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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

The Worst Prayer Meeting in History

"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples."

John 18:1–2 (NKJV)

Following the description of Jesus' last supper discourses (John 13:31-16:33) and His prayer for himself and His disciples (17:1-26), John provides an account of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion and burial (18:1-19:42).

The name "Gethsemane", used only in the Gospels of Matthew (26:36) and Mark (14:32), means "oil press," suggesting the presence of an olive grove. It was here where Jesus agonized in prayer on the night before His arrest and crucifixion (Matt. 26:36–46).

I call this history's worst prayer meeting because only a dismal group of 11 disciples showed up that evening (Judas came late, like so many with ulterior motives) in spite of the thousands who were fed and healed, and witnessed the many signs and wonders in the early days of Jesus' ministry. When it comes down to the hard work of prayer, should we be surprised by such a poor turnout and lackadaisical commitment?

The Scriptures record for us that Judas betrayed Him at Gethsemane, the place where Jesus often met with His disciples to pray. Who would imagine betrayal happening at the very place of learning, the preferred place of communion with the Father?

We naturally surmise that mighty things would happen in prayer meetings. Yet, it is also at prayer meetings that our hearts are revealed. The man who questioned the worth of Jesus, who had issues with the money box (John 12:6), showed up at the final prayer meeting with Jesus to confirm that he could be bought for 30 pieces of silver.

Could we be subconsciously steering away from prayer meetings because of fear that our ugly selves may be uncovered?

Another reason why it would qualify as the worst prayer meeting is because all fell asleep. The disciples could not watch and wait. That's akin to having your song leader and your prayer leader not being able to stay awake after leading in songs and sharing the prayer items. And it was not even an all-night prayer meeting! Jesus merely asked of them "one hour".

It was during this last prayer meeting that we see the only time Jesus suggested an alternative to the Father – "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." (Matt 26:39)

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The Need to Build Prayer Altars Everywhere

By Dr Lew Lee Choo

We are living in times when darkness seems to be covering the earth and exerting its power over people and land. It dominates and no matter where we go, it eclipses everything that we do. What then can be done to reverse this?

2 Chron 7:14 tells us that it starts when God's people call on Him and humble themselves and acknowledge that all our ideas and methods are not working. It is when we earnestly seek His face, turn from our wicked ways and cry to Him for mercy, that God hears our prayers and turns His face towards us and visits us to bring healing to our land. This is what prayer altars are all about.

When God's church comes together and build that corporate altar in our cities, a pillar of fire rises up towards heaven and drives away the darkness and the demonic spirits that are taking over our land.

Prayer altars are not a new idea. Indeed, men and women who have laboured in prayer have always built altars of prayer. However, they were too few to affect a change in the spiritual climate of the land.

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The Worst Prayer Meeting in History

The Savior of the world was about to accomplish the greatest feat of dying on the cross for the salvation of mankind, to enable the greatest "exchange" to take place – His will for the Father's will – yet the Church slept through it all.

Definitely it was the worst prayer meeting on man's part.

After being chided, again they slept (Matt 26:42, 43).

We are all familiar with the actual betrayal with Judas leading the pack to arrest Jesus. But we should note that after the prayer meeting, one of His disciples drew a sword to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant who had accompanied Judas.

Oftentimes, we are remiss of the Father's purpose and we also "draw swords" wrongly after our prayer meetings. This is bound to happen when we neglect our prayer meetings or when we sleep through our God appointed prayer seasons.

There have been repeated calls to pray for our nation. The need is great. The time is now. The 24/7 has been set up. Let me repeat the call to pray again, like what Jesus did at Gethsemane.

Are we sleeping through God's prayer season for Malaysia?

May our Lord save us from becoming the "prayer-less church" -- when roused from her sleep, is found with a sword in-hand.

In Eden, the first Adam caved in. In this second garden, the second Adam prevailed. In this time of pressing need, I pray the Malaysian Church will be found in her garden of prayer, at the very least.

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The Need to Build Prayer Altars Everywhere

In order to combat such widespread darkness, God's call to us is to build altars of prayer at home, at work and in cities and villages and, of course, in our churches so that His presence can come and saturate our atmosphere.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A PRAYER ALTAR?

1. The Focus of the Altar – The Presence of God.

The main difference between a prayer meeting and prayer altar is the focus. One focuses on our long prayer list and the other focuses on the love of the Father and the omnipotence of our Maker. A prayer altar is a place of encounter with the Presence of God. At the prayer altar, methods and styles of prayer should not matter. All that matters is that connection to God Himself.

2. The Agenda at the Altar – Alignment to His will and Purpose

In Romans 12: 1-3, Paul, gives us a clue as to what takes place at our altar times. As we come to the altar and offer Him our love and devotion we desire to see our minds renewed. It is the renewed mind that can know God's will and only then can we truly pray His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

We need to think the way God wants us to think, and see the issues before us as He sees it, so that we will be able to pray according to His good pleasing and perfect will. As we align our will to His, we will then see His Kingdom come His will be done in our cities as it is in heaven.

A short summary is given below that will help us understand in what way prayer altars are different from our usual prayer meetings.

	Prayer Altars	Traditional Prayer Meetings
Focus	An intimate relationship with God; Getting to know what is in God's heart	A need to pray flowing from our hearts
Agenda	God's agenda	Our agenda
KPI	Change in atmosphere affects the physical territory	Change in situation
Frequency	Regular with a set commitment towards altar time	May stop when not required

3. The Purpose of the Altar – Changing the Spiritual atmosphere.

Altars are the spiritual gateways between the spiritual and the physical realms. When men build altars to worship and sacrifice to demonic spirits these demonic spirits rule over that area. This becomes worse, when there are no holy altars, raised in prayer and worship to God. The degree of darkness over a territory is directly linked to the number of active unholy altars. Only the presence of many active holy altars can reverse its effect. That is what we are called to do at such a time as this.



Summary

Building prayer altars throughout a land is about laying claims to the land, adopting the land, praying and blessing the land, with the desire to establish God's Presence on the land. It is about possessing the land so that forces of darkness cannot take over the spiritual atmosphere of that land.

