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Christian Fellowship
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Berita NECF

Editorial

Born Again for the Right Reason

At the recent Merdeka Prayer Rally on August 30, the speaker, Philip Mantofa from Indonesia, said something very interesting: “Jesus Christ is asking us tonight: ‘Has Malaysia been born in your heart?’. The question is not, ‘Were you born in Malaysia.’ Your nationality and passport is Malaysian, but in Jesus’ eyes, not everyone is truly Malaysian. We have no choice which country we are to be born in but by faith in Jesus Christ, we have the choice whether our country is born in our hearts.”

Many of us probably did not give a second thought to what he said, but on hindsight, we who reside in Malaysia need to do some serious soul searching.

Often, we Malaysian Christians will declare our heavenly citizenship while holding on to our earthly Malaysian MyKad. We live with an alien attitude with our minds set on our future in the clouds.

It is true that our ultimate destination is heaven. But in between the then and now, we’ll be spending a good many years in Malaysia (provided we don’t emigrate).

The challenge before us is: Are we not concerned with what God is doing in our nation? Don’t we love

Malaysia enough to care about what is going on around us?

That is what Philip meant when he challenged, “Has Malaysia been born in your heart?”

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Firstly, we must be able to identify with everyone in the community, regardless of race, creed and language.

We too can say that we are ‘sons of the soil’ (like the *bumiputras*) if we are physically born in this country. In claiming this title, we are not looking for status and benefits but that we want our hearts to resonate with the struggle of all Malaysians.

This was expressed at the East Malaysian event held on Sept 16 at Kota Kinabalu where Christians representing all the states and ethnic groups in Malaysia celebrated Malaysia Day. At the celebration, they built an altar to declare “One United Malaysia” (see pg 3).

It was a new day for the East Malaysian Church leadership and the people of God when they boldly approached the throne of grace proclaiming “YESUS ENKAU RAJA, ENKAU PERWIRA, ENKAU YANG TERAGUNG.” (Jesus, You are King, You are

the Mighty Warrior, You are the Supreme One.)

Secondly, we should love our neighbour. This was the theme in this year’s 40-day Fast and Prayer which concluded on August 30. Not only must we pray, we must also act by moving out of our closet into the community to do good works.

This leads us to our third point – we must act. Action out of compassion does not mystically happen; it takes concentrated, disciplined effort.

Often, it is not convenient, but the response has to be practical, timely and unselfish. We may not be

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Chairman's Message



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

The danger of PRAYING

Who has ever heard that praying is dangerous?

Too often it has been said that one can never pray enough. That is no doubt a timeless truth. But the grave danger for today's church – besides not praying enough – is that we do not know when to stop praying and start doing.

In the Czech Republic, the Christian community – commonly called the Moravians – is well known for their motto, "No one works unless someone prays." This spoke of their corporate commitment to sustained prayer, and prayers often went on unbroken 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every

wonder if it is not time to move on.

As we peer into the chapter (8) after the 'catch chapter' of 2 Chronicles 7, Solomon did indeed move on to become a 'nation builder'.

2 Chron 8: 2--6, "... the cities which Hiram had given to Solomon, Solomon built them; he also built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the storage cities which he built in Hamath. He built Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon, fortified cities with walls, gates, and bars, also Baalath and all the storage cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot cities and the cities of

Prayer can become an excuse for **NOT** doing.

day of each year for over 100 years!

I believe in tarrying in the Upper Room and I thank God for sustained persistence.

Taking another look at the Moravians, I find that their importunate prayers produced passion and zeal for missionary outreach to South America, Africa, Greenland and many other places. They even sold themselves as slaves, just for the sake of the Gospel.

In comparison, I found myself asking, what has our prayers produced in Malaysia? 2 Chronicles 7:14 is the 'catch verse' of many of our prayer conferences and movement.

We have seen prayers or reconciliation, acts of feet washing, the practice of generational forgiveness, the call for and the responses of inter-border and inter-tribal reconciliation (particularly with Singapore and between East and West Malaysia) and prolonged seasons of prayers and I am beginning to

the cavalry, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion."

All these he did besides building the altar of the Lord (v12). And in chapter 9, we are told that the Queen of Sheba had "no more spirit in her," (vs 4) when she heard the wisdom of Solomon and saw what God had done through Him and the spirit of excellence in which he did the work (including the building work) of the Lord.

I suspect Solomon had a 'modified Moravian Motto' – "No one prays unless someone works" or at least is "willing to work."

Prayer can become an excuse for not doing. It's not because we 'have not heard' but because we have become secure (and even comfortable?) in our

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One United Malaysia

It began as a National Prayer Gathering at Kota Kinabalu on September 14-16 at Skyline SIB to pray for the transformation of the nation, specifically in the political, social and economical spheres.

The gathering ended with a celebration of One United Malaysia witnessed by some 1,000 Christians from both Peninsular and East Malaysia churches to mark the birth of Malaysia 46 years ago.

Through the celebration, the *Anak Negeri* (indigenous people) have risen to see their place in the Father's heart and plan. The *Anak Negeri* also welcomed and embraced all people groups, who have come into this land of Malaysia. Every people group in Malaysia is now joined

with them to be ONE, redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The roots, identity and birthrights of the people are now being restored, aligned and positioned significantly.

Participants came before the altar of God as a nation to represent the 14 states, the people groups, the Malaysian Church and the future generations. Fifteen natural stones were laid at the altar, representing the 14 states with the 15th representing the Church of Malaysia

They repented for the broken altar in this land due to idolatry based on 1 Kings 19:10 "The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death..."

The celebration symbolised a new day for the Malaysian Church as the participants boldly came before the Throne of Grace proclaiming "YESUS ENKAU RAJA, ENKAU PERWIRA, ENKAU YANG TERAGUNG." (Jesus, You are King, Mighty Warrior and the Supreme One.)



...from front cover: Born for the Right Reason

able to help everyone everywhere, but we can help someone somewhere with meaningful works of service. Equally important, our acts of mercy must be based on need and not the colour of one's skin.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is trying to promote equality and fairness under his 1Malaysia vision.

During the 1Malaysia grand launch in Ipoh on 19 October, he promised, "The principle behind 1Malaysia is to create social equality and fairness for all. The concept must be meaningful, it should not be a mere rhetoric or political gimmick." (*The Star*, 20 Oct 2009).

He added, "When we say 1Malaysia, we can feel that we are one in this country. Every race has its own contribution

to the country. The contribution must be recognised."

The PM has said many things about his 1Malaysia vision that sound right and offer hope of a better Malaysia.

