

beritaNECF



EDITORIAL

When King Uzziah Dies

2013 has had a troubled start. The use of “Allah” by non-Muslims is an old issue, but it has resurfaced with an unprecedented move –the Sultan of Selangor’s decree that the word is off-limits to non-Muslims. The essence of this decree has also been supported by the PAS Syura Council, the party’s highest authority on spiritual matters. Pahang’s mufti, meanwhile, has called for enforcement of state laws that ban the use of “Allah” by non-Muslims. And to heighten political tensions further, a call was made for Malay bibles to be seized and burned.

Racial-religious polarisation has always simmered beneath Malaysia’s calm exterior. Of late, it has reached a disconcerting level. Many of us may be struggling to get a handle on it, what more with the general election looming ahead accompanied with great expectations of change. What’s in store for 2013? Perhaps, in our moments of honesty and reflection, we fear the unknown.

That was how the people of Judah felt in the days of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 6 tells us that when King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord, “high and exalted, seated on the throne”. King Uzziah was one of the better kings of Judah, doing “right in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 15:3). His death brought uncertainty for the nation. Yet, in the midst of this, Isaiah points to the vision of a sovereign God. Note how he does not point to the *blessings* or acts of God, but to God Himself. This reminds us that as we face the uncertainty of 2013, our eyes should be on God and His sovereignty, not on circumstances or the blessings we may hope to receive.

A danger for the church is the tendency to look to signs and miracles for comfort and assurance. Or, we may rely on technology or even rituals to gain a sense of control over circumstances. We forget that all things belong to God and all that happens fulfils His great purposes for the church and beyond.

But acknowledging God’s sovereignty is not enough. Isaiah also had a personal encounter with God. Likewise, we need a true vision of God that inspires us enough to be struck by how unworthy we are. Only then, in our unworthiness, can the grace of God bring forgiveness - of our sins, our failures and perhaps even our unfaithfulness to Him. And then, empowerment, for only when we understand our unworthiness can we become of use to Him. It is not the proud or capable whom God uses but the humble and contrite who are dependent on Him.

Isaiah’s vision did not end as a mystical experience of awe and wonder. It moved him to practical action. In the same way, our vision of and encounter with

Continued on next page...

What’s Inside?

- 3 *Chairman: The Dance of Two War Camps*
- 4 *Transitions at NECF*
- 5 *Facing the General Election*
- 6 *Pray for Tamil Ministries*
- 7 *Praying for the GE and Beyond*
- 8 *Beyond Praying: Christian Witness in the Public Square*
- 10 *The Freedom of Religion vs Laying Down of Rights*
- 12 *Exposed: Shining a Light on Corruption*
- 14 *Uphold BM Churches and Leaders*
- 14 *Time Out for Pastors*
- 15 *A Power-packed Pastors’ Kids Retreat*



Main feature: ‘Beyond Praying: Christian Witness in the Public Square’ on page 8 & 9.

NECF members, have you paid your membership subscription? Please contact us!

Berita NECF is a quarterly publication of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia.

For more regular updates, follow NECF at Facebook and Twitter today.

Download this e-newsletter at www.necf.org.my/html/berita_f.htm

...continued from front cover: *When King Uzziah dies*

God should lead us to action. Isaiah's response was not to ask for training or for more signs of confirmation. His reaction was one of action: "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah's reaction was one of willingness and surrender. It was the giving of one's life to be used by God for the sake of the nation and its transformation.

Have we been willing to surrender our lives, our all, for God's use in 2013? Or are we holding back by saying, let me go for further training, give me more signs of confirmation, before we can say, "Here am I, send me"?

If the renewed "Allah" controversy has anything to tell us, it is this: Time is not on our side. Our fundamental liberties and our religious space are fast being constricted whether we realise it or not, and whether we accept it or not. The danger for the Christian community is procrastination, thinking that all is well, or that all will turn out well. God's way of making things "well" may not always be in the way we imagine.

The antidote to fear and uncertainty rests in a personal encounter with the sovereignty of God in deep holiness, willingness and surrender to do His will. Isaiah understood that doing his would mean bringing a message of hope for the nation of Israel amidst the reality of judgement.

In the same way, our mission for 2013 should one of peace and hope.

Tensions and contestations must be countered with messages of engagement, reconciliation and liberty. Malaysian society needs this.

The challenge is whether the church is ready to do this. Or are we spinning thicker cocoons for ourselves with bigger church buildings, hi-tech, state of the art worship, or personal plans for migration?

It is time to arise and take stock of how we are to bring the Gospel's message of transformation and reconciliation to Malaysia. If we are to see change and goodness coming at the end of 2013, God's people need a fresh encounter with Him daily, wherein we realize our need of His grace. And then with humble and contrite hearts, to willingly surrender all unto Him and with boldness and courage, to impact our neighbourhoods, communities, society and nation.

Dear Lord, give us a fresh vision of You.



