

# BERITA NECF

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF MALAYSIA

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E D I T O R I A L

## Quest for Spiritual perfection

### The Malaysian Church Agenda

“Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.”  
(Matt. 5:48)

#### Celebrating 20 Years in Service

As we reflect on the goodness, faithfulness and gracious guidance of God over the past 20 years, we just marvel at the way He has led us through. Indeed, we have come a long way, and along the journey, He has strategically placed various people with the appropriate skills to build His ministry. As we have seen His hand at work, we rest secure in confidence that He will continue to lead us, no matter how rough the road ahead will be.

#### Moving on to Spiritual Perfection

The family of NECF Malaysia has been prayerfully led to make the theme of her 20th anniversary celebration this year as “Quest For Spiritual Perfection – The Malaysian Church Agenda”, according to Heb. 6:1, “Therefore leaving the elementary principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on to perfection”. Over the last few years, this ‘spiritual perfection’ has been increasingly on our hearts for the Malaysian Church.

And the momentum towards this goal has been building through successive waves of evangelistic and renewal initiatives, nationwide fast and prayer, and seminars on end-times prophetic fulfillment, discipleship and leadership. The two World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) international events that NECF Malaysia hosted in Kuala Lumpur last year contributed to a shift of focus in church spirituality and priorities from the ‘local’ to the ‘global’ scene. (The two events were the WEF International Consultation on Globalisation and the WEF General Assembly, which was attended by some 600 Christian leaders from over 80 countries.)

Modernisation and globalisation issues have added to the church new concerns over security, terrorism and international tension.



*Travelling together on the road to spiritual perfection.*

#### God's Greatest Concern

From the foundation of the world, God has planned to present to Himself a glorious church, “holy and blameless in His sight” (Eph. 1:4), “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

A Church that is spiritually perfect has been His whole concern. He desires that His fullness – character and power – be manifest in us ((Phil. 1:23). From the elementary doctrines of salvation and baptism (milk for infants), the church has now to press on (led by the Spirit of holiness) to a deeper relationship grown on solid food.

With our most holy faith (Jude vs 20), we should live a life of separation from the world (2 Cor. 6: 14–18); and from those who pervert the Gospel (Gal. 1:7). Sanctification by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 13:12), Word of God (Jn. 17:17), and the Spirit (Rom. 15:16) is crucial for our spiritual victory, both in our personal life and ministry over the flesh, Satan and the world.

The Spirit transforms us from glory to glory into His image of perfection. Spiritual perfection is not just about outward ecstasies and miracles, but occurs when perfect love and purity rest in the Church.

It is a state where the Church is entirely cleansed and every sin purged, where His saints love Him with all their hearts, minds, souls and strength, and love their neighbours as themselves. Where carnal ambitions make way for godly passion and heavenly desires. Where they dwell in unity despite their differences. Being transformed by the Spirit from glory to glory into His image by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18), they then become living epistles of Christ.

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# RULES TO PRAY BY

By Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam  
NECF Malaysia Chairman

**T**hough God is not bound or limited by the laws which He has set for nature to function, yet nature exists only according to His laws. For example, there must be sufficient sunlight, air, water and minerals before the planted seed can grow. God works according to His laws.

How often we become discouraged and give up praying when our prayers are not answered. Yet, the true reason for unanswered prayers is that we fail to keep God's operational laws that govern prayer.

Here are some of them:

### The Law of A Pure Heart

“Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps. 66:18). The Lord told Joshua to stop praying. Why? God will not commune with the soul that continues in sin (Joshua 7:10–12).

### The Law of Forgiving

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions” (Mark 11:25). This is a condition of answers to prayer. A forgiving spirit is so essential that the Lord made a drastic statement: “But if

you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions” (Mark 11:26).

### The Law of Right Motive

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). A right motive is essential to obtaining answers to prayer. There is only one motive which is right, stated in 1 Cor. 10:31: “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

### The Law of Faith

“But let him ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6). “And without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). How often our prayers displease God because they are not made with faith.

### The Law of Praying in His Name

“If you ask Me anything in My Name, I will do it” (Jn. 14:14). What does it mean to ask in His Name? It is asking for what Christ wishes, and God will not refuse His Son.

Let His laws guide every one of our prayers. You can expect God's answers! ■

Quest for spiritual perfection: from page 1

### Positioning the Church

Equipping the Church for its march to spiritual perfection needs the building of integrity (‘wholesomeness’), a trait that is under increasing attack. As God is building His church by bringing “all things in heaven and on earth together under one head” (Eph. 1:10), Satan is working to tear apart His work.

The Church of integrity needs to be void of deceit or hypocrisy since “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). In our quest for perfection, it is also important to examine prevailing negative traits that need to be corrected for our life and service to conform to His perfect will.

The leaders whom God has appointed to help the Church attain perfection, need to excel in upholding the principles of commitment, consistency and competence.

Purifying themselves “as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3), the church leadership has the divine task of practising and inspiring the congregation to practise what they preach: “Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

### Call to Fulfill the Agenda

In line with the theme of spiritual perfection, we will be gearing our programmes to attain the ‘mark’ of perfection in holiness (2 Cor. 7:1). We seek to uphold the principles of commitment, consistency and competency in all that we endeavour to do. Thank you for your companionship all these years in our journey thus far. As we travel the road ahead, let us move on together, encouraging and strengthening each other as we see the day drawing near. ■

## Focus: Prayer Commission

# Filling up heaven's bowl

By Grace Hee

ONE of God's greatest moves in the last decade, which is still gaining momentum, is the intercessory prayer movement. Almost overnight (by His calendar), all across the globe, He has raised (and is still raising) intercessors who resemble biblical characters of old that appeared before He unleashed something new.

Some examples are:

- Standing in the gap for the sins and weaknesses of nations like Ezekiel (Ezek. 22:30)
- Calling upon the Lord for salvation of whole cities and nations like Isaiah (Isa. 62:6-7)
- Prophesying and preparing the way of the Lord like John the Baptist (Luke 3:4-6)
- Worshiping and praying before the Lord day and night like Anna (Luke 2:37)
- Weeping for and identifying with the sins of the nation like Jeremiah (Lamentations)

God's burden for the Church and the nation of Malaysia is huge. So is His vision. I believe He has 3Rs for Malaysia – Revival of the Church, Restoration of gifts and power, and Redemption of many souls in the nation. But He has chosen to work out His plan through prayers and intercession, not just from the intercessors, but from His whole Body.

That is the vision and desire of the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission – to harness and focus strategic prayer throughout the land for God's national plan to be revealed in and worked out by the local church. We are merely facilitators, a voice in the wilderness prompting the local churches to unite and prepare the way for the Lord's second coming – to be the Glorious Bride He is coming for.

In desiring to raise up more intercession and to fill up the 'bowl' in heaven for Malaysia, the commission initiated a number of nationwide prayer events last year that we believe were significant:

- **Pastor's Prayer Shield** The Bible exhorts believers to pray for their leaders (Heb. 13:7, 17-19) so that their service might be a joy and not a burden. In so praying for them, we may become a blessing and avoid the trap that befell the Israelites of old who murmured against Moses and incurred the wrath of God on the

whole community. The goal of the Pastor's Prayer Shield is to raise 100,000 believers nationally to pray and bless pastors and leaders. The Commission believes this is one of the keys that has unlocked God's 3R plan for Malaysian churches – that leaders not fall but are added to the Kingdom.

