

Berita NECF


 Editorial

Get off your MULE



The Malaysian society is witnessing an increase in the fragmentation of human communities. The Church, therefore, can no longer be exclusive. She has to get rid of her narrow mindset, demolish her walls and make every effort to be more inclusive by reaching out to every community around her.

At times like these, churches in Malaysia must embark on a holistic approach to mission and express their care and concern for the struggle of others.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37 well illustrates this approach. In the social realities of Jesus' days when ethno-religious tension existed between Jews and Samaritans, we would have expected the Samaritan to avoid helping the wounded man or maybe to even "finished him off"!

Instead, we encounter a person with a heart of gold. Transpose this parable to Malaysia today and we'll have a story that challenges us in at least three simple ways.

The right question

Firstly, the scribe in the parable

asked, "Who is my neighbour?" The question seems logical.

However, a closer study betrays an attitude of superiority; of one who considers himself privileged and who would benevolently do a favour for the less fortunate? When a person regards himself as privileged due to his own social, economic, cultural or religious standing, he will have a tendency to elevate himself and regard others on a lower plane.

This "Who is my neighbour?" question marks a distinction between the haves and have-nots, between the superior and inferior. Such a distinction displays a 'you-me' rather than a 'we are all sinners' relationship. It is demonstrated by the religious leaders of Jesus' days who confine their religion and practices to their private sphere in total disregard for the needs of others. Do we follow the footsteps of these religious leaders or the Good Samaritan?

Perhaps the better question to ask is, "To whom am I a neighbour?" Putting the question thus emphasises our duty as human beings, vested with human dignity, to extend to and receive help from

one another, regardless of our position.

The right action

Secondly, in the Good Samaritan story, we find the Samaritan making the effort to get down from his mule to attend to the man's needs, unlike the religious leaders who passed him by. Getting down from his mule marked the start of his journey towards helping the battered victim.

Hence our next question: How

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Chairman's Message

Leave Ahab Alone!

Right after his ascension, Ahab earned the unenviable reputation of the “worst ever ruler.” It was then that God sent Elijah to speak, not to Ahab, but to His people. Not to condemn Ahab for his wickedness, other than to announce the three and a half years of impending drought, but to “adjust” his people.

On Mount Carmel, the prophet boldly challenged the indecisive people. Wickedness was permeating in the systems and various segments of society by Ahab (1Kings16:30ff) and herein are lessons for the Malaysian Church – five things the Church should do in this season of difficult transition.

1 Firstly, choose whom you serve. At the critical time of Israel's political history (circa 906 BC), the main concern of God was who His people would follow and serve.¹

It is so natural to focus on social righteousness, the justice system, the moral decay of the nation and the wickedness of the ruler but instead, God zoomed in on the weaknesses of His people.

Today, needless debate is ongoing about the political scenario in our nation but as we gripe about the state of the nation, God in likewise manner is demanding an answer (from us) to His question: “How long will you falter between two opinions?”

For too long we console ourselves of being a sleeping giant but that is an oxymoron. As long as the Church is asleep, we will never be a giant.

How very true that “the ruler of a nation is a mirror in which is reflected the character of the people” but to harp on that is to bark up the wrong tree. Plainly put, the “right tree” is the Church.

The Church has somehow been guilty of “projection.” The issue is

not Ahab (and his Jezebel) – we are oblivious that God has hit the “pause button” and wants us to examine our own faltering ways. Ahab certainly

has a case to answer but so does the Church.

2 Secondly, implore Him to answer by fire. He is certainly more than capable of decisively defending Himself and it's time we ask Him to reveal Himself as a God of fire.

When Christians waver, we cannot expect unbelievers to be impressed and convinced. When one religion is pitted against another, it's time we implore the one true God to prove Himself.

Elijah deliberately poured water into the trenches and the sacrifice, and invited God to defend Himself. In ancient times, gods proved themselves by their might. The populace was quick to call upon their gods to do so. It should be no different today. To do that indeed is to be “purpose driven.”

God does not need our clever strategies and methodologies; He is quite capable.

3 Thirdly, be encouraged by the hidden company of God's people. We must remind ourselves that the destiny of the nation is never as precarious as we sometimes imagined.

There is always a company of God's people who “have not bowed their knees to Baal.”

There were the 100 prophets hidden by Obadiah (1Kgs18:4) and the 7000 “reserved” (1Kgs19:18) by the Lord. I thank God that in every crisis, there is a “hidden company” of God's people who are ever loyal to Him. We



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

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MALAYSIA'S MORAL MORASS

An Urgent Call for Christian Action

A Statement by NECF Malaysia

Malaysia is fast approaching a moral morass* from which it is going to be very difficult to extricate itself. Many would argue that we are already entangled in the mess but as Christians, we ought to pray against this air of resignation and continue to look to our Sovereign Ruler who is our true hope.

After the 12th general elections in 2008 where the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition was denied a two-thirds majority in Parliament, hopes were high for the beginning of a 'two-party' system that would moderate past political, social and economic excesses. Calls were made from within and without the ruling administration for 'reforms' that would bring about changes that could benefit the *rakyat* (citizens) and the nation as a whole.

Far from improvements and positive developments in the present climate and political landscape, we are however, witnessing an extremely distressing deterioration of conditions. Besides facing the most serious economic crisis in the country's history, we stand in the midst of the most serious crisis of confidence – that of legitimacy, and above all else, a crisis of morality.

Crisis of Morality Manifested

As a result of this crisis of morality, unrighteousness abounds and is evidently expressed in the following ways:

- Grave questions of integrity are being raised concerning our nation's top leaders;
- Loss of public trust in the political process, system and machinery;
- Widely perceived flouting and/or manipulation of the nation's law and order;
- Distrust of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and courts of law;
- Grave doubts about the unbiased and impartial nature of the police and other enforcement agencies; and
- Deep concerns about the loyalties and impartiality of the civil service.

Of equal concern are matters affecting various communities such as:

- Widespread corruption which continues not just unabated but unabashed;
- Fanning of racial hatred at all levels, not only on

the Internet but also in mainstream newspapers and television; and

- Religious discrimination and bias of the most serious and brazen manner.

The Root Cause

In efforts to regain and retain power, the Rule of Law and the various State institutions have been laid low and compromised to such a degree that these are fast losing the respect of the public at large. The state's considerable power has been wielded with selectivity, impunity and sadly, with injustice.

The constitutional crisis in Perak is one outcome of such behaviour. There can be no doubt that the behaviour of our leaders and our political parties have contributed the most to the almost endemic disrespect for the State and Rule of Law. They have ignored the demands of their various constituencies and that of the nation. Even opposition politicians are not entirely free of responsibility. Their personal behaviour and tainted agendas have also contributed to the current dilemma.

What Malaysians face today is nothing short of a moral morass that is submerging not just the little good governance we have, but law and order itself. It is wrecking the economy and dissolving what is left of the social bonds of friendship among the various racial communities.

The Need for Action

This crisis of morality and causes is a political, security, economic and social threat of the highest order. It is a moral calamity in the making and Malaysian Christians cannot afford to remain idle in the face of this onslaught.

