

BERITA NECF

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E D I T O R I A L

The World In The Church

The Christian population in Malaysia is only nine percent, according to the latest census conducted two years ago. We are a mere fraction of the total and yet, we have been called to make a positive difference in this nation, to be a good influence to the other 91 percent; in other words, to be the “salt and light”.

And certainly, the non-Christian community – whether consciously or unconsciously – looks to the Church for moral integrity and righteousness. Has the Church of Malaysia lived up to this expectation?

As we reach the end of 2002, let us soul-search this question and take stock of our condition. What we are positively doing – for example, the growing unity among churches and our good works to society at large – should not just continue but intensify. At the same time, we must also consider the negative elements within our body that must be rid off to preserve our witness.

In this respect, we have observed a growing trend of Christians discrediting and disrupting the ministry of other Christians – often pastors and full-time workers or those actively in God’s service – through unethical and malicious acts. Instances of such acts, arising from personal conflicts or plain malice or envy, are:

- Releasing official and confidential documents and correspondences between conflicting parties within the church to the leaders of other faiths;
- Handing over recorded tapes of pastors’ sermons, which may have covered sensitive issues, to certain authorities with the intention of causing troubles to the pastors; and
- Divulging confidential and sensitive information relating to church management, leadership and relationships to certain authorities outside the church with the intention of disrupting the church’s operations.

Increasingly, church members are venting their frustrations over their pastors or leaders through scandalous acts, as in the case of a pastor who purportedly sent pornographic VCDs to several innocent church members. In truth, the VCDs were mailed by a disgruntled individual, who listed the pastor’s name as the sender.

Another popular tactic to discredit the reputation of Christian leaders these days is circulating ‘poison’ letters or e-mails alleging wrongdoings committed by the said leaders.



True, such practices are not new, but like the dizzying speed of change in the world today, they have also intensified to the extent that one can safely comment that the ‘Judas spirit’ – the spirit of betrayal – is well and alive. For do not such practices ultimately betray the body of Christ?

Why should we be alarmed at this situation?

Firstly, it shows that increasingly, Christians are disregarding God’s instructions as laid down in His Word. Where inter-personal conflicts are concerned, our Lord Jesus clearly gave the principle to follow in Matt. 18:15–17. Disputes are to be resolved within the conflicting parties within the church. But instead of heeding our Lord’s teaching, some Christians prefer to take their grievances to parties outside the Church.

This sends the message to the community that the Church is not able to mind its own affairs, or that its followers do not believe that the Church is able resolve their problems.

Secondly, these unscrupulous acts imply that Christians are increasingly absorbing carnal and worldly ways into their behaviour and lifestyle. Instead of influencing the world to good, we are being lured into its ways.

Such practices cause confusion and disarray to the body of Christ, tarnish the Church’s reputation, and worse, taint the sacred name of our Lord.

Stopping the rot

Sadly, some churches remain passive when faced with members who are hurting the ministry of other Christians. Pastors and

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The Overcoming Church

“Watch out that no one deceives you.” (Matt. 24:4)

By Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam,
NECF Malaysia Chairman

We are living in troubled times. Unprecedented changes are taking place in the social, economic, political and religious arenas of world. While some changes are positive in nature, others such as widespread poverty, health issues, substance abuse, increase in acts of terrorism and moral decadence are of grave concern.

The moral tone of the world today can certainly be compared to that which existed “in the days of Noah”. The Church as His Body, and every believer, must rise up and be the salt and light as Jesus has commanded. However as we seek to address these vital world issues, the Church must remember her God-ordained responsibility to warn and teach believers so that “we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

In such times, the contemporary Church must take measures to build confidence in God and resilience to ward off erroneous doctrines creeping subtly and deceptively into its midst and into the lives of individual Christians.

Paul’s advice to Timothy: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourselves and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16) is relevant to believers today; likewise his admonition to the Church to watch out for false teachers (1 Tim. 6:3–5). We must not allow ourselves to be swayed to and fro by erroneous doctrine but must hold fast to the truth so that “no one will take our crown” (Rev. 3:11).

