

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

Berita NECF

Editorial

How can you mend this broken nation?



As the nation enters her 52nd year of independence, the dynamics and circumstances within the country have brought about such changes that Malaysia itself has become a mission field!

Over the years, Malaysians have witnessed the rise and fervour of ethnic nationalism that has resulted in racial disharmony. This has led to a fragmented society and an increase in social ills resulting from the erosion of moral standards and disrespect for civil liberties.

Distressed quarters from every side have pleaded for a process of change towards the betterment of society and nation.

What can the Christian community in Malaysia do to contribute to this process of necessary change? How can Christians in Malaysia impact society and the public square, to be “salt and light” unto the nation to effect transformation in Jesus Christ?

The Path to Healing

Current realities and social trends suggest an urgent need to instil a sense of personal integrity and the value of civic responsibility. This is

to guard the sanctity of individual freedom and counterbalance the intrusion of the autonomous State while linking individuals with one another so that all may work together for the common good of the nation.

It is here that we discern the Christian community as a whole and churches may come together with their manifold resources to contribute to the common good of the nation. Churches must therefore strive for a vision in nation building as part of their mission and witness to the country and the world.

A vision for nation building must necessarily involve two basic components: (1) Seeking the welfare and well-being of all people and communities in all aspects of life through the local church; and (2) All aspects of life include social, economic, public and spiritual.

It is apparent from this vision that the Church is confronted with two major challenges: (1) in terms of direction, how and in what way are churches to implement this vision? and (2) in terms of practicality, what concrete projects or efforts are to be undertaken for the future and in what way is

evangelism a part in this effort?

At a *Pastor-Leaders Consultation Nation Building* held in 2006, two major responses arose: (1) the need to establish a prayer network¹; and (2) the need to actively engage in nation building.

The consultation revealed a growing awareness and consensus on the part of the Church to mobilise their congregation towards this national agenda of nation building.

This response was due in part to the recognition that the Gospel must not only be preached but lived out.

...continued on page 4

Inside this Issue

- 2 Chairman: The *Other* Meltdown
- 3 ‘Allah’ Goes on Air
- 6 Sin’s Double Standard
- 7 Is Our Translation of ‘Allah’ Inconsistent, Insensitive and Inaccurate
- 8 Lavished with Extravagance
- 9 Christians and Politics
- 10 Youth Alpha Joins NS
- 11 Personal Transformation
- 14 Coming Up

NECF Malaysia Council

Chairman

Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Vice-Chairman

Elder Kong Yeng Phooi

Honorary Secretary

Pr Tay Wah Seng

Honorary Treasurer

Dr Khoo Kay Hup

Committee Members

Rev. Dexter Low

Rev. Ng Kok Kee

Rev. Richard Ong

Rev. Peter Mutang

Rev. Foo Moy Peng

Rev. Elisha Satvinder

Rev. Simon Chandran

Pr Chan Theam Lai

Pr Alfred Phua

Pr Jerry Dusing

Mrs Grace Hee

Advisor

Rev. Tan Sri Prince Guneratnam

NECF Malaysia Staff

Secretary-General

Sam Ang

Senior Executive Secretary

Patrick Cheng

Executive Secretaries

Lucrece Loo (Prayer)

Kathryn Tan (Finance)

Eugene Yapp (Research)

Cheong Sze Ying (Chinese)

Pr Azariah Rajendram (Tamil)

Alfred Tais (Bahasa Malaysia)

Larry Lee (Youth and Leadership Development)

Simon S. Arputham (Administrator)

Ong Juat Heng (Communications)

Jeff Chok (Information Technology)

Confidential Secretary

Ching Bee Gaik

Administrative Secretaries

Yvonne Chin

Leong Kit Wah

Sangan Mutang

Administrative Assistants

Sally Tan

Jouslly Buaya

Executive Advisor

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

Printed by Akitiara Corporation

1&3, Jln TPP1/3, Tmn Perindustrian Puchong

Batu12, 47100 Puchong, Selangor

Chairman's Message

The Other Meltdown

Now that the euphoria over Barack Obama's election is somewhat over, many are beginning to realise that it's not the colour of one's skin but the colour of one's heart that really matters.

The Americans seem to have missed the point that the morality of the nation is more important than the economy of the nation. Obama is known to be pro-choice, pro-gay, pro-anti prayers in institutions and is blatantly tearing down the moral safeguards in the US. The ramifications are sure to be felt in other parts of the world.

Already a division of the European Union that deals with gay rights has demanded that all foreign aid to Nigeria be suspended after the Nigerian government voted not to recognise homosexual "marriage."¹

No doubt the financial meltdown is the major concern worldwide, but very close at the heels of the global crisis is the other more sinister and damning meltdown – the moral meltdown.

Without doubt, the tsunami will hit our shores ... but it's not going to be just one. It will definitely be a double whammy – the financial and moral meltdown simultaneously!

Signs of the moral meltdown are already on our horizon, for instance:

- Growing disrespect for legitimate authorities (e.g. hijacking of a state government);
- Rise of radicalism (e.g. the recent needless protest over the teaching of Math and Science in English and the proposed further restriction on the use of 'Allah' in all states);
- Blurring of moral boundaries (more nude pictures coming?);
- Little Napoleons getting away without even a smack on the wrist (how did 70,000 Bangladeshis

get their visas to enter the country when the Government is trying to solve the growing unemployment problem?);

- Slowness in prosecuting abuse of power and wrongful parties (e.g. Kugan's death mystery and the clearly "unlawful invasion" of Parliament to chide a veteran wheelchair-bound opposition MP);
- Numbness to the cries of the poor and needy;
- Silence of the majority of MPs over the abuse of ISA (Malaysia is the only country that has arrested a reporter under ISA for her safety); and
- The clear lack of political will to track conveniently missing witnesses.



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

If ever there was a time to apply 2 Chronicles 7:14², it is TODAY.

The phrase "If My people will" commit themselves to the fourfold requirements – 1) "humble themselves", 2) "pray" (not just attend prayer conferences where celebrity Christianity is endorsed), 3) "seek My face" and 4) "turn from their wicked ways" – then there's hope for the country.

When was the last time we admitted that the church (yours and mine) is 'wicked'?

We can be so pharisaical and obsessed with how bad 'they' and things are that we, like so many, miss the point that it is our wickedness and not their 'badness' that God is going to deal with first.

There has not been much

...continued next page

Allah Goes On Air

From comments and discussions in print, the 'Allah' issue has gone on air and shows no sign of letting up even as opposing sides are battling out in the courts on whether non-Muslims have the right to use the word.

On Feb. 17, TV1's talk show, *Bicarawara*, invited three Muslim scholars to examine the question "Should the word Allah be used by all?" One of the panel members was reported to be a former Augustinian monk who had served 12 years in Germany before he converted to Islam. The other was a Chinese Muslim while the third was a professor of Islamic studies from a local university.

Among the points they agreed on were:

- 'Allah' is a special name and pronoun and should only be used in Islam to designate their God.
- Christians in the Middle East use 'Allah' in their Arabic Bible and everyday speech but this is because the Arab Christians had no choice whereas in Malaysia, people can use the word 'Tuhan'.
- If non-Muslims use 'Allah', it would confuse Muslims and weaken their faith because they are not very educated in Islam.
- There must be a "hidden agenda" for the sudden usage of 'Allah' now.