As minorities, we have habitually and perhaps wrongly avoided all forms of public engagement that put our interests and comfort at risk. For too long we have hidden behind a few self-serving Bible verses and ignored what God has done through the centuries. We have feigned disinterest in politics. We have hidden our light under a barrel. In short, we have failed to provide the moral and ethical principles that we so strongly criticise our leaders for not having. Now is the time to put this right. The country is in turmoil and to stand idly by is an act of gross negligence.

* A frustrating, confusing, or unmanageable situation that prevents progress.

...continued next page

From previous page: Malaysia's Moral Morass

NECF Malaysia therefore calls on all Christians to take the necessary prayerful, principled and affirmative steps towards appropriate actions as follows:

1 Be INFORMED

Firstly, there is a need to be informed. Christians cannot be effective until they understand the issues. For this purpose, Christians should attend briefings on national political and social issues. Church leaders should also organise talks by believers who understand the issues and can help to enlighten the congregation.

2 Be INITIATED

Secondly, there is a need to be initiated. More Christians should join political and non-governmental organisations or form voluntary associations of their personal conviction and choice towards public engagements.

Numbers do not indicate quality but they should not be underestimated in efforts for concerted actions.

Editor's note: This statement was written by the NECF Research Commission for NECF.

3 Be INVOLVED

Thirdly, there is a need to be involved. There are already Christians working at the highest levels to influence and counterculture the undermining of our political and legal system as well as State institutions. Not all may have the abilities or similar opportunities but each should find his/her calling and in small ways, attempt to make a difference.

4 Be INTERACTIVE

Fourthly, we must be interactive. Just as we would earnestly desire everyone in this country to know the grace and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must seek to influence those in authority and those yet to be committed, to restore national righteousness. In times of crisis, this is an urgent call and our acts should be predicated on the love for our country which the Almighty God has placed us in. It is an essential act of stewardship and accountability towards our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

May our Almighty Allah protect and preserve this nation of ours in its dire hour of need.

From front cover: Get off your mule...

can I be a neighbour to those around me? To answer this question, we'll have to get down from our mules to find out what others are going through. If we remain on our mules, we will only 'see' a wounded man on the road. By getting down, we will not just see, but hear his silent cries and identify with his pain. Then, we will know how to minister to his needs.

When we get down from our mules to minister to the needy, we follow our Lord who came down to earth to serve the needy and has since commissioned us for this sacred service.

The right attitude

Thirdly, the parable ends with the words from Jesus, "Go and do likewise". The words challenge us to reflect deeply whether we have been a neighbour to others. "Go and do likewise" points us to the fact that Christ expects the same of the Church today.

The tragedy in today's society, and indeed of the Church, is that we see others as objects – the lowly, underprivileged – who deserve only

our pity and favour while we maintain our superior position. When we are not willing to get down from our lofty position, we are shutting our ears from the cries of the needy. And like the religious leaders, we'll go on our merry way.

Are churches in Malaysia guilty of this kind of behaviour?

Or are we like the Samaritan, who contrary to expectation, showed love and compassion?

"To whom am I a neighbour?"

The parable of the Good Samaritan helps us to shift our focus from the "us" attitude to "the one who needs help". With such an attitude, we will no longer look at people as objects but rather as subjects capable of playing a positive role in the world. That should encourage us to propagate the love and compassion of God.

Good News!

Some of us may feel incapable of active ministry to the needy. Here's

good news for you – if you are unable to serve with your hands and feet, you can intercede and give

generously to those whose hands and feet are doing the work.

It is our deep desire to see churches dismount their mules. We have therefore themed this year's nationwide 40-day

Fast and Prayer "Love

Our Neighbour – A Shining Light to the Nations." The theme follows Christ's command to "love our neighbour as ourselves".

We pray that through concerted prayers, the Church of Malaysia will begin to experience the transformation that removes all prejudices, biases, barriers – whether social, religious, economic or even denominational – which comes from being a neighbour to others.

Will you make effort to pray and provide practical help that will bring forth the aroma of Christ for His name and glory?

Will you get off your mule?



Allah Absent

Allah is missing. The Indonesian Bible, “Kitab Suci Indonesian Literal Translation” has replaced the word with the Hebrew word “Elohim”.

The Bible is distributed by a group called “Yayasan Lentera Bangsa” which claims that every sentence is directly translated from the Hebrew-Greek-English Bible and is therefore a more literal translation to the original manuscript.

It was promoted at the recent international bookfair in Kuala Lumpur, which was organised by the Government, as a way of resolving the current “Allah” conflict between the Church and the Government.

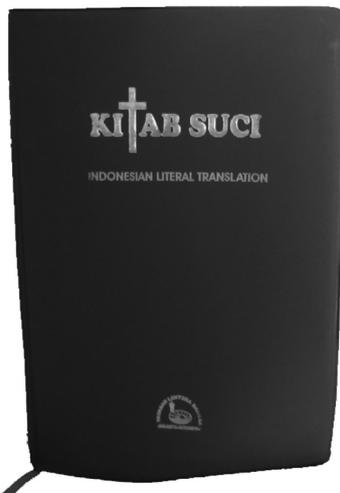
According to the group, the word “Allah” is not found in the original Greek and Hebrew Bible. This is obviously a non-statement and there is no need to go further on this point.

In assessing Kitab Suci, NECF Malaysia wish to categorically state the following:

- 1) That the usage of the word “Elohim” is not wrong in itself as at least one English Bible uses the word “Yahweh” in place of “God”;
- 2) However, we strongly oppose the offer of using the Kitab Suci to resolve the “Allah” ban issue and we continue to maintain the right to use “Allah” as it has been so used for over 300 years in Malaysia.

The core issue is our fundamental right to practise our faith in whatever language, for languages are universal properties and no one has any right to claim exclusive use of any one language.

We also wish to highlight the numerous inaccuracies in translation in Kitab Suci. For example, in Kitab Suci’s Job



2:9, Job’s wife was reported as telling him to “Berkatilah Elohim, dan matilah!” (“... bless Elohim and die”!) In the approved Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, the phrase used is “Kutuki Allahmu dan matilah” (“Curse Allah and die”).

Another example of inaccuracy is found in Gal. 3:22 where the Kitab Suci says, “Tetapi kitab suci telah menutup segala sesuatu di bawah dosa, supaya janji itu dapat diberikan kepada mereka yang percaya **atas dasar iman Yesus Kristus** (based on Jesus’ faith).”

The approved Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia reads, “Tetapi Kitab Suci telah menugurung

segala sesuatu di bawah kekuasaan dosa, **oleh karena iman dalam Yesus Kristus** (because of faith in Jesus), janji itu diberikan kepada mereka yang percaya.”

The Catholic Church has also opposed the Kitab Suci. In its April 26 Catholic Herald issue, the newspaper pointed out that Kitab Suci had not been approved by the Indonesian Bible Society.

“The new Malay Bible (Kitab Suci) weakens the argument for using the word Allah because some groups are trying to substitute God with a foreign name, whereas Allah is the Malay word for God and has been the accepted translation for centuries,” the paper’s editor Father Lawrence Andrew told AFP (*malaysiakini*, April 26).