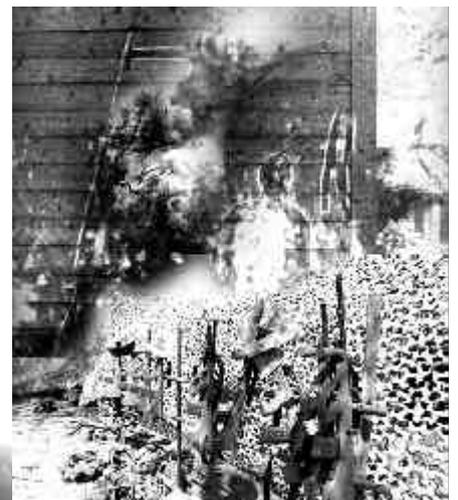
The contemporary Church must also strive for unity – to be joined together in one mind, one accord, one heart and one purpose to resist and to intercede against principalities and powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12) working vehemently against God’s plan to spiritually perfect His Church (Eph. 5:27).

Contentions should not prevail amongst us (1 Cor. 1: 10–13), nor should there be any “quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions,

slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder (2 Cor. 12:20). Spiritual discernment, wisdom to deal with trying situations and a passion for holiness are crucial to being an overcoming contemporary Church.

We as humans have a tendency to be ruled by our carnal minds, often setting aside the work of God’s Holy Spirit who seeks to rule us. God’s Word warns us: “... to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). The witnessing and overcoming Church must be led by the Spirit with the wisdom from the Word of God, always seeking for the Spirit’s anointing and for the operating of His gifts as we fulfill the work of God.

Therefore in these testing times, let us pray that the Malaysian Church will be an overcoming Church that is pure in doctrine and lifestyle, purposeful and united in her mission to preach Jesus and powerful in influence through the empowering of God’s Holy Spirit. ■



Troubles at the Frontline

“Ah, a parcel from Pastor. How nice of him,” Amy thought to herself as she fingered the sending address on the package that the postman has just dropped off. She decided to thank him straightaway and picked up the phone. Soon, Pastor was on the other end but no, he had not sent her anything.

Puzzled, Amy put down the phone and tore open the parcel to find a harmless-looking VCD. Wondering what it was, she put it in the player and waited. What appeared in the next few minutes were revolting scenes of hardcore pornographic actions!

Amy was not the only one who received the VCD; several other church members also received similar VCDs, all purportedly sent by their Pastor Tan who immediately lodged a police report, as did some of the VCD recipients. This was done to protect himself from any potential police action that may be taken against him (distributing pornographic materials is an offence).

Although surprised and saddened by the whole affair, Pr Tan has not let it affect his ministry in any way. He confessed though, that initially, he did go on a mental hunt in search of the sender and what caused him to do so. He ended the hunt with the conviction that the sender is not a member of his flock, and perhaps it is this confidence in his congregation that had enabled him to move on.

Unlike Pr Tan, Pr Lim knew immediately the group of people responsible for trying to get him into trouble with the authorities. And they were his own church members who were unhappy with him for emphasising certain aspects of the charismatic renewal – such as deliverance and healing – in their conservative

congregation.

So, when Pr Lim handed out some seminar notes which contained some sensitive matters relating to other religions, the disgruntled members pounced on the notes as the means to “get even, to disqualify me from my ministry,” according to Pr Lim. They handed the notes to the leaders of the two religious groups mentioned in the notes, who in turn passed them to the police.

Did he do anything to clear his name? “No. The police decided to close the issue in the process of their investigation,” Pr Lim replied. Blessed with the “time will tell and the truth shall prevail” attitude, it was work as usual for this pastor who refused to be mowed down by the malice of his own sheep.

“Some members were concerned; some were wondering what it’s all about; a few opposed the work in the church. On the whole, the church moved on but a few disgruntled people were affected,” he recalled.

Asked about his feelings toward the people concerned, he said: “I don’t think I harbour any ill feelings. It (the incident) only opens my eyes to see the extent some Christians are prepared to go to.”

Pastors and leaders make easy targets for scandals as they are in the forefront of God’s work. One way to help protect themselves from falling prey to unnecessary troubles is to build a strong relationship with their members and earn their trust, Pr Tan suggested.