Unfortunately, many are skeptical about this vision, especially after he stressed the need to retain policies that favour one race over the others during his speech at the Umno General Assembly on Oct 15.

When we speak of loving our neighbour, we extend that love to the needy irrespective of race and creed.

At the end of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus asked the theologian, "Which of the three do you think was a neighbour?" The theologian could not even bring himself to utter "the Samaritan" but instead replied, "The one who has mercy on him."

Like the Samaritan who helped

someone in need without thinking twice about his race or religion, Jesus calls us to "go and do likewise".

If we, God's people in Malaysia, can start thinking like that Samaritan, then Malaysia will have been born in our hearts.

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prayer bunkers.

Solomon ... built, built, built and built!

After all the years of prayers for our nation, I want to suggest that it's time the Church of Malaysia becomes 'nation building-minded.' Is this not part of the healing of the land that 2 Chron. 7:14 promises?

Every believer, a nation builder. Yes, it's time to move forward.

Caning Kartika! What's Next?

By Eugene Yapp

In August 2009, the Kuantan Syariah High Court sentenced Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarnor to a RM5,000 fine and six whippings after she pleaded guilty to consuming an alcoholic drink in public last year. Kartika was charged under Section 136 of the Pahang Administration of the Islam Law and Malay Custom Enactment.

The court's decision has caused great controversy and invited criticisms from various quarters. Some feel that Kartika should not be caned as the punishment could damage Malaysia's reputation abroad as a moderate Muslim country. On the other hand, the Islamists claim that the punishment must go ahead as she has breached Islamic law.

Is it any of our business?

Although, there is a wide spectrum of opinions coming forth, the non-Muslim community has generally been silent on the issue. One reason may be ignorance. After all, how many non-Muslims are familiar with Islamic jurisprudence or the Syariah enactments? Notwithstanding our unfamiliarity with Islamic matters, can we afford to be ignorant and remain silent?

The Muslim authorities may wish for non-Muslims to stay silent. "This issue pertains to Islamic matters and non-Muslims should therefore stay out of it as it does not concern them and have no bearing on them", so they reason. Some may go as far as to think that this is a divine sanction and should not be subjected to questioning.

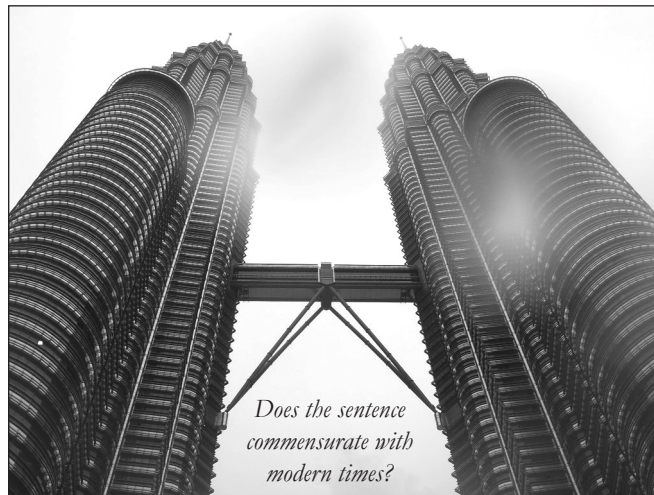
Should Christians think likewise?

For one, aren't we all Malaysians irrespective of our creed and race? If so, whatever befalls another Malaysian should be of equal concern to us as we are all citizens of Malaysia and part of the destiny and fortunes of our beloved

nation, Malaysia!

Hence, Christians in Malaysia should care for the plight of their fellow citizens like this mother of two who is forced to undergo this sort of punishment.

When a crime is committed and where judgments and decisions undertaken are within the public sphere, all such judgments, punishments and decisions should be subject to public scrutiny and appropriate legal



reasoning. It should not be the case that public scrutiny and debate is exempted for one community.

Otherwise, where is the justice of the case and fairness to all others of different race and community?

Sri Lankan scholar Vinoth Ramachandra points out, "Christians should not respond by demanding a state makes no controversial moral judgments but rather by demanding a state be more transparent in its judgments, precisely so that they may be subjected to wide-ranging public scrutiny and debate."

In the case of Kartika and her sentence, the question is whether the punishment to be meted out is just?

The Kuantan Syariah Court Appeal panel thinks so. On what basis was this decision arrived at? No reasons or grounds were given as to whether the sentence was just.

Again, what's the crime?

Specifically, one may ask, what was the crime she was supposed to have committed? Is it in breach of the very precepts of Islam or is the crime merely against some 'man-made' legislation?

And even if the act committed is a crime in that it is against the precepts of Islam, does the sentence commensurate with the so-called crime committed and in accordance to present-day mode and circumstances?

As Zainah Anwar of Sisters in Islam pointed out in her article "Growing List of Don'ts", Kartika was a first-time offender and showed remorse for the wrong she committed.¹ There was also no violence in the commission of the so-called offence either.

Under such circumstances, normal guidelines would prescribe she receives an automatic one-third remission of the sentence.¹

Yet, as we know it, these considerations have not been highlighted or appear to have been taken into account in arriving at the pronouncement that her sentence is deemed just.

The fact that Kartika has now boldly made her stand on the matter – that she prefers to go ahead with the punishment – does not detract from the legitimate concerns from wider society and of Malaysian citizens as a whole about the question: "What is the crime and why the sort of punishment?"

It's our business too

And this, if we may submit, is a question all Christians must ask and take cognizance of. For if one aspect of our criminal justice system is brought to bear on another in the name of religion and with State sanctions without

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Gila Bola

Football Fever Hitting Churches and Communities in 2010

Football is ‘worshipped’ throughout the world. The World Cup is testament to that mania and come World Cup season every four years, we can see multitudes of bleary-eyed employees showing up for work in stoned, zombie-like state. And it’s football talk everywhere, even in nursing homes!

SPM – not the Form 5 government exam but Sports Partnership Malaysia – is tapping on this craze to reach out to the public, particularly the youths, through a nationwide football programme to be launched next June in conjunction with World Cup 2010.

The programme has a lofty vision “to bring national transformation through football” and a mega mission to mobilise churches to raise Life Coaches who will coach and impact 10,000 lives, transforming them into future leaders of sound character.

Under the programme, SPM will train the Life Coaches. Meanwhile, 400 churches

throughout the nation will form football teams of 25 members each from their communities.

The Life Coaches will then train the 400 teams and going by this plan, the event will be able to reach 10,000 people.