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church has been granted leave by the High Court to quash the Home Ministry’s decision prohibiting the use of “Allah” in the Herald Catholic Weekly. The Ministry had told the Weekly that its publication permit for 2009 was subject to the condition that it did not use the word.

The Government had argued that “Allah” should only be used by Muslims and had banned non-Muslims from using the word.

SPECIAL INSURANCE SCHEME

THE NECF–Great Eastern Group Insurance Programme is being offered until end-July. The specially-packaged critical illness scheme is extended to those working at or attending churches or organizations which are members of NECF Malaysia. For RM30 per month, the insurance package provides:

- Critical illness coverage of RM30,000;
- Death coverage of RM30,000;
- Total permanent disability due to illness of RM30,000;
- Death or total permanent disability due to

accident of RM60,000; and

- Maturity benefits at age 65.

Insurers may opt for the higher package of RM50 per month. No medical examination is required; however, GE requires a minimum participation of 200 members and the participants must be below 55 years.

Since the scheme was launched in September 2005, NECF has helped to subsidise the premium for needy full-time workers, especially those in East Malaysia.

Great Eastern has also paid out over RM460,000 in claims since 2006.

For more information, please contact: Lawrence (019-338 2687); Laura (013-336 7088); or 03-4294 7673.

CFM's New Committee

The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) has elected a new committee for the 2009–2010 term. The following were elected at its biennial general meeting on April 27:

Chairman: Bishop Ng Moon Hing (CCM)
 Vice-Chairmen: Bishop Julius D. Gitom (RC)
 Elder Kong Yeng Phooi (NECF)
 Rev. Dr Thomas Philips (CCM)
 Hon. Secretary: Rev. Eu Hong Seng (NECF)
 Asst. Hon. Secretary: Rev. Fr O.C. Lim (RC)
 Hon. Treasurer: Anthony Row (CCM)
 Asst. Hon. Treasurer: Rev. Fr Michael Chua (RC)
 Committee Members: Dr Khoo Kay Hup (NECF);
 Bishop Dr Thomas Tsen (CCM); Ivy Josiah (CCM);

Ee Joo Lian (NECF); Tay Wah Seng (NECF); Bishop Antony Selvanayagam (RC); and Evelyn Mora Lio-Lee (RC)

In his brief final message, outgoing Chairman the Rt Rev. Dr Paul Tan shared candidly about his frustration at the “intricate inefficiency” within CFM due to the differences in structure and management of the three component bodies. (CFM comprises RC – Roman Catholic, CCM – Council of Churches of Malaysia and NECF Malaysia.)

To resolve the problem, he said the three bodies must “mandate their representatives in the executive council with a certain power of decision and trust the decisions of their representatives...”

In his closing remark, he blessed the meeting with, “May the Son of Allah, our Lord Jesus, fill you with His Spirit of wisdom and love!”

From pg 2: Leave Ahab Alone!...

can be confident in every national crisis.

4 Fourthly, pray, pray, pray! The prophet Elijah prayed with his head in between his knees for rain to be poured forth so that that relief and blessing could come upon the nation.

Every problem has a shelf life, and the three years and six months drought was about to end. Once again, God used a praying man, who was like us.²

The many unsavoury reports of economists and the IMF no doubt signal the beginning of “drought” in our nation. But there is no time for the blame game.

The Church must “put their head in between their knees” to travail in prayer for there will be the sound of the “abundance of rain.” And God wants His House of prayer to be filled once again. There is no excuse for the “ordinary believer” not to pray. The apostle James took pains to tell us the great prayer warrior (Elijah) was a “man with a nature like ours.”

It was not the *kaïros* time for the wicked Ahab to be dealt with. It was, and it is, time to pray.

Pray, pray, and pray.

Elijah stayed focused on praying for rain, and I suspect more time spent in our prayer meetings will bear greater fruit than time spent in political

analyses and rallies.

In this season, let’s implore our Almighty for rain to end the drought – economic, moral, political and spiritual – over our nation.

He is the God of mercy who answers by fire and when the fire came down, it was not to burn Ahab up, nor to devour his palace. It was to prove Himself to His people and to end the drought.

5 Lastly, prepare to speak. The responsibility to see and understand what God is doing is still ours today. The prophet’s servant couldn’t see in spite of the prophet’s encouragement. Elijah alone could hear and knew the rain was indeed coming.

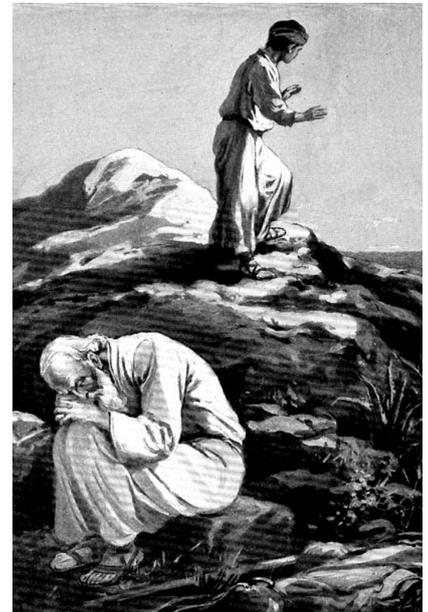
We must “see” because the day will come when God will ask us to deliver a message to Ahab to “go... prepare your chariots.”³

The worsening crisis is on the horizon, but there is much hope for the seeking, seeing and serving Church. Until and unless we seek, see and serve, we are not qualified to speak.

He is indeed the merciful One, the Allah who will defend His own name.

If God were to rain fire down today, it won’t be on Ahab’s palace. I won’t be surprised if it will be just a few feet from our pulpits.

How long will we falter between two opinions?



In this season, let’s implore our Almighty for rain to end the drought – economic, moral, political and spiritual – over our nation.

Footnote

¹ Kings 18:21 (NKJV) And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.

² James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. NKJV

³ 1 Kgs 18:44

Conversion Cases Exact Heavy Emotional Toll

Will the Government Finally Give Relief?

On April 23, the Cabinet made an historical decision to prohibit parents who have divorced from converting their children to a different religion. The decision arose from the furore of the case of kindergarten teacher Indira Gandhi whose estranged husband converted their children to Islam without her consent. He had earlier converted and had successfully applied to the syariah court for custody of their children.

The Cabinet has directed the Attorney-General to look into the relevant laws that need to be amended to seal its decision to disallow converted parents to convert their children's religion.

The decision, though long overdue, was hailed by many as the right step toward bringing relief to the many lives whose children have been covertly converted by their spiteful spouses.

Ever since the S. Shamala case exploded in the media, bystanders could only look in dismay and with growing alarm at the Government's seeming apathy to the human plight plaguing those concerned. (See <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/4/28/nation/20090428210133&sec=nation> for details of the Shamala case.)

Most of the time, it is the women who have had to bear the anguish of their husband's actions – firstly, converting to Islam and then, converting the children without their knowledge nor consent.

Who knows the depths of sufferings these affected ones go through? Their gripping fears of losing their children? The anguish of their spouses' betrayal? Their frustrations at being tossed around by the courts? And even after the courts have decided in their favour, their despair at the police's apparent uncooperative attitude towards enforcing the court's orders as in the case of Indira Gandhi.