NECF Malaysia maintains that languages and words are universal property and should not be monopolised by any one

religion or ethnic group ("Allah for All", *Berita NECF*, January–February, 2008). That includes 'Allah'.

For a detailed explanation on why we uphold the usage of 'Allah' for everyone, read the article by Kairos Research Centre

Director Dr Ng Kam Weng on <http://www.necf.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=12&action=view&retrieveid=922>

(See related story on page 7.)

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism,

Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) has issued a press statement to support the usage of the 'Allah' word for all Malaysians. The statement said any attempt to proscribe the use of the term 'Allah' in any way to any religion is untenable from the standpoint of language, theology or history.

"No religion can claim exclusive possession or use of this term. Historically, the common use of the term predated the Holy Koran and Islam," said the statement.

The council called on the Government to stop issuing orders prohibiting non-Muslims from using 'Allah'. Instead, if necessary, let the respective religions explain to their communities any difference in theology arising from the use of the common term.

Religious freedom must be respected as a fundamental human right. "As a consultative council of five major religions in Malaysia, MCCBCHST calls on all concerned to always be careful to treat each religion and its practices and beliefs with deep respect," the statement urged.

"No religion can claim exclusive possession or use of this term ('Allah')."

Continued from previous page...

"Nehustan shouting" (2 Kings 18:4) in our churches and we are definitely not passionate about what He is passionate about. Materialism and worldliness have distorted our testimony. And there is no wickedness?

The apostle John pointedly traces the root of much of the sickness of our world today to the "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:15–16).

And with the crisis looming ever greater round the corner, we rush to educate ourselves concerning the impending problems, attend seminars to upgrade our leadership skills and glean the "needed tactics" to deal with the crisis and perchance save ourselves and the Church from the woes that will hit our shores.

We are looking for sophisticated

answers – while ignoring the basic root problems.

The Church struggles to be prophetic because we do not realise that God wants to say the simple things. It would have been easier and more profound if He had told us to say something about the unexplainable strength of the US dollar, the 10 reasons for the collapse of leading banks or the inner workings of the Illuminati³.

If all the Old and New Testament prophets were alive today, what would they say to us? No doubt it will be "repent," "pray," "seek My face," and "turn from your wicked ways."

These signs are hanging at the doorposts of our churches. They cry out to us to take heed, so that our land can be healed.

He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the

churches.

Footnotes

¹ Article entitled "Nigeria favors traditional marriage, loses funding" by Charlie Butts in OneNewsNow dated 2/1/2009

² Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV): "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

³ The Illuminati is a secret organisation of the most powerful and influential elite in the world. They go back for centuries and maintain the same bloodlines. They set up the council on foreign relations, the bilderberg group and the tri-lateral commission. These three groups all meet to plan the fate of the world. (www.urbandictionary.com)

Continued from front cover: How do you mend...

Christians need to be visible witnesses of the love and compassion of Jesus Christ so that others may be drawn to Him and the salvation He offers.

To enable the Church to move forward, it is necessary and essential to envision the local congregation in integral mission² for holistic purposes and transformation grounded on the Creation Mandate and the Greatest Commandment.

Dr Leong Tien Fock expounds on this concept succinctly,

"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... 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... 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 Christ³."

To achieve this given purpose, the local church must be empowered with and be prepared to form synergic partnership, which not only requires shared participation and resources but mutual understanding and cooperation undergirded by a common goal, vision and passion.

It is the task of churches to seek to set aside ecclesiastical traditions and practices, remove denomination barriers and inward biases to work together on projects that can bless the community. In doing so, the Church becomes a visible community and witness that demonstrate the reality of the presence of Christ in the world through the good and compassionate work we do.

Evangelism Efforts towards Nation Building

A broad survey of our country will reveal four key areas of needs (not exhaustive) in the quest for nation building; (1) Socio-Economy; (2) Health; (3) Education; (4) Socio-Political. These four areas represent the institutional structures of society with their own

attending working order, distinctive norms and sphere of operation.

The aim here is to motivate and mobilise Christians as the redeemed people of the cross to challenge and transform the distinctive norms and sphere of operation governing each particular area⁴. This challenge and transformation is brought about when Christians live out the life of a faithful disciple by commitment and participation in projects or initiatives in social communities that build bridges and communities, and empower people for change in terms of welfare and well being. Dr Vinay Samuel illustrates how this relates to evangelism,

"Constantly relating the social change they are involved in to Christ is evangelism. When they treat a patient, when they are involved in a project, they are sharing about the reality of Christ. You articulate why you do it. If people ask you why are doing this, that is evangelism⁵."

How does all this work in practical terms? A simple example will suffice. After a sharing session at the Johor Baru Pastors Fellowship last October, the pastors were inspired to do something collectively. It is not that the churches were not doing any community projects, but they wanted to do one that would represent the JB Church under the Pastors' Fellowship.

A recent email from the spokesman, Pr Tay Wah Seng, says, "The JB Pastors' Fellowship has launched the "Helping Hands" project to help the poor. We are collecting usable second-hand goods, clothing and books to give to poor families. Money will also be collected to buy groceries for the poor in JB – we are targeting to give to Chinese, Malay, Indian families and immigrant workers."

A project like this means there is personal engagement with the community and this gives ample opportunity for the churches to know the community and to share the good news about Jesus Christ.

That ample opportunity will arise for churches to impact the community as well as for the Gospel to penetrate the people is borne out by another simple testimony.

In this case, a church in Kota Kinabalu has built an *asrama* (hostel) to house 12 child students from the interiors for their studies. The hostel is managed by a





warden cum pastor. The project cost RM60,000 and has been in operation the last three years.

Chin Chi Kiong, who is involved in the project, testifies that as a result of the project, a church has been planted there. To sustain the project, churches need to adopt the *asrama* and provide vocational training for the students. For example, students are taught how to repack rice from their villages and sell it to earn their allowances.

Moving Forward

Scripture tells us that churches and Christians, irrespective of race or creed,

are gifted with their own unique strength and talents to fulfil the purposes of God. There are many churches that have started and successfully managed ministries that have contributed to the value of society and in evangelism.

Some of the more successful works managed by churches are:

1. Feeding programme at Rifle Range Flats in Penang
2. Drug rehab centre at JB
3. Youth centre in Kluang, Johor
4. Dialysis centre at Cheras

The success experienced by these churches should cause churches and Christians to re-think and re-evaluate their view and understanding of evangelism and nation building, and consequently re-strategise new approaches and find fresh ways to express their identity and influence in a manner relevant and impactful to people, communities and society at large.

This may require a 'paradigm shift' in terms of thinking and it certainly calls for an honest evaluation of our priorities and commitment and more importantly, our relationship with Christ as Lord and understand why He has placed the Church on this earth.

In this respect, Dr Ng Kam Weng's prophetic challenge should strike a chord in our hearts,

"The Christian community does not exist to cater only for the needs of the well-off and socially adjusted. The remarkable role of the Church lies precisely in its ability to attract and integrate the socially marginalised groups and the underprivileged of society. The message of hope in the Gospel motivates them to release suppressed energy and redirect them constructively towards building a common community. Marginalisation should not generate social apathy. Believers are to strengthen their communal identity and through their caring relationships, testify to an alternative and more attractive society⁶."

Conclusion

In times like this, when the economic crisis will create more hardships for people across the board, the Church of Malaysia needs to be visible and proactive.