But it’s not just about football. The Life Coaches will seek to impact the lives of their team members with life and leadership skills. These values-infused youths will then be able to contribute positively to the

nation, thus realising the event’s vision for national transformation.

Life Coaches hold the key to the success of the event. Hence, SPM is looking for men – and women too – irrespective of age and including non-professional sports people, who have the passion for community transformation through the “beautiful game”, as the sport is called.

It will be foolhardy to go alone on this huge programme. SPM has therefore secured the partnership of NECF Malaysia and the GDOP (Global Day of Prayer) team.

Once the event is launched next June, there will be a series of coaching clinics and leagues in every state, culminating in the National Cup Final in 2011 where the top two teams of every state will compete for the trophy. But first, SPM will be making the church rounds to promote the event. Look out for them or contact them at sportspartnershipmalaysia@gmail.com



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discourse or debate as to its legality or illegality and whether the form of sentencing invoked is appropriate for the mischief rendered in accordance to our times and age, then it may be that we are well on our way to a form of ‘religious tyranny’ where religion or religious clerics or even the State have the final say.

This is undesirable given that Malaysia has consistently held herself

out as a democratic country with a Muslim majority community and in the light of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak’s 1Malaysia concept.

We therefore call on Christians to exercise their prophetic witness – to cherish and uphold justice and transparency by calling for a review of the judgment and sentencing and to ensure that any decision regarding the case is made manifest subject to the Rule of Law and Equity as well as established legal reasoning and

jurisprudence.

Only then will our beloved nation thrive and prosper as a truly democratic and yet pluralistic-multicultural community of people under the blessings of God.

May God bless Malaysia!

¹<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/10/4/focus/4831679&sec=focus>. Accessed on 7 October 2009



Longing to Belong

In September, the Home Ministry held a high-profile ceremony to award citizenships to 92 people who were among 33,000 'stateless' persons in the country. Most of these people were born in Malaysia, but do not have legal papers as their births were never registered or their papers were lost.

Meanwhile, the National Registration Department is targeting to finish processing the 93,360 applications for late-birth registrations by year end.

Whatever the reasons are for the long delay in processing the citizenship applications of the stateless people – apathy, inefficiency – the fact is that tens of thousands of people are in a limbo where they feel they are 'neither here nor there'.

How can a person in that situation feel belonged to the country when he is unsure about his future? And how can one who doesn't feel belonged to the country participate in the process of building the nation?

It's hopeless

These stateless people aside, increasingly many Malaysians are feeling more and more alienated from the country. For many, the air of despondency hovers depressingly above their heads.

The tumultuous political upheavals all around, the shaky economy, the unjust policies that are depriving the truly needy from help, the increasing lawlessness on our streets, the flip-flopping educational policies – these are just a few of the grouses that are driving many Malaysians away to greener pastures.

But deep down, the underlying cause may be the sense that there is not much an individual can do to effect positive changes to the country. How do you fight the giant of injustice? Eliminate the scourge of corruption? Melt the ice of cynicism towards change for the better?

Perhaps no one feels the disenchantment and hopelessness more than our youths whose anthem today must be "This country's not my home, I'm just a passing through". It doesn't help that the older generation continue to speak ill of the country and parents encourage their young ones to migrate. The message being communicated is: "It's hopeless. Get out if you can and don't come back."

It's hopeless?

Contrast this with what God told His people (through Jeremiah) when they were taken into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

"Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and father sons and daughters. And take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters, that you may be multiplied there and not become few. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be exiled, and pray to the LORD for it. For in its peace you shall have peace." Jer 29:4–8

"Seek the peace of the city" – this is an interesting instruction from God. Adam Clarke says in his commentary:

"Endeavour to promote, as far as you can, the prosperity of the places in which ye sojourn...Wherever a man lives and has his nourishment and support, that is his country as long as he resides in it. If things go well with that country, his interest is promoted by the general prosperity, he lives at comparative ease, and has the necessities of life cheaper; and unless he is in a state of cruel servitude, which does not appear to have been the case with those Israelites to whom the prophet writes, (those of the first captivity,) they must be nearly, if not altogether, in as good a state as if they had been in the country that gave them birth. And in this case they were much better off than their brethren now in Judea, who had to contend with famine and war, and scarcely any thing before them but God's curse and extermination."

Adam Clarke suggests that we endeavour to promote the prosperity of the place where we live in but he adds a limitation, "as far as you can" – a fair proposal because there's only so much one can do. The trouble is that most of us lack that community mindset. Instead of promoting the peace (or prosperity) of our places, we want the places to promote our peace and prosperity.

God also told the exiles to "build houses and live in

Continued next page...

Pit Pastor's Salary Against Teacher's Pay Package

The NECF Malaysia Leadership Commission has proposed that pastors' salaries follow the government teachers' scale, but with some adjustments. At their last meeting in October, some commission members felt that the pastor's basic pay should be at least 80 percent of the teacher's basic pay. Others, however, felt that it should be higher.

All agreed though that the pastor's package should include housing and COLA (cost of living) allowances, and other allowances such as mobile phone and transport. The entry level should be the same as that of a graduate teacher.

Furthermore, the commission suggested that churches take into account the pastors' job responsibilities and not the job title when deciding their salaries. For example, a senior pastor of a 1,000-member congregation should rightly get a higher salary than a pastor of a 200-member congregation.

Besides the size of the congregation, other factors to consider within the job responsibility scope include:

- Span of control – number of people reporting to him, is he responsible for the church's assets and properties, does he have to liaise with government



- departments? et cetera;
- Decision making – complicated or simple;
- Years of experience required;
- Minimum qualifications – theological and professional; and
- Urban or rural church location.

The commission also cautioned against using the average-congregation-income principle to calculate the pastor's salary. That means adding the salary of the high-income congregation member with the low-income member, and taking the average from the two ends. A better mode is to go for the most common income level within the congregation.

If discussing a pastor's salary makes you squirm, take a leaf from Jay Adams who said, "It is NOT UN-SPIRITUAL to discuss and even negotiate the salary. Salaries offered by many congregations are scandalously inadequate. In general, it may be said that it takes a salary equal to the average salary of the members to live and work adequately in any community." (Jay Adams is an American Reformed Christian author who is mostly known for his book, *Competent to Counsel*.)

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them; and plant gardens and eat their fruit." Since there were no ready-built homes in Jeremiah's time, unlike today, it must mean that houses take time to go up and trees take time to grow and bear fruit.

Building homes and planting gardens are an allegory of settling down for the long haul, something which God meant for His people to do until the next phase of His plan.