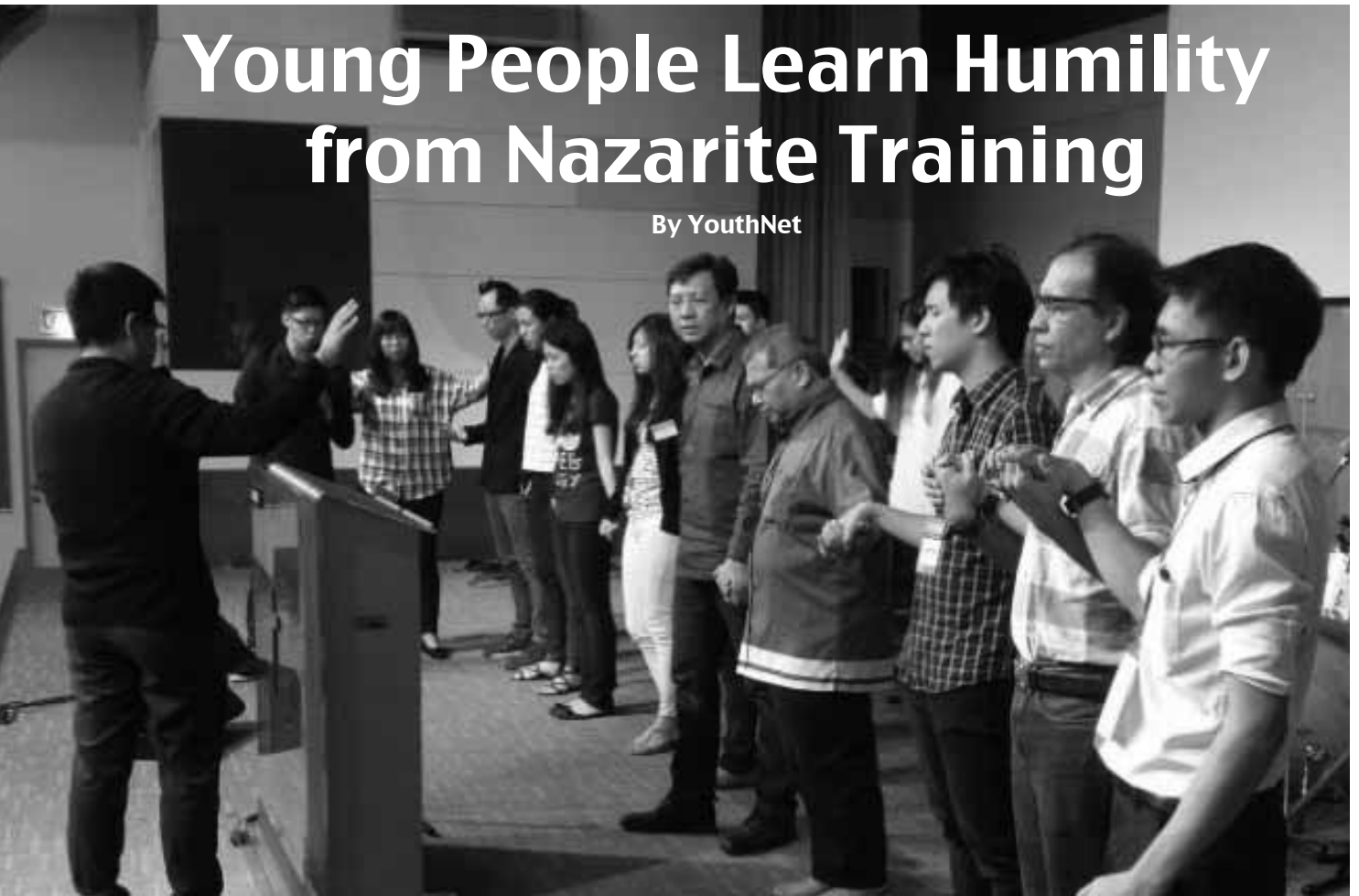
We need to take these altars into our homes, our workplaces, our schools, our cities and, above all, our churches. We need to turn the house of God into the very throne of God Himself. Then will we witness His kingdom will come and His will be done on our land as it is in heaven, even as He promised.



Pr. Dr. Lew Lee Choo is the senior associate pastor of SIB Kuala Lumpur. She wholly believes that building prayer altars is a form of blessing.

Young People Learn Humility from Nazarite Training

By YouthNet



Malaysia's very first Nazarite training anchored by a local team of trainers, was successfully held from June 8-12. On the opening night nearly 500 brothers and sisters from churches of different regions attended and witnessed the commencement of the 5-day *Chinese Nazarite Training: Humility*.

Pastor Jerome Ocampo, the founder of this training course in the Philippines, officiated the training by sharing the purpose and objective of the course and some challenges faced by young people. Before the end of the public meeting, Pastor Jerome, together with all the pastors who were present there, laid hands on the young trainers who would be teaching the course to others, and anointed them with fervent prayers.

All the attendees raised their hands and in unity uttered their prayers of blessing. The prayers provided a strong spiritual covering of God over the trainers. The presence of the Holy Spirit was strongly felt, and God gave His words of affirmation and encouragement to all the trainers, enabling them to be bold and courageous to deliver the truth of humility in the following days.

The training sessions were conducted in a relaxed manner. The participants were further divided into small groups for discussion after the trainers had delivered and imparted their main points of teaching. The participants shared how they had been ministered and edified throughout the sessions, and how they had benefited from the teachings. They also shared some of the weaknesses

they were encountering in their lives. Everyone revealed their true sentiment and they were sincere and truthful in their sharing.

When the time came for prayer, it was very touching to see the young people praying for one another. They demonstrated to one another their lives of humility. The most impressive moment came when the participants willingly submitted their lives to God, and acknowledged God's sovereignty over them once again. They chose to return to God and to rediscover their destinies in Him. They were more than willing to live out a life of humility to release and maximize the full potential in them.

