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berita NECF



The Walls Must Come Down

Chairman's Message

By Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng

Imost a year has passed since the shocking results from General Elections (GE) 14 saw the first ever change of government in Malaysia after 60 years. Clearly, the people's euphoria has dissipated with each passing month as the stark reality of living within a broken system hits home. With the ruling government and opposition constantly quibbling and bickering, the *rakyat* cannot help but feel like neglected children caught in an acrimonious marriage.

Millions had hoped for openness and moderation to be the new norm after May 9, 2018. Instead, we are served a slate of comic sideshows sometimes on a weekly, if not daily basis. With every colourful outburst, we marvel at how easily every issue that arises in *Boleh*-land is politicized.

In which other country but ours would the academic qualifications of cabinet ministers be publicly and shamelessly scrutinized? Is the nation's sovereign wealth fund *Khazanah* for all or for *Bumiputras* only? Sell Malaysian Airlines System (MAS) or not sell MAS? So, it is wrong to insult a particular religion — but it is right to belittle other religions?

Contrary to what we all had hoped and prayed for, new walls are steadily being built up in our nation.

At first, we laughed at the ridiculous raillery, then we started to get almost depressed. These days, we sink into disbelief as we throw up our hands and lament, "When will the real business of re-building the nation actually begin?" Will our leaders never realize that mollycoddling is not a coveted leadership trait?

The lack of maturity in the political landscape and the obvious inability to engage in intellectual discourse without resorting to raving and ranting make for a formidable wall indeed.

Archaeologists tell us that the Jericho Wall recorded in Scriptures (book of Judges Chapter 6) was a "double wall" — one lower and one upper. I am inclined to surmise that this double wall is prophetic of the double wall we must overcome in our nation. The second wall is the one in the Church.

The neglect of prayer and full obedience to His Word by believers is undeniable. The godly fear of God is missing as increasingly more and more members render casual worship on Sundays.

Make no mistake, there is also a double wall in our land today — the wall in the political arena, and the wall in the heart and soul of the Church.

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Historians and scholars tell us the Jericho Wall was impregnable. But our consolation is that the wall did eventually come down because Joshua, the priests and the people complied fully with God's instructions — by marching in obedience around the wall in prayer and worship.

Similarly, it is time the Church heeds the clarion call to march in prayer and worship. The GE14 did not bring about the tumbling of walls. At best, it was only a rumbling of good things to come. The double wall is still standing.

Nevertheless, remember Jericho Wall did eventually come down supernaturally. What appears imposing and indestructible for us today may well fold up and collapse with intervention from Heaven. Therefore, let us take heart and be encouraged!





nalysts have always tended to measure a society by classical economic and social statistics...Such statistics are important and revealing. But there is another statistic that I think is even more important and revealing. Does your society have more memories than dreams or more dreams than memories?"—Thomas Friedman

THOMAS Friedman distinguishes societies by whether they are driven by dreams or memories. Countries driven by dreams are forward-looking, innovative, open to new ideas and competitive. Those driven by rose-tinted glasses of nostalgia tend to focus all their energies on making the imagined past even more beautiful than it ever was and then cling to these memories of the past instead of dreaming and building a better tomorrow. Does this also apply to your church?

At its peak, the Roman Empire could claim to control 70% of the known world. After centuries of avarice and prosperity, they became weak as they started focusing on past glories, closing the door to external growth, and causing a growth of parasites from within including senators, Caesars, pride, as well as a decline in civic cohesion. The same applies to many corporations and individuals. How about our church? Have we become so internally focused and reflective of the past that we have forgotten how to lead for the future?

Michael Hammer, business guru and author adds: "One thing that tells me that a company is in trouble is when they tell me how good they were in the past. Same with countries. I am glad you were great in the 14th century, but that was then and this is now. When memories exceed dreams, the end is near. The hallmark of a truly successful organisation is the willingness to abandon what made it successful and start afresh."

A few months ago, the Chairman of PJEFC shared with me how the church leadership started looking at their membership and growth patterns over the past few years. As they analysed their church, they realised that there was much they had to change, including possibly focusing more on their Bahasa work. As 80% of the Malaysian church is Bahasa speaking, the future had to be the Bahasa work. Not many churches can even contemplate abandoning past practices to build the future. But shouldn't they? Isn't history littered with examples of too many churches having memories of the past vs dreaming of the future?