In the midst of building their houses and planting their gardens, God's people were to seek the peace of the city at the same time.

If we have felt like we don't belong here, perhaps we have not "built our houses nor planted our gardens." True, our physical homes are well established and maybe even our investments have matured, but if our hearts are not planted here, we will always cast eyes on other pastures somewhere else.

May the Lord give His people in Malaysia hearts that stay as we seek the peace of our land.



Are you a registered voter?

This is one question Malaysian churches should occasionally ask their congregation, especially the youths, and impress on them the importance of and their obligation towards voting.

The simple act of marking an 'X' on the ballot paper goes a long way towards nation building as it determines who will lead the nation-building process or whether even the nation gets built or destroyed!

According to the Election Commission (EC), there are more than four million eligible voters (those aged 21 and above) who have yet to register themselves. They are mostly aged between 21 and 35. Registered voters number about 11 million.

Many analysts believe that first-time voters will be crucial in the next election, which must be held by 2013. As the 8 March 2008 election has shown us, the sum total of every individual vote caused a tsunami whose waves continue to rock the nation today.

Do not despise that one vote. It counts. Register yourself the next time you come across a voter registration exercise. Or you can register at any post office whose system is computerised or at the EC office.

Since the EC takes several months to process the registration, register now to ensure you are eligible to vote when the time comes.

Run of their lives

It was no coincidence that Run For The Nation (RunNat) 2009 fell on 10 October, or that there were 900 runners covering 1010km in the Klang Valley, or that the theme for the prayer run was taken from John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life and may have it abundantly.”

It seemed as if the number 10-10 was God’s assurance that He will complete His plan for Malaysia. (Ten is the symbol of completion.)

Besides the Klang Valley, RunNat – an event endorsed by NECF Malaysia – was also held simultaneously in the other 13 states throughout Malaysia. Altogether, more than 1,500 runners covered 1,500km throughout the country.

On the morning of RunNat, the first teams of runners and team managers in the Klang Valley were up and about before sunrise. While runners got ready to run, the others interceded at the meeting hall at PJEFC for the entire prayer event. As many teams started their prayer run, updates flowed in from all states straight into RunNat’s Twitter page.

The run concluded with corporate

worship and prayer for the nation at PJEFC followed by a celebration lunch.

And when RunNat 2010 was unveiled during the corporate worship, it seemed as if the runners were warming up again to run. (RunNat 2010 will coincide with the Global Day of Prayer gathering to be held at Stadium Melawati in Shah Alam.)

RunNat 2009 was a day when His people blessed the nation with intercession; in return, they were blessed by His presence at the run.

The RunNat journey was officially launched on May 31 at the Global Day of Prayer gathering in Petaling Jaya with the vision of inspiring youths from different denominations to be more prayerful over Malaysia.

RunNat prayer coordinator Ho

Weng Hong shared, “Now, when I go to government departments to pay my rates or do my transactions, it means time to intercede. As I wait or talk to the government officers, I will pray for them to do their work efficiently and for God’s blessings on those who fear Him. It’s time we stop going to government departments just to do our business. We must aim to be transformational and we can start by praying.”

Pr Chris Leong, director of Sports Partnership Malaysia which is a RunNat co-organiser, believes that RunNat has accelerated the advancement of God’s kingdom in Malaysia. “Many believers will be activated out of their passivity, and others will be fast-forwarded into their God-given destiny,” he said.

Continued next page...

Pix clockwise from top: (1) I’ll buff and I’ll puff and I’ll make it – a team of runners in Petaling Jaya entering the PJEFC concourse. (2) Yeabbb...I made it – screams of exhilaration from a last runner in Alor Setar. (3) It’s still dark, so let’s get going before the shops open – pre-dawn rendezvous in Kangar.



...from previous page: *Run of their lives*

Reflections from RunNat Organising Chairman Victor Chua

When the idea to take RunNat national was first mooted late last year, we had no idea how people would respond to it. Our goals were to see the prayer run take place in every state capital of Malaysia; to cover 1010km of the Klang Valley; and to see different church members running and praying together. Despite the challenges, God in His faithfulness made all of this a reality.

"The last eight months has been an incredible journey for the RunNat Committee as we have seen God's favour and blessing upon so many that were involved. What is essentially a simple idea of combining running with praying has turned out to be much more than that. It has brought churches together. The young and the old running side by side and praying together for the same things is a symbol of what we desired to see – unity in the body of Christ.

"We have seen testimonies of how many were blessed by the journey itself. For some it has inspired confidence to come out of their comfort zone and believe God for greater things. For others it has opened the doors of possibility of real transformation taking place in our country.

"RunNat 2010 is going to be special as we partner with the Global Day of Prayer 2010 and see thousands upon thousands of Christians throughout the country praying for Malaysia!

"I would like to end by saying thank you to those who inspired, mentored, and prodded us on to the finish line! We keep with us learnt lessons and cherished memories that will keep us in good stead as we prepare for RunNat 2010.

Let's continue to run, pray and believe!"

Return our Bahasa Bibles

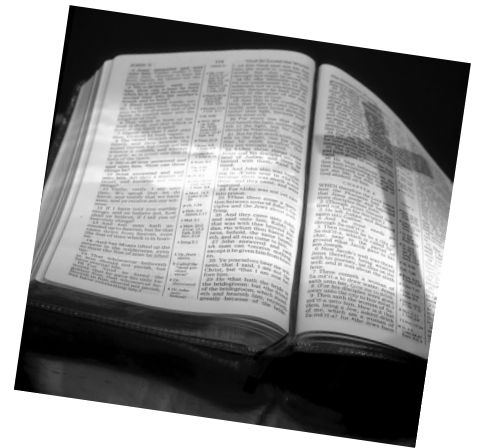
The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) has called on the Government to release the 15,000 Bahasa Bibles confiscated by the Home Ministry this year. In March, the ministry seized 5,000 Gideons International Bibles in Bahasa Indonesia. On Sept 11, it seized 5,000 Gideons Bahasa Indonesia Bibles and another 5,000 Gideons Indonesia/English Bilingual Testaments.

Following is the CFM's statement released on Nov 4.

"THE CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA (CFM) calls for the immediate release of the 15,000 bibles in Bahasa Malaysia currently being withheld by the authorities. To withhold the use of the Bahasa Malaysia Bibles is an infringement of Article 11 of the Federal Constitution which gives every Malaysian the right to profess his/ her faith as well as to practise it.

This constitutional right is rendered illusory if Christians in Malaysia are denied access to Bibles in a language which they are familiar with.