- **40-Day Fast and Prayer** This was an initiative added to concentrate prayer for the Merdeka Light Up The Nation programme. The response was overwhelming and confirmed in many hearts that NOW is the time for Malaysia to arise and shine. His people were found willing in the day of His Power. Surely, as we, His people called by His Name humble ourselves to pray and turn from our wicked ways, He will hear from Heaven and will heal our land (2 Chron. 7:14). Interestingly, as the people fasted, the Lord was also unlocking a significant key to financial release – sowing our lunch money saved from the 40-day fast for the purposes of blessing the poor, weak and the needy. This is the fulfillment of the true Isaiah 58 fast that we plan to take on board this year!



GRACE HEE: "There is still much prayer, sweat and tears that need to be sowed into the soil of Malaysia."

- **Light Up The Nation** For the past two years, churches have been moving out together on Merdeka Day to do community projects. When our light shines before men, the Bible says they will praise our Father in heaven. Our spiritual Light Up theme has 'coincidentally' matched the Government's call to light up buildings during last year's Merdeka season! Above all these, we believe that as churches network together in each city, the walls of denomination will crumble, and Psalm 133 that speaks of unity commanding the blessings of God will perhaps come to pass in our land. Souls will be attracted to the light.

There is still much prayer, sweat and tears that need to be sowed into the soil of Malaysia. No individual person or church is going to be able to fulfill the Great Commission alone. The 'gulf' of race and religion in the land threatens to widen, but it is our strong belief that as churches unite to pray and intercede, the 'gulf' will be completely bridged by the wondrous Cross of Christ. This is the Prayer Commission's dream. We believe it is also the dream of every believer in this nation. ■

Grace is the chairwoman of the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission. She works with Exxon Mobil as the Environment and Regulatory Manager and is married to Pr Ron Hee of New Life Restoration Centre, Petaling Jaya.

## Prayer Network

Calling all PRAYER COORDINATORS in charge of mobilising prayer for their churches. The NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission wish to strengthen their network of prayer coordinators throughout Malaysia. Please contact Ann Low (the executive secretary in charge of the commission) at 03-7727 8227 (tel.); 013-364 9239 (mobile); or prayer@necf.org.my (e-mail).

# Shield that Protects and Bonds

The Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign was an initiative to mobilise church members to pray for their pastors. Along the way, it drew both parties closer, sometimes healing hurts and mending rifts.

Lately, the pressure of ministry has been weighing heavily on the mind of Pr Roy (not his real name). The more he thought about the issues in his church, the deeper he sank into the pit of depression. As he drifted down, the call to quit grew louder.

Just then, his eyes fell upon an envelope from NECF Malaysia. Slowly, he opened it and drew out the contents. There were some publicity posters about the Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign and a letter to pastors encouraging them to press on.

Thoughts of leaving the ministry dimmed as fresh hope well up in his heart. "I had wanted to tell my leaders, 'Before you give up on me, I have already given up'. The posters and letter were God's encouragement to me to stay on in the ministry," he recalled.

Soon after the episode, Pr Roy received another boost when a fellow pastor unexpectedly presented him a gift – a set of John Maxwell's *Partners in Prayer* book and VCD. Since then, God has been bringing people to Pr Roy to pray with him. In gratitude, Pr Roy exclaimed: "Dear prayer partners, you are very important to us as you are co-labourers with us in the ministry. Thank you for being such a blessing to us."

Indeed, the Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign, first launched in February last year, has restored many struggling pastors wrestling various issues in their churches and personal lives.

Initiated by the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission, the nationwide campaign has since then been launched in all the 14 states, mainly through the local pastors' fellowships.

The feedback received thus far has been overwhelming, with



**ANN LOW:** "It's not selfish to ask for prayers. Ultimately, the congregation benefits and the whole church is blessed."

*Shielding their pastor in prayer ... one of the many groups that participated at the campaign launch for the Klang Valley region last year.*



many eager testimonies pouring out freely from both pastors and congregants.

For pastors, it has renewed their zeal for the ministry, affirmed their calling and re-directed their focus from their problems to the purpose of their calling. For the congregants, the campaign has caused them to be mindful of their pastors' struggles and reminded them of their role as co-labourers.

As God softened the hearts on both sides, hurts and differences gave way to a better appreciation and understanding of each other's needs, a scene that is reminiscent of Peter's words, "...love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8).

This emotional healing has also brought physical changes – some pastors have reported that overall, their members are now healthier! Emotionally healed, physically fit and spiritually charged, the churches can now charge ahead to impact their communities for the Lord.

And impacting communities has to do with how Christians interact with the non-Christians in their daily lives. One pastor shared how his prayer partners helped him to confront an enraged non-Christian motorcyclist whom he accidentally knocked down while on his way to visit a cancer patient.

"I tried to calm him and offered to pay for his bike repairs and the hospital bills. He was not satisfied and threatened to harm me physically," Pr Rodney said.

"I immediately called my prayer partners for prayer support. Two days later, the motorcyclist phoned me. He sounded very different. His tone was more subdued and repentant."

"I got his bike repaired and even bought him a new pair of slippers. I could see that he was very touched. God did something in his heart even as my prayer partners prayed for him. In fact when I thanked them for their prayers, they shared that they have prayed that the man would be humble and repentant.

"I have been so encouraged by my prayer partners. Truly, there is power in united and concerted prayers," Pr Rodney said.

While the campaign has spurred churches on the road to healing and unity, the organisers have also encountered churches with a lackadaisical attitude towards prayer support for their pastors. According to the commission's executive secretary, Ann Low, some churches do not see the need to form prayer groups that will consistently pray for their pastors.

"Some pastors think they are okay and it doesn't really matter if they have prayer support or not. Some said they're shy to ask their members to pray for them! We think it is very important that pastors are protected in prayer as they face many temptations, which are sometimes so subtle that they fall into them without even realising it. As for pastors who are shy, they must be thick-skinned. It's not selfish to ask for prayers. In fact, when pastors ask for prayers, it is so that they can serve more effectively. Ultimately, the congregation benefits and the whole church is blessed."

Ann is urging churches that need help in starting a prayer shield for their pastors to contact NECF Malaysia. For churches that are already participating in the campaign, she urged them to continue shielding their pastors with their consistent prayers. ■

## Focus: Prayer Commission

# How to Last the Fast

## This year's 40-day Prayer and Fast to benefit the poor

**W**HEN fasting, there is strength in numbers. This proves to be true for the many Christians who took part in last year's nationwide 40-Day Prayer and Fast initiated by the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission.

The initiative was a call to pray for the nation and many signed up to participate out of their grave concern for the welfare of the country. But what sustained them through the 40 days was the thought of fasting and praying together as a body. Knowing that many others were fasting alongside them inspired and encouraged them to "tahan" to the end.

The tremendous response to the prayer and fast initiative—indicated by the snapping up of all 43,000 prayer booklets that were released—were a pleasant surprise to the commission.

Spurred by the overwhelming response, the commission is mobilising another prayer and fast this year, but with a difference—it will focus on social concerns in line with Isaiah 58:7, "Is it (the fast) not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Participants will be encouraged to save the money set aside for their meals during

the fasting period. At the end of the 40 days, the money will be handed over to NECF Malaysia, who will then channel the collection to charitable organisations and needy churches.