It is the same for individuals. When you have dreams, you have a goal you're aiming for. When you have memories, you're thinking about the past. Rev. Martin Luther King understood the power of dreams to build hope in people: "If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life

...continued from page 3

moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all. And so today I still have a dream."

Leaders understand that people are driven by hope. Past glories make a person proud. Pride is usually a recipe for disaster as it blocks your ability to see your true situation. Many pride-filled churches with a chequered past fail to deal with current issues that plague them as they are blinded by this pride.

There is a story of a man who walked into a friend's home, bruised and bleeding. When asked what had happened, the injured friend replied: "While walking in Bangsar, I was mugged by two thugs who wanted all my money. I didn't want to give it to them, so I fought them and got badly injured!"



The man, who was shocked that his friend had fought off thugs, then asked how much money he had when he was attacked. "Three ringgit," he answered. "You fought for three ringgit?" his friend exclaimed. "Yes," replied the wounded man. "I didn't want to reveal my financial situation."

Many of our churches are just like this man. They would rather win small, meaningless battles than avoid the reality of their current plight being exposed. Memories tend to reignite the passion in many to continue working hard and fighting for lost causes.

Nelson Mandela fought for 27 years for a cause he championed. But when he became president of South Africa, he quit after his first term, even though he could have stayed on. Many leaders find it hard to quit when they should, often because pride gets the better of them.

Reinvention is the key for organisations to remain on top. Reinvention begins when pride is discarded together with all assumptions that constrict growth. This works for companies, churches and even for individuals. Many years ago, Siemens Medical discarded its past tradition of selling its product only to hospitals and began questioning every business assumption ever made. By abandoning its long-

held beliefs of the past, it changed its product marketing and sales strategy, redesigning and simplifying its complex product line, enabling it to lower costs by 30% and increase market share to unprecedented levels.

Organisations at the top tend to become content, reactive to changes and prefer to maintain status quo. Andrea Jung, former CEO of Avon, works tirelessly to proactively "reinvent herself" yearly.

"Fire yourself on a Friday night and come in on Monday morning as if a search firm put you there as a turn-around leader. Can you be objective and make the bold change? If you can't, then you haven't reinvented yourself. If you can, then you can have a decade of tenure that is like having different jobs. I'm not the same leader I was even last year, because those skills have rendered themselves not as useful. I've had to reinvent myself every year."

Jagdish N. Sheth, a distinguished professor, says: "World-class businesses fail because they are either unable or unwilling to discard old models of businesses when external forces have changed dramatically."

Sheth believes that many of industry's legacy and heritage are more of a liability than an asset. The reluctance to change, the natural tendency to follow a "prevailing wisdom", and look backward to the past are their undoing. "Companies will thrive under tough times by challenging existing dogma," he concludes. Could this be a similar issue in our churches?

Looking back to the past is not a bad thing. But when the past and present become a frame that locks you inside the corners, then it becomes harder to look outside the frame.

Pastor John Maxwell's "law of the lid" claims that every person or organisation has a lid or ceiling. Once a person reaches his limit and hits the ceiling, there can be no more growth. Churches that hit the lid often look back to the "good ole' days" instead of pushing the barriers off the lid. I believe God wants all of us to look forward and lift the lid of our organisations with a compelling vision of the future, which He will provide, if we unlock ourselves from the past, and ask it from Him.

Memories tend to develop problem thinking while dreamers tend to be possibility thinkers. **Possibility thinkers** aren't concerned about what they are, but what they can be. **Problem thinkers**, on the contrary, are more concerned with issues and problems being faced. **It is important to have both sets of thinkers but growth is ultimately dependant on the possibility thinker.**

I will end with this inspired aphorism: "Food energises the body but dreams energise the soul." As church leaders, let us be reminded not to be bogged down by our past glories but strive forward in the Lord!