Richard Mouw reminds us that we are called to await the coming transformation. But we should await actively, not passively.

Scripture reminds us that as Christians, we are set apart on grounds of our special and unique experience in Christ and a commitment to different principles and values of life. Our actions should not be an escape from the social situation and realities of life in isolation, but rather to move and place ourselves strategically to ensure our ability to engage with the world on kingdom values with Christian insights.

Only then will the Church succeed in displaying a superior form of social and religious witness in this global era with post-modern or modernistic tendencies.

May the Malaysian Church rise up to her true witness.

Footnotes

¹ After the conference, efforts were made to continue with spearheading the national prayer movement. This effort was partially fulfilled through the establishment of the Malaysian National Prayer Network on 19th March 2008. It is a prayer movement that will link Children and Youth Prayer Movements that have started in recent years. It would also have networking on prayer with countries around this region.

² The idea and concept of integral mission was developed by participants of the Micah Network's consultation on Integral Mission held at Oxford in September 2001. As a result of the consultation, the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission was drafted. For further thoughts and experience underlining this Declaration, see the book by Tim Chester, *Justice, Mercy and Humility: Integral Mission and the Poor*. (Carlisle: Paternoster Publishing, 2003).

³ Dr Leong Tien Fock, "The Great Commission and The Creation Mandate" in NECF Forum V1 at <http://www.necf.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=12&action=view&retrievid=1021>.

⁴ This is also the position of the Evangelical Alliance in paragraph 4 of the declaration, *Iguassu Affirmation*, October 1999, which emphasised the holistic Gospel and the concern for the whole person in the whole of society.

⁵ "Mission as Transformation" in *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, eds., Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden. (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 233.

⁶ Dr Ng Kam Weng, *Bridge-building: Building Consensus in a Pluralistic Society*. (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka SUFES, 1994), 12-13

Sin's Double Standard

A recent Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research poll found that the public would not accept politicians involved in sex scandals being appointed to senior government positions (*The Star Online*, 4-2-09).

"People tend to expect leaders to hold higher moral standards than ordinary folks. Hence, they should be free from both sex scandals and corrupt practices," commented Transparency International Malaysia president Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam in response to the poll. He added that the poll was a reflection of the moral and religious values of our society and was thus important in the election of politicians.

Soon after the poll results were released, the Elizabeth Wong scandal broke out when indecent photographs of her were distributed to the press and circulated on the Internet. A PKR member, Wong – the Bukit Lanjan state assemblyman and Selangor state executive councillor – has offered to resign from all her positions for the sake of her party and the coalition Pakatan.

In the midst of the furor, media discussions of the scandal – on print and online – were thick and juicy. One sidewalk commentator said, and rightly so, that if the issue was about a corrupt practice, the talks wouldn't come near to this intensity.

Furthermore, most of the time, politicians caught in the centre of sex controversies have resigned from their public positions to avoid intense media scrutiny and save themselves from further public shame.

Contrast this with those caught in corruption scandals who usually escape their ordeals unscathed. Why is this so? Is it because the public tend to judge a person's morality more by their sexuality than other forms of wrongdoing, such as corruption and cheating?

Lee Wee Min thinks the judgement is based on both – sexuality and other forms of wrongdoing. However, the area of sexuality stirs a different level of interest, which the media capitalises on and it therefore results in greater awareness, says the Executive Director of Focus on the Family, Malaysia.

"It is just like advertisements we see on billboards and magazines. The majority of these advertisements have a sexual appeal and that seems to draw more attention," he says. He is thankful that the Malaysian society still embraces a measure of traditional Judeo-Christian values in areas relating to family life, for instance the sanctity of human life, the traditional marriage as the union between a man and a woman, and the importance of strong bond between family members. He cites the Chua Soi Lek extra-marital affair and Elizabeth Wong case as examples of the importance placed on such values.

But as Christians, all wrongdoings – whether sexual or corrupt in nature – are equal sins. Wee Min opines: "As far as the Bible is concerned, a sin is a sin regardless of the type or intensity. A wrong is a wrong as God's standard is the plumbline. Sins of any kind do not please Him and separate us from Him. We therefore need to come before Him, acknowledging our sins and accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour who is capable of forgiving us and setting us right with the Father."

Leaders are expected to hold high moral standards (based on the Merdeka poll). Christian leaders are held to even higher standards, "probably because people know that the God whom we worship and so often speak and talk about is the Holy and Righteous God," says Wee Min.

"As servants and saints of the Living God, the onus is on us to be the light that shines on the hill and the salt of the earth. We often complain that societies are getting darker and darker with the kind of atrocities done by humankind," he laments.

"I think the problem sometimes is not the darkness but that our light is not shining bright enough."

The plea is for Christians, especially leaders, to jealously guard their hearts, for from there springs their conduct and all actions.

"I think the problem sometimes is not the darkness but that our light is not shining bright enough."

Leading Leaders

NECF Malaysia recently set up the Leadership Commission to look into the issue of raising quality leaders who will lead the Malaysian Church to greater heights in Kingdom work.

On the broad side, the commission will work on three key areas:

1. Conduct research on leadership

issues facing the Malaysian Church;

2. Gather and make known available leadership resources; and
3. Impart vision to raise up Christian leaders for the nation.

Recognising too that leaders are humans, the commission will also focus on three specific tasks:

1. Restoring burnt-out or wounded leaders;
2. Revitalising leaders; and
3. Developing younger leaders.

Towards this end, the commission is organising a one-day seminar in April entitled "The Future of Leadership". See page 15 for more details.

Is Our Translation of ‘Allah’ Inconsistent, Insensitive and Inaccurate?

On March 12, *theSun* carried an article by *Tan Sri Prof. Dzulkifli Abdul Razak entitled “Inconsistent, insensitive translation of ‘Allah’ ” (<http://www.sun2surf.com/article.cfm?id=30962>).

The thrust of Prof. Dzulkifli argument is that the methodology employed in translating the word ‘Allah’ appears questionable. His argument is premised on how the words ‘Allah’ and ‘Tuhan’ are seemingly used in an inconsistent fashion and how other Arabic words are not retained in the translation of our Scriptures, thus giving the impression that our translation methodology is riddled with confusion.

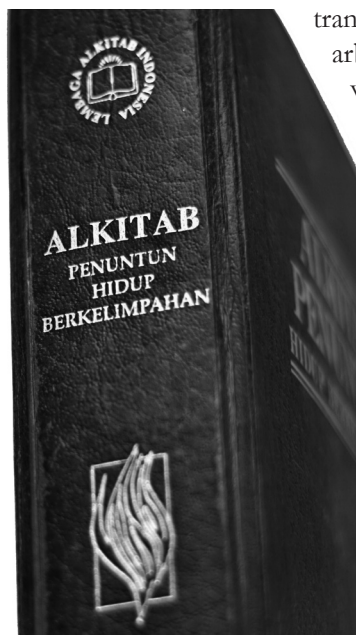
Hence his finding that “the inconsistencies, inaccuracies and insensitivities in the use and misuse of the word ‘Allah’ have become even clearer”. With due respect to Prof. Dzulkifli, we find his analysis flawed on several counts.

Firstly, Prof. Dzulkifli was wrong in assuming that the Bahasa Indonesian version of the *Alkitab* as authorised by Konperensi Waligera Indonesia was translated from the English New King James Version.