The training ended with the full anointing of God. Seeds of humility were planted in the lives of all the participants and we strongly believe that these seeds will sprout and grow to become big plants, impacting their generation. We hope that all the participants will become humble men and women of God like our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to defeat their enemies and to overcome temptations, restore the anointing of God lost due to our own pride, and pass on such humility to our next generation. Like how Elijah made Elisha the successor of his anointing, all the participants have been injected with the DNA of humility to pass on to the next generation. In this way, the splendor of the Kingdom culture will be actualized in our midst. We call this the coming of the Kingdom of God, where the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Humility keeps our heart strong because when we

“On the opening night of the Nazarite Training Phase 1, Pastor Ocampo said that “the strength and power of a previous generation is determined by its ability to transfer Godly lessons and values to the next generation”. This statement challenges me to evaluate all that I am currently doing and focusing on. How am I doing this for the next generation? What I have discovered with the Nazarite Training is that it serves to break down these very important godly lessons and values into bite size nuggets of truth that can be easily translated into application and action in our everyday lives.

“In Phase 1, we tackle the fundamental issues of our identity and it brings us through a journey of knowing, accepting and loving ourselves to training, controlling, surrendering, consecrating and submitting ourselves to God. This journey is one that I find good to revisit on a frequent basis in order to align ourselves to fulfill the destiny that God has for each of us. I am also personally very encouraged through the group discussions. It provides a safe place where we can honestly share our struggles on walking humbly before God and men and also serves as a platform to give ideas and encouragement to one another on this journey.”

Wong Ju Lee, participant

are humble, it is really God's strength sustaining us, not our own. The powerful message of the Nazarite lifestyle is undoubtedly causing ripples as more and more people recognise the powerful Scriptural principles that the Nazarite Training champions.

Finally, this was what Jerome Ocampo had to say about our trainers:

“I was blessed with the display of determination by the new trainers both in the English and Chinese versions. All of the ones I reviewed were excellent trainers using their own personal experiences to share the message on humility.

- All of them studied the material well.
- They used their own PowerPoint slides and at certain times researched alternative videos.
- It showed that they have meditated on the topic and prayed it through.

“A very promising start. I am believing there will be more trainings in the future. I think that NECF has inspired these emerging young leaders to have a direct impact on the future leaders of the churches in Malaysia. The training can cater to business leaders, pastors, professionals, couples, and many other potential common interest groups. I am excited, blessed and very hopeful for what will happen next.

“By the way, aside from the Netherlands, Malaysia is the only nation that started to train after attending just one Nazarite Training on humility, that was last held year. That says a lot of the church's passion and commitment to raise up the next generation.”

The next Nazarite Training -- Phase 2: Holiness -- will be from Sept 23-26 this year. Pastor Ocampo will be back with us. (Please note that completing Phase 1 – Humility is a pre-requisite to Phase 2 – Holiness.)

If you would like to find out more or are interested to organise a Nazarite training in your area, please email us at nazarite@necf.org.my.

“It was a really enriching experience.” - Pastor Yew Meng



7 Things that Still Stand

The NECF makes its stand on the issue of gay marriages. NECF chairman, Rev Eu Hong Seng, presents a Biblical perspective on the matter.

The evangelical community of churches, both in Malaysia and worldwide alike, are saddened by the Supreme Court decision on 26th June 2015 to legalize same sex marriages in the United States.

This development will no doubt have an impact on the world stage as the sitting US president is himself pro-LGBT and will undoubtedly use his country's economic clout to induce many nations to adopt a similar stance in exchange for subsidies and trade benefits.

Those who advocate teaching young children the alternative lifestyle will be harder to thwart. Child adoption by same-sex parents is set to surge while priests and pastors will increasingly be prosecuted for refusing to conduct and recognize "legal" marriages. Asian conservatism will not be spared in the onslaught from this new tsunami of liberalism.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remind ourselves that 7 fundamental truths remain intact.

1. The God of Genesis is still God.

Since creation, it has always been Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Franklin Graham said it succinctly – "God gave us marriage and God doesn't change His mind ...and His decisions are not subject to review or revision by any man-made court. It did not define marriage and therefore is not entitled to re-define it."¹

2. The God who punished Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19) for their lewd behaviour has not changed His standard for judging mankind.

Sodom and Gomorrah were ill reputed for sexual perversity. Such immorality was not circumscribed as Old Testament phenomena; the New Testament similarly alludes to these gross sins -- see Matt. 10:15, Luke 10:12; Rom. 9:29; 2 Pet. 2:6 and Jude 7.

Jude 7 cites "just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire." ESV

What happened in Sodom and Gomorrah is an example and warning for all of us.

Clearly the Supreme Court's decision and the subsequent celebration over the institutionalization of decadence can only anger God.

3. It is God who defines sin.

In the pathetic attempt to redefine "marriage" is the feeble endeavor to redefine "sin." It is the God of the Bible who "sets the ideal, the standard for human behaviour, and the most frequent biblical words for sin (Heb. ḥāṭā'; Gk

hamartēma) meant originally "to miss the mark, fail in duty" (Rom 3:23)."²

Sin is when we miss the mark set by God, not necessarily when the Supreme Court declares it so. The legal definition does not change the biblical definition.

If there is sin in the Church, it is sin! It is what God says, not even what the pastor says (should he similarly try to redefine what is right and wrong). It does not matter what the Human Rights Commission asserts, what any court declares, or what a referendum decides. If the Bible calls it sin, it is sin.

4. The way to eternal life is through repentance at the foot of the cross.

There is no self-prescribed way to salvation. One cannot get saved just because you come to Jesus "just as you are". Repentance cannot be omitted from our homilies.

Repentance involves acknowledgment of sin. How can one get saved whilst intending to remain unrepentant and ungodly?

The verb "repent" appears 84 times in Scriptures, almost equally divided between the Old Testament and the New Testament.³ We fool ourselves to think we do not need to repent. We are delusional to redefine sin in order to abrogate the need for repentance. There can be no regeneration without repentance and turning to God in faith.

5. After salvation, there is no biblical exemption to lead a sanctified life.

There are three stages in the process of salvation viz. justification, sanctification and glorification.

Simply put, justification is "the act of God in bringing sinners into a new covenant relationship with himself through the forgiveness of sins."⁴ This takes place when a person repents, acknowledges Jesus as the only way and is saved. Thereafter, he is expected to live a sanctified life.