Roshan Thiran is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership development. He is also a Scripture Union Council member and part of the Wawasan Penabur ministry. He worships at Pusat Injil Kelana Jaya, Petaling Jaya.



he NECF's Women Commission has been on a journey of women empowerment. The scope of women's interests is vast since it entails all aspects of life. In seeking the Lord for focus, we felt the Lord wanted us to focus on being a catalyst to empower women to be daughters of destiny for His Kingdom in our beloved nation of Malaysia. The Commission wants to help other women

feel empowered and inspired to arise and to be all that God has ordained for them to be.

The Women Commission has engaged in several activities since its formation in 1992, but since 2016, the Commission has begun to focus more on women empowerment. Starting first with Petaling Jaya, the Commission members, serving on their own time and finance, have conducted women empowerment roundtables throughout Malaysia. To date, we have held seven roundtable sessions: Petaling Jaya (twice), Ipoh (twice), Johor Bahru, Kuantan and Miri. Other cities in 2019 are Penang and Kota Kinabalu.

Through collaboration with Pastors' Fellowships in various cities, the half-day roundtables often involve a gathering of 30

to 50 women from various churches and all walks of life. The empowerment talks are often followed by application workshops facilitated by Women Commission members focused on empowering women in the home, the church and the marketplace. The gatherings also result in much fellowship and networking. We often receive heart-warming feedback like "lifted up my spirit", "wonderful time" to also feedback on areas for improvement like "insufficient time" and "more practical examples".

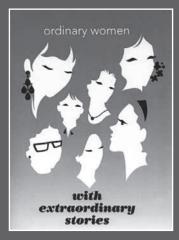
From Genesis through to Revelation, we see that God made human beings in His own image and likeness, and in His wisdom, He made them male and female to do His will on earth. Working together with each gender's uniqueness and giftings, the image of God and His glory shall be revealed to the world. The good news of God's love will permeate into families, churches and marketplaces. While women form

50% of the world's population, they make up the majority¹ in local churches everywhere in the world; when fully released to all the roles available (including leadership) in the church, marketplace and home, the world will be transformed.

Our focus has been to engage Christian women with the vision of empowering women to empower other women. Like Jesus speaking to the 12-year-old girl whom He raised to life: "Talitha koum" - Daughter arise – so we have been speaking to women with these words as our rallying cry. Over the years, we have employed various means of communication. Besides the main NECF website, we have published two booklets, "Ordinary Women with Extraordinary Stories" and "Hear the Cries of the Women in

Malaysia," a brochure to introduce the Women Commission's role and mission, as well as a Face Book site with 421 members (as of March 2019) where we share monthly devotionals and articles of interest.

As you read this brief article, we pray that you will join us in this journey of raising up daughters of destiny to bless Malaysia.