A check with the Indonesian Bible Society confirms that the New King James Version was never the base text on which the Indonesian *Alkitab Terjemahan Baru* was translated from.

The fact is that the Terjemahan Baru was translated directly from the original language of the Bible – Hebrew (Biblia Hebraica Kittel edition) and Greek (Nestle Aland edition) – and this is clearly stated in the inside cover of the Indonesian Alkitab. Since the writer has based his analysis on this wrong assumption, his finding and conclusion are highly suspect.

Secondly, in translating the Indonesian Alkitab, the Indonesian Bible Society has always followed linguistic-based translation theory and practice which has been well documented in academic circles and applied by Bible translators all round the world. The main principle has always been the accuracy and faithfulness to the meaning and function of the text in the original languages as well as allowing for a natural reading in the modern Indonesian language. Hence, the philosophy and methodology in the



The use of the word ‘Allah’ in our translation has demonstrated itself to be the most appropriate form and word for God in both Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia based on sound linguistic usage and historical usage.

translation of our Scriptures have never been arbitrary or in confusion as alluded by the writer, but are consistent and logical.

Thirdly, the Arabic word ‘Allah’ is cognate to the Hebrew word for God – *el*, *elohim*, *eloah* and the Aramaic *alaha*. As such, the word ‘Allah’ has always been the rendering for the Hebrew *el*, *elohim*, *eloah*, the Aramaic *alaha* and the Greek word for God *theos*.

From before the dawn of Islam, Arab Christians have been using ‘Allah’ to render the Hebrew *el*, *elohim*, the Aramaic *alaha* and the Greek *theos* and this is reflected in the earliest translation of the Arabic Bible (8th century AD) to the modern Arabic Bible. As with the case of the Arabic Bible, the word ‘Allah’ has also been in constant use from the earliest Malay/Indonesian translation by A.C Ruyl (1629), M. Leijdecker (1733), H.C Klinkert (1879), W.A Bode (19228) to the present *Alkitab Terjemahan Baru*.

Likewise, the word ‘Tuhan’ which is the translation for the Hebrew words *YHWH/adonai* and the Greek word *kurios* (both rendered as Lord in English). In all these instances, there has never been any confusion or complexity arising from the use of

the word ‘Allah’ to render as God and the word ‘Tuhan’ to render as Lord, both in terms of translation and meaning. One therefore wonders where and how the confusion arises in this present day context when it has never been the case.

Fourthly, how Christians translate the names of biblical characters, geographical location and places has no bearing on and does not alter the fact that the word ‘Allah’ has constantly and consistently been translated for God throughout its historical usage. It has demonstrated itself to be the most appropriate form and word for God in both Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia based on sound linguistic and historical usage.

It is unlike the translation of biblical characters and geographical places, which are based on the historical and present names (that are familiar to the present users) in the modern Indonesian language.

Having said this, we fail again to see the inconsistencies and inaccuracies as alleged by Prof. Dzulkifli.

...continued pg 9

Lavished with Extravagance

Pastors' Wives Pampered by Generous and Grateful Christians

Over 60 wives of pastors were lavishly pampered at a recent three-day-two-night retreat in February at the Swiss Garden Golf Resort and Spa, Damai Laut – considered an extravagant affair during this economically-challenged time. However, it was fully sponsored by several Christians and jointly organised by Full Gospel Assembly Melbourne and NECF Malaysia in collaboration with other churches such as International City Church, Brisbane, and Banner of Love, Petaling Jaya.

This first-in-a-kind event in Malaysia is the fulfillment of the “Impact Pastors Impact Nations” (IPIN) vision of Roland and Evelyn Seow (pastors of FGA Melbourne) to refresh and strengthen pastors. The vision started in Melbourne in 2004 with the first pastors’ retreat attended by pastors from Malaysia, Singapore and Cambodia. Since then it has been extended to Malaysia and Slovakia. Funds were raised for each project from various churches, the Christian business community and individual sponsors.

Besides the many inspiring messages from a thoughtfully selected list of speakers, participants also returned home with many gifts. Some may ask, “Why the extravagance?” and “Wouldn’t the money have been better spent on more needy causes?”

To this, Evelyn says, “We serve an extravagant God who wanted to throw a lavish banquet for his faithful servants who have laboured tirelessly for His kingdom. God treasures His shepherds more than people can imagine because without them, His sheep will be easily scattered and devoured. He knows that the wife’s role in the pastor’s life is vital to sustaining him in the ministry. The pastor’s well-being is often dependent on the condition of his wife.”

Explaining the vision, Evelyn says that according to Psalm 133, God’s anointing and blessings flow from the head to the rest of the body. As the head (pastor) of the local church is blessed, so will the rest of the body (church)

and this will flow right to the nation.

The retreat saw a gathering of wives from over 60 churches from various denominations spanned throughout the 11 states in the peninsula. For many, it was the first time that they had peers in the ministry to talk to.

There was a good blend of speakers, such as Mrs Koh Poh Kim (wife of the late Dr Koh Eng Kiat, founder-elder of FGA Kuala Lumpur); Datuk Prof Chiam Heng Keng (educator); Pr Dr Lew Lee Choo (co-pastor of SIB KL and wife of SIB senior pastor Dr Chew Weng Chee); Pr Jeannie Mok, Tan Lay Hwa; Grace Hee (NECF Women’s Concern Commission Chairperson); and Pr Irene Goh (wife of Banner of Love pastor David Goh).

Even though the needs were so diverse, all of them were deeply touched and blessed by the different speakers who contributed to the various parts of the puzzle.

One of the highlights of the retreat was the foot-washing ceremony on the last day. Datuk Chiam and the other speakers insisted that the older ones washed the feet of the younger women first.

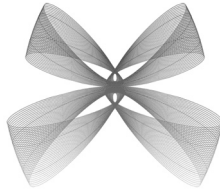
“Through the act of humility and love, tears flowed profusely all over the place and the Spirit of the Lord moved mightily. It was like Jesus washing everyone’s feet with His tears of love and appreciation,” Evelyn observed. She also reported many messages of gratitude received via e-mail after the retreat.

“It was truly a mission accomplished – a banquet for God’s faithful pastors’ wives. As they were impacted, our nation will also be impacted,” Evelyn concluded.

What next?

In 2010, IPIN together with NECF will organise “IPIN for Pastors’ Kids (ages 15-28)”. Hopefully, businessmen, working adults, pastors and churches will support this endeavour financially and prayerfully.

A pastor’s ministry suffers if his family is hurting. “Are you willing to be a channel of God’s extravagant love to pastors’ kids?” Evelyn challenged.



Christians and Politics

How much hope should Christians place in political solutions to our problems?

That's the million dollar question posed by *Christianity Today* in its promotion of a downloadable online bible study that discusses the relationship between Christians and politics.

According to the magazine's contributing editor Dr David P. Gushee, "The New Testament writers show great confidence that the world is being transformed through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ."

"But they show no confidence whatsoever that the powers and principalities of this world serve as the agents of that global transformation," adds the Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University, USA.

Gushee reminds us that redemption is God's work, and He will accomplish it in His time. The Church, meanwhile, is intimately involved in this process through the faithful pursuit of its mission and the daily practice of God's will.

How might Christians best impact the culture in which we live? What does Scripture say about a Christian's role in politics? How might we best produce moral change in our country?