The New Hampshire Baptist Confession (1833) states: "We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means -- especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer".⁵

There are no unique exceptions for special groups to be exempted from pursuing a sanctified life.



Sabahans Take the Initiative to Pray for State and Nation

By Rev Andy Chi

The Sabah Council of Churches (SCC) together with NECF's Commission of Sabah Affairs (COSA) and the Sabah Pastors Fellowship (SPF) organized a prayer meeting recently in response to Sabah Park's invitation to pray for Mount Kinabalu, after it was hit by an earthquake on July 5 that took 18 lives and left many others with damaged homes and emotional trauma.

The two-day prayer session on July 10th and 11th at Dewan Kinabalu was a time of consecration and prayer. It was also attended by representatives from Sarawak, Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.

Despite the short notice, the organizers moved swiftly to plan this prayer meeting. Letters and e-flyers were sent out to churches and networks. Many responded by confirming their attendance. Pastor Dr Khoo Kay Hup and Rev Andy Chi represented NECF at this gathering.

There were three prayer sessions. The first was on the evening of the 10th. The hall was packed to the brim with an estimate attendance of over 900 people. Among the crowd were many who came from the quake-hit areas surrounding Mount Kinabalu. As the praise and worship began, a deep sense of God's Presence descended on the hall. Many hearts were touched and faith restored. During this session, a time of personal dedication was made. A call to return to God and faith was also made. Following this, the pastors present were invited forward and committed in prayer to receive His fresh anointing. After receiving that prayer, the pastors were released to pray for each individual in the crowd.

The next two sessions were conducted in the following morning. Many more came to the gathering. The

attendance increased to over 1,200 people! This resulted in many having to sit outside the hall. In session two, time was spent praying for Sabah and the country. As the Holy Spirit descended upon the meeting, many began to cry for the state and the nation. Different ones were invited forward to lead in prayer. At the end of the session, an altar was raised prophetically with SCC president Rev Datuk Jerry Dusing praying and dedicating the land of Malaysia to the Lord.

After a short break, the final session began. This session was more formal in nature. In attendance were the Mayor of Kota Kinabalu, Datuk Abidin Madingkir, Rev Dusing and SCC deputy president, Bishop Datuk Thomas Tsen, the president of the Sabah Provisional Methodist Church Annual Conference, Rev Dr Hii Kong-Hock, president of the Protestant Church of Sabah, Rev Jensey Mojuin and SPF chairmen Ps Steven Choon, Ps Cornelius Henry, Ps Daniel Chin and Ps Daniel Chong. Also present were the heads and denominational representatives from the Catholic, Anglican and Baptist churches and Sidang Injil Borneo and the Basel Church. The session began with the blowing of the shofar, followed by the Kadazan dance. Rev Dusing then gave his speech followed by a series of prayer for the community, state and nation. Finally, Bishop Tsen gave the closing prayer and benediction.

It was a memorable time as we witnessed the unity of God's people as they came together to seek God's face in prayer, praise and worship for Sabah and for this nation.



Rev. Andy Chi is the Assistant Secretary General of the NECF. He is passionate about prayer.



Persecution and the Middle-Class Lifestyle

By Dr Leong Tien Fock

No other book in the Bible teaches the sovereignty of God as forcefully as the book of Daniel. Daniel is clear that God is sovereign over kings, kingdoms and history itself. Even the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful king of his time, was under God's rule.

And God revealed through Nebuchadnezzar and to Daniel that after the Babylonian empire would come three more world empires; namely, the Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires, before the coming of the Kingdom of God to replace them. The New Testament teaches that God's Kingdom has come, is coming and will come. Christ came to inaugurate it, the Church is called to pray for and seek it (Matthew 6:10, 33), and Christ will come again to consummate it.

Daniel also makes it explicit that the sovereignty of God over kings and kingdoms does not mean that God's people will never suffer persecution from those who hold political power in this world.

What then, can happen to God's people when they face persecution? Daniel teaches three possible outcomes. The first is deliverance from the persecution. Daniel and his three friends were granted favour so they could avoid eating the king's prescribed food, and were thus spared an otherwise inevitable persecution.

The second is that they will be delivered in the persecution. Daniel's three friends were thrown into the furnace for refusing to worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. They were not delivered from, but in, the furnace. They were not spared the persecution but their lives were spared as they went through it; they were even spared material loss. The same thing happened when Daniel himself was later thrown

into the lion's den for upholding his integrity.

The third possibility is that neither of these will happen, but God's people will die for their faith and faithfulness.

God revealed through Daniel that in the future a Greek king (who turned out to be Antiochus IV Epiphanes) would desecrate the temple in Jerusalem (this happened in 168 BC). There would be Jews who would give in to him, but those "who know their God would firmly resist him" and would "fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered" (Daniel 11:32-33). However, they would be rewarded with the prospect of resurrection to everlasting life and "shine like the brightness of ... the stars" (Daniel 12:2-3).

Hence, some of God's people will die as a result of persecution, but be delivered from this world to a better world.

What about Malaysia?

Past and recent Church history has repeatedly borne witness to all three possible outcomes, thereby confirming the teaching of Daniel on the sovereignty of God. Malaysia is currently going through her most significant political transition as a nation and the Malaysian Church is caught in the midst of this turmoil.

Persecution is on the horizon, if not already on the shore. Which of the three possibilities is the Malaysian Church most likely to experience?

With the authorities already harassing the Church, the first possibility—deliverance from—seems unlikely. Most people, whether Christian or not, would also agree that the situation in Malaysia has not reached a stage that would involve the third possibility, which is Christians losing their

lives.

The second possibility—deliverance in the midst of persecution—thus seems most likely. Unlike Daniel and his three friends, who escaped their furnace with their clothes and turbans unscathed, material loss will likely be a possibility for Malaysian Christians. The current harassment has already caused the Church to suffer material loss, especially in terms of printed materials like Bibles.