We pray for these suffering souls

that they will find justice and relief. We pray for wisdom for their lawyers. We pray that the Attorney-General will act quickly, despite our cynicism.

We pray for a firm stance on the Government's part to resolve the issue. We pray against the Government being cowed to retract its decision by certain quarters.

We continue to pray because we look to a God who cares for the oppressed.

Educate our People on Consequences of Converting

Meanwhile, it is needful to educate our

people, particularly the youths, on the consequences of converting to Islam.

We believe in and uphold the fundamental right of every individual to choose his religion.

However, before deciding to follow a religion, it is crucial to know the legal implications, if any, attached to converting to that religion.

In Malaysia, converting to Islam carries serious legal consequences, which many are unaware of despite the numerous high-profile court cases.

The article below sheds light on some of the consequences.

Conversion to Islam and Family Life

IN the context of the multi-racial, -social and -religious society in Malaysia where Islam is the religion of the Federation, conversion to Islam affects a person's daily life. Family life is no exception and there are serious implications and consequences affecting a person and his family should he/she convert to Islam. What are some important implications and consequences?

Firstly, if you convert to Islam, your legal status is changed. Your conversion to Islam will be registered with the Religious Department and the National Registration Department, both of which are computerised, so that access to this information is available throughout the country.

You will be issued a "conversion certificate" by the Islamic religious authorities to certify you are now a Muslim and this new religious status of yours may be captured in your MyKad.

In addition, you will be given a new name, usually a Malay name to signify your conversion to Islam.

Secondly, with your conversion to Islam, you will be expected to adhere to Islamic requirements or stipulations according to the Administration of Islamic enactments found in most of the 13 states of Malaysia. What are some

of these requirements or stipulation?

1. Conversion back to your former religion is either not allowed or treated as a criminal offence which means you may be fined, whipped, detained or imprisoned.

2. If you have children under 18 years of age, your children will follow you and likewise be treated as Muslims subjected to the same Islamic law enactment.

3. Even if you have not been a practising Muslim or observed actively the religion of Islam, your records and identification documents will show your conversion to Islam. Hence, you may be fined, whipped, detained or imprisoned for violation of Syariah laws, such as praying in church, eating in public during the Muslim's fasting month, khalwat (close proximity), etc.

4. You cannot marry a non-Muslim. If you decide to divorce and attempt to convert out of Islam, you will lose custody of your children because they are Muslims.

5. Upon death, your non-Muslim relatives will lose their rights to any money, property, inheritance, etc. that you may want to leave to them. The

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Getting Axed

How can the church help?

Getting retrenched is a depressing and frightening experience, and for many, a rather shameful one too. Losing a job brings with it a lot of emotional baggage, making the 'losers' feel vulnerable and unworthy. With our rapidly-deteriorating economy, more and more people are expected to be shown the door. How does the church help unload that emotional burden off those who are and will be affected?

A quick check around churches shows that while they are concerned about the effects of the economy on their members, not many are taking proactive action to help potential retrenchment "victims". Most churches said they were keeping a lookout for members who might have been retrenched or are in danger of losing their jobs to offer them counseling and material assistance.

But can churches do more than these? And quickly?

"The earlier we help the better. Day by day the situation is deteriorating and more and more of our members are in distress physically and mentally," says Dr Benjamin George Snr, a church leader. Dr George is currently initiating a nationwide job-care force to help retrenched Christians find employment.

"These are the people who have been with us for years supporting us financially, often sacrificially. Now, when they are in dire need how can we fail them? Many are feeling that the church does not care...the leaders are not even aware of the tragedy of their members, and do not want to be involved!"

Dr George admits, however, that establishing a nationwide initiative takes time and laments that "time is not on our side."

Also, mobilising a nationwide initiative poses a steep challenge. Hence, he feels the most efficient way to help affected church members is to 'localise' the aid programme through individual churches. The programmes

need not be big or fanciful.

For instance, some churches in Kuala Lumpur have started to pin up job vacancy notices from their members who are hiring people and link job seekers directly to the prospective employers. One church pastor, who wishes to remain anonymous, shares, "In the last recession, we asked those who were retrenched or were facing financial problems to see us so that the church can provide financial aid to them.

"We interviewed them to ensure they were genuinely in need and then gave out amounts ranging from RM200 to RM700 a month. The money wasn't a loan but a gift to them from the church. We have not started this yet (for this round) but will if it's needed."

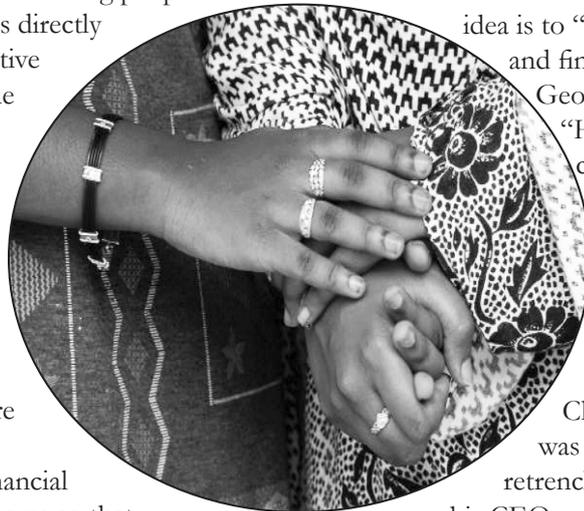
Individuals within churches can also make a big impact in assisting their needy brethren in difficult times by offering practical help such as the following examples reported by Dr George:

1. A brother gives his works to Christian contractors and buys things from fellow (Christian) businessmen;
2. A Christian businessman gives special discounts to needy believers;

3. A doctor provides free or hugely-discounted fees to needy Christian patients.

For a more coordinated approach, Dr George has proposed a church membership register where members' details, such as their profession or business, are listed and the register made available to all members. Some churches may shy away from having such a register for fear of misuse, but the benefits of having one far outweighs the negative side, argues Dr George.

This is a proactive step to helping potential needy members. For example, the register will give an indication of who are likely to be affected by the downturn based on their jobs. The



idea is to "know them and find them". Dr George adds, "How can the church help the needy when they do not know who they are?"

Another Christian who was recently retrenched from his CEO position has suggested that churches form 'job placement' committees to match employees and employers within the church. Those who have been retrenched or are unemployed can forward their resumé to the committee. Likewise, those who are seeking employees can forward their requirements to the committee who will then try to make the match.

Additionally, businessmen or professionals can register with the committee to indicate the goods and services they offer so that fellow Christians can bless them by utilising their services. He also proposed the creation of a website or database directory where church members could access to find the goods and services.

...continued next page

Selangor Bans Christian Song

Imposes fine of up to RM1,000

From banning Bibles to Christian publications, the authorities are now prohibiting songs.

The Selangor Islamic Religious Council (MAIS) has banned an Indonesian song which contains the word “Allah” to “prevent Muslims from being confused”.

Anyone found playing or singing the song, “Allah Peduli” (God Cares), risk being fined up to RM1,000 under the Non-Muslim Religious Enactment 1988.