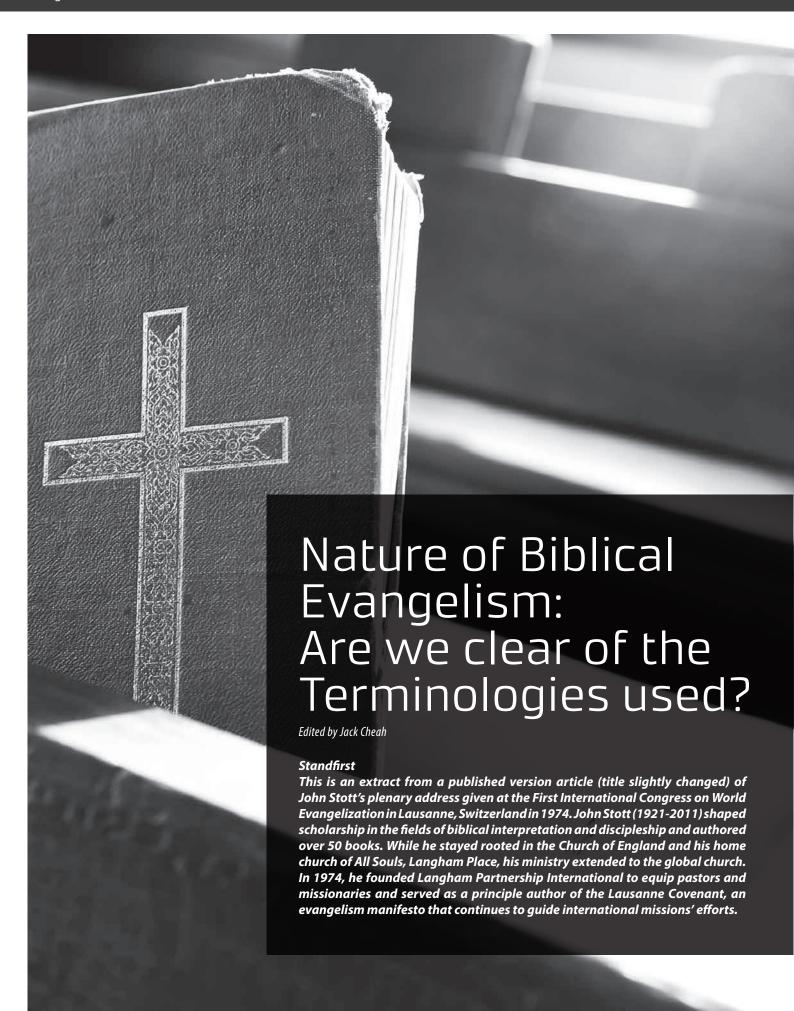


A booklet published by the Women Commission





Grace Hee, a Consultant and Sole Proprietor of Advantage Safety Consultancy is the Chairperson of NECF's Women Commission. She is married to Rev Ron Hee of New Life Restoration Centre group of churches.



Introduction

e, as Christians, often hear these words: 'mission', 'evangelism', 'dialogue', 'salvation', and 'conversion' but over time their meanings can become muddled and distorted.

The issue between whether man can manipulate the meaning of words or whether words have an autonomy which cannot be infringed – is still a contemporary issue. It is best to try to define these words according to Scripture.

1. Mission

Mission is an activity of God arising out of the very nature of God. The living God of the Bible is a sending God. He sent His Son into the world and His Son sent out the apostles and the church. In at least two major respects, He sends us as He was Himself sent. First, He sends us *into the world*.

Secondly, Christ sends us into the world to *serve*. It is truly in a servant role that we can find the right synthesis of evangelism and social action.

How then, are we to reconcile this concept of mission as service with the Great Commission of the risen Lord? The Great Commission should not be regarded as the only instruction Jesus left us. He also quoted Lev. 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," which is the Great Commandment".

The Great Commission neither explains nor supersedes the Great Commandment. What it does is to add to the command of neighbor-love and neighbor-service a new and urgent Christian dimension. If we truly love our neighbor we shall without doubt tell him the Good News of Jesus. But equally if we truly love our neighbor we shall not stop there.

2. Evangelism

Evangelism which is translated from *Euangelizomai* is an essential part of the church's mission. It is to bring or to announce the *euangelion*, the good news. The regular use of the verb relates to the Christian Good News. This fact has important consequences.

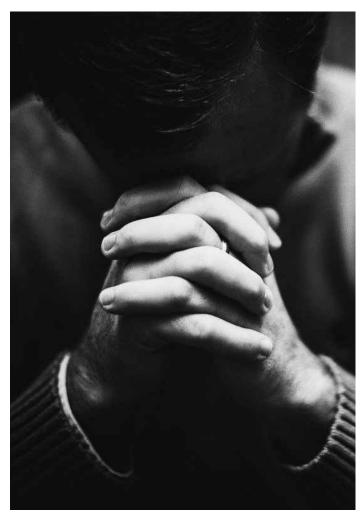
First, evangelism must not be defined in terms of its *results*. Second, evangelism must not be defined in terms of *methods*.

Third, evangelism may and must be defined only in terms of the *message*.

In a single word, God's good news is Jesus. The good news as presented by the apostles contained at least the following four elements. First, there were *the gospel events*, primarily the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Second, there were the gospel witnesses. That is, the apostles proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus both "according to the Scriptures" (Acts 2:25ff, 3:18, 24; cf. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4) and according to the evidence of their own eyes.