If the current political situation worsens, it may further impact the Church in her freedom to practice religion and seriously affect the nation in economic terms. Christians would then suffer economic stress together with the rest of the nation. This means many Christians may lose their middle-class lifestyle, though not their basic livelihood. Further restrictions on the practice of religion may also result in Christians losing their middle-class church-lifestyle. But worshipping comfortably in an air-conditioned building with the accompaniment of musical instruments is a luxury and not a necessity.

If the early Church grew from strength to strength despite Christians then worshipping in homes and in secret, such loss should not hinder, but may, in fact, hasten the progress of the Gospel.

The Life We Fear to Lose

The possibility of persecution will likely cause fear among Christians. This fear needs to be put into proper perspective -- that God remains in control. Throughout history, the Church has been known to thrive in persecution.

As Christians in Malaysia, what do we really stand to lose? In the case of the Church in Malaysia, as far as we can see, the question of losing our lives or even livelihoods does not yet arise. What we may stand to lose is the current lifestyle we have grown comfortable with. If we do not fear losing this, then there is really nothing to fear. Jesus has promised that when we seek first God's Kingdom, all that we need to live on will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). And the apostle Paul teaches that we can be happy with just our basic needs (1 Timothy 6:8).

The epistle to the Hebrews is also instructive. It was written to a group of Jewish Christians who, because of the fear of persecution, were tempted to give up the Christian faith. Some had even neglected "going to church" (Hebrews 10:25). It is clear that the question of losing their life did not yet arise (Hebrews 12:4). And we are told that in an earlier persecution *"you suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions"* (Hebrew 10:34).

Hence, when Christians take to heart the hope they have in Christ, they will be able to accept joyfully even the confiscation of their property -- a loss that is economically more basic than the middle-class lifestyle. They would thus testify to the power of the Gospel. But when Christians are overcome with fear, it may not be easy to take to heart the Christian hope. Hebrews is mostly a defense of the Christian hope in Jewish terms to rekindle their confidence in the Christian hope (Hebrews 10:35).

This means that in the face of persecution, Christians need to be refreshed with a defense of their hope in Christ.

The apostle Peter, also writing in the context of persecution, goes so far as to say that Christians should *"always be prepared to give an answer (a defense) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have"* (1 Peter 3:15).

This assumes that Christians are assembling together regularly before and during times of persecution so that *"we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds"* (Hebrews 10:24). This verse provides the gold standard for the goal of Christian fellowship, whether in the context of a formal assembly like the weekly church service or otherwise. Our meetings must "spur" one another to "love" (grow in Christian maturity) and "good deeds" (grow in Christian service). Perhaps the threat of impending persecution is a blessing in disguise, challenging us to ensure that our assemblies fulfil the goal of Christian fellowship.

Consumerism and Creation Care

The fear of the possibility of losing our middle-class lifestyles should spur us to ponder the basis for such fears. This is all the more needed in view of a global ecological crisis, which threatens the earth's ability to support life.

Modern lifestyles can easily degenerate into consumerism, which means, instead of consuming goods and services that we need in order to live, we live in order to consume goods and services that we do not really need. Both the production as well as consumption of industrial goods and services not only deplete natural resources but also pollute the earth -- land, water and air -- harming the ecosystem. Just as the human body can handle a small amount of poison, the earth can cleanse itself if the amount of pollution is manageable. But with consumerism, the level of production and consumption of industrial goods and services exceeds what the earth can handle. Consumerism further harms the ecosystem when the consumption of goods and services involves endangered species and finite resources.

The root cause of consumerism is covetousness on the part of both producers who seek to maximize profits and consumers who seek (in vain) happiness through consumption. And Paul says covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). For this reason alone Christians should already be part of the solution and not the problem, even if they have no personal concern for the ecosystem. But, should Christians also be personally concerned about the ecological crisis given that the earth will one day be "burned up" (2 Peter 3:10)?

What Peter says about the fate of the earth has triggered a popular theology that likens the earth to a sinking ship. If a ship is sinking the concern is to save lives, not keep the ship clean. So according to this theology our concern is to save souls and not to preserve the ecosystem. Even if we accept the analogy of the sinking ship, the problem is that this ship (the earth) is taking a long time to sink. If we are stranded on a sinking ship that is taking years to sink, the ship becomes our home and we will need to keep it clean.

But the "sinking ship" is a wrong analogy. It is not probable to be stranded on a damaged ship that can

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Persecution and the Middle-Class Lifestyle

become our home for years -- there will not be enough edible food and drinking water. In contrast, the earth is indeed our home for years. And when the health of the ecosystem deteriorates, we suffer the consequences, which is already the case.

A proper analogy is that of our house, which will one day be torn down for redevelopment or "burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). What would we think of someone who tells us that he is not concerned about the cleanliness of his home because his house will one day be destroyed anyway? Even though our house will one day be destroyed we should take care of it because it is still our home for now. Another analogy is that of our body, which is the "home" of our soul. One day we will die and our soul will leave this "house" (assuming we die before Christ returns for us). Whether our body is cremated (literally "burned up") or buried, it will still be destroyed. Should we be concerned for the health of our body given that it will one day be destroyed?

To be concerned about an ecological crisis is really to be human and is not at all inconsistent with what the Bible teaches about the fate of the present earth. Otherwise, we will have to tell non-Christians that we have no concern for the ecosystem because of what our Scripture teaches. And if we tell them the reason for our unconcern is that the earth is a sinking ship, they will say it is sinking because of irresponsible people like us who have no concern for the ecosystem. Will they then be interested in the Gospel? So if our concern is indeed to save souls, all the more we need to be concerned about the ecological crisis and demonstrate through words and deeds that the Gospel, which sets us free from covetousness, is in fact the solution to the problem.

The middle-class lifestyle, unless it becomes consumerist, is in itself not wrong. God does bless us beyond our basic needs. However, as Paul says, something may be "lawful" but we must not become addicted to it (1 Corinthians 6:12). What we really need to fear is that our fear of losing the middle-class lifestyle may be due to an addiction to this lifestyle, which is an indication of consumerism, and thus, idolatry. If so, the fear of impending persecution can be a blessing in disguise to set us free from this addiction and thus bear witness to the power of the Gospel.



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...continued from page 6:

7 Things that Still Stand

To embrace gay believers without expounding transformation is sheer compromise.