NECF MALAYSIA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chairman

Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Vice-Chairman I

Elder Kong Yeng Phooi

Vice-Chairman II

Pr Tay Wah Seng

Honorary Secretary

Rev Elisha Satvinder

Honorary Treasurer

Dr Khoo Kay Hup

Council Members

Rev Dexter Low

Rev Ng Kok Kee

Rev Simon Chandran

Ms Ee Joo Lian

Pr Samuel Surendran Krishnan

Elder Thomas Lim

Rev Datuk Jerry Dusing

Rev Peter Mutang

Rev Chin Lee Yean

Pr Chomy Ching Choon Mee

Samuel Ang

NECF MALAYSIA STAFF

Acting Secretary-General

Eugene Yapp

Executive Secretaries (Commissions)

Katryn Tan (Finance/NECF Foundation)

Daniel Loh (Tamil)

Alfred Tais (Bahasa Malaysia)

Larry Lee (Youth)

Andy Chi (Prayer)

EDITORIAL

Editor

Eugene Yapp

Assistant Editor & Writer

Debbie Loh

Artwork

Cmate Communications

NECF
MALAYSIA

ADDRESS

32, Jalan SS2/103,

47300 Petaling Jaya

Selangor, Malaysia

Tel: 603-7727 8227

Fax: 603-7729 1139

Email: berita@necf.org.my

Website: www.necf.org.my

Printed by

Akitiara Corporation

1&3, Jln TPP1/3,

Tmn Perindustrian Puchong

Batu 12, 47100 Puchong, Selangor



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

The Dance of Two War Camps

*The Beloved and His Friends
Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return,
that we may look upon you!
The Shulamite*

*What would you see in the Shulamite— As it were,
the dance of the two camps?*

(Song of Songs 6:13)

In the Song of Songs, we have perhaps the most pervasive use of imagery and metaphor. In this collection of love poetry, the key characters, a dark and comely maiden wooed by her lover, find each other in gardens (Song 6:2-3), under an apple tree (Song 8:5) and amidst seasons of separation in hostile settings (Song 5:6-8).

In one particular scene, the Shulammite woman offers to dance before her beloved so that he might enjoy her beauty in lovely motion.¹ In the NKJV and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), this is described as “the dance of the two camps.”

Mounce² suggests that it could possibly mean “the dance of two war camps”. The point of the metaphor is that the Shulammite spellbinds her audience in the same way one is awed by the movement of two armies engaged in battle.

As the general elections draw closer, there is no doubt that a modern-day dance of two camps is mesmerizing spectators from both within and beyond the Church.

Clearly, this is the time when the citizenry and the Church must be discerning and on guard against the seductive wiles of the dancers. As we walk to the polling booths, do not assume our decision will be easy.

For starters, there are good men on both sides. While a popular song lyric may lament, “where have all the good men gone?” the simple truth is there are just too few of them around.

One might prioritize zero tolerance for corruption. Yet what is the difference between one who has “stolen” from the one who has not stolen just because he has not been tempted yet?

(Of course, to be fair, some new administrations have done wonders for their state budgets.)

Aha, it is simple - vote for the pro-Allah camp. Recent events in Jan 2013 tells us a pro-Allah party can flip flop

and this is a well-timed reminder that what we have today are *political positions* and not *moral convictions*. After the GE, it would not be surprising to find both pro- and anti-Allah campers in the same pub, gleefully recounting how they used Allah as a political football.

Another simple option - vote for someone of the same faith! But what is the point if they succumb to the whip and become wimps, and end up being part of the silent majority in Parliament? They take their seat of power, get paid by taxpayers, strut around as “YBs” but will not speak out against injustice, extremism and the like.

One young teacher recounted recently that the old-timers³ (teachers) are frustrated with what they perceive as ever-changing education policies. The blueprints look good, but the implementation is oftentimes politically skewed. To date, the use of English as a medium of instruction is still hotly debated at the grassroots. So, do we vote for more of the same or for change? But when we vote for change, what is the likelihood that we end up with different players who have the same game plan?

The waters are continuously being muddied, now with even calls for a Royal Commission into Tunku Abdul Rahman's legacy. How do the kampong folks and interior villagers begin to process the attacks of the revisionists, let alone spell the word “election”.

*“The evil that men do lives after
them; the good is oft interred with
their bones.”*

William Shakespeare

“The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.” But then William Shakespeare never lived in *Boleh-land*. Whilst some countries exhume dignitaries to see if they have been poisoned, here we exhume their legacies to see if we can poison the good they have done. Never mind what Shakespeare said.

The war drums are out. The dancers with war paint on their faces are out handing out goodies, making promises, spewing out politically correct manifestos. To borrow Clint Eastwood's phrase, “the Good, the Bad and the Ugly” are out in full force.

Continued on next page...

Transitions at NECF

THE NECF Council has appointed Eugene Yapp as Acting Secretary-General, effective 1 January 2013. He takes over duties at the NECF secretariat from Rev Chan Theam Lai who returns to church and pastoral ministry from March 2013.

Eugene joined NECF in 2008 as Executive Secretary for research and religious liberty. In recent years, he coordinated the NECF nation-building programme to develop Christians as agents of change in the public sphere. He has served as a Deacon and Council Member of a Brethren Assembly in Petaling Jaya.

Eugene holds a Masters in Christian Studies from the Malaysia Bible Seminary and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of London. He was an Advocate and Solicitor of the High Court of Malaya for about 15 years during which he was involved in religious liberty work before entering Christian ministry in a full time capacity. He is married to Siew Ling and they have two school-going children.



Eugene Yapp, Acting Secretary-General

NECF will also see the departure of Senior Executive Secretary, Patrick Cheng, who has served the organisation for 17 years. His experience in handling church relations and consulting on church governance and administrative matters will be missed. Patrick was also Executive Secretary of the Leadership Development Commission. He will move on effective 1 February 2013 to pursue his passion for Christian counselling and coaching as a full-time staff of the National Association of Christian Counsellors.