Third, there were the gospel promises. In Peter's Pentecost address, he was able to promise them with complete assurance that they could receive both "the forgiveness of sins" and "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Salvation also includes the remission of past guilt and the gift of an entirely new life through the regenerating and indwelling Holy Spirit.



Fourth, there were the gospel demands, namely repentance and faith. "Repent," Peter said (Acts 2:38, 3:19), but also declared that "everyone who believes in him (Jesus) receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43 cf. 13:38, 39). In addition he commanded, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ."

3. Dialogue

The word "dialogue" is derived from the Greek verb dialegomai, to "discuss" or "argue," which Luke used some nine times in the Acts to describe Paul's preaching.

Christians should engage in dialogue with non-Christians. Dialogue, writes Canon Max Warren, "is in its very essence an attempt at mutual listening, listening in order to understand. Understanding is its reward."

So dialogue becomes a token of Christian humility and love, because it indicates our resolve to rid our minds of the prejudices and caricatures we may entertain about the other man; to struggle to listen through his ears and see through his eyes so as to grasp what prevents him from hearing the Gospel and seeing Christ; to sympathize with him in all his doubts and fears and "hang-ups."

4. Salvation

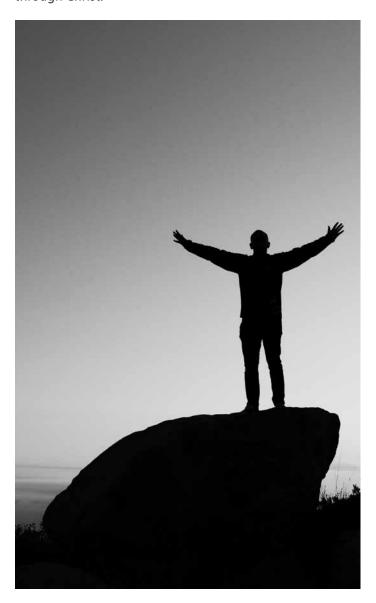
Some say that "salvation" means psycho-physical health or "wholeness." They point out that Jesus said to the woman with the issue of blood, "Your faith has saved you," which the Authorized Version renders "your faith has made you

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whole" (Mark 5:34), while we are also told that as many as touched Christ's garment "were made well," which in the Greek is *esozonto* "were saved" (Mark 6:56).

It would be impossible to reconstruct the biblical doctrine of salvation in these terms. Salvation by faith in Christ crucified and risen is moral not material, a deliverance from *sin*, not from *harm*, and the reason Jesus said "your faith has saved you" to both categories is that his works of physical rescue were intentional "signs" of his salvation.

Others are saying that "salvation" means, or at least includes, socio-political liberation. But this does not constitute the "salvation" which God is offering the world in and through Christ.



Salvation, rightly, is a personal freedom from sin and its consequences, which brings many wholesome consequences in terms both of health and of social responsibility.

We should think of freedom *positively*, in terms not only of what we are set free *from* but of what we are set free *for*. First, we have been saved from the wrath of God, from his just judgment upon our sins. We are not only justified but also adopted as "sons" with the Holy Spirit constantly witnesses with our Spirit that we are indeed his children (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:4-7).

Second, we are being saved. Salvation in the New Testament is as much a present process as a gift or possession received in the past. Sin still dwells within us and our bodies are not yet redeemed. Nevertheless, during this present time, gradually but surely, the indwelling Spirit of Christ is subduing the flesh within us and is transforming us into the image of Christ, "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:16·26).

Third, our final salvation lies in the future. It is the object of our hope, for Christian hope is precisely "the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8; cf. Rom. 8:24).

5. Conversion

The response to the Gospel is called "conversion." *Epistrepho*, though commonly translated to "be converted," really has an active sense, to "turn." When used in secular contexts in the New Testament it means either to "turn around" or to "return". The usual word for "return" is *hapostrepho* and when the word is used theologically it also means to turn from one direction to another, or return from one place to another. Thus, Christians can be described as having "turned to God from idols" (1 Thess. 1:9) and, after "straying like sheep," as having "now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). Since the turn from idols and sin is usually called "repentance," and the turn to God and Christ "faith," we reach the interesting biblical equation that "repentance + faith = conversion."