The commission hopes to raise RM2.4 million by signing up 20,000 participants who can pledge RM120 each (at RM3 a meal a day for 40 days).

Although the prayer and fast will kick off on July 21, it will be launched earlier on July 6 to mobilise participants and facilitate administrative matters. The fasting period will end on August 29, followed by the annual Merdeka Eve prayer rally the next day. ■

# Out of the Closet

**W**HO says intercessors are solemn, sombre people, always holed up in the closet fasting and praying? At the recent NECF Malaysia year-end thanksgiving tea for prayer leaders and intercessors, they feasted and frolicked as their gesture of thanks to God for taking them through the year 2001.

It was also a time of meeting up with prayer leaders mainly from churches throughout the Klang Valley. The tea, held at the newly-built Wisma FGA in Kuala Lumpur, was attended by about 200 intercessors from various denominations including Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Assemblies of God.

The initial icebreaker games 'loosened up' the participants and set the gay mood for the rest of the afternoon. A time of joyful worship followed, after which the commission chairman, Grace Hee, gave the exhortation and a preview of the forthcoming year's programme. Two persons then shared testimonies on how the prayer initiatives introduced by the commission had led them into a deeper communion with God.

The afternoon ended with, as expected, a time of intercession. As the participants made their exit, there was definitely a greater sense of intimacy with one another and attachment to the prayer network. ■



*Not as easy as it looks ... participants trying to write the mirror image of their names on paper placed over their foreheads in this hilarious icebreaker.*

# prayer-ers' prayer points

They are part of the driving force behind the growing prayer movement in our nation. Call them prayer warriors and they will grimace because they believe prayer is for every Christian, for the ordinary people.

What sets them apart is their willingness to spend time in prayer. In fact, praying is their lifestyle. They are members of the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission, which has been entrusted with the task of mobilising Christians from all denominations to pray for the nation.

Here, several of the 10-member team share their thoughts with us:



## Doris Ho (Wife of DUMC Senior Pastor Daniel Ho)

"My heart's desire is to see an atmosphere where God's people naturally and regularly seek His face in all situations for all people, for our nation and the nations of the world, that prayer becomes a lifestyle for God's children.

My burden is to see a large-scale renewal coming to the churches in Malaysia. This begins with an increasing number of Christians earnestly seeking God in prayer. Repentance, brokenness and the humbling of ourselves is the beginning of a powerful move of God. May it quickly come."

## Lucrece Loo (full-time worker at SS Methodist Church)

"Progressively we have seen the momentum of the prayer movement accelerated over the

last few years. At the present moment, there is a greater sense of unity among church pastors, leaders and believers, and we pray that in the days to come, it will grow. Our hearts' desire is to see the Malaysian church coming together in a more concerted way, whether in prayer or community projects, to impact our communities, city, nation and nations beyond.

The Prayer Commission has a continuing role to play in uniting and mobilising the body of Christ in prayer, and equipping and developing prayer in local churches.

One of the major concerns is that 'people perish without vision'; therefore it is my desire that the prophetic voice be released in the body of Christ and also for the nation to come forth in its fullness.

Another concern is that we need to put right the structures of leadership in the Church that are based on God's principles and order."



## Ruth Lee (Lawyer worshipping at Hope of Glory, Ampang)

"I desire to see pastors, leaders and intercessors from churches all over coming together regularly and consistently in united prayer for their community, especially in the particular locality, region, district or area where God has placed them. My prayer is that John 17 will be fulfilled and they will hear from God collectively His heartbeat, strategies and plans to reach their entire community for Christ. They should have a lifestyle of prayer, be humble and effective team players devoid of selfish ambition.

As for my role in the Prayer

Commission, I hope to establish an effective communication network linking up prayer cells in offices, homes and churches and identifying key prayer leaders so that united prayer can be mobilised quickly and effectively."

## Charissa Giam (Pastor with Charis Christian Centre)

"I am praying for His Church in Malaysia to arise to stand in the gap, fervently seeking the Lord and not be complacent and lukewarm. I am also praying that our commission will be a source of encouragement to the Church to rise up. That we will equip her to meet the challenges to overcome the stronghold that is disillusioning and preventing them from the ministry of intercession."

## Ann Low (NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission Executive Secretary worshipping at Kajang AOG)

"One of my greatest desires, which we are working towards, is the setting up of a prayer commission in each state that will assume ownership for the prayer condition of their states. Our prayers will be more focussed as these state commissions will regularly feed us with the issues to pray for their states. This network will also facilitate our prayer programmes. Also, if there are any urgent prayer needs, we can immediately mobilise Christians all over the country to pray.

At the same time, we are also praying for Christians to be more interested in national issues, which affect all of us, so that they can pray more intelligently.

Lastly, we have a burden for our brethren in the East Coast. They really need our encouragement and prayers on a regular basis. So, we are praying and working to raise awareness on this matter."

## Irene Chew (Kindergarten owner and worshipping at Semarak Revival Centre)

"We need to faithfully continue whatever prayer initiatives we have started, such as the

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ISSUE 61

## Women to Women



# Ranka GrowUp!



**T**HERE is no mistaking the words on the side of my lab bench. Even my well-past-forty eyes can see these eight-inch-high letters scrawled in indelible ink.

I don't say a word as I make my way back to my place. The class is busy writing up lab reports. There is time to think.

As I sit there, I realise what a monster I have been to my two 'worst' classes. For the first time in my teaching career, I resisted trying to understand my students. I just wanted to be a bulldozer. Several times I could sense the Lord telling me, "You could be more creative. I could show you a few new ways to reach them, if you'd only listen to the first one for a start."

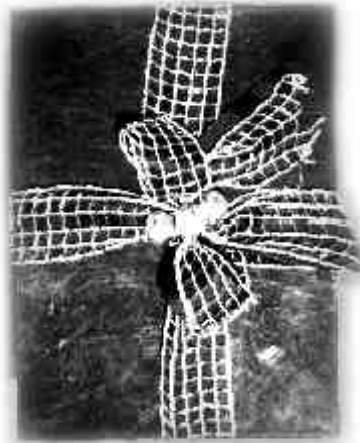
I didn't want to know. I kept my heart hard. And so in August 1995, one of my students delivered his verdict of a teacher with 25 years of experience and only six years to retirement.

Thankfully, I had been through enough to realise there was a message for me. I resisted seeing it as something vicious. I knew I had to take it seriously.

"Grow Up" meant I had been childish. So how was I childish? Flaring up under the slightest provocation is the kind of immature behaviour one expects from children. My students were right to expect much more from their 49-year-old Biology teacher. More patience. More graciousness. A more generous

perspective of what it is to be 17 years old with a limited interest in photosynthesis or the functions of the human skeleton.

It was already August, so I only had two or three months to redeem myself. I began to take more care with these classes. I began controlling my tongue and tried to organise the two periods in a more meaningful way. Instead of



bullying them into doing this...this...this...I tried to have a little more regard for them.

I don't know whether they noticed the change, but after re-thinking my own attitude, I seemed to apply the brakes instinctively. By the end of the year, some of these students were my friends.

The thing about youngsters is that almost all of them forgive you. Very few kids actually end up hating a teacher unless the teacher has been hateful. That message helped me realise how awful I must have been. I didn't investigate the incident although at least one teacher told me I should. The school had a policy of pursuing students until they owned up. This time the teacher had to

own up.