The Council thanks Rev Chan and Patrick for their services rendered to NECF. They have been a blessing to NECF and to churches, and we wish them God's blessings in their future endeavours.

...continued from page 3: The Dance of Two War Camps

There is very little difference between a prostitute and a *b-a-d* politician. One sells her body, the other his soul. One is loyal for a night, the other for a season. Both do "it" for money. In a land where almost everything can be politicized and nothing is sacred (Scriptures included), and where anyone can be demonized (the dead not exempted), may God help us weed out the genuinely bad and ugly.

Let us recognize that today's dance is not being performed out of love or respect for the Church or the people – in contrast to the dance in the Song of Songs. It's staged purely for votes. And for someone who does not dance nor enjoy dancing, watching this dance of the two war camps can be quite painful.

Alas, this is what politics is all about.

Providentially this week, I heard a refreshing voice of reason:

"We cannot solve today's problems by harping on the past. We have to live with the past, and not find excuses when we are unable to govern well now. We solve problems by working together, by adopting peaceful means and by having big-hearted leaders like the Tunku."⁴

With all that in perspective, Allah alone can grant us wisdom on how we should choose our suitors. I entreat the Church to continue to intercede that God will give us parliamentarians with a true lover's heart for this nation.

We need statesmen, not seducers.

¹ NKJV Study Bible.

² Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.

³ according to his experience.

⁴ Blog post by Zaid Ibrahim, 22 Jan 2013. I hope we are mature enough to understand that quoting a person from one camp is not synonymous as endorsing that camp.

Facing the General Election

ADVISORIES on how to pray for the election and how to vote have been issued by the Christian Federation of Malaysia, Prayer United and by NECF Malaysia. Christians are by now well-aware of their role in nation-building and of their duty to cast their votes as part of biblical stewardship over the earth.

However, there are certain views on the relationship between the church and politics, and the view that the church must remain 'apolitical'. NECF does not endorse any particular party or candidate but we wish to share a general framework to guide Christians on such views.

Firstly, the church is not a political entity but the body of Christ. As such, her engagement is informed by Scripture. A faithful reading of Scripture would show that the truth of the Gospel must speak to every area of life. Genesis carries the divine mandate to humanity to rule and be stewards of God's earth and everything in it. This includes upholding justice for the common good of all human beings as creations made in the image of God and who are invested with dignity.

As stewards of God's creation, Christians are commanded to be a blessing to the nation and the world. We are also to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matthew 5: 13-16). We are reminded that we are not to conform to the world but to be a positive influence. We require our leaders to be just (Exodus 18: 19-21) and we hold them to the standards God places on earthly rulers.

If the church as salt and light is to influence the world, calls for the church to be apolitical are then self-contradictory. The meaning of "apolitical" is to be completely uninterested in politics, which cannot be if the church is to bring blessing upon the nation and fulfil her responsibilities in the interest of the common good.

To fulfil this mandate, what the church should be is non-partisan but must speak on moral and spiritual issues affecting the nation. The words of the Evangelical theologian, Carl Henry, are instructive, that the Church is "obliged to declare the criteria by which the nation will be ultimately judged and [the] divine standards to which man and society must conform if civilization is to endure". In the Bible, we see that this is what the Old Testament prophets did when speaking truth to power to sinful nations, including the leaders of Israel and Judah.

Religion, as part of Malaysian politics, has been politicised, abused and misused as an election strategy. Let the church have no part in that but let this not deter her either, from her mandate of speaking God's truth to our nation and leaders.

For this season where our nation is at the crossroads, let us as Christians engage one another, our fellow citizens and leaders with grace, compassion and mercy alongside the truth founded on Biblical principles that speak of God's heart for justice and righteousness.



Pray for Tamil Ministries

TAMIL pastors and their wives will gather to be ministered to by Rev Benedict Rajan (picture, left) of Calvary City Church, Johor Baru. The Pastors and Wives' conference will be at D'Village Resort, Air Keroh, Melaka, from 27 to 29 May. Fee is RM50 per person. For more information, contact Tamil Commission Executive Secretary, Daniel Loh at 017-8866003.

Pray for these pastors and their families, for God to do mighty works among the Tamil community through their ministries.

Tamil churches will also rise to stand in the gap for Malaysia at the National Tamil Prayer Rally at FGT Subang from 9am to 5pm on 23 March 2013. Mohan C. Lazarus from India, is the speaker.

NECF Malaysia Welcomes New Members

Ordinary Members

1. Holy Word Church (Chinese), Johor Bahru (Chairman Lai You Ngen)
2. Gelang Patah Christian Centre (Chinese), Nusa Jaya, (President Leong Tian Fung)
3. Living Grace Church (Chinese), Kota Kinabalu (Ps George Kok Chiau Chu)
4. Global Harvest Assembly (English/Tamil), Penang (Ps Reuben Seevaratnam)
5. Faith Tamil Baptist Church, Bukit Mertajam (Ps T. Michal Solomon)
6. Faith Covenant Church (Tamil), Bentong (Rev Steven Kau)
7. St Barnabas Church (Eng/BM/Tamil), Klang (Rev Dr Vijendra Daniel)
8. Malaysian Chin Christian Union (Burmese), Kuala Lumpur (Rev Za Mang)
9. Muar Grace Bible Fellowship (Chinese), Johor (Tan Kian Chuan)
10. New Life Community Church, Subang Jaya (Chairman Stephen Ong Chan Hwa)



NECF is looking for an Office Manager to handle staff matters, administration and building management. Those with relevant experience and a desire to serve in a national Christian body are encouraged to apply. Call NECF at 03-77278227 or email to enquiries@necf.org.my.



