the nation.

As we anticipate a challenging year for 2009, and to ensure continuity for the prayer ministry, NECF Secretary-General Sam Ang will fill the role of Executive Secretary for the Prayer Commission until a suitable person is called by the Lord.

* To know more about MNPN, look up its website www.prayer.net.my

⇒ A pastor's response to *Dontlama*

IF THE ANOINTED DOES NOT want to be touched, then he should live and lead in such a way that no member will want to 'touch' him, Chan Theam Lai, pastor of the Ipoh Canning Garden Baptist Church.

And to be 'untouchable', the anointed (that is, pastors and leaders) must first recognise their fallibility – that they are as easily tempted, if not more, as any ordinary member, he adds. This demands humility and a constant dependence on God.

Next, pastors and leaders should create an environment where they can be protected from the temptation of power abuse or corruption.

"Pastors and leaders who have absolute power are on dangerous terrain. As a pastor, I have a check and balance system in the administration of my church that makes it difficult for me to commit malpractices or fall into temptation.

"I also recognise that I have room for errors and that not all my decisions are the right ones. That's why I have

a team of leaders who work with me and keep me in check. Furthermore, I believe that the pastor is not the only anointed one in the church. The elders and leaders also carry God's anointing," he points out.

However, Pr Chan's church practises *dontlama* (Don't touch the Lord's anointed) in that the congregation accepts that their pastor and leaders, once put in their position by the church members, are God's anointed and appointed.

If and when situations arise where the leadership is challenged, the leaders will journey with the disgruntled to work out the issues of discontent. Pr Chan recalls two such cases in his church.

"On both cases, we journey with them to work out the issues. We focused on honoring God and looking after the welfare of the sheep. Decisions were difficult in both circumstances but God's wisdom prevailed when we sought Him," he shares.



Meditating on Yoga

On Nov. 22, the National Fatwa Council issued an edict that yoga is *haram* (prohibited) for Muslims. Earlier on, Prof. Zakaria Stapa of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Islamic Studies Centre had remarked that practising yoga could deviate Muslims from their faith. His statement drew negative reactions from yoga instructors and students.

Many view yoga as a form of exercise to improve and maintain good health. But why has it become such a big issue to certain religious groups? The point of contention seems to be the meditation techniques – or “curbing the mind” as some call it. While it has been argued that these techniques are scientifically proven to improve one's health and have nothing to do with religion, yogis – practitioners of yoga who have reached an advanced spiritual state – think otherwise. They are adamant that yoga, regardless of how it is branded, is Hinduism.

Within the Christian community, yoga too has been a controversial subject. Rev. Dr Herman Shastri, the General Secretary of the Malaysian Council of Churches, opined it was all right so long as Christians do not pray “to other Gods while practising yoga” (*The Star*, 31/10/08). However, some Christians disagree, and like the yogis, they firmly believe that yoga cannot be separated from its Hindu roots even if one takes away the spiritual underpinning and practises only the physical exercises.

Still others hold that yoga can surely be redeemed for God's good purposes because our God is a redemptive God. A growing interest in Christian Yoga was thus developed, particularly in America, replacing Hindu spirituality and philosophy with Christian spirituality and theories. Such concept, nonetheless, did not go down well with certain groups.

The American Hindu Foundation, in its response to an article “Stretching for Jesus” featured in *Time* magazine (25 Aug. 2005), commented, “Hindu Americans are rightfully outraged by the brazen appropriation of one of their vibrant faith's most lasting contributions to this country's health, well-being and popular culture.” It called Christian Yoga an act of “intellectual property theft” and accused evangelical Christians of proselytising and converting Hindus in the guise of Christianised Hindu practices.

According to Dr Ng Kam Weng, director of Kairos Research Centre, Christian Yoga fails to understand how yoga meditative exercises (especially the breathing techniques and the mantra chanting) work to disrupt our mental function. Change of name does not change the process, he says.

Yoga is an ancient practice that originated from India. The goal of the practitioners is to achieve oneness or union with the Absolute through physical and mental disciplines. Dr Ng emphasises that one must keep in mind the historical connection between yoga and Hinduism and how such practices are traditionally integrated with its own philosophy and spiritual worldview. The physical exercises are merely initial steps to prepare oneself to become more attuned to a higher reality.

Perhaps the question for many Christians would be: Is it possible to separate the physical exercise from the spiritual aspect?

“In theory it is possible for Christians to separate the physical exercises from the spiritual exercises. I have in mind Christians who just want to try out some postures to stretch their muscles when they exercise at home. Others who are more serious may try out *Pilates. However, those who take yoga seriously will soon find that yoga is offered as a package deal. Meditation is the main ingredient to achieve spiritual enlightenment. In other words, serious yoga instructors do not separate the form from the substance,” Dr Ng explains.