My lab assistant was so embarrassed for me that she wanted to paint over it. I told her, "No, no, no. You leave it there to remind me." That was effective because I still had a few years left in school. I used that lab every week, and whenever I passed the place, I looked at it. It was a very good reminder.

## When God Gives You a Present, Open It!

When I retired, I had so many retirement presents that it was difficult to keep track of them. Only last week I noticed another one. It was a very pretty box with a ribbon tied around it. I hadn't even opened it. I lifted the lid and found a beautiful, expensive cookery book inside.

When I put the book down, my eyes fell on a little note with tiny handwriting: "A special box for a special present for a special teacher made specially with the sincerest heart." It was from an Upper Six boy whom I had never even taught. I examined the box and admired his craftsmanship. I knew he was an artist but it was really good.

After hunting high and low for his phone number, I finally managed to contact him and say, "I've just opened your present and I'm absolutely delighted."

Perhaps life is like this too. If we receive something and don't open it, we can't benefit from it. Any instruction from the Lord has to be opened - by reflection, by honest examination, and by coming to the point where our will is involved in making a response.

The "writing on the lab bench" episode made me an eager learner. If I had decided to take the message badly or

negatively, and refused to respond, I would have been the loser. After all, it was not unbiblical. "Grow up" is a call to every Christian all the time. Grow into maturity in Christ. What difference did it make whether the call came from "naughty" students or from the pulpit? Why should I distinguish between the two?

Thanks to that wake-up call, I eventually retired happy and fulfilled rather than embattled and embittered. The boy who wrote that saved himself and saved his teacher as well.

If Puan Kua did grow up, credit must go to my pupils. They have always been my teachers. I think that's the best part of being a teacher. You don't have to be a "know all". It's very, very tedious and very dull to be your own know-all. It's a lot more fun to learn from your pupils and The One Who Really Does Know All.



PS

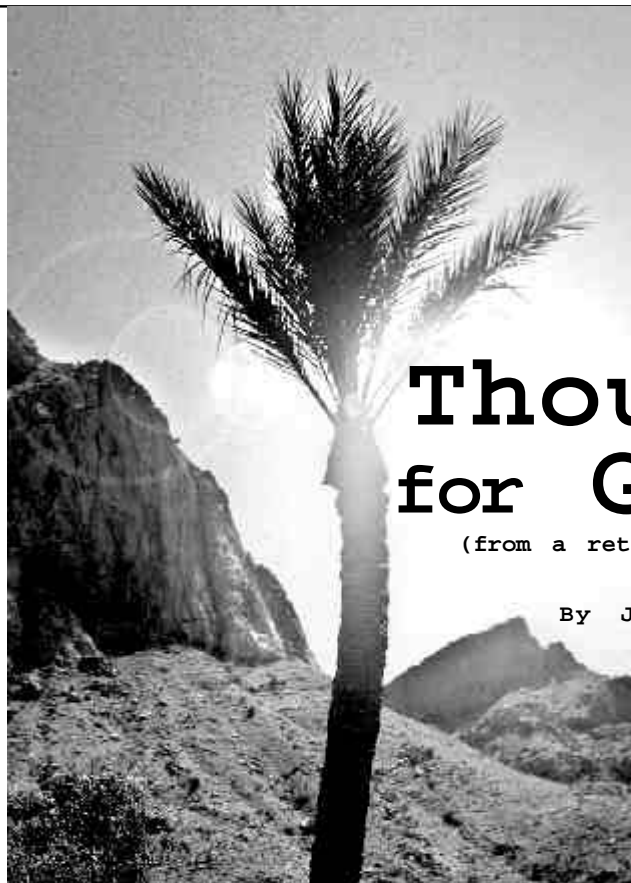
*Women to Women* asked Kun Han what she has been doing since she retired (read re-tyred). Her answer:

*Holidaying, Catching up with old friends. Last year I worked on the 2nd postal (national) Bible Knowledge Quiz and the 5th (oral) Interstate SPM BK Quiz. I've also been visiting teachers, both out of town and local, encouraging trainee and undergraduate teachers and promoting teaching as a career. This year, I shall be travelling more with Indy (TCF Staffworker), working on the 3rd Postal BK Quiz and the 6th SPM BK Quiz.*

*Volunteer work is great!* ■

*This is an extract from an article published in Teachers' Christian Fellowship Malaysia In Step Volume 13 Issue 4, 2001. For more information, please contact TCF Office: 03-56375623*

*Kun Han and her husband, Micky Kua, worship and serve in the Cornerstone Doulos Church, Petaling Jaya. They have three grown-up children. Around the country Kun Han is the BK Quiz woman.*



# Thoughts for Growth

(from a retiree's viewpoint)

By Joyce Hee

I opted out from teaching about four years ago. The children have grown up and got married but I have to be there for them especially now that the grandchildren have also come along. By His grace, I wish to fulfill my role and responsibility well as a Christian, a wife, a mother and a grandmother.

As a 'retiree' with no rules and deadlines to keep, it is so easy to drift into a rather addictive and euphoric state of too much rest and inactivity. This could easily lead to complacency, lethargy, and indiscipline in the spirit. I have to be consciously on guard against such a 'blissful', unfruitful stance which may become an easy bait for Satan to work on and to render me ineffective for His use. The Word of God helps to keep me on the right path and focus.

Psalm 92:12-14

"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD... they will stay fresh and green..."

The Arabs have a saying about the palm tree that it stands with its 'feet' in salt water and its 'head' in the sun. The Arabs are often not able to drink the brackish water found in the oasis where the palm tree grows, but they tap the tree

and drink the sweet palm wine. This analogy of the palm tree can be applied to my life. Though my feet may be in the mire and bitterness of sin around me and upon me, and my head may have to bear the strong heat of temptation, I can still grow strong. I am able to reject the evil and assimilate the good as I continue to guard my inner life in the Lord Jesus.

The cedar in Lebanon depicts the sweet aroma that may be emitted as I spend time in the presence of the Lord. As I do my part to cultivate the Lord's presence in my life, I believe I will reap the harvest of fruitfulness and stay fresh and green (v14) despite growing more mature in years. Psalm 1:1-3 also encourages me to spend time meditating on His law. A person who delights in the law is 'like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither and whatever he does prospers.'

Aging is a word we try to avoid, especially for us women. So when the subject of age is raised, it feels good for me just to quote, "Age is a matter of the mind. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. After all, life is 10% what you make it and 90% how you take it!"

But I know of a beauty that is far



more precious in the eyes of the Lord. The apostle Paul, writing to the women, said, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment...it should be that of your inner self, the unfolding of a gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:3,4). To acquire this beautiful spirit I must look to Him, for those who look to Him are radiant (Psalm 34:5). I must also develop the attitude of praise for Psalm 42:11 says, "I'll yet praise Him. He is the health of my countenance, and my God."

We may try to hide our age by camouflaging it with cosmetics, but there's no cosmetic as effective as the treatment for inner beauty – the cosmetics of consecration. The formula used by a beautiful godly lady will always inspire me:

- I use for my lips – truth
- I use for my voice – kindness
- I use for my eyes – compassion
- I use for my hands – charity
- I use for my figure – uprightness
- I use for my heart – love.