For Pr Lim, the pastor’s character will decide ultimately the outcome of any scandals. “Their character and time will tell. Truth will finally prevail,” he reiterated, echoing the words of 1 Pet. 2:23: “When they hurled their insults at him (Jesus), he



“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

– Heb. 13:17

did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

Note: All names in the article have been changed.

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church leaders are often caught in a dilemma, not knowing the best course of action. Such cases call for discernment and wisdom in knowing the right thing to do. And the courage to do it.

Firm discipline combined with love and a genuine concern for the wrongdoers, meted out at the beginning of the wrongdoing, will help to ‘nip the problem at its bud’ before it takes root. If there is no sign of repentance after exhaustive counselling has been done, the church should apply the biblical method of discipline, by following, for example, the case in 1 Cor. 5.

Arresting the rot is not only the responsibility of the leadership, but also the obligation of individual Christians. Simple measures, such as trashing the slander or refuting the allegation if you know it is untrue, will discourage further growth.

Not all scandals or accusations are baseless, though. But as members of the body of Christ, let us conduct matters in the biblical way that will ultimately glorify God.

When our house is in order, people will open their hearts to our gospel.

Christian Teachers Urgently Needed

When it comes to education, Christian parents are generally selfish, concerned only with how to get the best for their children with scant regard to nation-building, according to Prof. Chiam Heng Keng.

The professor in the Department of Education Psychology and Counselling in Universiti Malaya made the bold remark at the recent "Educational Trends and Challenges and the Mission of the Church" consultation organised by the NECF Malaysia Research Commission.

She added that most Christian children are discouraged from going into the teaching profession because it is perceived as a non-lucrative career.

Prof. Chiam's view is credible given that most of the members of the Teachers Christian Fellowship (TCF) are over 45

years old, as reported by Indryani Kannaiya representing TCF. Additionally, most Christian teachers come from East Malaysia, observed another consultation participant, Dr Hannah Pillay who is the principal of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Methodist Banting.

Some 40 people involved in education attended the consultation to identify the current trends and challenges, and the Church's mission in education.

The issue of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English was also discussed. Dr Pillay believed that the Government's proposal, when implemented, would provide more opportunities for the language to be used, and thus enhance English proficiency. Dr Chiam concurred and added that it would help students to familiarise themselves with technology terms since they

are mainly in English.

Research Commission member Datuk Lew Sip Hon, however, said that English proficiency could be improved in other ways such as increasing the hours of English lessons.

Participants also discussed the issue of indiscipline and declining morals in schools and traced their cause to the breakdown of the family structure. These problems have given rise to religious schools, whether Islamic or Christian. Participants agreed that the Church must play a more active role in building strong families to stem the tide of decline.

The Church must also show greater support to teachers and present teaching as an influential and honourable profession to its young ones. ■

Churches Hold Combined Sunday Service

About 2,000 members from nine churches situated within the Petaling Jaya-Hartamas corridor came together recently for a special Sunday worship service to affirm unity in the body of Christ.

Themed "Together 2002", the service began with the various pastors appearing on stage and linking hands to symbolise unity. Organising chairman Pr Nicholas Wu

then welcomed the congregation, followed by the sound of shofars to kick off the worship session, which was enhanced by some 40 dancers from the different churches.

Director of Prayer Wave Asia, Singapore, Lai-Kheng Pousson gave a challenging message on evangelising Asia and beyond, stressing that unity, alongside urgency and passion, is an essential

ingredient to revival.

Commenting on the effort put in by the different churches, Pr Wu said: "The fact that the pastors can work together without any sense of insecurity is a clear sign that the barriers between churches are coming down." The other pastors concurred. They hope to organise a wider-scale, community-based combined worship service in mid-2003. ■

Together on stage to welcome the congregation ... pastors representing their churches.



BM Pastors Fellowship for every state

A strong, vibrant Pastors Fellowship (PF) in every state for pastors of BM congregations – that is one of the major goals of the NECF Malaysia BM Commission for 2003.

The Commission has already started mobilising pastors to come together and in June this year, it helped to establish the Johore Bahru BM PF, which now has pastors from 15 BM congregations.