He also clarifies the difference between Christian and yoga meditation. The former carries a positive function since meditating on the glory of God and His manifold works inspire the Christian to praise and love God; it is relationship and content oriented. The latter, in contrast, has a negative function – it deliberately empties the mind of rational thought processes and eventually leads to the dissolution of ego or the inner self. Dr Ng cautions that Christians should be wary of such exercises in dissociating the mind from its normal function since this may leave one vulnerable to external spiritual influence.

Some may have reportedly found peace with yoga meditation, but others have developed mental dysfunction, e.g. hallucination, outburst of uncontrollable energies through the body and emotional trauma. According to renowned psychoanalyst Carl Jung, “The deliberately-induced psychotic state, which in certain unstable individuals might easily lead to a real psychosis, is a danger that needs to be taken very seriously indeed.”

Dr Ng urges Christians, who are practising yoga or who are thinking of taking it up, to seriously consider their motive for doing so. “If it is merely for physical exercises, there are other alternatives; if it is for meditation, we need to seriously consider the basis of yoga meditation as it is traditionally practised.

“Why would I hitch my Christian faith to a process which might render myself vulnerable to influence from deceptive spiritual forces?” he asked.

*Pilates (pī-lā'tēz) – A system of exercises that promote the strengthening of the body, often using specialised equipment. Named after Joseph Pilates (1880–1967), German-born American physical fitness instructor who developed the system. – The American Heritage® Dictionary

NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ORDINARY MEMBERS

K.K. Bread of Life Christian Church, Kota Kinabalu, *pastored by Daniel Chin Vui Kiong*; Calvary Charismatic Centre Sarawak (Marudi), *represented by Pr Hii Lu Kuoh*; Gereja Logos Charis Kluang *pastored by Loh Hee Min*; Bethseda Church, Petaling Jaya, *pastored by Francis Xaviour a/l Anthony*; Alpha Malaysia Bhd, Kuala Lumpur, *represented by Foo Lai Wei*; Sidang Injil Borneo, Skudai, *pastored by Jasme Dairis*; Charisma Baptist Church, Sri Kembangan, *pastored by Elinor Tan Ah Nya*, Changloon Glory Christian Centre, Kedah, *pastored by Tan Beng Ling*; Glorious Kingdom Christian Centre, Penang, *pastored by Chan Suan Fook*; Persatuan Orang Pekak Kristian Negri Pulau Pinang, *represented by Pr Kim Eun Hyeok*; and Evangelical Charismatic Churches of Malaysia, Subang Jaya, *represented by Rev. Eu Hong Seng*

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Pr Michael a/l Arokiasamy and Dr David Sheddan



The Council and Staff of NECF Malaysia wish all our readers a Blessed Christmas and New Year.

HOPE for MALAYSIA

NECF MALAYSIA 2009 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Event	Venue
JANUARY 12 – 14	East Coast Chinese Pastors Retreat	*TBC
FEBRUARY 27 – 28	Evangelism Consultation	*TBC
MARCH Month-long	Evangelism Training by Bill Newman	Pen. Malaysia
10 – 11	Tamil Pastors and Leaders' Conference	FGT, Subang Jaya
17 – 19	Orang Asli Consultation	NECF office
APRIL 1 – 4	BM Prayer and Leadership Training with Daniel Pandji	Kota Kinabalu
MAY 8 – 10	BM Leadership Training Conference with Daniel Pandji	Kuching, Sarawak
31	Global Day of Prayer	Nationwide
JUNE 3 – 4	Youth Prayer Gathering in collaboration with Malaysia Youth Prayer Gathering	Kulim, Kedah
30 – 3 JULY	East Malaysia Chinese Prayer Camp	Miri, Sarawak
JULY 5 – 8	Peninsular Malaysia Chinese Prayer Camp	Kuala Lumpur
22 – 30 AUG	National 40-Day Fast & Prayer	Nationwide
AUGUST 7 – 9	BM Leadership Training Conference	Miri, Sarawak
25 – 27	NECF National Church Conference	Kuala Lumpur
30	National Prayer Rally	*TBC
SEPTEMBER 6 – 7	Students' Ministry Forum jointly organised by NECF YouthNet and Christian organisations	*Ipoh
8 – 11	North Peninsular Malaysia Chinese Pastors' Retreat	*TBC
OCTOBER 13 – 15	Orang Asli Conference	Port Dickson
* To be confirmed		

NECF Malaysia has scheduled Dec. 19 to 21 (Friday to Sunday) as the official dates for churches and individual Christians to run the nationwide COHM2 (Celebration of Hope Malaysia 2) for the second year running.

Last year's COHM saw 40,000 guests attending the evangelistic programme held during the Christmas season.