Praying for the GE and Beyond

MANY intercessors are praying hard for Malaysia's 13th General Election. Join them by downloading prayer guides and resources from www.necf.org.my. Click on the thumbnail image of '13th General Election: Pray and Vote'. You can also pray for the elections in the following ways:

- a. Adopt your local parliamentary constituency and state seats for prayer.
- b. Organise regular prayer walks or drives around your church's area/constituency.
- c. Gather other churches or prayer groups in your area and hold combined prayer meetings for the elections.
- d. As individuals, to set aside one day in a week to fast and pray.
- e. Create and mobilise 24-hour prayer chains.

Whatever the outcome of the election, we still need to keep upholding Malaysia in prayer. Learn how to pray in line with God's heart at the 'Momentum GDOP 2013 Prayer Conference' from 9-11 May at FGT Subang. The conference will touch on building strong prayer lives as individuals, families and churches, and on prayer for transforming society. Speakers featured are Jerome Occampo, Julius Suubi and Anton Cruz. The conference comes ahead of the Global Day of Prayer, on 19 May.

Register online for the conference at www.gdopmalaysia.com and enjoy early bird discounts for those who sign up before 9 March.

Looking ahead, the annual NECF 40-Day Fast and Prayer in August 2013 will focus on the theme of 'Thy Kingdom Come'. Even after the election is over, we want God's sovereign will to be fulfilled for our beloved nation!



Beyond Praying: Christian Witness in the Public Square

By Mable Leong



From left, Christian Federation of Malaysia Executive Secretary Tan Kong Beng, NECF Acting Secretary-General Eugene Yapp and Rev Dr Lim Kar Yong of PJEFC conducting a seminar on 'Christians in the Public Square' at the Petaling Jaya Evangelical Free Church on 3 Feb 2013.

THE cornerstone for any theology of engagement in the public square is Christ's command that we be "salt and light" to the world (Matthew 5:12-16). But our present-day evangelicalism may be at risk of confining the salt and light metaphor to mean that Christians should just bear good personal witness as individuals. However, this dual task to preserve good and dispel darkness is also a call to promote righteousness and justice, to bless our communities and bring beneficial transformation to society.

British parliamentarian and Christian, Edmund Burke once said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". This is a call not to indifference but involvement in our communities as the manifestation of the grace and love of God. Although our earthly sojourn is temporary and the Christian is not called to build an earthly utopia to recapture paradise, Psalm 84 notes that those "who set their hearts on pilgrimage" nevertheless make the Valley of Baca' a "place of springs".

It is part of our Christian destiny to engage with the public square, to influence law, public policy and culture in our roles as watchmen and stewards of the communities God has placed us in. We learn to be in the world but not of it. Christians are not merely to be distinct from the world but to positively impact it. The stories of Daniel and Joshua are instructive for our contemporary context on how Christians can effectively engage in wider public life beyond the walls of the church. This is a biblical mandate

that is part of God's broader plan for the Redemption of all humanity, which beyond personal salvation, also covers our social and political communities. The goal is not to establish a theocratic state, for His Kingdom is one that ultimately belongs to the coming age.

Common Grace, Common Values

When believers seek to do justice in the public square, they often find it both necessary and desirable to work with others who may not share their faith. Christians working for social justice in particular neighbourhoods, or for some social reform such as the betterment of public schools, or for the end of ethnic cleansing in another part of the world, will find many allies willing to work with them.

The Apostle Paul taught that human beings who have never read or known the Bible nevertheless intuitively know that the requirement of God's laws are written in their hearts as their consciences also bear witness

"They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them."
Romans 2:15 (NIV)

(Romans 2:15). Theologians have called this a “general revelation”, apart from the written revelation of God through the Bible. As a result of this general revelation, there is much “common grace” in every culture. The implication of James 1: 17 is that God scatters gifts of wisdom, goodness, justice and beauty across the human race regardless of people’s beliefs. A holistic Christian view of all skills in science, scholarship, crafts, politics, government, art and jurisprudence would be to see all these as being from God. This grace is called common because it is given to all, not just those who have found salvation in Jesus Christ. And this grace allows and teaches Christians to cooperate and learn from non-believers in the shared goal of bettering society. As author Ken Myers says: “When Christians articulate cultural values, they should be values that non-Christians can embrace as well, not because we have some prior commitment to ‘pluralism’, and thereby seek to be inoffensive, but because we have expressed values which because of common grace are in fact common values”.

A Philosophy on Engagement

Christians need to go beyond merely quoting scripture to a post-modern world. Instead, we need to cultivate a public engagement philosophy through which to speak Truth and Wisdom to people. There are Christians who counsel others to not seek social justice at all, predicting that such efforts only make them more like the world, or in their words, “political”. Instead, they say, Christians should concentrate only on bringing individuals to salvation and growing the church. Why should they be pessimistic about the possibilities of cultural change and social reform?

“The pursuit of justice in society is never morally neutral, but is always based on understandings of reality that are essentially religious in nature.”