Check out the bible study at <http://www.christianitytodaystore.com/biblestudies/ctbs174.html>

Meanwhile, Malaysians remain in the throes of the ongoing political wrangling. At the time of writing this, Perak is still facing a political impasse with both sides refusing to back down from their claim of the silver state.

Politics has so gripped the nation that increasingly, Malaysians, exhausted from all the scandals and counter-scandals, are pleading for all factions to lay down their arms and work together on the really distressing issues – the failing economy, worsening crime situation, etc.

On a positive note, Christians everywhere are being mobilised to pray around-the-clock for the nation.

Ultimately, God is the hope of the nation as He works through the individuals He has appointed. Let us rest our hope in the right place – His sovereign throne.

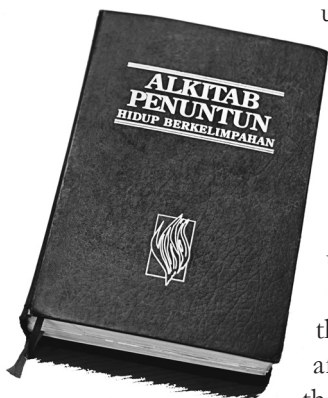
Pray:

- that His work flourishes in the midst of all the troubles;
- for every church in Malaysia to have a deeper passion for God's Kingdom;
- for spiritual awakening in churches that are asleep;
- for transformation of lives as a testimony of God's redeeming grace;
- for God to endow His Church and people with discernment and wisdom so that they can be a guiding light to their communities;
- for all God to raise courageous leaders and leaders with integrity; and
- for the Malaysian Church to be united so that they can present a credible voice to the nation.

Continued from pg 7...

In view of the above, we can only conclude that the conclusion arrived at by Prof. Dzulkifli that our use or misuse of the word 'Allah' is "inconsistent, inaccurate and insensitive has become even clearer" is manifestly untenable for the lack of proper basis and sound reasoning. His concern in this respect is also premature and unfounded.

For the Church, and particularly the Bumiputera community, we can affirm that the word 'Allah' is indeed the proper usage for the word 'God'



and that our Scriptures in Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia is the assured Word of God "breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

(Read also Kairos Research Director Dr Ng Kam Weng's response at <http://www.krisispraxis.com/archives/2009/03/response-to-prof-dzulkufli-abdul-razak-misreading-of-the-malay-bible/>)

*Tan Sri Professor Dzulkifli Abdul Razak is Vice-Chancellor of USM.

The data and sources in the article are provided by Dr Daud Soesilo, Asia-Pacific Translation Consultant, United Bible Society.

The Youth Alpha Course has been rolled out as the new curriculum for the weekly Christian moral and religious classes in National Service (NS) camps across the country.

NECF Malaysia and Alpha Malaysia are partnering to provide facilitators with resources and training to run the course. Both organisations hope the new materials will excite and enable more churches to work in their local NS camps as it is one nation-building strategy to build the next generation.

Youth Alpha is a basic discipleship course that takes teenagers through 14 fundamental topics of the Christian faith. Each meeting is interactive, with group activities, DVDs, powerpoint presentations, and very importantly, food.

Pastor Teo Chung Hock, the youth pastor of New Life Church in Petaling Jaya, pioneered the use of Youth Alpha in NS and has run it with six batches of trainees at a camp in Banting. He will now help to train more volunteers to be facilitators. "I think the church needs to recognise this as a mission field that is at its doorstep," he said.

There are 85 NS camps across Malaysia but just over 40 of them have Christian classes. Religious and moral classes – Islamic, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu – are held every Thursday and Friday nights, but Christian participants at camps without Christian classes either have nowhere to go or end up at the classes of the other religions.

"The problem is manpower," lamented Larry Lee, the executive secretary of the NECF YouthNet,

Youth Alpha Joins The National Service

which has been given the task to coordinate Christian classes throughout all the NS camps in the country.

It has been difficult to recruit volunteers to teach in the camps as the response from churches have been slow. Meanwhile, those volunteers who have been going to the camps on their own have been stretched to exhaustion.

With Youth Alpha providing a simple, yet dynamic structure, it is hoped that more churches and youth ministries will participate in the NS ministry, and there will never be a shortage of facilitators in the camps.

Larry explained that Alpha was chosen, not just for its good programme, but because it was able to provide continuity and sustainable growth for the long haul. "In fact, Alpha Malaysia is willing to gazette a substantial amount of resources and manpower for the NS project," he revealed.

The impact on youth at the camps will be significant as the weekly sessions provide a place for them to fellowship and receive spiritual education.

Surveys by NECF have shown that many of the youths who attend the Christian classes at NS are second-generation Christians who do not necessarily have a personal relationship with God or a grasp of the fundamentals of the faith.

"Hence, with Alpha," said Larry, "we can go back to the basics of Jesus Christ, who He is, why He died, how do I pray, etc."

Another benefit of

the programme is that it is inherently a discipleship programme for church youth groups.

Pr Teo travels three hours to and from the Banting NS camps with his church youths. "It's like on-the-job training for them. They pray, strategise, and run the course together. And when they drive back they talk more and debrief. So it is a great discipleship and outreach opportunity for the volunteers going in as much as it is for the trainees in the camps," he explained.

Larry concluded, "For many years, Malaysian churches have prayed for God to impact the next generation. Now, God has provided this window of opportunity because for three months, we have a captive audience within a retreat-type setting.

"Maybe previously we had shortcomings in the curriculum, resulting in volunteers being left in the dark on how to teach.

"But now that we have a solid programme in Youth Alpha, our churches really have no excuses not to heed this Macedonian call in Acts 16: 9–10, as well as to make our God famous in the NS camps."

Those interested to volunteer for Youth Alpha in NS camps may contact Alpha Malaysia National Office at 03-2698 8200 or email info@my.alpha.org



New NECF Prayer Secretary

LUCRECE LOO has been appointed NECF Malaysia Executive Secretary for Prayer. She worships at SSMC, Petaling Jaya, where she served for 18 years before joining NECF. At SSMC, she led the church's prayer ministry for 12 years and has been involved in the national prayer movement for more than 15 years.

Prior to her ministry at SSMC, she was involved in Youth With a Mission and trained in their School of Biblical Study in Singapore and School of Intercession in University of the Nations.

Lucrece has led prayer teams throughout the nation and is one of the pioneers of the 24/7 Prayer Tower in Kuala Lumpur.

Personal Transformation

The quest for new life has swept the whole globe, both inside and outside the Church. People across the world are seen overtly craving for a new life as they find their present lives deficient, meaningless and unfulfilling. As a result, the word 'transformation' has become the 'in' word with a worldwide circulation used in almost every arena of life.

By Rev. Khoo Boo Wah, MTh

Proponents of transformation, be they from economic, social, political, or spiritual field, or behavioral science, label the word on their products, agendas, strategies, policies, programmes and projects respectively, advocating 'transformation' as the solution to human dilemma.

They give the impression that their respective measures will take their customers from right where they are to where they should be. Much propaganda, or something of this nature, is publicised to lure people into thinking that personal transformation is attainable through human efforts alone, within the reach of everyone who passionately pursues it.

Christian perspectives on personal transformation

The above global quest challenges us all the more to study the subject, to have a clear understanding, to live out and work out the transformation that salvation brings, so that we can share its essence when we are asked.

Personal transformation is a matter of great concern which we cannot ignore. It is the spring of all the other transformations – family, church, society, economics, politics, nation and the world.