God has given me good reason to believe that He has not finished with me yet even though I may be growing in years and perhaps passed my prime. By His guidance I can grow in beauty and remain active spiritually, physically and mentally to serve the Lord freely, as He leads. With the children having left the nest and married, what better business can there be for me than to be in the business of which I will be answerable to no one but to the one and only Boss of all – my God. ■

*Joyce and her husband, Tien Fok, worship at Praise Baptist Centre, Sri Damansara, KL*



# Freedom to Follow Jesus

By Al Hsu

**F**AMILY-oriented churches and Christians often pity singles who seem alone, without spouses or children. This very situation, however, allows Christian singles a unique opportunity to testify to the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ. For the Christian single, Christian identity can take priority over all other allegiances or affiliations, whether biological, organizational or national. Singles do not have the temptation of primarily thinking of ourselves as husbands, wives or parents. Instead our self-identity can be 'followers of Jesus.' In this way, Rodney Clapp (in *Families at the Crossroads*) writes, the committed Christian single life can itself bear witness to the resurrection.

The single Christian ultimately must trust in the resurrection. The married, after all, can fall back on the passage of the name to children, and on being remembered by children. But singles

mount the high wire of faith without the net of children and their memory. If singles live on, it will be because there is a resurrection. And if they are remembered, they will be remembered by the family called church.

Singles do not have the temptation of primarily thinking of ourselves as husbands, wives or parents. Instead our self identity can be 'followers of Jesus.'

The apostle Paul exemplified this. Here is a man who, contrary to Jewish tradition and societal norm, was unmarried. As far as we know from historical records, Paul left no offspring. At his death, Christianity was no more than a fledgling religion with a handful of ragtag followers scattered across the Mediterranean. With no children to carry on his name, what were the chances that anybody would remember Paul after his death?



Though Paul had no physical children, nearly two millennia after his death, millions of Christians throughout church history know him as the apostle to the Gentiles. Millions of Bibles translated into thousands of languages across the globe name Paul as the author of one third of the New Testament. His example as a radical follower of Christ – one who did not choose a life of marriage and children – will continue to motivate the church until the time of Christ’s return.

Of course, such a life is not automatic. Tim Stafford (in *Sexual Chaos*) writes:

A single person is not necessarily a sign of the kingdom. If he is tangled in his longings and his sense of loss, he is not. But a single person can demonstrate

with a remarkable clarity that he knows the reason he was created to love and serve God, and Him only. If that singleness of vision, that purity of heart, possesses him and shows itself in his purposeful service of others and in his preoccupation with prayer and worship, then he makes a radical statement with his life about the kingdom.

‘Single people experience the great joy of being able to devote themselves, with concentration and without distraction, to the work of the Lord.’

In contrast to the married person, who by necessity must be concerned with the needs of spouse and family, Richard Foster (in *The Freedom of Simplicity*) says that the single person

can concentrate with abandon on the advancement of the Kingdom of God... Paul was not against marriage, but he did insist that people should count the cost. No-one should enter the covenant of marriage without understanding the immense amount of time and energy involved in making that relationship work. We need to face the fact that we cannot do many of the kinds of things which Paul did and be married.

A primary advantage of singleness is a mobility that many married people envy. With the responsibilities of a spouse and children comes the idea that it may be best to settle down more or less permanently, in order to provide children with a community to grow up in and a place to call home. Of course it is true that many married people do move across the country frequently due to job changes and transfers. But the married who move must consider the effects of the move on the other members of the family, while a single person may not have as many such concerns.

As John Stott says, the liberty of singleness is that “single people experience the great joy of being able to devote themselves, with concentration and without distraction, to the work of the Lord.” ■

Taken from *The Single Issue* by Al Hsu IVP

## WOMEN to WOMEN

Advisor/Co-ordinator: Goh Poh Gaik

Women to women, a project of the NECF Commission on Women’s Concerns, is a bimonthly supplement to Berita NECF.

It has the broad objectives of:

- educating and raising awareness of the social and theological issues affecting women
- stimulating efforts towards networking and dialogue amongst women
- encouraging one another in the use of our gifts and talents for the Lord’s Kingdom

Your letters and contributions (feedback, suggestions, ideas, articles, poems, cartoons, etc.) are most welcome.

Send to:

The Co-ordinator, **WOMEN TO WOMEN**

NECF, 32, Jalan SS2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

*The views expressed in this supplement do not necessarily reflect those of the Commission or the NECF.*



# A Post-Survey Analysis: Towards Greater Community Involvement

by Edmund Ng

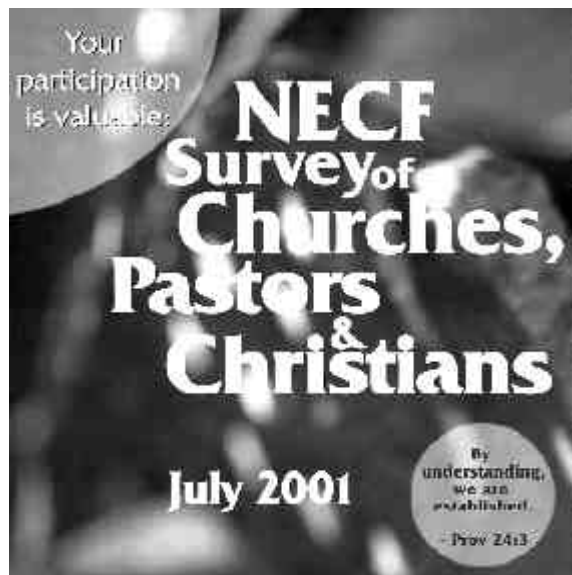
Churches around the world are becoming more aware that their impact on society is weakening. The good news is that many are beginning to place more emphasis on reaching out beyond the church walls.

What about the Malaysian churches? The NECF Malaysia Survey of Churches, Pastors and Christians conducted last year has given us a clearer picture of this incarnational dimension of the affiliated evangelical churches in Peninsular Malaysia.

## Some Indicators

Christians are a minority in our country, forming 9% of the population. To begin, how much are we interacting with non-Christians? Looking at the church level, the indicators are not encouraging. Less than 20% of churches surveyed participated in any kind of community projects in their neighbourhood throughout last year. Only one third (33-36%) were involved in care services for the needy, or organised games or sporting activities that included non-Christians. Only a quarter (26%) had some form of musical, cultural, arts or educational activities that were open to outsiders.

Overall, more than one third (36%) did not organise any activities that involved interaction with non-Christians in their neighbourhood! This sad state of retreat



from society is reflected in the finances of the churches surveyed. On the average, churches spent a mere 8% of their annual budgets on social concern and community involvement, compared with 32% on salaries and 23% on building maintenance.

Of the activities Christians attended or

participated in their churches over the past one year, only 11-14% were involved in some form of community service, social work or justice activities. This figure is rather low compared with 24% in Australia as revealed in an earlier National Church Life Survey carried out there.

Involvement in society, of course, is not always through church-based activities. Christians also get involved through parachurch agencies in their individual capacities. However, the scenario is much the same. With the exception of games and sporting activities, less than 17% of Christians surveyed participated in voluntary organisations or activities outside churches. The involvement included participation in professional bodies, societies, interest groups, hobby or craft groups, social care services, and educational, arts, musical or cultural activities.

Involvement in justice and other public issues was even less, with 4% in environment conservation, and 3% in human right groups, trade unions and political parties. Less than 2% of Christians surveyed contacted a member of parliament or took some action on a public issue for the whole of last year. One in two (48%) hardly interacted with Muslims. Overall, more than one third (35%) said they were not involved in any activities with unbelievers!