6. God will not change who goes to heaven.

In the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, we are told: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral (the lewd, adulterers - Amplified Bible) and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. (Revelation 22:14-15, NKJV)

The warning of Revelation is not about to be re-written. And any proposed gay Bible⁶ expounding "friendlier doctrine" is surely an abomination.

7. God is not mocked.

The eschatological writings forewarn us of the emergence of the harlot church in the last days. Nevertheless the true Bride, the Church, remains confident that God still has the upper hand.

We may be disappointed about the changing trend and moral decline in the world landscape but we are not despondent.

Indeed God is not mocked. Galatians 6:7-8: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (NKJV)

I like the way Eugene Peterson paraphrases Galatians 6:7 in *The Message*, "No one makes a fool of God."

Hence the stand of the Malaysian Evangelical Church remains steadfast, biblical and unchanged.

As we move forward, I am reminded there is indeed a great harvest out there. We must continue to embrace all with love and understanding, in the hope that all would live godly lives that please God.

In these vexing times, no man can do an effective work as an unclean vessel. Therein is the challenge before the Church leadership -- to hold the moral plumb-line steadfastly before a watching world. Without this, there is no testimony, notwithstanding all our achievements.

Footnotes

¹ *Newsmax*, 29th June 2015.

² Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (p. 1967). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

³ Bridges, R. F., & Weigle, L. A. (1994). In *King James Bible word book* (electronic ed., p. 287). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (p. 1252). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ See article by Matt Slick, on the *Queen James Bible*, the gay bible.

More Churches Join Tamil Prayer Shield for Spiritual Shepherds

By Rev. Gabriel Jabanathan



“And I Will Pour Out On The House Of David ...A Spirit Of Grace And Supplication.” -- Zechariah 12:10

On March 29, more than 330 intercessors who were keen to form a prayer shield for their pastors came together for a day of prayer and teaching. The figure was more than double the 150 participants who were initially expected and it reflected the growing interest of intercessors to act as a prayer shield for their spiritual shepherds.

The intercessors came from 41 churches. The strongest participation was from Selangor, with 180 delegates. The better response from Selangor can also be interpreted to mean that Selangor must play a leading role in the Tamil prayer movement. The next two biggest delegations came from Perak (55) and Melaka (53). The support from Perak was usual but the turnout from Melaka was unexpected. It was a great surprise! They came in full swing.

Is this an indication that there is a new move of the prayer spirit in the Melaka area? Is Melaka positioned to lead in the Tamil prayer movement, along with Selangor and Perak? Selangor, Perak and Melaka must join forces to spearhead the Tamil prayer movement in the nation. If they do so, they can be a three-knot bonded prayer force for the nation.

The participation from Johore, Negri Sembilan and Kedah can be considered small, due to the geographical distance, but not insignificant. Johore can be key in rising up to be a bastion of prayer for southern Malaysia. More prayer networking interaction must also take place between Selangor and Negri Sembilan in order to create a strong base of prayer in central Malaysia. Though Kedah sent a small group (due to the distance involved), it can work on an intensive prayer strategy to be a strong prayer force for the northern region.

The unexpected large turnout at the prayer summit also shows that the pastors and intercessors from Selangor, Perak, Johore, Melaka and Negri Sembilan should link up to develop a more intense national prayer strategy. More interaction can take place between the intercessors in

these five states. It is also interesting to observe that some key senior pastors played a leading role in sending their intercessors to the prayer summit.

Out of the 330 participants, 38 were pastors and 14 of them could play a role to be key strategic prayer partners. For the first time, too, there were representatives from Kuala Selangor and Meru. Kuala Selangor, being on the coast, has the potential to be a prayer force over the coastal areas. Both Kuala Selangor and Meru will need to be given more attention to become rising prayer bastions for their respective regions. It also seems like small communities are joining the national effort to play a key role in prayer.

Puchong, Melaka, Taiping, Meru, Kuala Selangor, Klang, Pandamaran, Selayang, Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Subang Jaya are twelve pockets of prayer groups. Attention must be given to them so that they can link together to lead the gradually developing Tamil prayer movement in the nation.

The *Tamil Pastors' Intercessors' Prayer Summit* was held at the Full Gospel Tabernacle, Subang Jaya. The main speakers were Pastor Dr Eu Hong Seng, Pastor Simon Chandran and Pastor Gabriel Jabanathan.

The Follow-Up Strategy

From the prayer summit, we saw the need to work on four prayer strategies:

1. To focus on the 38 pastors who came.
2. To form a prayer link between the 12 key towns and 14 strategic pastors.
3. To form a prayer network between all the 41 churches that attended.
4. To form a prayer network that eventually connects all Tamil churches.



Rev Gabriel Jabanathan is the Senior Pastor of Charis Word Centre Networking Churches. He is also the chairman of the NECF Tamil Commission.



Are You Ready for a Disaster?

Are we disaster-ready? When the 5.9 magnitude earthquake hit the Ranau area in Sabah on June 5, Malaysians woke up to the fact that natural disasters other than floods can affect us. While Malaysians rallied to provide all the support we could to help those affected by the earthquake, we became more aware of the need to be disaster-ready.

A community that is disaster-ready will handle natural disasters better. Relief agencies which went to the aid of the victims of the East Coast floods realised how helpless the affected local communities were because they were unprepared for a disaster. It became apparent that people on the ground needed to be disaster-ready.

The National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) — which played a significant role in coordinating relief efforts in last year's East Coast floods — recognised the need for ground-level preparedness in the event of a disaster and has initiated a nationwide effort to accomplish this objective by organising training sessions for the local community.

Together with CREST, HISTEAM, FGBFM, World Vision Malaysia and Methodist Malaysia, they held their first Disaster Response Training (DRT) from May 13-15. The session was attended by a record 200 participants! It was an information-packed three-day session led by International Disaster Response Network (IDRN) emergency coordinator and certified trainer Daron Tan, who has years of experience in disaster relief.

Tan, who is committed to training local communities to be disaster-resilient had this to say, "Your community is the first responders and they can save more people immediately after a disaster than the relief teams who come later."