If individual believers do not experience it and are unable to demonstrate the new life in Christ, how can the Church fulfill her role as the agent of change? George Barna says: "The Church is paralysed by the absence of transformed leadership (*Christian lives*)."¹ (Italics mine). What then is the Christian understanding of personal transformation?

Central to the Christian belief in personal transformation is that *it is a*

movement in which all three persons in the Godhead are at work on our behalf. This is in stark contrast to the marketplace's notions of personal transformation.

The Christian version has a strong divine emphasis. It is distinct from the rest in that it is essentially God's own idea. He is the source and fountainhead of human personal transformation. It is His loving and perfect will that the life of man should be transformed, no matter how defaced the image *in* man has become. God has not finished with us yet. He sees not what we have been but what we can become. He has designed for man an entirely new sort of life and the way it will take place. He has the power to change our lives.

Something is very wrong with human nature; no amount of human effort can change it but God can transform it. Sinful, inadequate man can be transformed.

However, this new manhood is not given automatically. To become the man God intended, we need to come to Him in His terms. We must be willing to accept His way. This is non-negotiable. It is not a debatable option. It is imperative that we adhere to it, for God is the Lord of all with His rights over all. He has made available in Christ Jesus a personal transformation that is of a totally different category, the only one of its kind.

Therefore, personal transformation must be at the top of our agenda and our paramount conviction. Any other approach to it means that we run the risk of alienating ourselves from the good purposes of God. Not believing this would reveal a lack of faith, and if indeed our faith is lacking, well, no wonder we are not experiencing anything.

God did not come into the world and dropped a set of plans on us. His amazing master plan did not come to us cheaply. It cost God dearly. His only begotten Son died for our sin and for the world's. Because of the work of His Son, personal transformation is now possible.

Paul says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Evil found no foothold in the life of Jesus. In His utter self-giving on the cross, sin was defeated. By union with that one victorious life, we experience inner transformation – *Jesus as the life changer*. In our moral and spiritual struggle with sin, we do not stand helpless and struggle on our own.

In Christ, our lives will be reversed from abnormalities to normality, from alienation from God to orientation towards Him, from dysfunctional to functional, from deformity to recreation, and from brokenness to wholeness. Such work of transformation goes beyond the conversion experience although it begins with it.

Personal transformation means actualising our new distinctive identity as God's people

Personal transformation is, as spelt out in the Bible, being made into what God intends us to be, i.e. Christ's likeness (2 Cor 3:18), leading eventually to the formation of Christ's image in us (Gal. 4:19). If the transformation is genuine, this Christlikeness advances, progresses and grows to its fullness. It does not stay the same as when it first begins.

We grow daily, more and more Christlike. We grow to become Christ's

...continued next page

Continued from previous page...

persons, or God's people, the God-given new distinctive identity. We move from bearing the name to actualizing it in our daily lives. A speaker once said, "God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus."

God does not want us to live in mediocrity and beneath the standard He has set for mankind. This involves change: to be different from the world of self-interest, self-sufficiency and self-assertion.

When John the Baptist saw the crowds going after Jesus, he says, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

This means self-concern should no longer be seen as our focus but God-concern which becomes the mark of what we say and do, to be noticed by others more and more. We do not exist for our own sake, nor do we exist for the sake of the holy, catholic and apostolic church. We exist for the sake of others and for the sake of God's glory.

Christianity is Christ. In Him, we see Him ushering in a new age, a new creation, a new way of life, a new order, and a new kingdom, i.e. the Kingdom of God. In Him we see what humanity is designed to be. In His life and in His death we see love, service and faith to which we are called, and for which we were created.

Above all, in His resurrection we see the final destiny which God holds out to those who come to Him in faith. Jesus is the example by which we live, and the vision towards which we move. We practise to become the people of God, not just good citizens.

We practise to make our new identity a reality with the aid of the Holy Spirit, not merely bearing the label. If there is

to be any change in the Church, in the nation and in the world, it must come through transformed men and women who bear the name of Jesus.

Our whole lives changed

A radical transformation marks our whole being. We have not simply subscribed to a new set of religious ideas and rules, or adopted a few religious jargons and clichés and behaviour; we have been transformed; we have become a different kind of person. Responding to the initiative of God and life altering experience are inseparable. It leads from one to another. The post conversion life will be markedly different from the pre-conversion life. Our effectiveness at helping others will depend on how efficiently God's principles are working in us.

"We do not exist for our own sake, nor do we exist for the sake of the holy, catholic and apostolic church. We exist for the sake of others and for the sake of God's glory."

Whereas we once shared the sense of purposelessness that is prevalent in this world, we now know that we are part of God's great plan. There is a purpose to life and it is centred in God. Whereas we were once in a state of hopelessness, we are now filled with a living hope in Christ. At such a time when chaos, pessimism and despair seem to prevail, we need to be both hope-filled and hope-dispensing believers. Whereas we used to let opportunities slip by, we now make the best use of them to develop our spiritual life and to further God's work of transformation in the world.

Effort is required in developing the relationship of our union with God. Our great fault may lie in the confusion of our priorities. We forget our essential dependence on Him; we neglect prayer, worship and His Word. We are more concerned with the results of that

union rather than the union itself. We are more concerned with doing rather than being. If we are to preach Christ we must be like Christ in all aspects of our life. Only our continuing union with Christ will ensure that.

We need to develop our mind. We who believe in the Lord Jesus have His mind (Phil 2:5; 1 Cor 2:16).

Personal transformation is for the blessing of others

We know that the work of the triune God is to make us Christlike. But it is not to be seen as an end in itself. It is only the means. We are to be so changed that we might attract others around us to have and enjoy the transforming experience available in Christ. Christian faith is not something private and concerned only with individuals. Our

Lord Jesus, whilst on earth, is the man for others, the man for the world. So should all of us be. That "Help Wanted" chapter is still open. The cry of humanity for personal transformation continues. God has made believers His agents because there is no way for men to be transformed other than through Christ. The Bible also makes it clear that God's blessing goes with

His call to personal transformation – this is not for believers only. We are to be a blessing to others: a man for others just as our Lord is.

Conclusion

Jesus says, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." But there is obviously a credibility gap among us all. We have heard these remarks many times: "Jesus is wonderful, but you Christians – you are not like Him!" "You proclaim 'the gospel is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes,' but it is hardly evident among you!"

Personal transformation is primarily to be a model of how God works when He is allowed to come into our life. When our lives are not transformed it

...continued next page

Doing the Right Things During the ‘Wrong’ Time

In turbulent times such as the one we are living in, it is all the more crucial to have faith in God’s power, wisdom and mercy, said NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Sam Ang in his opening address at the recent Tamil Pastors’ and Leaders’ Conference.

Over 500 participants attended the two-day conference, entitled “Living and Leading in Turbulent Times”, which was organised by the NECF Tamil Commission.

NECF Chairman Rev. Eu Hong Seng continued the exhortation with an inspiring message from Psalm 27. Speaking about King David’s exuberant declaration of faith, he urged the participants to remember 10 “right things” to do during this difficult time: 1) Go to the right person; 2) Maintain right thinking; 3) Assume the right posture; 4) Be in the right place; 5) Cultivate the right responses; 6) Recall the right experiences; 7) Do the right thing; 8) Recognise the right enemies; 9) Embrace the right perspective; and 10) Wait for the right timing.