However, the ban is confined to Selangor as matters of religion come under state jurisdiction.

MAIS chairman Datuk Mohamad Adzib Mohd Isa told the media on March 13 that the song by Indonesian singer Agnes Monica repeatedly

used the word ‘Allah’ when referring to Jesus Christ and that the lyrics ended with words “Tak akan pernah dibiarkannya ku bergumul sendiri sebab Allah Yeses ku mengerti” (Will never be left alone to face my own anxiety because Allah Jesus understands).

Following the ruling, the Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAIPP) urged the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) to extend the ban to the nation.

MAIPP chairman Shabudin Yahaya said he had not heard the song but he had received reports that the lyrics touched on the sensitivities of Islam.

NECF Malaysia maintains that it will continue to use the word “Allah” as languages and words are

universal property and should not be monopolised by any one religion or ethnic group. Furthermore, the word has been used by Christians and other religions even before Islam existed.

NECF asserts that one of the ways to resolve the issue is to get the various religious groups who use “Allah” in their Scriptures and faith – Sikhs, Christians, Muslims and others – to educate their followers on their unique understanding of the word according to their religions.

Different religion views and understands “Allah” in different manner and no one religion should impose its understanding of the word on another religion.

You can catch the controversial song “Allah Peduli” on youtube.com

From previous page: Getting Axed...

“In this way, we are blessing one another and supporting the Christian community,” he said.

For another church in Petaling Jaya, keen ears are the main approach it is employing to help any needy brethren during this economic downturn. “The main thing we are doing is to get our cell and zone leaders to pay attention to any needs in their cell groups so that we can help one another through this time,” says its spokesman.

The church has a strategic plan – the pastoral care of its members in cell groups would first be directly met by the cell leaders, then zone leaders and finally the zone pastors. The care includes prayer, counseling, referrals, visitation and practical help for one another, including financial, spiritual, social and emotional assistance.

In the meantime, the leadership is exploring strategies such as getting the experts – human resource professionals, financial planners and

counsellors – together to discuss ways to help the needy with job placement, debt restructuring or financial planning.

But helping the needy must go beyond the church, the spokesman

But helping the needy must go beyond the church...

maintains. The church also helps suffering non-believers referred by church members. “Our foodbank and financial assistance are given (to these needy ones) through referrals.”

Meanwhile, retrenched workers can look to various marketplace initiatives which have been established to help match the jobless with suitable jobs. An example is the Selangor state retrenchment task force, an initiative by the state government, which organises career and resumé clinics where retrenched workers can register themselves and obtain aid or advice.

Recently, the force was expanded

to include assisting unemployed graduates. At the clinics, individuals can also obtain information on retraining programmes which are available under the Human Resources Ministry.

New Staff

DANIEL LOH has joined NECF Malaysia as the Executive Secretary (part-time) for the Tamil Commission.

At the same time, he is pastoring the Tamil congregation of Charis Word Centre in Selayang Baru, Kuala Lumpur.

He was formerly a business executive in a general insurance company.

In his ministry at NECF, he leads and coordinates the work among Tamil churches in Malaysia.

NS Doctrinal Errors

Christians, especially Christian parents whose children are attending the National Service programme, need to be aware of the grave doctrinal errors on Christianity contained in the workbook used by the NS integration programme on religion.

The workbook is entitled ‘Buku Kerja Program Integrasi’ on ‘Keagamaan’, 4th edition, 2009.

The chapters on Christianity on pages 12 and 13 contain the following errors:

- On page 12, under the heading “Agama Kristian”, bullet 2 states: “Pengikut Christ menganggap beliau sebagai penyelamat yang diutus untuk membela Bani Israel daripada penindasan bangsa-bangsa lain seperti bangsa rom yang pernah memerintah Palestin.” (Translated: Christ’s followers regard him as the saviour sent to deliver the Israeli race from the oppression by other races, such as the Romans, who once occupied Palestine.)

This is erroneous as Christians do not regard Christ as the saviour for Israel’s political and territorial oppression. Instead, the Bible clearly states He came to deliver the human race from the bondage of sin.

No where in the Bible does it say that Christ came to deliver the Israelites from human oppression.

- On page 13, bullet 6 states: “Jesus mengajar konsep tuhan yang esa, pengasih, penyayang, pemurah dan pengampun. Bagi orang yang mengamalkan ajaran ini, mereka akan menikmati kesempurnaan hidup di akhirat.” (Translated: Jesus taught the concept of God as loving, merciful, forgiving and compassionate. For those who follow this teaching, they will enjoy eternal life in the hereafter.)

This is erroneous as Christians have always maintained that salvation in the hereafter is not based on merely knowing God as a loving, merciful and compassionate God, but believing, confessing and accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Protestant Christians also do not subscribe to the description written under the heading “Agama Kristian”, bullet 3 which says that Christ “menghidupkan burung yang dibuat daripada tanah liat dan sebagainya.” (Translated: brought clay birds to life.)

NECF Malaysia has notified the Christian Federation of Malaysia about this matter which will be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities.

From pg 7: Conversion Cases...

corpse of a convert to Islam will be taken away from his or her non-Muslim family for Islamic rites and burial even if you have not been a practising Muslim.

Thirdly, if you are married and should your spouse choose to convert to Islam, this will not affect you personally but it will bring about uncertainties in your family life, such as:

1. The converted spouse may take your children with him or her, in which case your children may be regarded as

Muslims. Should you decide to resist or challenge that, it is unclear how the authorities may decide as one spouse is a Muslim and the other is not.

2. In such case, the family unit is usually split and may cause turmoil and unnecessary stress to family life. This is illustrated in the ongoing Indira Gandhi and S. Shamala cases.

3. When your spouse converts to Islam, you may have no right to either your children or your spouse’s property.

We know some Christians who have converted to Islam are not aware of or

have not seriously thought through the implications of their conversion.

Hopefully, the points raised above will shed some light on this thorny issue that has brought much grief to those affected.

We wish to stress that we are not against any decision to follow Islam or any other religion because we subscribe to the freedom of religion guaranteed for all Malaysians in Article 11 of our Constitution.

But to choose correctly, you need to know well what you are choosing and the consequences of your choice.

Computer Workshop for Orang Asli church leaders

WE live in the computer age and in keeping with the times, several Orang Asli pastors and leaders learnt how to use the computer at a one-day workshop in April organised by the NECF Malaysia Orang Asli Commission.

NECF volunteer Leong Yew Lai kicked off the workshop by asking participants to share their experiences – good and bad – with the computer.

Then, it’s hands-on learning on using the Word programme – how to format

a document, store files, the importance of backing up files, etc.

They were also exposed to a Bible software where they learnt how to search Scriptural texts and topics to help them prepare sermons.



It may have been information overload for the participants but they definitely took home some tips and gained some confidence to get them going.

At least the computer doesn’t look so intimidating now.



HOW DO YOU REACH OUT TO YOUR COMMUNITY WITHOUT DUPLICATING WHAT'S ALREADY available there? In mulling this question, one church has come up with an innovative ministry that is sure to connect with the needy.