Therefore, there is a great need for people to become attuned and be ready to survive a disaster.

Tan suggests three factors in being personally ready. Firstly, be informed. Secondly, don't expect help and, thirdly, have a plan. That's exactly what was covered during the three days of intensive training.

Disaster response preparedness can help minimize casualties and increase the coping abilities of individuals and affected communities. For this reason, NECF plans to organize more training sessions in the coming days to equip as many individuals and communities as possible in disaster response preparedness.

If you need further information regarding these trainings or are interested to conduct a training session in your area, please contact the NECF.



Tan... committed to training local communities to be disaster-resilient.

How a Small Church Caught the Vision for the East Coast

By Pastor Hendersen Wee

26th December 2014 marked the unforgettable historic day in the history of Kelantan. It was on this day that the state experienced the worst ever flood recorded in the last 50 years. The unprecedented flood had caused massive devastation, particularly in Gua Musang, Kuala Kerai, Temangan and many other remote regions.

Initially, in response to the crisis, we, as a small church with limited human power and financial resources, set up a flood relief centre on our church premises. Temporary shelter, food and flood relief items were provided for the flood victims who were mainly senior citizens. A meagre amount of funds was allocated to purchase flood relief items for flood victims who would pick them up from the church premises. We did what we could within our capacity thinking that all relief work would soon be over within days.

However, God's ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He has divine purposes in the midst of disaster. Doors were opened. Several organizations came in seeking partnerships with local churches to initiate flood relief efforts on a wider and greater scale.

Could we, as a small church be able to shoulder the hefty responsibilities and huge challenges ahead? Obedience is better than sacrifice -- that was what we learned. We responded to the call and mobilized other local churches to participate. The East Coast Flood Relief Work was then set up in partnership with NECF, CREST, World Vision, HISTEAM, FGB and a few local churches,

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity." (Psalm 133:1). We praised God for humility and excellent co-operation and unity in working together. Church denominational walls were dismantled -- only love prevailed. What a breakthrough! Blessings began to shower on us. We witnessed donations pouring in. Free warehouses were provided for us. People chipped in to assist in various ways. Surely, God reigned! Even at times when routes seemed inaccessible, God opened ways so that the distribution of flood relief items was able to reach the hands of the victims in the remote villages. Entering the disaster areas and distributing flood relief items needed much strength and endurance.

Many of our volunteers, who had worked unceasingly round the clock for 16 days, were still in the pink of health. We thank God for His divine health and protection.

What seemed to be bad, God turned to good for His purpose. Because of this flood, the local churches and west coast churches had an opportunity to enter villages we had never stepped in before. Timely distribution of

flood relief items touched the hearts of many villagers. We believe many had experienced God's love and doors are beginning to open.

"Love In Action" is a way to reach out to everyone.

Through the flood incident, God has indeed opened many eyes to witness the fact that the harvest is plenty but the labourers are few. There are fifteen churches in Kota Baru, with only a few pastors stationed here. Churches are normally small in congregation size. The largest church has about hundred-plus members while the smallest church comprises less than 20 members.

There are 10 districts in Kelantan each with a Chinese population of about 1,000-2,000. Most of these districts are still unreached. Limited human power and financial resources seriously impede local churches from reaching out to the unreached areas.

It is an undeniable fact that most West Coast churches, especially KL churches, are normally more endowed with spiritual giftings, talents and financial resources as compared to the East Coast churches. Often the surplus human resources -- a dire need by the East Coast churches -- are not fully utilized.

We understand missionaries are being trained and sent to the faraway oversea harvest fields such as China, Russia, Africa etc. How good it would be if some of the human resources could be channelled to our doorstep that is the East Coast, the nearest and the cheapest place to do long-term outreach work.

Many have prophesied that revival will come to Malaysia. We believe revival has come through the unprecedented flood occurrence last December. It had opened doors for us to reach the unreached groups via flood relief work. Once known as hardened ground has now been softened because of our "love in action".

We pray and want to extend this challenge to the West Coast churches that you would arise and grasp this kingdom mentality. The East Coast harvest field is also their God's chosen portion, their lot and inheritance.

Let us pray "Catching the Vision for East Coast" will materialize as both East and West coast churches work together for the expansion of God's kingdom.



Pastor Henderson Wee leads the Christian Praise Centre in Kota Baru and hopes that the East Coast Vision will be a catalyst for the expansion of God's kingdom.

CFM against Shrinking Public Space for Religious Expression and Increasing Religious Repression

The NECF has received many queries regarding recent acts of intolerance towards Christians and Christian practices in Malaysia. On May 22, this year, the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) issued a statement addressing these issues. Below is the CFM statement reproduced in full.

The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) has observed with deep concern the ever-shrinking public space for religious expression in Malaysia. The CFM also notes the worrying trend of curbing freedom of religious expressions without prior consultation with stakeholders. The overall environment of religious acceptance and understanding deteriorates as the country is dragged from one incident of intolerance to another.

The recent controversy surrounding the demand by a group of Muslims for the removal of the sign of the cross from a church in Taman Medan in Selangor is but the latest expression of that intolerance. Even the central symbol of our faith, the cross, which is the symbol of love and sacrifice of God for humankind is now seen or projected by some as a threat. It joins the list of other expressions of intolerance, including a continuing push for prohibition against religious words and expressions in Bahasa Malaysia which have been commonly used in Christian worship even before our nation was born.

There is the fear that common parlance results in influence, propagation and conversion. This fear has caused tension and has led to numerous incidents in recent years where copies of the Al-Kitab, our sacred book, were detained or outrightly seized, only to be returned after they were mutilated by endorsements of prohibitive words.

Worse, it is now proposed that the importation of the Al-Kitab be subject to newly-announced administrative requirements and procedures in Sabah and Sarawak albeit in draft form for discussion. The latest edition of these administrative requirements contains outright prohibitions of importation of the Al-Kitab into Peninsular Malaysia, save for personal use, in total violation of the Federal Constitution's protection for freedom of religion.

Instead of building religiously self-confident communities of mutual respect in our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation, there has been a progressive layering of fear, tension and suspicion. Our nation is in dire need of encouraging respectful discourse and dialogue to promote mutual understanding and widen perspectives.