The other speaker, Rev. Augustine Jebakumar – Founder/Director of GEMS Mission, India – shared that God was indeed shaking the world and that we ought not to be afraid. During the two night rallies, he preached about spiritual blindness among Christians, taking his message from Rev. 3:18, “...and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”

Many in the congregation were struck by his message and responded to the altar call for repentance.

Tamil Pastors and Leaders' Conference



Success in God’s Economy: Who is the ‘successful’ prophet – Haggai or Jeremiah?

From our human perspective, Haggai’s ministry was successful because people listened to him and rebuilt the temple. Tasks were accomplished and goals achieved.

As for Jeremiah, Judah collapsed and went into exile during his ministry. When he spoke God’s word, people refused to obey. He was threatened and imprisoned. In short, he did not accomplish what he set out to do.

In modern terms, his performance indicators (KRA – Key Results Areas) were not met, even though he remained faithful to the Lord.

However, in God’s economy, Jeremiah’s calling was just as valid as Haggai’s and was equally successful. So, what is success to God? If we are in Jeremiah’s shoes, consider these:

- Should success be measured in terms of attendance or membership, budget or financial resource, number of programs or powerful ministries, and size of building?
 - Whose ministry should be a model of success – Jeremiah’s or Haggai’s?
- Christianity has to do with

authenticity. Whether our ministry is Haggai-like or Jeremiah-like is God’s choice – His calling. When people look at the church, they see a model of what it means to live under God’s reign.

We need to show the world – which often seeks pleasure apart from God – that we are willing to suffer and sacrifice for a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Success in God’s economy is doing His will. – *Extracted from “Is Your Church an Agent of Transformation?” by P. Vijayan, DBA (Aus) to be published in Forum VI by the NECF Research Commission.*

Continued from previous page

gives the impression that God’s own idea has not worked. Obviously, our response is to be contrite before God, rise up to consecrate ourselves to Christ afresh, live our lives acceptable to Him, and in all things let Him have the preeminence.

We will then see the transformation that salvation brings. It begins with personal life, followed by family life, life in the marketplace, and society as a whole. We pray and hope that the whole moral, psychological and spiritual

atmosphere will be turned around. Personal transformation is possible but cannot be self-manufactured. It is what we allow God to remake us in His terms. Ω

(This is an extract. The full article will be available in the upcoming NECF Forum VI, published by the NECF Malaysia Research Commission.)

Endnotes

- 1 George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Word Books, 1998), p. 101.

Clarification

In the “Hope for the Needy Community” article published in our January–February 2009 Berita NECF issue (pg 14), we reported that Alfred Phua has been appointed by the Penang Chinese Churches Caring Network (Hua Ai) as the full-time worker for the House of Hope ministry. Alfred has clarified that he is only a representative of Hua Ai in the ministry’s working committee.

We apologise for the error.

Coming Up



GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER

May 31 at SIB Kuala Lumpur

THE Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) is a worldwide event whereby on Pentecost Sunday every year, believers throughout the world gather to pray for a greater Pentecost.

The GDOP vision is to have Christians from all nations unite in repentance and prayer.

Last year, GDOP was celebrated on May 11 by millions of Christians from 214 nations. In Malaysia, more than 1,000 believers in the Klang Valley from various denominations gathered, praying in faith that God will fill the nations with His glory.

This year, Christians around the globe will once again embark on this prayer journey on May 31. God is moving in His awesome power and He is challenging us to be part

of this journey. It is a journey that is not about us, but about a world in desperate need for His glory and compassionate love.

It is a call to respond to His invitation in 2 Chronicles 7:14 to humble ourselves, pray, seek His face and turn from our wicked ways.

Malaysians in the Klang Valley will meet at SIB KL for a night of intercession, organised by NECF Malaysia, while Christians from over 20 other towns throughout Malaysia will gather in their respective places.

NECF urges Malaysian Christians to come and pray together in desperation and in expectation – that the earth (including Malaysia) will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea!

National Church Conference

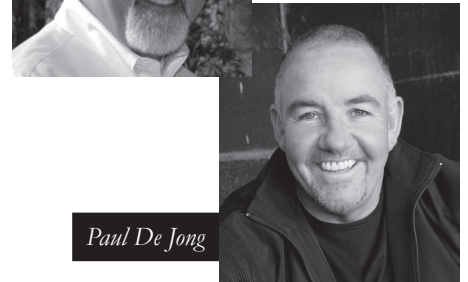
Aug. 25-27 at FGA KL

THEME: Transformation – Leading with Creativity and Conviction in Crisis

SPEAKERS: Rev. Barry Boucher from Ottawa, Canada; and Paul De Jong from Auckland, New Zealand.



Rev. Barry Boucher



Paul De Jong

NECF Malaysia is rallying Christian leaders from throughout Malaysia to participate in this major conference that carries the NECF's vision for nation building – Transforming the Nation Through the Local Church.

In line with the transformation agenda, there will be workshops that will inspire participants to serve and impact their communities with projects that serve the needy.

Churches that are running successful community projects will share their stories to encourage participants to go and do likewise. Participants will discover how the projects were set up and run, the cost and human resources involved and ultimately, the impact the projects have made in changing lives and the community.

The projects that have been lined up are a dialysis centre, drug rehabilitation centre, children's home, disaster relief work and two grocery-related ministries that either sell-at-subsidised-cost or provide free-of-charge essential goods to the poor.

Look out for more details in the coming issues.

National Chinese Prayer Camp

July 12 – 15 at Bayu Beach Resort, Port Dickson

SPEAKERS: Bishop Ng Moon Hing, Bishop of The Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia; and Rev. Eu Hong Seng, NECF Malaysia Chairman

A STRONG bond among churches will result in a strong network which can contribute effectively towards community transformation and ultimately, national transformation.

Organised by the NECF Chinese Commission, this year's camp will focus on strengthening the bond among the Chinese-speaking churches.

The camp is a prelude to the NECF Malaysia 2009 Nationwide 40-Day Merdeka Fast and Prayer, scheduled to begin on July 22.

With the speakers' experience, foresight and influence, participants will be inspired to become more passionate intercessors for the nation.

'Renewing Life, Uniting Churches, Transforming Nation' has been the theme for the prayer camps since 2005.

It has been the commission's desire to see God's people come together and pray as a family in one voice, crying out to God for the renewal and revival of the nation and all the nations of the world.

Single Women's Retreat July 9-11

ALL SINGLE WOMEN – including single mothers, divorcees and widows – are encouraged to attend this three-day retreat organised by the NECF Malaysia Women's Commission. This will be a time of sharing your struggles, ministering and spurring one another to love and good works, all for the glory of God.

Look out for more details in the next issue.

Planning Our Youths' Future

Sept. 7 in Ipoh

THE health and future of our nation rest on our youths. The Church therefore needs to proactively and passionately pursue ministries that reach out to teens and youths, particularly those in schools.

Since education policies and school authorities dictate the running of the schools, these ministries present delicate work with many variables which are beyond their control.

The availability of committed teachers and students to serve in the ministries can therefore make or break the work. Additionally, parental involvement are key factors to the health of the ministries.

It is thus vital that Malaysian Christian leaders appreciate and support the Students and Schools Ministry (SSM) so that the windows of opportunity remain opened and that continued growth is sustained.