Three warnings need to be issued in the call to conversion. First, conversion is not a work which man can do by himself. True, men are described as "turning to the Lord" (e.g., Acts. 9:35, 11:21), but they could not really do so but for the work of the Holy Spirit (see, e.g., Acts 26:18).

Second, conversion is not the renunciation of all our inherited culture. We should not expect the convert to step right out of his former culture into a Christian subculture. Conversion must not take the convert out of the world but send him back into it, the same person in the same world, and yet a new person with new convictions and new standards.

Third, conversion is not the end but a new beginning. It is to be followed by the life of discipleship, by a growth into Christian maturity, by membership in the church (see Acts 2:40, 47) and by involvement in the world.

Such is the nature of biblical evangelism. It is part of God's mission through God's Church in God's world. It is the spreading by any and every means of the good news of Jesus, crucified, risen, and reigning. It includes the kind of dialogue in which we listen humbly and sensitively in order to understand the other person and to learn how to present Christ to him meaningfully. It is the offer, on the ground of the work of Christ, of a salvation which is both present possession and future prospect, both liberation from self and liberation for God and man. And it invites a total response of repentance and faith which is called "conversion," the beginning of an altogether new life in Christ, in the church and in the world.





Promoting Harmony: Love God, Love Neighbour

By Jack Cheah

Interfaith Harmony Week in Malaysia was celebrated at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre on 21 February 2019 and attended by around 150 people. Deemed as a celebration of diversity and the value of similarity among the world's religions and beliefs, the United Nations had, on 20 October 2010, declared that the World Interfaith Harmony Week be held on the first week of February of every year.

The event which was organized by the Committee for the Promotion of Inter Religious Understanding and Harmony among Adherents (JKMPKA) together with the Department of National Unity and Integration and United Nations Malaysia was officiated by the Hon. Senator P.

Waytha Moorthy, the Minister of National Unity and Social Wellbeing. It was also attended by Hon. Datuk Wira Dr Md Farid bin Md Rafik, the Deputy Minister of National Unity and Social Wellbeing and Mr. Stefan Priesner, the Resident Coordinator for United Nations Malaysia.

A forum on the topic, "Inter Religious Harmony among Adherents in Malaysia based on *Love God, Love Neighbour*" preceded the officiating of the event by the Honourable Minister. Panel members comprising representatives from Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism, Bahaism and the Orang Asli Community participated at the forum. Of particular significance were the remarks made by Rev Andy Chi, the Secretary-General of NECF who represented the Christian Federation of Malaysia. He pointed out that the theme actually refers to the greatest commandment of the Christian faith as found in their authoritative guide for living, the Bible. He quoted Matthew



Christian Representatives with the Hon Senator P. Waytha Moorthy

22:37-39 which says, ".... You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

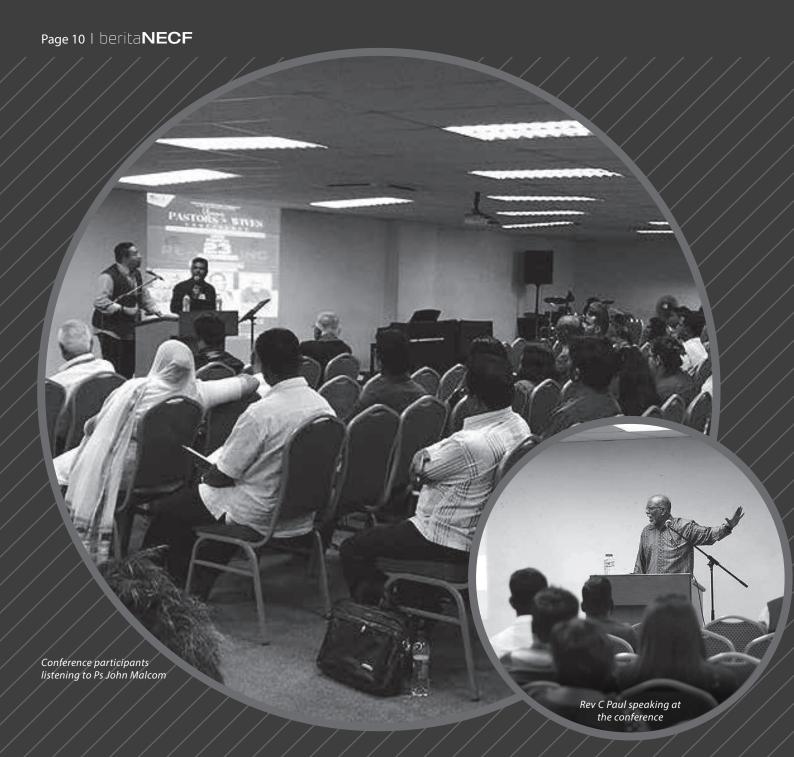
In his officiating address, the Honourable Minister stated that Malaysians, though diverse in race, culture and religion, are blessed to live in a peaceful and harmonious environment due to the strong sense of acceptance and coexistence among them. Thus, Malaysia is ideally placed to showcase itself as a model country which promotes multiracial unity. He added that it is necessary to protect that environment as well as to cherish and value the strong bonds that exist among the people.