The CFM is against this shrinking public space for religious expression and increasing religious repression. The CFM calls for the following to be immediately implemented:

A. All relevant authorities, departments and agencies of the government must exercise their duties and conduct their activities properly and promptly without prejudice or preference within the unambiguous ambit of the Federal Constitution to ensure that the freedom of religion for minority communities is equally respected and that incidents such as the removal of the cross and confiscation and/or mutilation of the Al-Kitab and other religious materials are not repeated.

B. Members of the civil service, especially those in the

front line of engagement with members of the public, must be given adequate education on the necessary decorum and sensitivity in dealing with inter-religious matters and to accord the necessary respect to all religions without bias or favour, regardless of their own religious convictions.

C. The Federal Cabinet must uphold the 10-point solution concerning the Al-Kitab and desist from imposing any further restrictions on the use, publication and import of the Al-Kitab throughout Malaysia. The Government should ensure the adherence and implementation of the directive issued by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Home Affairs on 8 April 2011 regarding the importation of Bibles in Bahasa Malaysia / Indonesia. The Federal Cabinet must stop pretending that the 10-point solution applies only to Sabah and Sarawak, or that they are powerless where state laws are concerned, since the Barisan Nasional hold the reigns of political power in 10 of our 13 states, and control all the Federal Territories.

In particular, the latest proposed standard operating procedure (S.O.P.) announced recently to church leaders in Kuching and in Kota Kinabalu should be withdrawn as it violates the provisions of the Federal Constitution. The importation of the Al-Kitab is part and parcel of the freedom of religion and does not come under the scope of the states to regulate the religion of Islam. The specific requirement for non-Muslim religions to seek the approval of the Federal Government's Islamic agencies for the importation of religious material is in clear violation of the provisions of the Federal Constitution and the spirit of the 10-point solution.

For these reasons, CFM rejects the S.O.P. regarding the publication and distribution of the Al-Kitab. The S.O.P. negates the very guarantee of freedom of religion and the right to manage one's own religious affairs.

D. All relevant Federal and state lawmakers must take into account and give express regard to the sentiments and concerns of non-Muslims in the matter of the proposed implementation of Hudud laws. Though there have been statements that such laws would only affect persons professing the religion of Islam, the CFM and other members of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism have expressed concern that this would make our dual legal system untenable and lead to irreconcilable conflicts of laws, especially in cases where both Muslim and non-Muslim parties are involved. A dual criminal legal system, and in particular one which extends to Hudud laws, would not only result in legal confusion and constitutional quagmire but inevitably to miscarriages of justice for one or both parties.

Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng,
Chairman and the Executive Committee,
The Christian Federation of Malaysia

Pastors Learn A Lot from Seminar

The NECF Bahasa Commission held a *Managing the House of Worship* seminar in response to problems encountered from the usage of shoplots, factory lots and commercial spaces as churches. A total of 66 pastors and leaders from the Klang Valley, Tanjung Malim, Melaka and Negeri Sembilan Bahasa Malaysia and Orang Asli churches attended the seminar which was held at the NECF on May 11.

Representatives from the Selangor state government were invited to the seminar to brief the pastors regarding this matter. Bro Michael Jalleh, a Majlis Perbandaran Subang Jaya (MPSJ) council member, shared on a number of issues and the rules and regulations set by MPSJ on using shoplots, factory lots and commercial spaces as church premises. His sharing helped the BM and OA pastors and leaders gain a better understanding of the laws and procedures relating to the use of shoplots, factory lots and commercial spaces as church premises.

Bro Spencer Klumai, a civil engineer from Consultant Pakatan Runding Zain Spencer Sdn. Bhd. also shared on the conversion of land titles for religious use and the application process for permits to build church buildings.


In the afternoon, the pastors had a dialogue session with Subang Jaya assemblywoman and Selangor State Speaker Hannah Yeoh and Serdang Member of Parliament Dr Ong Kian Ming. Besides responding to questions raised by the pastors and leaders, Yeoh and Ong also gave guidelines on the usage of shoplots, factory lots and commercial areas as church premises.

Overall, the seminar was very informative and useful. The pastors and leaders were very satisfied and suggested that such seminars be conducted in other states too. They were also encouraged to communicate and work closely with their Adun (assemblyman) and the local council to iron out difficulties faced by their respective churches.


Up Coming NECF Events

Date	Event	Venue	Time	Remark
July 29	Penang 40-Day Fast & Pray Launch	Excel Point Community Church, Penang	8.00pm	Admission Free
July 30	Klang Valley 40-Day Fast & Pray Launch	Petaling Jaya Evangelical Free Church	8.00pm	Admission Free
August 7	Kota Baru 40-Day Fast & Pray Launch	Faith Sanctuary Church	8.00pm	Admission Free
August 7	Alor Setar 40-Day Fast & Pray Launch	Trinity Baptist Church, Alor Setar	8.00pm	Admission Free
August 14	Batu Pahat 40-Day Fast & Pray Launch	Berean Assembly of God	8.00pm	Admission Free
September 7-9	Prayer Summit 3 with Dr John Mulinde (Translation available: Chinese, Bahasa & Tamil)	Full Gospel Assembly Kuala Lumpur	9.30am to 4.00pm daily	Registration Required
September 10	Pastors & Leaders Dialog with Dr John Mulinde	Full Gospel Assembly Kuala Lumpur	10.00am to 4.00pm	By invitation only
September 13	National Prayer Rally (Klang Valley)	Wisma Eagles, Full Gospel Tabernacle	7.00pm	Admission Free
September 23-26	Nazarite Training Phase 2: Holines	To be confirmed	Only open to those who have completed Phase 1. Registration Required.	
October 8	Thinkers' Club Seminar	Wisma Eagles, Full Gospel Tabernacle	9.30am to 12.30pm	Registration Required

For details, please call our office 03-77278227.



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Venue : Wisma Eagles FGT
Time : 7pm
Admission : Free

NECF
MALAYSIA



THINKERS' CLUB

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SPEAKER: JOSE PHILIP
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