The pursuit of justice in society is never morally neutral, but is always based on understandings of reality that are essentially religious in nature. Christians should not be strident and condemning in their language or attitude, but neither should they be silent about the Biblical roots of their passion for justice nor should they compromise on God’s standards on sin and holiness.

God is concerned with all aspects of human life, whether it be government, economics, education, science, art, communication, business or social morality. Christians should not fall prey to the dualist bifurcation of the “sacred” and the “secular” sphere, while recognizing the legitimate role of government as an institution ordained by God (Romans 13: 1). Government and the laws it upholds are expressions of God’s common grace, a grace which makes rain fall on both the just and unjust.

Christians and citizens of goodwill must not neglect their civic duty to maintain the moral tone of society and freedom under law to positively influence popular culture and public policy. It is thus necessary to engage with, rather than to be detached from, what is going on in our society. There must be initiative to educate ourselves and our churches about contemporary issues and to participate in the political process, responding to debates in the media and making our views known to the authorities. We should not be silent on issues of common concern, even if they do not appear to affect the Christian community on the outset, for what affects the rights of one community may one day affect the rights of another.

“We should not be silent on issues of common concern, even if they do not appear to affect the Christian community on the outset...”

What does all this mean for the church in practical terms? Many of us may find the answers daunting. But if we are to take the theology of public square engagement to the fullest extent of its logic, it could mean, amongst others, the following scenarios: Equipping, encouraging and then releasing our youths to less financially rewarding jobs in the civil service and teaching profession, releasing church members to civil society organisations that advocate for a larger common good, or even to serve in politics or in public institutions, and according the same support to these “ministers in the public square” as we do to cross-cultural missionaries.

All these may involve a paradigm shift in the way churches have viewed ministry and missions. But God has, in His Word, given us a sound model and precepts on which to order our societies and to further relational well-being at the personal, corporate, national level. Christians have a stake and inheritance in their societies, as watchmen and witnesses of Jesus Christ. When He returns, the important thing is that we will be found at our posts, doing what He has confided to our care.

References:

- Timothy Keller. (2010). *Generous Justice*
- Ng Kam Weng. (19 July 2012). *The Social Impact of Christian Salvation*, www.krisispraxis.com/archives/2012/07/the-social-impact-of-christian-salvation/
- Thio Li Ann. (2009). *Issues of Law and Justice in Singapore*

¹Various interpretations of this include “lack of streams”, “valley of sorrow” or “valley of weeping”.

The Freedom of Religion



THERE are several approaches to address the issue of whether “Allah” should be used by non-Muslims in this country. Among the political and legal arguments are the 10-point solution promised by the Cabinet in April 2011, whereby the rights of non-Muslims to use “Allah” were recognised. There is also the High Court judgment of 31 Dec 2009 which affirmed the constitutional right of the Catholic weekly, *The Herald*, to use “Allah”. This right has been legally recognised and still stands.

There are also theological, historical and linguistic arguments which have already been presented, notably by scholars like Dr Ng Kam Weng on his website at www.krisispraxis.com, and by Alkitab translator, Dr Daud Soesilo, who is also the Global Translation Advisor to the United Bible Societies (UBS).

Most of these resources, however, are in English and while written as simply as possible for public consumption, can still be difficult to digest by most readers. Lack of such material in Bahasa Malaysia is also a problem in helping BM-speaking Christians articulate arguments on a theological, historical and linguistic basis. Efforts must be continued to educate lay Christians to develop

cogent arguments on the use of “Allah” by non-Muslims, and to appreciate the history of Malay Bible translation, a heritage that is 400 years old.

But there are also views that Christians should “lay down” their rights to use the word so as to live in peace with others and to show love. This view needs to wrestle with the notion of religious freedom, a fundamental liberty granted to all people.

In NECF’s advisory on 10 January 2013 to churches (available at www.necf.org.my), we affirmed the right to the freedom of religion for all persons as a constitutional provision under Article 11.

“This right to profess, practice and manage our own religious affairs includes the use of the Alkitab, which is the Holy Bible in Bahasa Malaysia, our national language, as well as the Bible in the native languages of Sabah and Sarawak which also use “Allah”, both in the public and private spheres of life including in all our church meetings and in our homes.

“To insist that the use of any word in the national

VS Laying Down of Rights



language is only for one particular religion is contrary to the Federal Constitution. It is ludicrous for one faith community to interfere in and tell other faith communities how they should manage their own faith and religious affairs, particularly by imposing which words can or cannot be used in their holy Scriptures.”

Our advisory also highlighted other legal arguments. For one, fatwa prohibiting “Allah” from being used by non-Muslims has no bearing on non-Muslims if such fatwa are made pursuant to state enactments on the Administration of the Religion of Islam, which covers Islamic administrative matters. Such an enactment would be applicable to Muslims only.

We also argued that banning the word among non-Muslims under state enactments on Non-Islamic Religions (Control of Propagation Amongst Muslims) is only within the context of propagation. How then, can a law to govern propagation be made to encroach on the rights of non-Muslims to profess and practice their own religion, and to manage their own religious affairs.

The freedom of religion cannot be divorced from the

legal, theological, linguistic and historical arguments in this equation. The freedom of religion is a critical consideration that cannot be divorced from the rest. Hence, it is not a question of laying down rights for the sake of peace, but of, firstly, upholding human dignity to free conscience and conviction which God has invested human being. This is recognised by the letter and intent of the Federal Constitution, which is the only common document, despite its flaws, that keeps our fractious, multi-religious and multi-racial society from disintegrating.