Reaching the youths in our schools cannot be done in isolation (by the teachers alone or by parents alone or by churches alone). To achieve far-reaching impact for our nation and churches, effective SSM requires the synergic partnership of all parties concerned – teachers, parents, churches, and para-church ministries.

In light of this, NECF Malaysia,

through the NECF YouthNet, has been in discussions with organisations involved in SSM to brainstorm ways to effectively impact students. The organisations include the Malayan Christian Schools Council (MCSC), Teachers' Christian Fellowship (TCF) and Scripture Union (SU).

The discussions have led them to plan a *National Appreciation Day and Forum* in September with the theme, "Students & Schools Ministry – A Partnership between Parents, Teachers and Churches." The forum aims to:

- Re-look at schools as an important mission field and plan long-term strategy towards developing our youth as nation-builders of tomorrow;
- Bring together parents, teachers and churches to synergise their roles as agents of transformation, for example through parent-teacher associations and schools' Christian Fellowships; and
- Brainstorm how to make SSM effective and impactful.

The organisers are hopeful that parents, teachers, youth workers (including uniformed bodies), senior pastors, church leaders and youths will participate at the forum scheduled for Sept. 7 in Ipoh. Look out for more details in the next issue.

Leadership Seminar

April 24–25 at First Assembly of God Church, Kuala Lumpur

THEME: The Future of Leadership

SPEAKERS: **Peter Chao** – Founder-President of Eagles Communications, Singapore ; **Dr John Ng** – President of Meta, Chair of Eagles Leadership Institute and Honorary Chair of Eagles Mediation and Counselling Centre Board of Governance; and **Michael Tan** – Eagles Communication Executive Vice-President.

SITUATIONS are expected to get more complicated in the future.

Leaders must therefore be able to grapple with the expected complexity and arising challenges and issues if they are going to lead effectively.

To prepare for the future, it is all the more crucial that leaders are firmly rooted in the fundamental principles of leadership so that they can lead their people through the storms of complexities.

This seminar will help participants to get a good grasp of the future as it takes them through five sessions of leadership principles: trust, balance, teamwork, personal recovery and motivation.

Contact the NECF office for more information or check out the NECF website www.necf.org.my

Run For the Nation 10 October, 5.00a.m. – 12.00p.m.

RUN FOR THE NATION (RunNat) 09 is a nationwide event where Christians run and pray for the peace and welfare of the cities and the nation as they sweat through the routes.

Organised jointly by NECF Malaysia and Malaysia Sports Partnership, RunNat 09 will be held in selected cities in Malaysia to also encourage healthy living. The event is opened to all Christians.

The event was birthed in the early hours of October 5, 2007 at 5a.m when three men met in front of a cinema in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, and started their five-kilometre run together. Half an hour later at a petrol station, they were met by another three who continued the run for another five km. Meanwhile at a coffee

shop in Ampang, a similar event was taking place. As was in Subang, Damansara and elsewhere in the Klang Valley. By 10a.m., 105 Christians had run a total of 160km from Ampang to Petaling Jaya, Bangsar to Subang. This was no ordinary morning run, for as they pounded the streets, they prayed for the places they passed and released God's blessings upon the city and nation. The youngest runner was five and the oldest 66.

This year, a group of Christians from different churches in KL are planning to revisit this event on Oct. 10, and expand the run to all the 13 capital cities throughout the country.

The organisers are looking for like-minded Christians and their churches to help organise and execute the event in the 13 cities. For further details, contact organising chairman Victor Chua at viccwchua@gmail.com or leave at message at the Run For The Nation 2009 Facebook group.



North Korea Christians are regarded as political subversives because their worship of the Lord as God is contrary to the State cult that venerates the Kims as the divine saviours of Korea. For the 'crime' of Christianity, three generations of a family will be incarcerated in a prison labour camp where immense and inhumane cruelty and starvation guarantee a short, tortured life. North Korea's great leap backwards is a devastating blow for the Church.

In North Korea all religion other than the veneration of the ruling Kims is criminal. Christians are executed or, along with three generations of their family, incarcerated in prison labour camps where they are cruelly worked, tortured and starved to death. After several years of tentative but positive steps towards openness and Korean rapprochement, the Kim regime has made a dramatic U-turn and is returning the northern state to Stalinism, escalating militarism and intensifying the isolation essential for regime survival.

This is a crushing blow for the severely persecuted North Korean Church. But God is sovereign still. He has not abandoned his Church.

Pray for all North Korean secret and incarcerated believers. May God their Father protect and deliver them; may Christ their Saviour hear and answer their prayers; and may the Holy Spirit sustain their faith, comfort them and bless their witness with miraculous results 'abundantly more than all that we could ever ask or think' (Eph 3:20.)

Pray that our sovereign, just and merciful God deliver North Korea from its captivity and restore its spiritual heritage. (In the early 20th Century the North Korean capital Pyongyang – the birthplace of the

1907 Korean revival – was known as "The Jerusalem of the East".

England Pray for the many Christians in England UK who have converted from Islam, for they suffer much abuse and threat by their families and communities (*barnabas aid, March/ April 2009*).

Some specific cases: 'Hannah', a British imam's daughter, became a Christian after running away from home in 1992 (when she was 16) to escape an arranged marriage. She is living in fear of her life and was recently placed under police protection after receiving death threats from her family for converting to Christianity.

Nissar Hussein is a hospital nurse in Bradford, UK. Born a Muslim, he converted to Christianity in 1996 and his wife converted soon after. Since their conversion, they and their children have been regularly jostled, abused, attacked, told to move out of the area and given death threats in the street. Nissar's car has been rammed and torched. Recently, he was warned that his house would be burnt down if he did not return to Islam. When he reported the threat to the police, he was told such threat was rarely carried out and was advised to move out. A few days later, the unoccupied house next door was set on fire.

It is hard for to imagine that in a liberal country like England, Christian converts are being persecuted and the intensity is increasing. But this is a fact and we must, from the comfort and security of our home, to uphold our brethren in prayer. Pray they will remain steadfast in their new-found faith and they will experience His divine peace, strength and joy in the midst of their suffering, knowing that there awaits a crown of glory for those who endure to the end.

Gaza Continue to pray for peace in the Holy Land, remembering especially our Christian brothers and sisters in Gaza caught up in the conflict. They number about 3,000 out of a total population of 1.5 million in the Gaza Strip. A church and a Christian hospital were among the buildings hit by Israeli attacks in January.

They face all the deprivations of the Muslim majority as well as the extra difficulties of being Christians under the strongly Islamic Hamas government.

It is not uncommon for Christians to have their properties seized or bombed and their business boycotted. In 2007, the manager of the Bible Society bookshop was kidnapped and killed. In 2008, the Young Men's Christian Association in Gaza was bombed. In the context of growing Islamisation, this persecution looks set to increase.

There is also a lot of hostility, especially towards Messianic Jews, from extreme Orthodox Jewish groups. In 2008, these groups published announcements in religious newspapers, calling Messianic Jews "dangerous" and for their expulsion from Israeli areas.

Pray for the Lord's hand of protection over the small Christian remnant, that He will supply for their needs in supernatural ways. Pray for understanding and peace between the various religious factions.

Pray for the work of Barnabas Fund, a ministry devoted to helping persecuted Christians, as they assist Christians in Gaza with food and basic needs. Since the December attack, it has been working with the Palestinian Bible Society, the Bible Society in Israel and the Arab Israeli Bible Society to provide food coupons for the afflicted.