Called CAREmart, the ministry is essentially a grocery shop but with an edge. Berita NECF finds out more about this one-of-its-kind ministry from its director, Tan Chin Chin (who is also the part-time cashier, general worker, stock checker and system trouble shooter).

Q: What is CAREmart?

CAREmart is a grocery store that is open to the public. The difference is that we give subsidies to needy people to purchase essential goods at 30 percent discount. It is a ministry of our church (Full Gospel Tabernacle, Subang Jaya) to help people, primarily families, who are struggling with the escalating cost of living. Our unemployment rate is hitting 5%. Nationwide, 80,000 graduates are unemployed and many are being retrenched. Giving subsidies for essential goods is one way that we can help these people.

The 30 percent subsidy is only for essential goods, things we cannot do without such as rice, sugar, salt, flour, noodles, washing detergent, toiletries and others. Items such as chewing gum, fizzy drink, oyster sauce, Nescafe are not

by referring needy people to us. Once their applications are approved, the recommending churches will fund the subsidies. We will invoice the participating churches each month with details of their referrals, their purchases and amount subsidised.

In our church, we encourage all our members to buy their groceries from CAREmart instead of their favourite hypermarket or kedai runcit). After all, everyone needs to buy toiletries, noodles, rice etc. Our motto is "Everyone chipping in to help the needy". All our profits go towards helping the needy.

Q: Its location?

CAREmart officially opened on Nov 14, 2008 and is located at 15, Jalan Tiara 2, Tiara Square, Taman Perindustrian UEP, Subang Jaya. Currently, the shop is opened from 8a.m. to 6p.m. from Monday to Saturday. On Friday, it's

Grocery Shop

considered essential goods. So a subsidy holder who wants to reward himself with a coke will have to buy it at market price.

With A Difference

extended to 8p.m. And on Sundays it's from 12:30p.m. to 6p.m.

Church members and the public who are not eligible for the subsidy can also purchase the goods from CAREmart at market prices.

Q: What are your 'market prices' like?

We are just like any other grocery shops and our prices are comparable to theirs. We can't compete with hypermarkets as they get better deals from high volumes. Also, they may price certain goods at a loss to attract customers who will buy other stuff at higher margins.

Q: Who qualify for subsidy?

We are looking at families with savings of less than RM15,000, and with a combined monthly income of less than RM1,700 if they have two or more children, or less than RM1,400 with one child.

They apply and we assess their needs through an interview and home visit. Upon approval, they get a subsidy card entitling them to the 30 percent discount initially for three months. After that, we will review the subsidy for renewal of up to 12 months.

Q: How is the subsidy funded?

By individual churches. Other churches can participate

Q: Is the choice of location important?

Yes, as with any sundry shop, accessibility to the public, church members, targeted needy people and the cost of goods are important. CAREmart is located near FGT Subang where we have over 1000 members and we are encouraging ALL of them to open their eyes to the poor and be a customer! Plus we are in the midst of a residential area.

Q: What has the response been like since it started?

Since its opening over four months ago, more and more of our members are choosing to buy from CAREmart. Some who own their companies are also buying their office use from CAREmart. We also sell gift vouchers. People buy these as birthday gifts or just to bless someone in a practical way. Most importantly, our members are looking out for struggling families and are referring them to us.



...continued pn pg 13

Doctors Also Get Sick

“Wounded pastors” sounds like an oxymoron. After all,

pastors are supposed to be the ones tending the wounds of their injured sheep and massaging balm to hurting souls. On the battlefield, pastors are the invincible commander; the sheep are the vulnerable soldiers.

But this is far from the truth. Out there where bullets fly and mortars rage, everyone is at equal risk. In fact, pastors, being in the frontline, face greater danger of getting hit.

It's the same in the church scene. Pastors get wounded all the time in the course of their ministry, and sadly, some never heal and eventually drop out of ministry.

In the 2001 NECF Survey, when asked whether they had thought of leaving their pastoral ministry over the past five years, about half the pastors who responded said they had occasionally thought about it, 9.4% replied “fairly often” while 2.4% admitted “very often”.

What are the common causes of pastors leaving the ministry? From the same NECF survey, some of the reasons cited were:

- Discouragement over lack of spiritual and numerical growth in their congregations;
- Too many responsibilities;
- Lack of recognition and appreciation;
- Difficult relationships with church members; and
- Insufficient income

A survey among North American churches gives us a peak into the common reasons why pastors are frustrated:

1. Church Conflict

The most common cause is conflict, either with lay leaders, colleagues, members of the congregation or denominational leaders. These conflicts often

sap the pastor of his energy, enthusiasm and vision.

In a survey¹ done, a quarter of the respondents cited conflict with local church leaders as one of the most significant factors in the actual decision to leave.

2. Lack of Support

Pastors often feel that their needs (financial, emotional and moral) are neglected by their church. They often leave the pastorate with intense feelings of failure, anger, betrayal, resentment and guilt.

3. Pastor's Spouse/Family Issues

Spouse/family issues are often significant in the decision to leave the pastorate. Most of these issues are related to spouse, family, housing, finance and mobility.

- 13.5% mention problems in the marriage relationship;
- 10% of spouses have problems accepting the lifestyle; and
- 16% mention family problems.

4. Loss of Self-confidence

Loss of self-confidence is often characterised by self-doubt, low self-esteem, an inability to cope, and a constant focus on one's weaknesses.

5. Stress/burnout

When stress begins to affect pastors, they begin to feel that the pastoral ministry is no longer tenable. For some, this decision leads them to take “time out” for either a sabbatical and/or further study. For others, they just throw in the towel.

Churches must be aware of

the potholes and pitfalls that lie inconspicuously in the path of their pastors. Action must be taken to plug the holes, or else ministry casualties will result in a gradual diminution in number and strength of full-time pastors.

PLUGGING THE HOLES

Inevitably, pastors will get hurt in the process of ministry. This is an inherent part of discipleship which we cannot avoid. The church's role is to help pastors anticipate the pitfalls ahead and take measures to overcome them.

If and when their pastors are injured, the church should nurse the wounds, prevent them from festering and help its pastor get through his ordeal to emerge stronger.

NECF Malaysia, through its Leadership Commission, is looking at ways to help pastors achieve optimum health for effective service.

One such proposal is the Pastors' Adoption Programme where pastors from smaller towns can do refreshers and on-the-job training with bigger churches in the cities. This can also be an affordable way for the church to give its pastor a sabbatical.

Following are some other programmes that the commission is mulling over.

Proactive Care

- Conduct seminars on church systems and processes offering proactive advice to both pastors and lay leaders to help them identify and minimise problems before they surface to harm the unity of the church.
- Conduct leadership training for pastors to upgrade their ministerial skills – strategic planning,

...continued next page

Help for East Malaysian Farmers Hit By Devastating Flood

NECF Malaysia is undertaking a joint project with SIB Sabah and Sarawak and disaster-relief agency CREST to help our East Malaysian brethren whose fields and crops were completely destroyed in the January flood.

NECF is mobilising funds for some 700 families at the following locations: Kawasan Tanduk, Kota Marudu and Keningau in Sabah; and Baram Valley, Long Ikang and Long Bermang in Sarawak.