## Cause for Concern

Our low level of involvement with society is cause for concern since the Christian faith is missionary in nature, seeking not only to convert, but also transform the whole world. However, the order is for us to reach out to the whole world, to be "witnesses in

see page 14

Prayer-ers' Prayer Points: from page 6

Pastors' Prayer Shield and the 40-Day Fast and Prayer. Let us also continue to claim the land through prayer activities such as prayer walk. I also see a need to raise child intercessors. We should have prayer initiatives to encourage intercession among our children."

## Jennifer Wong and Leong Dai May (full-time workers at People's Park Baptist Church)

"We are praying that every Christian in the country will grow into a deeper prayer life. There will be a breakthrough where our prayers will release the power and authority to tear down strongholds of darkness over the nation, tribe and individual. Through this, churches can rise up in power to do great works for our Lord." ■

Note: The other commission members are Chong Lei Wah (a kindergarten co-owner worshipping in Christian Life Centre) and commission chairman Grace Hee.



## TO CATCH AND TO HOLD

“WHAT is the fruit of an apple tree?” Dr Tom Phillips asked a group of participants at a discipleship seminar organised by NECF Malaysia. The immediate reply: “Apples, of course.”

Wrong, Dr Phillips countered. The answer was – another apple tree! He paused there and allowed his answer to ‘perplex’ the participants for a while before explaining that the apple is only the flesh that covers the seeds of the apple tree. The seeds carry the potential to grow into apple trees that are themselves capable of reproducing similar trees.

The analogy was used to hit home the importance of discipleship, which, Dr Phillips said, is the process of leading a new convert to such maturity that he, in turn, can ‘bear fruit’ by reproducing.

The problem is that, often, new converts are not nurtured to maturity because of poor follow-up or discipleship, a situation that has been likened to ‘letting the fish slip through the net’.

Dr Phillips, who is Vice-President of Training cum Senior Crusade Director of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), was conducting the late-January seminar attended by about 100 Christian leaders and full-time workers from churches

and Christian organisations.

Bearing in mind that the audience consists of people already in the ministry of converting and discipling souls, Dr Phillips realised his task was to inspire them to take discipleship seriously and urgently.

This, he did effectively, by first emphasising that a global revival is at hand. “The signs of a world revival are here,” he said. “Revival breeds evangelism. Already, the Gospel is exploding, with more conversions in the last 40 years than at any other times in history.”

He gave four indicators that showed God is preparing a spiritual movement worldwide:

- Obvious outpouring of the Holy Spirit;
- Concerted united prayer worldwide – never in history has there been so many Christians interceding;
- Unity – this is evident through the emergence of multi-denominational organisations such as the World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Covenant.
- Brokenness – world events show that God is breaking His people in preparation for the great work ahead.

Through this worldwide revival, God will raise great warriors of the Cross, able to bring a positive change to communities.



*Dr Tom Phillips inspiring the ‘fishermen’ to take discipleship seriously and urgently.*

Most important, Dr Phillips reiterated, revival breeds evangelism.

“Are we ready?” he asked, not just to harvest the catch, but also to feed the fish until they are mature enough to reproduce. His message seemed to have born fruit when one pastor said after the session, “I catch his spirit.”

## Can't Go?

SENDERS are as important as GOERS in the ever-urgent field of missions. That’s the message that campers will take home from the second NATIONAL YOUTH MISSIONS CAMP organised by the NECF Malaysia Missions Commission.

The speakers, comprising both missionaries and missions leaders, will challenge our youths to live the Great Commission lifestyle through praying, giving, going and caring.

Those interested are advised to register early as the number of places is limited. Details are:

Venue : Awana Resort, Genting Highlands

Date : July 19 – 21 (Friday – Sunday)

Fee : RM145 per person (fee covers food and lodging at campsite, and materials)

*Note: Those who register before May 24 will each get a gift. Campers will collect the gift upon check-in at the camp.*

The camp is open to secondary school and tertiary students, and young working adults. For more information, contact Adeline of NECF Malaysia at 03-7727 8227 (tel.) or [missions@necf.org.my](mailto:missions@necf.org.my) (e-mail); 03-7729 1139 (fax).



### Have you ...

... made your mark on the first handwritten Bible in Malaysia? In this project organised by the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM), you get to handcopy a verse from the Bahasa Alkitab. The completed handwritten Bible will be placed in the forthcoming Bible museum for public viewing. The privilege is – you donate RM1 for each verse you write and RM20 for the first verse of each chapter. The amount collected will go towards buying Bibles for Christians in China. Call 03-77278215 (BSM office) to book your slot.

## Cross-Currents Consultation Report

# The World at Our Feet

**G**OD is committed to his covenant of expanding the community of all believers in the climax of His plan, and all Christians are under the mandate to take the gospel to all nations. Globalisation has made this mission easier because of advances in transportation and communication. On the other hand, it has also impeded the spread of the Gospel because cultures have become increasingly fragmented.

50 people attended the consultation held at the NECF Malaysia office.

In his paper, *Challenge to Evangelisation & Discipleship*, OMF Malaysia Home Director Dr Tan Kang San affirmed that in this era of globalisation, the world has come to our doorstep. Malaysian Christians can no longer ignore the responsibility of world evangelisation, and neither can they overlook the fact that the understanding of other religious beliefs is a valuable tool to prepare us for apologetics and evangelism.

Kairos Research Centre Director Dr Ng Kam Weng, who delivered a paper entitled *Christian Intellectual & Theological Dimensions*, urged Christians to recognise the power of religions and, in particular, Samuel P. Huntington's thesis which maintains that the most important conflicts of the future will occur "along the cultural fault lines", separating seven or eight major civilisations from one another. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and/or African civilisations.

There is a need to set up research institutes and centres for advanced mission studies that specialise in inter-religious encounters and cross-cultural studies. In his paper *Pastoral & Leadership Responses*, DUMC Senior Pastor Daniel Ho cautioned the Church to "guard itself against the spirit of individualism, competition, affluence, self-sufficiency and complacency." The Church must also present "the power of the Gospel in reconciling all men, women and children" in this society of ethnic polarisation.

Bible College of Malaysia President Rev. Ng Kok Kee urged Christians to give all their children to God's calling to vocations of all aspect in order to engage our world with Christian principles. A Christian doctor is not simply a doctor who happens to be a Christian, but he serves as a doctor with impact and evidence of Christ.

The essence of the Church is partnership, fellowship and participation. Above all, we must not lose sight of the importance of a Christ-like character, stated Ooi Chin Aik. — *Reported by Lim Siew Foong*



## Implications of Globalisation

A Malaysian Agenda for Prayer, Faith and Action

Globalisation connects people and places around the world, but its process has nevertheless produced a density of relationships that is overwhelming and oppressive to human community. Everything is connected and, at the same time, disconnected because modernity has taken us away from the basic principles of our daily life.

There are no rules that work for everyone because everything is relative. Society is pluralistic but polarised. Tension among ethnic groups is heightened and religions divide mankind. What is the fundamental source of conflict among humankind? Is it ideological, economic or cultural?

The Church is a transnational institution which must fit into God's redemptive plan for the world. How does it deal with the challenges of modernity against its doctrine and theology?