This action of withholding the Bahasa Malaysia Bibles deprives Christians in Sabah, Sarawak and in Semenanjung – a large majority of whom use Bahasa Malaysia – the right to use the Holy Scriptures in Bahasa Malaysia, to practise and profess their faith and to nourish themselves



education in Bahasa Malaysia.

To deny the same Christians in Malaysia the right to read and study the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia is thus ridiculous and offensive. In fact, it is this action by the authorities themselves which is an affront to good public order.

We call on the relevant government

To deny the same Christians in Malaysia the right to read and study the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia is thus ridiculous and offensive.

spiritually.

It is baseless to withhold the Bibles in Bahasa Malaysia on the ground that they are "prejudicial to public order". Bibles in Bahasa Malaysia have been used since before the independence of our country and has never been the cause of any public disorder.

Since the 1970s and in consonance with the government's policies in education and the national language, Christians in Malaysia have received their

officials who have neither the authority nor the right to act in this unconscionable manner to explain their action to the church leaders and to the public.

Church leaders and the Executive Committee of the CFM in "An Affirmation to the Churches in Malaysia" (at the Kuching Consultation on 6–8 Sept 1989) and then later in "A

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Spiritually Nourished, Physically Pampered

Often neglected and unappreciated and even forgotten especially if they are missionaries serving in some secluded part of the world, full-time single women ministers (FTSWM) are the 'unsung heroines' of the body of Christ.

To appreciate and affirm them, the NECF Malaysia Women's Commission recently held a retreat for some 50 FTSWM for a time of rest, recreation and networking. Over three days and two nights at a beautiful beach resort in Port Dickson, the ladies were pampered with love, food and fun – all paid for by generous donors.

The theme for the retreat was 'Arise, Shine...Ye Daughters of Destiny' with Dr Teresa Chai as the main speaker.

Her messages inspired the ladies to continue faithfully obeying and serving the Master. Speaking on 'Correcting Misconceptions about Women and Leadership', Dr Chai affirmed the role of woman ministers and pointed to Jesus who had women ministering alongside Him.

Dr Chai, the principal of Alpha Omega International College, also reminded the participants of their identity in Christ as priests based on 1 Peter 2:9-10. As such, women should not limit themselves, for in Christ we

are chosen and share equal status with our brothers.

The retreat was not just about spiritual nourishment; it also provided lessons on external beauty through the session "Looking Good". Image consultant Deborah Leong reminded the ladies that they represent the King of kings and should therefore take care to look their best for His glory. Deborah shared about body language and threw in a make-up demonstration as well.

To complement the spiritual with the physical, the commission slotted in fun time during the retreat which the ladies thoroughly enjoyed. They had a concert, went for a banana boat ride, detoxified in the sauna and sweat it out in the gym.

Throughout the retreat, the Holy Spirit worked gently as the participants ministered to one another through worship, prayer and fellowship which culminated in the Holy Communion on the last day. It was certainly a moving moment as they remembered His sacrifice.

The retreat ended powerfully and



Participants going through the 'anointing tunnel' while NECF Women's Commission Chairman Grace Hee (far right) waits to anoint them with oil.

poignantly with the 'anointing tunnel' where the participants were anointed with oil after coming out from a human tunnel formed by the commission members. As they passed through, they were blessed and prayed for.

The ladies responded to the retreat with overwhelming gratitude and to show their appreciation, they collected an offering and presented it as their gift to the commission.

"We had three carefree days and were emotionally fed, spiritually fed, physically overfed, breezing in and out like queens to go forward to face the challenges ahead," said one rejuvenated participant.

"Thank you for being God's conduit of blessings," another grateful participant said to the anonymous sponsors.

Thank You

2009 has been a challenging year but our Master has been faithful; He has never failed. Through His people, He has provided for the ministry of NECF Malaysia.

The NECF Council wish to thank churches and friends for their response to our appeal letter to meet the projected deficit of RM200k for 2009.

Thank you for your generosity and partnership in helping to build the Church of Malaysia.

...from previous page: Return our Bahasa Bibles

Declaration to Churches in Malaysia" (30 January 2008) have stood on their commitment to Bahasa Malaysia as our national language and have used and continue to use Bahasa Malaysia in the life and witness of our churches and Christian organisations.

The Government and CFM have exchanged letters on this matter previously and we have a written agreement in December 2005 that Bahasa Malaysia Bibles can be distributed so long as the symbol of the cross and the words "A Christian publication" are printed on the front page.

We call on the Government to walk the talk on its 1Malaysia policy and vision and not to curtail or impose conditions on the freedom of citizens to worship, pray and read the Holy Scriptures in Bahasa Malaysia.

How can the first pillar of the Rukunegara – Belief in God – be made a living reality in the lives of Malaysians if the Government imposes restrictions and conditions on the constitutional and fundamental right of citizens to freedom of religion?

We ask that the relevant authorities resolve this matter promptly and release these Bibles for the use of Christians without any further delay or excuse."

A Transformed Nation

Will this ever happen?

As the year draws to a close and the activities of NECF Malaysia taper off, the thought of whether our nation will ever be transformed stalks the minds of those of us engaged in this ministry of nation-building. How did NECF fare during the year and what's the next installment?

Of course, without being cynical or too negative, we can always say that God is sovereign and the future is safe in His hand. But do Christians really believe this and 'walk this talk'? And if so, does this mean that we Christians idle by the wayside and let God roll out His plans for the future of our nation?

Well, let's look to the future by taking a journey back to the past.

The year started with the gloomy and sombre news that Malaysians will undergo the worst-ever recession. The economic downturn defied all fundamentals and stumped analysts.

It was in this atmosphere of sobriety and also trust in the Lord that we spoke of nation building. To communicate our conviction that the Church must be actively involved in the welfare of the nation, we conducted several road shows throughout Malaysia calling on Christians to rise to contribute to the well being and future of Malaysia.

Then in March, we held a special prayer week to pray for the nation. That excited churches and on May 12, churches in Malaysia were inspired by Mark Geppert to forge ahead after 40 years of the tragic May 13 incident and to strive for a new beginning with a new generation.

In July, we kicked off the annual 40-day fast and prayer in conjunction with Merdeka (Independence). The theme of the event was 'Love our Neighbour' and churches united to pray for and demonstrate mercy to people of all walks of life who are our neighbours.

This was followed by our national Transformation conference where Christians were encouraged to live out an authentic discipleship demonstrating social concerns and care to the needy.