Secondly, the reality of our socio-political context is that concessions made by minority groups in one area could eventually lead to more concessions being extracted further down the road.

And thirdly, the freedom of religion which includes the freedom of conscience to choose and even leave one’s faith, is surely the most desired path for a country and people that aims to develop democratically, intellectually and spiritually.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom! (2 Corinthians 3:17)

EXPOSED

Shining a

MALAYSIA is in its Jubilee year, a time that calls for consecration and liberty. There are various on-going prayer initiatives but besides prayer, what actions can we engage in to realise Jubilee?

One area that demands action is the issue of corruption, a massive global problem. It is estimated that that US\$1 trillion is paid in bribes each year globally. Nearly US\$6 trillion was stolen from poor countries between 2001 and 2010. Illicit outflows from the developing world totaled US\$859 billion in 2010. Of this, US\$64 billion was from Malaysia, making it the world's number two, second only to China. To top it off, Malaysia was also 'world champion' in bribery in a Transparency International 2012 survey of 30 countries.

Corruption is defined as the abuse of power for private gain at the expense of others. It happens at every level and in every place. At the highest levels, it may involve misuse of public funds, obstruction of justice, or taking and giving payments in return for favours. There is also 'petty corruption' because it takes place in local communities. It might be bribes in return for a public service or to get out of trouble.

Why should we care about corruption? Because God does! Corruption is driven by greed and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col 3:5), and robs God of His glory and rightful place in our hearts. Corruption and secrecy hinders God's justice, stealing resources that belong to families, communities and nations.

Corruption affects everyone in society with the greatest impact on the poor. In Malaysia, absolute poverty has been reduced, but for the last 20 years, there has been no improvement in income equality. Corruption just worsens the situation.

We usually get very angry at grand corruption and the corrupt practices of the 'powerful' but how do we feel about our own 'involvement' in the petty, day-to-day bribery and tax avoidance? Are we mere victims with no choice? Are we also responsible for a culture where corruption flourishes through our collusion and silence?

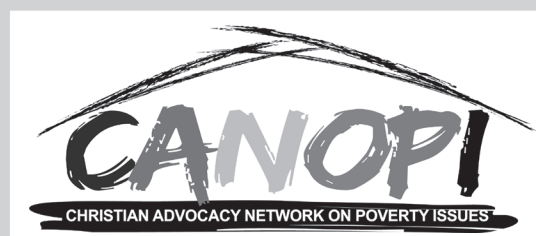
What is EXPOSED?

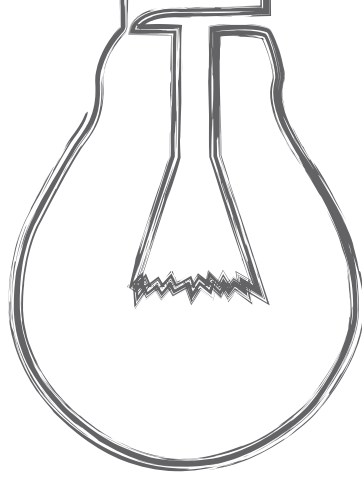
EXPOSED is a global call to action against corruption. EXPOSED is a response of the Christian Church inspired by the Bible and is committed to promoting practical steps for ethical behaviour in business, government, the Church and society as a whole.

It aims to mobilise 100 million Christians in 100 nations as advocates and practitioners of justice so that resources are shared equitably and all have the opportunity to flourish.

Launched worldwide in October 2012, the EXPOSED campaign will culminate in vigils around the globe and a global call to petition the G20 countries during the week of 14-20 October 2013.

In Malaysia, EXPOSED is coordinated by CANOPI (Christian Advocacy Network on Poverty Issues), a loose network which aims to bring together Christians across denominations to be a voice for the poor. EXPOSED was launched here on 6 October 2012 on RunNat Day, followed by communications mainly on social media.





Light on Corruption

EXPOSED calls for three actions:

- 1 Light My Heart** – make a personal commitment to stand against corruption.
- 2 Light My Community** – join a vigil against corruption from 14-20 October 2013.
- 3 Light My World** – Sign the Global Call asking leaders of the most powerful nations (G20) to ensure financial dealings in business and government are open and honest.

We want to bring God's light and hope to this global problem - starting with our own behaviour and attitudes, then getting our church involved and also taking action at the highest levels. We want the church to have an impact.

We are developing an Action Kit to engage churches. The kit will consist of a booklet (introduction, information

and 'how-to') and a CD of videos, a Powerpoint presentation and designs of promotional materials. The kit, in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil, should be ready by March 2013.

For more information, please visit www.EXPOSED2013.com and www.canopi-msia.org. Contact Joyce/Keith at 03-90582102 or email: canopi.msia@gmail.com. Also follow us on Facebook (Canopi.Msia) & Youtube (canopimsia).

Article contributed by Joyce Thong, Malaysian Care Communications Assistant Director.