The recent NECF Malaysia Research Commission's Cross-Current consultation on "Globalisation and the Church" has shed some light into these issues and suggested some action plans and responses for churches. Over

## NEW MEMBERS

**E**IGHT churches and one para-church organisation have joined our growing fellowship. We welcome:

- *Worldteach Sdn Bhd*, Subang Jaya, Selangor, represented by Eric Tan Boon Siong
- *Praise Celebration Centre*, Batu Pahat, pastored by Philip Balakrishnan a/l Simnasamy
- *Vineyard Christian Fellowship*, Kota Kinabalu, pastored by Thomas Ho Nyuk Seng
- *Bethel of Glory Christian Centre*, Penang, pastored by Andrew Chong Ngo Long
- *Shekinah Magimayin Koodaram*, Kuala Lumpur, pastored by Daniel Arokiasamy
- *Shiloh Assembly of God*, Kuala Lumpur, pastored by Rev. Jetindar Mohan Singh
- *Vineyard Community Church*, Penang, pastored by Barnabas Low Kam Sang
- *Victory Praise Church*, Kuala Lumpur, pastored by Ezekiel M. Eswaran
- *Grace Mission Church*, Kuala Lumpur, pastored by Long Kim Hai

We also welcome five individuals into our fellowship.



**Any spare  
computers to  
give away?**

**W**E need more computers in our office due to our expanding ministry. So, if you have a spare computer that is sitting idly in your home, will you consider donating it to us? We will appreciate if the computer is at least a Pentium II model and in good working condition. For pick-up arrangement, please contact Patrick Cheng at enquiries@necf.org.my (e-mail) or 03-7727 8227 (tel.). All donated computers will be put to great use.

**Towards greater community involvement:**  
from page 11

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That is, our own backyards first, then only farther away. The irony is that while we send missionaries to distant places, we seldom hear of churches having full-time workers serving the unchurched community in our midst. In monetary terms, we averagely spend up to 17% of our annual church budgets on missions, evangelism and church planting, the bulk of which are presumably on cross-cultural settings, while only 8% goes to social care and community service.

The mushrooming of para-church social concern agencies over time indicates our churches' neglect or low level of involvement with the community. But, in essence, we cannot get away from the fact that churches do have a community-centred responsibility, and in view of their greater resources and the extensive people-based interconnectedness, they can play this role more effectively, especially when in partnership with the independent para-church agencies.

Although reality points to a low level of community involvement by our churches, we note that most Christians were somewhat unconcerned about this. In fact, there were as many as 22% of Christians who even said they were satisfied with the way their churches were already impacting society. As to why the church is weak in impacting society, if at all, only one third of Christians thought it was because we lived as though our faith was private and irrelevant to society. At the same time, the same Christians thought that it was also because we did not engage contemporary issues in our society. In other words, the majority two-thirds of Christians were indifferent about whether the Church was impacting society as the light and salt of the world.

### There's Hope

However, judging from what the general church leadership thought, there is hope. Concerning the need for churches to be involved in society, 80% of pastors agreed that we must demonstrate to society a 'wholistic' mission as Jesus did, compared with 52% of Christians who thought similarly. Additionally, 75% of pastors believed that in view of today's increasing social ills, the churches should be more involved in society, compared with 65% of Christians. Another 57% of pastors believed our churches were too inward-looking, compared with 27% of Christians. Hence,

## SHARING RESOURCES

### Globalisation Booklet

NECF Malaysia's booklet on globalisation, *Engagement or Isolation: A Malaysian Christian Perspective on Globalisation*, presents a Christian encounter and perspective with globalisation.

Churches are challenged to go beyond their own agenda and private plans, to encourage one another to think and act globally because they are called to be the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-14).

Available from NECF Malaysia office at RM10 each. ■



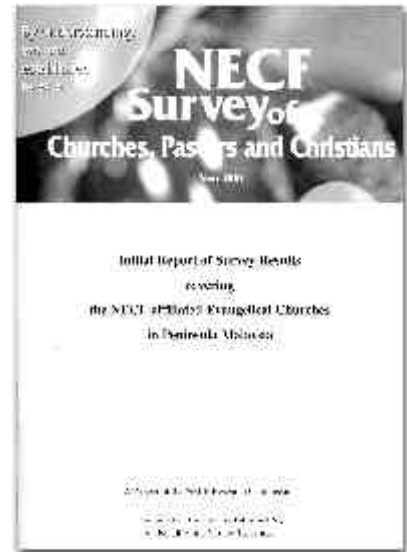
### Church Survey Report

THE report contains results of the first survey on churches in Peninsular Malaysia. The NECF Malaysia survey yields many interesting findings that go beyond mere ideas and perceptions of individuals about congregational life in our country.

The report covers a diverse range of information on the profile of churches, the work and ministry of pastors and Christians, their attitudes and perspectives towards issues, and their spirituality and lifestyle. An index helps the reader to locate the statistics of 48 topics listed in alphabetical order.

Church strategists may find the information helpful in their long-range planning.

Now available from NECF Malaysia at RM10 per copy. Add RM2 per copy for postage. ■



it is no surprise that the one most significant activity that pastors would like NECF Malaysia to focus more on is engagement with the Government and public advocacy for the churches (32%).

It is also heartening to note that at the Asia-Pacific Consultation on Discipleship (APCOD) held in Kota Kinabalu in mid-2001, 500 Christian leaders from over 20 nations in Asia and the Pacific Rim have resolved to be 'agents of transformation in our local churches that they in turn begin to make a strong impact in the wider community, in order that we truly become as salt and light in our nations, causing God's righteousness to be accepted as the common standard in society at large.' However, resolutions will remain as mere statements unless they are acted upon and changes are made.

Presently, many local churches do not even have a vibrant social care ministry that reaches out to their immediate communities, let alone other social action ministries. If we truly want to be involved with society,

churches should be having 'wholistic' Community Concern departments that are manned by full-time workers, with financial resources at least equal to those of the Mission departments. These ministries should work in close partnership with the para-church agencies whose 'specialist' roles are advocacy, coordination, training and the impartation of best practices. Then, our local churches will begin to impact our 'Jerusalem' in a greater way. And when this happens, we will become more balanced with regards to the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20) and the Golden Rule (Mt 7:12). ■

*Note: This is an abridged version of a post-Survey article that will appear in the forthcoming issue of the Watchmen's Forum 3. The NECF Malaysia Survey of Churches, Pastors and Christians has provided us with the latest data and statistics on 48 or more topics, each with a number of interesting issues for analysis. Individuals interested to utilise such information to write articles for our publication are invited to contact NECF Malaysia.*

# COMING UP ...

## Promise Keepers Conference for Men

**K**EEP April 24 and 25 free for the Promise Keepers (PK) from America, an organisation aimed at raising men who won't compromise the truth, are true to their word and are trustworthy. In short, men who keep their promises.

PK Vice-President of International Division Dr Paul Freed will conduct the conference cum workshop, entitled Men of Integrity, to inspire and equip men towards this goal. Joining him is Dr Ramesh Richard, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. The fee, which covers lunch and tea for both days and materials, is RM75 per person.

PK hopes that the conference will be the springboard to the setting up of a national men's movement, *ala* Promise Keepers, in Malaysia. Call NECF Malaysia for more details.

**NOTE: THE CONFERENCE IS FOR MEN ONLY.**

## Globalisation Consultations

**S**IGN up for the third and fourth globalisation consultations organised by NECF Malaysia Research Commission. Registration fee for each consultation is RM30, which covers lunch and materials. To register, call the NECF Malaysia office.