The 40-Day Fast & Prayer culminated in the Merdeka Prayer Rally where Indonesian pastor Philip Mantofa called on the Malaysian Church to awake the 'sleeping giant' within us to take possession of this land and to march forward in faith.

How do all these events and activities measure up to nation building? On the surface, it appears just like another activity. One pastor remarked, "Yes, we



The tools to build the nation – transformational prayer, authentic discipleship and intentional mission.

know about this nation building thing, but what else do you expect us to do? After all, we are already busy with our church programme."

Such thoughts are not uncommon and it begs the question, "What's next for NECF? More talks, rallies and road shows?" We think not.

Scripture informs us that the task of the Church is to be church. As the church of Jesus Christ, we are witnesses to the realities of God's redemption and salvation to all mankind and all things. As His instrument, we are called to proclaim this good news and live out this Gospel everywhere and for everyone.

Hence, NECF is calling upon

churches to arise and awake from our slumber to fulfill this God-given and constituted divine role for the good of all people and for Malaysia.

In practical terms, it involves Christians whom God has placed in every sphere of society – be it in the household, our neighbourhood communities, our profession and place of work – to arise and be an agent of change to the social ills, the corruption, the wrongs and injustices we see around us.

Our concern should also extend to areas of politics and governance, human rights and justice and the restoration of morality and ethical conduct in both private and public life.

This nation needs repentance, forgiveness and healing. Where can she find this beacon of light and solace but in the Church?

Often, such maladies in society and our nation escape our observation for one reason or another. Perhaps it could be due to ignorance or apathy or for some reason within our implicit and unspoken assumption in the way we perceive or see the world around us.

Whatever it may be, NOW is the time to arise and 'awake the sleeping giant' and ACT.

We can:

1. Pray transformational prayer – praying for issues and concerns that are not so much relating to ourselves or our church, but for justice and righteousness that affect the place that God has placed us in and society as a whole.
2. Live authentic discipleship – that sort of discipleship that demands we move away from our comfort zone and embrace the willingness to deny ourselves, take up the cross

Continued page 15...

Reforming Our Family Laws

By Eugene Yapp

Is the Government reforming our family laws or is it attempting to consolidate the laws in line with an Islamic moral vision?

Several months back, online news portal *malaysiakini* reported that the Government intended to table bills to amend three laws in relation to matters of conversion and religion. The legislations affected were the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 1976, Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Act 1993 and Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984. MPs were expected to debate on the amendments at the sitting in Parliament then.

However, the bills were never tabled and the debate never proceeded. This is because the Conference of Rulers decided to defer its decision on the proposed amendments pending additional views from the state religious councils. What the state religious council will say and the decision of the Conference of Rulers remain uncertain. That was June 2009.

Fast forward to November 2009. Rumour is rife that the three legislations will be tabled and debated upon at this sitting in Parliament, presumably some time in December after the budget debate gets underway. Irrespective of whether the bills or proposed amendment is debated, the feelings and impressions generated are that the amendments are unfavorable towards non-Muslim religious groups.

Family laws getting more Islamic?

The question that arises is: Is the Government reforming our family laws or is it attempting to consolidate the laws in line with an Islamic moral vision? Let's look at the proposed amendments and the implication thereof.

The amendments are premised on three principles in relation to the issue of conversion of one spouse to Islam. The three principles are:

1. The civil court shall have exclusive jurisdiction to all matters relating to the dissolution of marriages contracted under civil law;
2. The religion of a child below 18 years of age shall not be changed by one parent without the consent of the other; and
3. The converted spouse should not abdicate his duties and responsibilities under the civil marriage.

Are these principles brought through in the proposed amendments? The intended amendments may generally be summarised as follows:

1. A mother or an adopted mother may give consent to a marriage for a person under 21 years of age;
2. Duration for orders on custody and maintenance of a child pursuing further or higher education or training may be extended;
3. Court may grant injunction against molestation at any

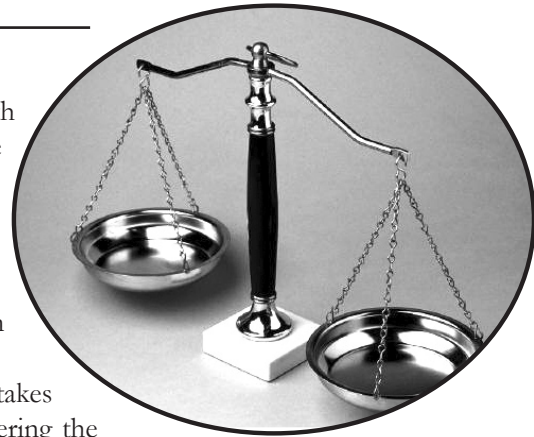
time;

4. Either or both parties to the marriage may commence proceedings to dissolve the marriage upon conversion;
5. Conversion takes place upon uttering the two clauses of the affirmation of faith in accordance to Islamic law;
6. Non-Muslim spouse or child(ren) may inherit assets of the deceased converted spouse without a will on condition that the wife and child(ren) prove they have contributed to the acquisition of the assets; and
7. Court may allow an extension of more than three months where maintenance is secured.

Notwithstanding these, civil rights groups have expressed concerns that the proposals do not reflect the three principles agreed upon. Some concerns are as follows:

1. Although either or both parties may petition for divorce, it does not provide for the remedy of judicial separation or nullity. This may be to the disadvantage of Roman Catholics and segments of conservative Christianity who do not permit divorce;
2. Although conversion is constituted by uttering the affirmation of faith in accordance with Islamic law, it does not address the persistent problem of notification to the next-of-kin. It may be necessary to stipulate the need for registration and compulsory notification;
3. The proposal to recognise non-Muslim spouse for inheritance should not be made conditional upon proof of acquisition of assets;
4. The insertion of a three-month maintenance for wife and allowance of an extension is unnecessary and has the tendency to discriminate against poor families; and
5. The proposed amendment does not at all address the problem of children being converted by one parent without the consent of the other.

It does appear from the above that the proposed amendments may be influenced in part by an Islamic outlook. For example, why impose the three-month maintenance period for the wife, when current provisions do not limit



Continued next page ...

...from previous page: *Family Reform Laws*

a wife's maintenance to three months?

We venture to suggest that this is based on the Islamic principle of *iddah* where maintenance for Muslim women under Islamic law is limited to three months. Such principles are surely incompatible with contemporary civil/secular society like Malaysia whose laws are essentially derived from the common law.

Further, it may be that certain provisions within the proposed amendments lean in favour of Muslims. The pressing and persistent complaint that children are converted to Islam by a converted spouse without reference to or consent by the other is not at all addressed.