According to him, the establishment of the identity of the Malaysian nation very much depends on mutual understanding, cooperation, respect and acceptance among different faiths. These positive values should be practised continuously in the daily lives of Malaysians.

The Honourable Minister concluded by emphasizing the importance of the role of religious leaders due to their expertise and authority to give their views on religious issues. These leaders are also recognized as the authoritative group in clarifying inter-religious conflicts and maintaining peace and harmony.



Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF



Conference with a Double Focus: Realigning the Present and Envisioning the Future

By Rev Gabriel Jabanathan

he NECF Tamil Commission's 3rd Tamil Young Pastors and Wives Conference was held on the 23rd of March, 2019 at Wisma Full Gospel Tabernacle, Subang Jaya. A total of 104 pastors and wives attended this Conference.

Two speakers were invited to speak at the Conference – Dr. Rev. John Malcom, the Senior Pastor of Calvary Church, Hong Kong and Rev. C. Paul, the Senior Pastor of the Tabernacle of Christ, Johore Bahru. A brief key note address was given by Rev Gabriel Jabanathan, the Chairman of the Tamil Commission, NECF.

The pastors and their wives came from 41 churches. The theme of the Conference carried a double focus: "Realigning the Present and Envisioning the Future." The pastors and their wives were challenged to correct issues that had misguided and impeded their past ministries, and to realign these issues and to put them into right perspective. Participants were also invited to focus on the potential of future possibilities. Hence, the delegates were encouraged to face both the realities of the past and present.

This Conference was held solely for the purpose of bringing together young pastors and their wives to look at issues confronting them. It is a known fact that many young pastors face numerous challenges and difficulties that discourage them from further developing their ministry potential. Many of them are lost from lack of proper guidance and direction.

Both the speakers shared numerous insights to help many a young pastor and his wife to avoid some key pitfalls in the ministry. The wives were also invited to come along to the Conference, for they are so much part of the life and ministry of their pastor husbands. Throughout the sessions, the need for correction and rebuilding was emphasised. Helpful insights were offered on how to be more stable, secure and confident in the ministry.

This Conference has highlighted the point that young pastors and their wives need regular guidance and mentoring from more senior pastors. It was very helpful to have our guest speakers who are veterans and senior pastors in their fields of ministry, share their numerous experiences and challenges. This gave a lot of insight and a better understanding of current issues faced by younger pastors. It was indeed an enriching Conference for the younger pastors!



Group photo of some conference participants



Rev Gabriel Jabanathan is the Chairman of the Tamil Commission, NECF and Senior Pastor of the Charis Word Centre Networking Churches.

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10.00am - 11.00am	Sesi 1 - Kewangan	Pr Jamse + Pr Andrew
11.00am - 11.30am	Rehat	
11.30am - 12,45pm	Sesi 2 – Kenegaraan	Pr Peter + Pr Andy Ch
12.45pm - 01.30pm	Makan Tengahari	
01.45pm - 02.45pm	Sesi 3 — Kepimpinan	Pr Sam Surendran
03.00pm - 03.15pm	Rehat	
03.30pm - 05.00pm	Doa & KKR	