Details are:

### • Globalisation & the Marketplace – Mar 16

Christians spend more than a third of their working lives in the shadow of ethical and moral compromises. Living out Christ's teaching in an environment that persistently sends out wrong signals and incentives is difficult and Christians will not necessarily be immune to them.

The consultation will look at how the Christian workers can integrate their faith and Christian values in their workplace.

The speakers and their topics are Mr Wong Hong Meng – *Business Ethics in a Changing World*; Mr Cheong Seng Gee – *Salt & Light: Integrating Faith in the Workplace*; and Mr Philip Koh – *Christians & Corporate Governance*.

### • Globalisation & the Family – April 20

This consultation looks at the effects of the breakdown of the nuclear family and the resulting substantive issues. The speakers will also scrutinise parenting and child-raising goals and strategies and propose practical ways to translate Scripture into reality.

Modernity has also had profound effects on the elderly and consideration will be given to their wellbeing. Finally, the highly important question of reinventing Christian family life will be dealt with, replacing MacWorld mindsets with Christ-like ones.

The speakers and their topics are: Dr Chiam Heng Keng – *Marriage, Child-Bearing, and Rearing: Trends and Implications*; Dr Chan Kok Eng – *Contributions and Care of Senior Citizens*; and Rev. Tony Lim – *'Reinventing' Christian Family Life*.

## BM Church Planting Seminar in Ipoh

**T**he NECF Malaysia BM Commission is holding the seminar for Perak churches from March 15 to 16.

The commission hopes to inspire BM churches to make church planting their ethos. Presently, a lot of BM churches seem unwilling to set up new churches although the opportunities are plentiful. They would rather hire buses to bring their congregants from nearby villages to their churches although the villages are far away.

The training seminar for BM church leaders aims to help them overcome their fears (of venturing out), and impart the skills and knowledge necessary to till new grounds.

## BM Prayer Conference

**T**HE conference will be held at Peacehaven, Genting Highlands from March 21 to 24 to raise intercessors from the BM churches, mobilise them to set up prayer groups, and strengthen unity among BM churches through prayer.

Jointly organised by the NECF Malaysia BM Commission and SIB Semenanjung, it carries the theme *Doa Kunci Pemulihan* (Prayer the Key to Revival).

Speakers are Pr Chew Weng Chee of SIB Kuala Lumpur; Pr Kenny Tham, former pastor of SIB KL and currently studying theology in Indonesia; and Dr Bill Gaddis, a lecturer at the Malaysian Baptist Theological Seminary.

Registration fee of RM150 per person includes all meals, accommodation and materials. For more information, contact Alfred Tais at 019-2683119 or SIB Semenanjung at 03-79560164 (tel.).

## Congress for South-East Asian Evangelists

**T**HE congress is jointly organised by the South-East Asia Congress on Evangelism (SEACOE) and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. It will be held in Singapore from June 17 to 21. The theme "Restoring the Cutting Edge" has been chosen to call the Church to restore evangelism as the cutting edge of the Church.

The congress aims to train, equip and excite church and mission agency leaders, pastors, and those involved in training evangelists and pastors. Some 800 participants throughout South-east Asia are expected to attend.

The key speaker is Mrs Ann Lotz Graham, daughter of Dr Billy Graham. Those interested to attend should send in their application forms, available from the NECF Malaysia office. Due to limited places, a selection process will be used to assess each applicant. Selected applicants will then be sent an invitation to participate.

For more information, contact SEACOE, Singapore, at 02-2922728 (tel.); admin@seacoe.org (e-mail) or check out www.seacoe.org



# FOR Your Prayers



## U S A

International Bible Society responded swiftly to the US terrorist attack by giving many thousands of Scripture resources for distribution in New York City and Washington DC to the affected ones. At the request of the Department of Defence, IBS also donated 5,000 booklets for distribution at the Pentagon. The initiative, in partnership with the Salvation Army, included *Deeper Still* (booklet in English and Spanish for disaster survivors), *Book of Psalms, Looking Up* (booklet of God's promises for the downcast and discouraged) and *Through the Storm New Testament* (for people in crisis). Pray for these booklets to continue to bring people comfort, hope and help to know Jesus personally.

## V I E T N A M

Half of the 78 million people of Vietnam are under 21 years old. A quarter live below the poverty line and about a third of the children are malnourished. But literacy rate is high, at 80 percent, as the people are avid readers. There is a desperate need for Christian teaching materials for children. One Western mission is producing flannel-graph pictures of the Bible for Sunday School teachers in Vietnam. Translation work on a 14-book teaching series for teenagers is underway. Pray for the financing of these and other materials, including the translation of a book of Bible stories for children.

## P A K I S T A N

Since the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in USA and the Dec 13 attacks on the Indian Parliament, Pakistan has been forced to make a clear and decisive stand against Islamic militancy. President Pervez Musharraf's government has arrested some 2000 activists and banned five Islamist bodies, closing some 650 of their offices across the nation.

On Jan 12, President Musharraf unveiled to the nation on TV his government's strategy to eliminate "hatred, militancy and sectarian extremism from society". Islamic schools, mosques and groups will have to conform to strict new

standards or they will be closed. He said sectarian prejudice must end if Pakistan is to emerge as "responsible and progressive".

Now is surely a time to pray for religious liberty in Pakistan and for removal of the Blasphemy Law so that Christians can witness and Muslims can convert without fear. Pray also for President Musharraf, for safety and the strength to maintain his resolve; may he be introduced to Jesus Christ and to God's word, the only source of truth, wisdom and transformation. Pray for international support for Pakistan during this time of positive reform and for the Church to be strengthened, encouraged and protected from violent attack.

## C H I N A

Motivated by the events of last Sept 11 and encouraged by international acceptance, China appears to be escalating its crackdown on dissent and religious zeal. The government is aiming to bring more churches under state control and is using the anti-cult laws to persecute evangelical Christians, whom they regard as a threat to social stability. The South China Church, with 50,000 house church members in 10 provinces, is currently being severely persecuted: 63 members are in prison, with the founder, Gong Shengliang, and four others sentenced to death. Also, Li Guangquiang of Hong Kong has been

charged with "using an evil cult to damage a law-based society", for having brought 33,000 Bibles into China at the request of a rural house church group.

Pray for: the Church in China not to be overcome by fear as repression appears to be escalating, but for a strong faith, courage and continuing witness; God's Spirit to touch the world's conscience and for parties such as the IOC, USA and WTO to protest such abuse of the law of basic human right to freedom of religion; faith, courage, practical support, good health and protection for Gong Shengliang and the other believers in prison and for their families; the Spirit to move among China's elite and educated.

## M Y A N M A R

Myanmar is made up of a vast number of different peoples. At least 67 separate indigenous racial groups have been identified, and some 242 separate languages and dialects. The people have suffered more than 30 years of internal warfare and military oppression.

Now, efforts are being made to create opportunities for reconciliation and trust among the many ethnic groups. Last August, leaders from 11 major ethnic groups met and formed the Ethnic Nationalities Solidarity and Cooperation Committee, which is entrusted with the task of fostering

unity and cooperation among all ethnic groups and find a peaceful political settlement through 'tripartite dialogue' – negotiations among the ethnic groups, the National League for Democracy (led by Aung San Suu Kyi) and the military government. Pray that this committee will help fulfill its aim of reconciling the peoples and restoring peace in the country. Pray also for religious freedom as the Church is facing persecution.



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