There is much ambiguity to essential questions such as who decides the custody, upbringing, welfare and religion of the child(ren) when one spouse converts to Islam. Ideally, such important and vital questions should be decided by both parents. If there is a dispute that cannot be resolved, the dispute should be referred to the civil courts in the best interest of the child(ren).

The proposed amendment does not address this situation as well. These uncertainties will not, in the long run, provide a lasting solution that is just and acceptable by both parties.

The sentiments are that the proposed amendments as they are do not fit well with a multi-ethnic and plural society



like Malaysia without further or substantial revision.

Amendments to any civil legislation should be made based on civil/secular considerations and established legal theories such as justice and the individual right to freedom of faith and belief rather than on religious factors.

It should also solicit as wide as possible responses from all interested parties to seek and build a broad consensus on the issue before presenting them for debate. Such is not the case in respect of these proposals. There is therefore doubt and questions.

We therefore urged Christians in Malaysia to take cognizance of such issues, be informed and pray over the following:

- The proposed amendments be premised on a civil/secular outlook rather than on Islamic jurisprudential considerations;
- The proposed amendments will give due consideration for issues of justice, fair play, and upholding the individual freedom of faith and belief. It is only upon such principles that the negative impact of national disunity and disharmony may be arrested and brought to good; and
- The state religious council and Conference of Rulers will uphold the spirit as enshrined in the Federal Constitution and seek to give due expression to the interest and expectation of all communities, irrespective of whether they are the minority.

NECF MALAYSIA 2010 CALENDAR

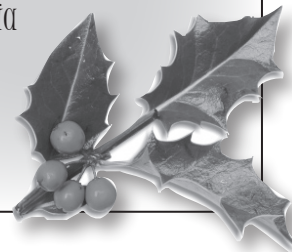
DATE	CONFERENCE	SPEAKER	
March 16 – 17	National Tamil Pastors' Conference	Rev Dr Ezekiel	2 days
March 26 – 27	Eagles Leadership Seminar	Eagles Singapore	1 1/2 days
April 15	Leadership Training	Rev Nicky Gumble	
May 22	NECF Malaysia BGM		
May 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDOP 2010 • Run for the Nation 		
May 24 – 25	Chinese Prayer Camp		
June 15 – 16	Prayer Conference	Philip Mantofa	2 days
August 26 – 27	Missional Conference	Paul Alexander	2 days
September 15	Malaysia Prayer Day		
Dec 7–10	Pastor's Kids' Retreat		

The above events are subject to changes.

Christ,
the hope of our nation,
has come.
Emmanuel

Blessed Christmas and a
Blessed 2010

From the Council and Staff of
NECF Malaysia



A retired teacher talks about the joy he experienced in ministering to the youths in a National Service (NS) camp. Though old enough to be their grandfather, his 'grandfatherly' love for the youths – evident from the food he prepared, the games he organised, the Bible lessons he taught and the time he spent with them – has endeared the youths to him and brought him much fulfilment that in his golden years, he can still be of great use to the Lord.

I first heard about the National Service (NS) Christian class in 2006. I didn't know what it was all about then. So, I followed some Christians to a camp to find out more.

In 2007, a brother helped me to apply for a permit to conduct a Christian class (Kelas Kerohanian) in the Kg Baru (L) camp in Perak. This was done through NECF Malaysia's contact.

I then took up the challenge to run the Christian class and invited the youth teams from various churches to conduct the praise and worship sessions. The churches that responded were Ayer Tawar Methodist, Raja Hitam Chapel, Simpang Ampat Methodist Church, Samudera Methodist and Church of Ayer Tawar.

I had full confidence our Lord was working with us, helping us to share His love to the youths, some who have never heard of Jesus.

Every Thursday and Friday nights, campers must attend religious classes: Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. All of them look forward to these two nights.

Over the past three years, many campers have encountered Jesus as their Saviour while the Christian campers have also renewed their faith. Every Sunday, the Christians from the three camps in Manjung, Teluk Rubiah and Segari meet at Wesley Methodist, Sitiawan where they attend the Youth Alpha for National Service.

This year (2009) is a revival year for Kg Baru (L) camp. Previous years, the number of campers attending the Christian class was only 20.

This year, there were only 14 Christians in the first batch but they brought their unchurched friends and we had over 50 in the class.

For the second batch, there were only seven Christians. One of them, Dickson Khoo from Klang, brought over 40 unchurched campers to the class! Hallelujah!

For the third batch, there were only two Chinese Christian girls, Yun Xue and May Yean. The camp intended to send both of them to the Buddhist temple on the first Sunday (of the camp).

May Yean phoned her father who immediately called the camp and demanded the two girls be sent to church. May Yeah and Yun Xue have been a great testimony to other campers with their enthusiasm for God. Thanks to them, the class ended up with over 40 attendees.

Serving in the NS camp has been a great joy. Pray for the revival in the camps. On Sunday, we have only around 30 Christians attending church service while over 300 campers go to the temple!

Joy in the Camp

By Chen Tan Chu



Dickson Khoo (2009 2nd batch) was very popular and brought over 40 unchurched campers to the Christian class. They said he always showed kindness and love. Chen is on the right.

EDITOR'S NOTE: There are altogether 83 NS camps throughout Malaysia but only about 40 have the weekly Christian classes, which are coordinated by NECF. We urgently need more volunteers to run the Christian classes. If you can help, please e-mail Larry at youthnet@necf.org.my

Gob Thim Chun (2009 2nd batch), from an unchurched family, kept attending the Christian class despite hardships.



(2009 3rd batch) The two girls were the only Christians in the camp but they invited over 40 unchurched campers to the class. Celebrated Sam's birthday (holding cake) and he was very touched by our gesture.



NECF Malaysia's Vision for National Transformation

Transformation Vision

THE theme for NECF Malaysia's nation-building agenda is "Transforming the Nation through the Local Church". To realise this theme, it is our vision to see Christians within the nation live out their purpose and calling as agents of transformation in the various places and sphere of influence that God has placed and called each one to be in.

Agents of Transformation

AS agents of transformation, Christians, as individuals as well as collectively as the church, must live as witnesses and instruments to proclaim the Good News and seek the welfare and good of society and the nation.

To do so, Christians found in and belonging to every sphere of society and within the institutional structures – whether in the family unit, neighborhood/communities, profession/place of work, politics/governance, human rights/justice, media/entertainment or economics – must intercede strategically, live as authentic disciples of Christ and engage in intentional mission for the purpose of transforming society and the nation.