¹ Interview with Daniel Kaufman, Global Governance Director, The World Bank Institute, "Six Questions about the cost of corruption" April 8th 2004

² Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries 2001-2010, Global Financial Integrity

³ Malaysian firms lose deals due to bribery, TI survey shows, The Malaysian Insider, 5 Dec 2012, <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/litee/malaysia/article/malaysian-firms-lose-deals-due-to-bribery-ti-survey-shows>

EXPOSED
SHINING A LIGHT ON CORRUPTION

**14-20 OCT
2013**

Uphold BM Churches and Leaders

DO non-Bahasa Malaysia churches pray enough for the BM-speaking church, whose members form the majority of Christians in Malaysia? Remember the NECF BM Commission as they kick off 2013 with events to strengthen the majority church.

The Summit Pemimpin Jaringan Doa (Leaders' Prayer Network Summit) from 1-2 March aims to expand an existing prayer network currently limited to the outskirts of the Klang Valley. The current network of BM pastors and leaders only covers Puchong, Serdang, Dengkil and Kajang in Selangor.

"This summit is aimed at encouraging more BM and Orang Asli churches to start prayer movements in every state," said BM Commission Executive Secretary, Alfred Tais. Orang Asli church leaders will also meet in Bentong, Pahang, for a seminar, Membangun Jemaat Orang Asli Ke Arah Pelayanan, from 14-16 March. The goal is to raise more indigenous full-time workers from among the community and to equip those already in ministry. American missionary Jim Yost, a veteran worker in Irian Jaya/Papua and Alkitab translator, will be the speaker.

Next-generation leaders of BM youths are also being prepared. A conference-cum-roadshow under the Dream Malaysia movement will be held for them, first in Kuching and Kapit from 22-27 March, and in Kuala Lumpur in May.

Time Out for Pastors

Book review by Patrick Cheng

METHODIST minister, Dr Mark Chua, has been a pastor for more than two decades and knows from experience what stress and burnout in pastoral ministry is all about.

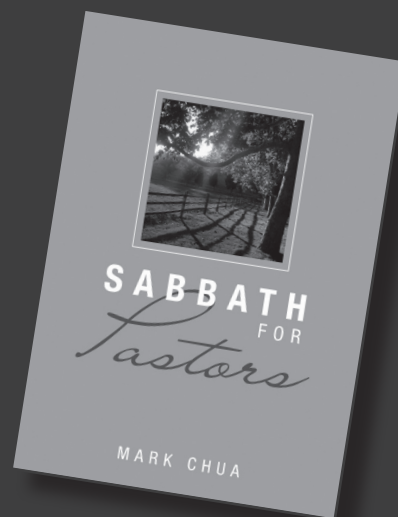
In his book, *Sabbath for Pastors*, published by Graceworks, Singapore, he traces the causes of burnout. One is the historical context where missionaries and pastors were church pioneers. Their sacrificial living earned them much respect but also caused their congregation members to become overly dependent on them, to the detriment of the pastors' own physical and mental health.

The results-orientated mindset of the Asian culture is another cause of burnout, combined with assumptions that full-time and ministry workers need not be remunerated on par with the commercial sector. Pastors may end up being viewed as mere employees instead of spiritual leaders of the church. They, too, come under the pressure of the fast-paced, modern worldview with its premium on success as defined by church growth. There is little time for reflection, meditation and Sabbath rest.

Chua opines that pastors may recognise stress and heavy workloads to be part and parcel of pastoral ministry, but many do not comprehend the negative effects of continual stress on them and their families. He highlights the various ailments and psychosomatic sicknesses as symptoms of stress and burnout and backs these up with statistics to show that many in the pastorate, both in the West and in Asia, suffer from this occupational hazard. He notes a Jewish saying that "more than pastors have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept pastors".

Chua's book ultimately begs the question, "How does keeping the Sabbath prevent burnout?" Chua examines theological aspects of the Sabbath and advocates a paradigmatic approach with practical suggestions for pastors and church leaders to live the Sabbath on a daily and weekly basis.

Many pastors often complain that their church may not understand their need to take a sabbatical (especially a paid one). Chua suggests that pastors model the Sabbath to their congregations first and delves into ways they can do this. When congregants have tasted the benefit of the Sabbath, they will find it easier to understand the justification for their pastor's weekly off-day, yearly vacation and seventh year sabbatical. Even if you are not a pastor, this book is an engaging read about what your pastor goes through. Most of all, *Sabbath for Pastors* can help all believers re-learn and re-discover the Sabbath as a gift of life.



A Power-packed Pastors' Kids Retreat

By Tabitha Ujang and Grace Goh

AFTER two consecutive years of being held in West Malaysia, the Pastors' Kids Retreat finally hit the shores of East Malaysia, in the bustling city of Kuching! Held at One Hotel Santubong from 17-19 December 2012, 95 pastors' kids (PKs) from all over Malaysia gathered for the retreat. A good number of PKs came from both the urban and interior areas of Sarawak, travelling many hours by longboat, bus and plane.

This camp was hosted by Pastors Roland and Evelyn Seow from FGA Melbourne, the founders of Impact Pastors Impact Nations (IPIN). The camp was organised by the Pastors' Kids Fellowship Malaysia, with the help of Pastor Greman Ujang (Christ Baptist Church, Kuching) and the Kuching Ministers Fellowship. This yearly event is endorsed by NECF Malaysia.

God's presence was tangible right from the first session to the last. Through the hosts, Pastors Roland and Evelyn, the speakers Josh Yeoh (Penang House of Prayer) and Ruth Budiman Tedjokusomo (Indonesian Praise Centre), the PKs were blessed with power-packed sessions on topics like encountering the Father's heart, personal identity, life as a PK, and trusting that God's plans are best. Session after session, God poured out His Spirit, delivering many PKs from bottled-up hurts, unforgiveness, ministry burdens

and pretension. PKs discovered the beauty of being in love with Jesus and a genuine personal relationship with God. These same PKs who once served in church because of their parents, are now serving because of love for God.