The money raised will go towards:

- Purchasing seedlings and fertilisers for the farmers to start planting at mid-year in time for the year-end harvest;
- Food and necessities for the families during the recovery period;
- Drainage system for the paddy fields and others.

The estimated sum needed for the project is RM150,000. Part of the money collected from this year's 40-Day Prayer and Fast will be set aside for this effort.

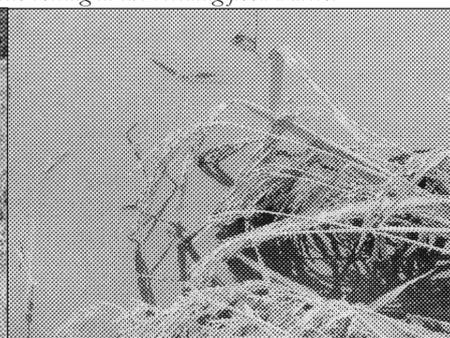
Interior of the flooded SIB church at Kg Kuala Punteh, Keningau, Sabah



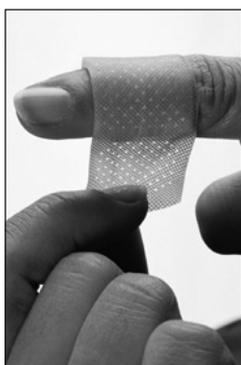
Rising water level at Kg Kuala Punteh, Keningau, Sabah



From left: Hundreds of acres of fields ready for harvesting destroyed after being submerged in the flood. Rice kernels rotting in the receding flood waters.



From previous page Doctors Also Get Sick...



interpersonal skills, self-awareness, etc.

Reactive Care

Wounded pastors need care. Sometimes, tenderness is the approach; other times, a firm hand and good measure of discipline are required. Whatever it is, they should

not be left alone to self-medicate their injuries. Their leaders must swarm to their rescue and quickly before the wounds turn fatal. We urge pastors and leaders to build close and firm relationships, and not just functional relationships that revolve around work and ministry.

We are family and family members look out for each other, stay true to our ties no matter what our disagreements are, and desire the best for each other.

We invite feedback or further ideas. Email to Patrick at Patrick@necf.org.my

From pg 11: Grocery Shop With A Difference... ..

Q: Any other comments that will help churches to think about community service?

The present economic meltdown is a wonderful opportunity to touch our community. CAREmart is just one way. Churches must start preaching "good works" and actually do it. We need to do a "good works audit" of our churches. We go by Matthew 5:16 which says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

For some time now, churches have not been known to be nation builders. We believe this is the scale of blessing and impact that God desires to pour through churches in Malaysia.

When we think back of the Christian missionaries, they have built the foundations of our nation in education, justice, governance, health, infrastructure, defence, finance and many more. Every single Malaysian has been affected and is still benefiting from the good works done by these missionaries.

¹<http://www.change-career-with-purpose.com/pastor-burnout.html>

The New May 13

MAY 13, 1969 is an ignominious date in our nation's history because of the racial clashes and bloodshed that occurred between fellow Malaysians on this dark day.

However, May 13, 2009 has become an historical event for the Malaysian Church as on this day, churches within the Klang Valley, irrespective of denominations, gathered to celebrate God's deliverance.

The event at DUMC Dream Centre, Petaling Jaya, marked the dawning of a new era after 40 years. From a biblical perspective, the 40-year period symbolises a passing over of fear and bondage and ushered in the Esther anointing for churches and the nation.

Pastors were called to pray for seven categories for the Church and for the future of the nation. With one voice, the congregation of more than 2,000 Christians concurred and brought their hearts' cries before His throne of grace.

Mark Geppert, President of the South East Asia Prayer Centre, shared from Luke 9 and 10. As Jesus sent the disciples out two by two, likewise we are "sent" and "to go" to every corner of the nation to pray, intercede and proclaim the Good News of the kingdom as we have been given the authority to do so. This is reflected in the report by the disciples in Luke 10:17, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

It was indeed a "new day" for the Malaysian Church, for we no longer dwell in the past, but look forward to what God would do in the generations to come for the Church and for Malaysia. What an encouragement it was to all of us as much emphasis was laid on loving our



*Standing or kneeling, the Lord hears our cries.
Mark Geppert on his knees in the forefront.*

neighbour – the theme of our 40-Day Fast and Prayer. Surely the Lord is prodding the Malaysian Church to go out and love her neighbours and if she "goes", the Church will never be the same again.

We were encouraged to look with expectation to what God will do through the local church for this nation. All glory and honour to our Lord and Saviour Jesus.

Petaling Jaya's First Public Easter Celebration

On April 19, Petaling Jaya residents had their first-ever public Easter celebration at the Dewan Sivik Auditorium (city town hall) jointly organised by All Petaling Jaya Residents Association Coalition, Christian Federation Malaysia and Councillors of Majlis Bandaraya PJ.

Several VIPs attended the historic event, including Selangor State Executive Councillor YB Teresa Kok who gave the welcoming address.

PJ folks turned up early to fill the 1,200-seater hall. The emcee was former television newscaster Robert

Lam. A Christian himself, Robert took the opportunity to share the meaning of Good Friday and Easter.

The eager crowd were lavishly treated with presentations from Patrick Leong, Juwita Suwito and Jaclyn Smith. The singers interspersed their songs with their personal thoughts on Easter and Jesus Christ.

The climax of the evening was when they came together to sing "Because He Lives" with such passion that stirred the audience to sing along in an atmosphere befitting that of a live worship event. This was no mere

performance from the three singers – it was their worship to the Risen Lord.

The Choir of Philharmonic Society of Selangor also provided a performance of heavenly harmony in their three pieces, timed to perfection.

Though state authorities and even the Government have in the past organised Christian celebrations, such as Christmas, this public celebration is significant in that the Gospel was freely shared.

All glory to God for this historic opportunity to share His love in the public square.

Coming Up

40-Day Fast & Prayer 2009

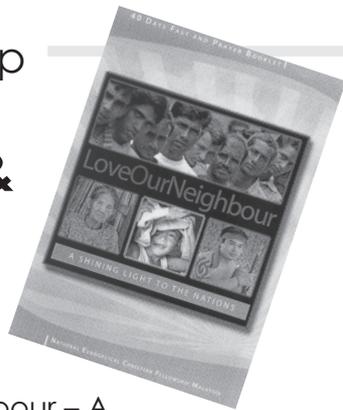
July 22–Aug. 30,
Nationwide

THEME: Love Our Neighbour – A Shining Light to the Nations

THE nationwide 40-day Fast and Prayer kicks off on July 22 and focuses on loving our neighbours in practical ways.

To help participants in their intercession, NECF Malaysia has produced a daily devotional guide which is available at RM1.50 per booklet. Add 30 sen for postage in Peninsular Malaysia and 50 sen for East Malaysia.

Order your booklets from the NECF office.