Figures collated indicate that 10,000 of the participants expressed faith in Jesus for the first time while another 7,000 rededicated their lives. COHM comprises the Matthew and Friends (MAF) programme where Christians host a meal for their unchurched friends and view an evangelistic show or message together thereafter.

While the MAF programme – run in English, Mandarin, Bahasa and Tamil – can be used anytime during the year, there is great synergy in synchronised evangelism and focused prayer throughout the country during the Christmas season.

COHM was jointly conducted by NECF, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the mainline denominations. For COHM2, NECF will provide participating churches the MAF master video for their duplication. NECF is also partnering with other Christian organisations to provide Bibles and follow-up discipleship materials.

Interested churches may contact NECF for the master video.

Sudan In line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, legislative elections are due to be held by July 2009. A year ago the situation looked futile in the face of the provocative separatist rhetoric from the south and the belligerent jihadist rhetoric from the north.

There has been much prayer for a unified opposition to contest the 2009 elections and unseat the Arab Islamist military regime in Khartoum. Praise God that the late Dr John Garang's vision of a 'New Sudan' (united, secular and rights-affirming) is now catching on and a campaign to forge an opposition that could contest the elections is emerging.

Both the Islamist government (based in the north) and the Southern People's Liberation Movement (a national movement based in the south) are re-arming and conflict appears imminent and unavoidable. But if a strong, broad political opposition can be built around the SPLM and given a mandate to govern then the Islamist regime's days could well be numbered.

Pray for the nation: that God in His mercy will bring life and energy to the 'New Sudan' vision, and raise up wise leaders of strength and conviction who will advance justice, liberty, equity and hope in a brighter future.

Pray for the Church: for the Holy Spirit to fill the longsuffering, traumatised, war-ravaged and persecuted Church with a Spirit of grace that will equip them to advance reconciliation and gospel witness amongst those who have persecuted and terrorised them for so long.

India Continue to pray for India where anti-Christian violence in BJP-led states has caused many deaths and the displacement of multitudes. Pray for the nation: for God to intervene and restrain Hindutva violence and use this tragedy to awaken Indians to a reassessment and rejection of

Hindutva ideology.

Pray for the Church: for God to protect and provide for the hundreds of thousands of Christians displaced by genocidal Hindutva terror in Orissa, and unsettled by the Hindutva violence.

Iraq Iraq's Christians are under siege, facing genocide, and running out of places to go. After serious threats and 12 assassinations within two weeks in October, 750 Christian families totalling 3,750 individuals fled for their lives between 4 and 12 October to seek refuge with relatives or in churches and monasteries in various Christian-majority towns across Nineveh (*WEA Religious Liberty Commission Prayer Bulletin, Oct 15*). BBC reported that up to 12,000 Iraqi Christians have fled Mosul in October (20 Oct, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7696242.stm).

This is the most concerted campaign against the Christians, although they have had their share of fallout from the Iraqi upheavals that followed the 2003 overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. Since the invasion, Iraq's Christian population is believed to have fallen from around 800,000 to about 500,000, with many emigrating for good.

The escalation in terror may be linked to the Christian community's recent attempts to protect its interests and future: (1) Assyrian Christians are increasingly taking up arms for self-defence and joining the police force in record numbers; (2) they are protesting the loss of their political representation – on 24 Sept, the al-Maliki government voted to abolish Article 50 of the Iraqi Provincial Election Law which reserved seats for minorities; and (3) some Assyrians are calling for the creation of an autonomous Christian-ruled province adjoining the Kurdish region, a controversial issue dividing the

Christian community.

Currently, there is an urgent need for humanitarian assistance for the displaced Christians. The Kurdistan regional government has joined Christians, Iraqi government and international organisations in providing relief and support to the displaced Christians, who come from some of the world's oldest Christian communities, including Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrian Orthodox and others. Some of their languages, both liturgical and everyday, go back to biblical times, including variations of the Aramaic spoken by Jesus Christ.

Pray that our suffering brethren will experience God as their shield and encourager, hearing their prayers, intervening on their behalf and increasing their faith. Pray for God to frustrate the plans of the wicked, bringing their unjust, repressive and genocidal plans to ruin. (Psalm 146:9).

May the Spirit of God breathe love and mercy over the land and into hearts so that his people may be preserved and empowered as his witnesses in Iraq.

Philippines In August the Supreme Court intervened to postpone the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MoA would have given the MILF jurisdiction over a de facto Islamic state in Mindanao.

When the signing ceremony was cancelled, Muslim militants who were aligned with the MILF attacked Christian rural areas of Mindanao, murdering and wounding dozens and displacing many thousands. In October the Supreme Court ruled that the MoA was unconstitutional. Tensions are high. Some Islamic elements are threatening jihad.

Pray for the Church to stand firm and and for a peaceful solution.