It was a joy to see PKs letting their guard down, being themselves and finding friends who understood the unique pressures that they go through.

The PKs also spent a session praying for the nation together with some pastors from the Kuching Ministers Fellowship. It was a beautiful and symbolic time of prayer, not just because the PKs, who represented over 50 different churches, were standing in the gap for the nation, but also because the hearts of two different generations were united.

Every participant gave positive feedback on the retreat. It was life changing for some – issues were resolved, relationships with God were put back on track, and life purposes were discovered. For some, it was a God-given opportunity to rest and relax in His presence. And for a few, God certainly used this camp to give material blessings in the form of mini iPads and other gifts! All in all, God used this retreat to do something irreversible in everyone present. Pray that the impact of this retreat will go a long way, bringing Malaysia closer to her destiny!





Looking Out Looking Up

UNITED KINGDOM The government introduced the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill in January which will legalise gay marriage and see amendments to marriage laws to include same-sex couples. The bill, which saw fierce opposition from Conservative MPs, was passed by the majority of Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs in early February. The new law could have possible repercussions on teachers, hospital and prison chaplains, and even churches, if they hold to the traditional Biblical view of marriage and refuse to teach about or preside over same-sex marriages. The Catholic Church mobilised a campaign to oppose the bill, while the Church of England has asked that the law still allow churches the religious freedom to decide such matters for themselves.



PRAY for Christian MPs to uphold Biblical values. Pray for churches, Christian leaders and advocacy groups to know how to engage the public square on this matter. Pray for the Lord's mercy to preserve and raise faithful believers to intercede for this nation.

NEPAL Christian leaders claim the number of the believers recorded in the 2011 census is far below the actual figure. The census puts the number of Christians at over 300,000 or 1.4% of the country's population, but church leaders say the figure should be 2.5 million based on the more than 8,500 churches throughout Nepal. In effect, Christians are being marked as Hindus. The National Council of Churches of Nepal has alleged data manipulation. This comes amidst Nepal's transition to a secular democracy after two centuries of Hindu monarchy. The consequences of such manipulation

can affect the outcome and extent of religious freedoms for Nepal's minority groups.



PRAY for the Christian leaders who are engaged in Nepal's public square as they work on building a democratic nation where all groups are protected. Pray for the continued growth of the church in Nepal and the nurturing and equipping of believers. - WEA-RLC

CHINA Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zinsheng is in prison for defending house church Christians and Falun Gong practitioners. Gao was first detained in 2009. In March 2010, he told Associated Press that he had been severely tortured. In April 2010, he disappeared and was not heard of again until December 2011, when the Chinese news agency, Xinhua, reported that he had been returned to prison. Only recently on 12 January 2013, were Gao's brother and father-in-law allowed to visit him at the Shaya Prison in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The visit confirms that Gao is still alive but the lack of information about his well-being, schedule of release and access to legal representation is troubling.



PRAY for God to minister strength, comfort and His presence to Gao in prison. Pray for his family members to remain strong and faithful. Pray for God to move the authorities to ensure safe treatment and release for Gao. Remember the house churches and other religious minorities which face persecution in China. - CSW

COLOMBIA An evangelist, Nelson Ramos, was killed by National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas in January 2011. Four months ago in 2012, his wife Alicia Castilla was warned to abandon her home by the same guerrillas. She didn't. On 7 January 2013, assailants entered her house and shot Alicia in front of her three children and father. Her eldest son, aged 18, has now been warned to leave the area along with the rest of the family or face death. Ramos and Alicia

had both ministered in Colombia's border area with Venezuela where ELN insurgents are fighting to control oil resources. The Church is targeted for standing against the violence, and between 25 to 30 church leaders are reportedly assassinated every year.



PRAY for the Ramos' orphaned children that God will protect them. Pray for Colombian Christians who have lost loved ones to the conflict. Pray for changed hearts among rebel groups to lay down arms and to seek peace instead. Ask God to stir the Colombian government with a longing for peace and justice. Praise God for Christians who remain strong despite having lost everything. - CD, CSW

AFRICA Central African governments are struggling in the face of spreading extremism. Nigeria has denounced the terror group, Boko Haram, as a threat to all of west, north and central Africa. The sect, which seeks to install conservative Syariah law across Nigeria, routinely targets Christians, police, soldiers and ordinary citizens. On 21 January 2013, they opened fire on a market in Damboa, killing 18 people. This was followed by another attack in Kano where gunmen shot at people playing an outdoor board game. Boko Haram has been blamed for some 1,400 deaths in Nigeria since 2010 and have now reportedly expanded into Mali. Meanwhile, Kenya's government has sent its army into Somalia to assist in the fight against Al-Shabaab militants. In retaliation, the group has inflicted attacks on the Kenyan population.



PRAY for the leaders of these countries as they respond to extremist elements and deal with corruption and other abuses within their own administrations. Pray that the rest of Africa and the international community will support the fight against terrorism. Pray for the churches caught in the middle of this conflict, that God will bring healing, comfort and courage to continue standing as a witness for Christ. Pray that Africa would be freed from the cycle of violence. - BBC, VOA