National Church Conference

Aug. 25–27 at FGA Kuala Lumpur

THEME: Transformation – Leading with Creativity and Conviction in Crisis

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

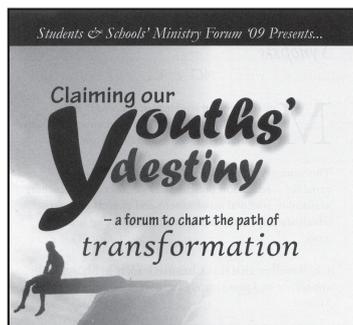
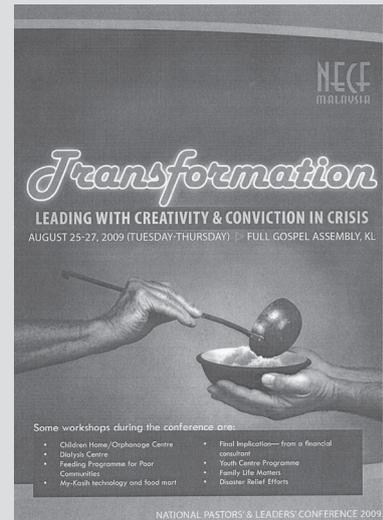
REGISTRATION FEE:
RM90 before July 15
and RM100 thereafter

THE presence of a church is felt in its community when it goes out to serve the neighbourhood in areas that are needed. Many churches have successfully started and run community programmes that have impacted their neighbourhood.

In line with this, NECF Malaysia is organising this conference to spur churches to move out of their doors into their communities.

The conference will feature some successful community programmes, such as dialysis centres, children's homes and drug rehabilitation centres.

Pastors and church leaders are strongly urged to attend the conference to be inspired and also to network.



Youth Forum

Sept. 7 at Canning Garden Methodist Church, Ipoh

THEME: Celebrating Students' & Schools' Ministry – A Partnership between Parents, Teachers and Churches

THE one-day seminar will gather educators, parents and youth workers to share the challenges faced in raising godly, value-grounded youths.

Organised by NECF YouthNet, Malayan Christian Schools' Council, Teachers' Christian Fellowship and Scripture Union, the forum will also be an occasion to appreciate those who have been actively serving in the students' and schools' ministry.

Registration fee is only RM10 per person for lunch and refreshments. Registration form is available on the NECF website.

NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ORDINARY MEMBERS

Church of God Mission International Inc., Puchong, *pastored by Rev. Kirk idika Joseph*; Pusat Kesatuan Kristen, KL, *pastored by James Anak Sumbah*; Holy Seal 611 Bread of Life Christian Church, Kota Kinabalu, *pastored by Rev. Chong Fatt Kong*; Persatuan Penganut Agama Kristian Rhema, Sitiawan, *pastored by Dave Thong*; Truth Baptist Church, Penang, *pastored by Ng Yew Meng*; Glory Christian Centre, Johor Baru, *pastored by Michael Tan Kee Lum*; Manna House Bhd, KL, *pastored by Francis Lee Pak Lee*; The High Priest Church, Kuching, *pastored by Lim Thiam Beng*; E.E. Friendship (M) Bhd, Subang Jaya, *represented by Rev. Voon Yuen Woh*; Sidang Injil Borneo, Kepong KL, *pastored by Janis Nandoh*; Persatuan Kristian Charis Kepong, KL, *pastored by Wong Chee Keong*; Harvest Church, Kluang, *pastored by Rev. Sheng Peng Hui*; Gereja Kemakmuran Sion, Ipoh, *pastored by Jacob Samuel*; Miri Praise Community Church, Miri, *pastored by Alvin Anthony Hajok*; City Light Church, Petaling Jaya, *pastored by Rev. Lee Sai Yew*; Second Corinthians 517, Kuala Lumpur, *represented by David Chiang Sang Yau*; El Shaddai Sanctuary, Ipoh, *pastored by Solomon Murugan K.*; and Bethel Christian Fellowship, Skudai, Johor, *pastored by Moh Hoi Nyen*.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Rev. Richard Moh Hoi Nyen; Pr Priscilla Lim Boon Lan; and Ms Woon Wei Li.

Mongolia When Mongolia started opening up in the early 90s, there were only a handful of Christians and no churches in this 2.6 million population country.

The opening of this nation has also brought about the opening of people's minds. In less than two decades, the Christian community has grown exponentially. There are now approximately 50,000 Christians and about 400 churches across the vast expanse of this land.

Over 80 percent of church leaders have gone through training organised by Asian Outreach Great Commission Institute (AO GCI).

Hand in hand with the training of church planters, pastors and ministry workers nationwide, AO has selected Bayankhongor Province as a focused ministry area and seeks to see a holistic transformation of the whole province – not only spiritually, but also socially and economically. Lives are being touched and changed. Churches are being planted and communities transformed.

Church and mission are growing together. The Genghis Khan heritage serves as a fitting backdrop to the evangelistic zeal of the Mongolian Christians. A few years ago, AO GCI ministry workers started to make trips into Russia, driving over 400km to visit towns and villages in Siberia.

At the same time, they continue to reach out to their fellow Mongolians on the other side of the Chinese border. Mongolia is no longer just a receiving country; it is now a country sending to her neighbours. – *Report from Asian Report, March/April 2009.*

Pray for the Mongolian Church to remain strong in faith and fervent in service. Pray God will preserve the Church against the attacks of the Enemy in the form of dubious teachings, materialism and self-serving leaders. Pray each and every child of God be firmly rooted in His Word.

Sudan Workers with Operation Mercy (Operation Mobilisation's partner aid agency) are bringing hope to Sudan's orphans and street children. Together with other NGOs, they are developing vocational training workshops that teach urgently needed skills such as carpentry.

During school holidays, some boys return home to stay with relatives but others are still too disturbed to leave the Operation Mercy centres or simply have no where else to go. Four boys have entered university but sponsors are needed to fund their further education. – *Report from OM Prayer Diary, April-June 2009.*

Pray: God will supply all the material needs to run this centre; for healing and restoration of the children's emotional, intellectual and physical health; for their salvation; and for the trainers to be filled with much love and wisdom as they interact with the children.

Europe Once, European Christians told the world about Jesus. Today's "Christian" Europe has less evangelical believers than any other continent. Millions have rejected God. Millions more are searching for anything to fill their emptiness. Europe is spiritually bankrupt.

But there is hope! God is doing amazing things across the continent, reports Operation Mobilisation (OM) whose teams across the continent are encountering a turning away from materialism and a renewed interest in faith. Sports programmes in the East attract crowds of young people and provide an excellent opportunity to explain the Gospel. Meanwhile, congregations in the West are asking OM teams to help them share Christ in their communities.

Together with the European Church, OM teams are transforming lives and communities in more than 30 nations: from Portugal to Norway to Albania to Russia.

OM Europe is...

- Caring for the unwanted through community work; empowering the next generation through youth and children programmes;
- Loving the 'neighbours';
- Challenging the secular through relevant programmes – such as dramas and publications and English classes – and strengthening the local church;
- Re-awakening their Christian heritage through church planting and raising a new generation of godly leaders.

Pray: for a strong, united relationship between OM and the European churches; for God to open doors for OM in areas that appear "impossible" to reach; for a powerful move of Holy Spirit throughout Europe; for more Christians in other parts of the world to be willing to answer the call to go to Europe. Once Europe sent their missionaries to us; now is the time for us to go to them.