Implementation

THE focus of this Transformation Vision is to inform and direct believers' participation in every sphere of society to address and mediate change in their own social context

and environment towards justice and righteousness.

This is achieved by identifying and connecting all believers, facilitating their roles and empowering them by the Holy Spirit to pursue good in every aspect of human life and interest. Christians should mediate change by proclaiming the Good News, becoming socially involved in issues plaguing society and the sphere of influence they are in and by engaging the social-cultural institutions for the common good of all people to the glory of God.

The Role of the Local Church

THE local church must play the role of encouraging, nurturing and enabling believers for this work of mission in seeking the welfare of the city, society and the nation. This Transformation Vision is not intended to divert believers' involvement in the ministries and programmes of the local church. On the contrary, believers are expected and encouraged to live out authentic discipleship wherever God has placed them in, whether in churches, workplaces or the communities.

NECF Malaysia's Role

NECF Malaysia, through the Nation-Building Committee, will strive to promote this Transformation Vision by providing consultation, facilitation, assistance, networking, and other services to churches and individuals to inform this vision, initiate opportunities, impart skills and know-how and implement strategic action to realise this vision.

...from page 11: *A Nation Transformed*

and follow Jesus.

3. Do intentional mission – when Christians deny themselves, take up the cross and follow Jesus, we will immediately move into public life – whether in the communities or marketplace – and wider society to proclaim, involve and engage for the good of all people and society.

We seek your prayer as NECF acts as catalyst and facilitator in awakening churches to the above. May you be inspired, encouraged and willing to be mobilised to ACT. In the next issue, we will share more details of our vision and direction ahead!

God bless the Church and Malaysia!

NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ORDINARY MEMBERS

HISTeam – Holistic Integrated Services Bhd, Shah Alam, *represented by Wong Eng Tek*; Ipoh Garden Baptist Church, Ipoh, *pastored by Rev. Chin Lee Yean*; Kampar Baptist Community Church, *pastored by Rev. Chin Lee Yean*; Church of Messiah, Seremban, *pastored by Balan (John Paul)*; Victorious Life Mission Centre, Ipoh, *pastored by Rev. Geetha Rajagopal*; Earth Production, Petaling Jaya, *represented by Dr Yap Chen Sing*; Christian Fellowship Centre, Petaling Jaya; and Life Builders Assembly.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Peter Soo; Alan Liew Chee Lam; Joshua Ong Tatt Poh, William Wong Kok Cheong, Kenneth Yeo Chu Hui; Pr Elijah Loh Shi Fo; Irene Yap Ei Lian; and Stephen Kanapathy a/I Kuppam.

UK We hear much about the persecution in places like the Middle East and China but often, we do not pay much attention to the persecution happening in the midst of our modern societies where the unbalanced promotion of wrongly understood 'human rights' and 'non-discrimination' leads to a different kind of persecution.

From Andrea Minichiello Williams, a barrister and the Director of the Christian Legal Centre, UK, we learn for example that Shirley Chaplin, 54, a nurse with 30 years' practice from Exeter, was threatened with disciplinary action after refusing to remove a necklace bearing a cross – a symbol of her Christian faith.

Although wearing a Cross has nothing to do with health and safety, the Royal Devon & Exeter Trust Hospital ordered Chaplin to remove the item, deeming it a breach of uniform policy and a health risk to her and to patients.

Williams, supporting Chaplin in her case, said, "Today, a nurse who has faithfully served members of the public in Exeter with her professional skills was forced, under duress, to agree to stand down from nursing and take up an administrative role, all because the Trust would not permit her to wear a cross, the worldwide recognised and cherished image of Christianity."

Pray for Christians – like Chaplin who has been strong enough not to compromise her faith – that they will be ready to withstand all consequences of their godly decisions with courage and testimony.

Pray for the Christian Legal Centre's team of lawyers working on cases such as Chaplin's and on behalf of true freedom of religion and expression in UK.

Pray for the Church in the West

to have a strong and distinguished voice, which should never be silenced in spite of the pressure from wrongly interpreted humanistic culture.

Somalia Compass Direct reported on Oct 27 that Amina Muse Ali, a 45-year old Somali Christian, was killed for allegedly not wearing a veil.

Ali was shot dead by three masked members of the militant Islamic group Suna Waljameca in her home in Galkayo, Puntland region on Oct 19.

She has been an active member of the underground church in the Lower Juba region since 1997, part of the Somali Christian Brothers' Organisation.

Pray for those mourning the loss of Amina Muse Ali in Somalia

Pray for the small suffering community of believers in Somalia who have to be daily encouraged to stay strong for their faith in time of fear and tribulation and for those who seek to take the lives of Christians in Somalia that they will see the love and grace of Jesus through the lives of their victims.

Open Doors reported that its workers have been able to make contact with a small group of Somali Christians in northern Somalia. Pray for God's guidance as they start a journey of discipleship with these Somali Christians.

Colombia Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) reported about the brutal murder of Pr Rafael Velasquez in the Colombian region of Córdoba.

The assassination of Pr Rafael is part of series of threats against a number of Protestant pastors in the region, done by illegal armed groups operating in the area. CSW states at least three pastors have been displaced with their families, after being told by the armed groups that they and their families would be

killed if they did not leave the area.

Pray for peace and comfort for the family of Pr Velasquez; safety of other pastors, church leaders and their families in the Córdoba region; that Christ might be glorified through the life and the death of His people in every place and circumstance of persecution.

Open Doors also reported that a violent environment has developed in Colombia and guerrillas are recruiting teenagers. On the west coast, young Christians have been targeted as candidates for a guerrilla group.

Pray against any attempt of the evil one to steal God's young ones; for God's protection over the hearts of His people, that they will stand strong – to the point of death – should they be forced to join the guerrillas.

Uzbekistan Forum 18 News Service reports continuous violations of religious freedom in Uzbekistan, and lists the country among those with still repressive and not-democratic regimes of governance.

Pavel Peichev, the head of Uzbekistan's Baptist Union, together with two of his colleagues went on trial on Sept 24, accused of "teaching religion illegally to children at church-run summer camps and evading tax on profits from the camp."

The punishment for these charges is up to three years' imprisonment. Pavel Peichev and his colleagues deny all charges.

Pray for significant and lasting advances in religious freedom in Uzbekistan and for spiritual strength and wisdom for the persecuted for their faith in the country.

Pray for God's intervention on behalf of Christians like Pavel Peichev and his colleagues at their court trials and others in prison for their faith.