“We are very encouraged that this

Pastors Fellowship is moving on very well. The pastors involved are very committed to each other and this really helps to strengthen the BM work in that area,” commented the Commission’s Executive Secretary Alfred Tais

The Commission is now working on reviving four other BM PFs, which it initiated several years ago but have been inactive due to leadership change.

Alfred urges all pastors of BM churches



Johor Baru BM Pastors Fellowship -- Chairman Pr Daniel Chow (back row, right); Vice-Chairman Pr Noah Sikar (middle row, 2nd from right); Secretary Elder Daniel Raut (front row, centre); and Treasurer Pr Winnifred (front row, right). The rest are committee members.

to come together for support. Meeting regularly will also help to remind them that they are in the Kingdom business and not just building individual churches, he added. ■

Church holds service to honour pastors

Calvary Church, Kuala Lumpur, recently organised a thanksgiving service to honour its Senior Pastor, Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam, and his wife, Senior Associate Pastor Datin Dr Petrina, for their 30 years of faithful service to the church.

The special Sunday morning worship service was held at Dewan PGRM with Dr David Cho Yonggi, pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea, as the guest speaker.

During the service, the congregation

was continually challenged with the message that God uses ordinary people, who will give their lives to Him, to do extraordinary things for His Kingdom.

The celebration continued that evening with a dinner banquet at the Royal Ballroom of the Palace of the Golden Horses. Leaders from component bodies of the Christian Federation of Malaysia, including Roman Catholic Bishop Antony Selvanayagam and NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong, were among the 1,000 people who attended the joyous occasion. ■

Rev. Datuk Prince and Datin Petrina being greeted by the Guard of Honour, comprising the Calvary Church Royal Rangers and Missionnettes, upon their arrival at the thanksgiving worship service.



NATIONWIDE CHARITY CAMPAIGN

Where The Collection Is Heading

Palestinian and Afghan refugees will be the main beneficiaries of the NECF Malaysia Nationwide Charity Campaign, organised in conjunction with the recent 40-day Prayer and Fast.

Each group will get RM75,000 from the collection which stands at over RM644,300 (from 242 churches) as at Nov 6. Of the balance, half will be distributed among local Christian charitable organisations and the other half among their non-Christian counterparts.

NECF is currently finalising the list of recipients and will present the cheques sometime in January.

No Change in Stand on Islamic State Issue

NECF Malaysia remains firm in its stand that Malaysia is a secular state in accordance with a declaration framed by the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBHS).

Called "A Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Elimination of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief", the Declaration – which upholds the Federal Constitution's clear provisions for the protection of religious liberties, among other points – was first adopted and released to the public in 1988.

In January this year, MCCBHS again released the Declaration in urgent response to the Prime Minister's statement that

Malaysia is already an Islamic State. Recently, the Prime Minister resurrected the issue by publicly repeating the statement.

NECF stands behind the Jan 31 MCCBHS press statement calling the Federal and all State Governments to "respect the rights of every person to freedom of religion and recognise that

Malaysia is constitutionally a secular state."

Malaysian Christians are represented in MCCBHS through the Christian Federation of Malaysia, of which NECF is a member. ■

(Note: Copies of the MCCBHS Declaration is available free of charge from the NECF office.)



Built for impact ... the 10-storey Wisma FGA.

New Building For Greater Impact

After five years of construction, the 10-storey Wisma FGA was formally opened at a dedication service in October. The building, owned by Full Gospel Assembly Kuala Lumpur, will help to fulfil the church's vision to impact the city, nation and the world for Christ. With a total seating capacity of 4,000, the building houses a multipurpose hall, baptistry, 24 seminar rooms, car parks and the church's administration office.

Built to cater to the growing congregation, the church's leadership has decided to open Wisma FGA for use to churches which are members of NECF Malaysia and also para-church organisations for a minimal sum to cover basic operational cost.

The building is located beside the current church where the main services are still being held. Any overflow is directed to a hall equipped with closed-circuit television screening of the services at Wisma FGA. ■

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Renewal

Membership – both Ordinary and Associate – with NECF Malaysia expire on Dec 31. Please renew your membership immediately to avoid any disruption to receiving the Berita NECF.

New Members

We welcome two churches into our fellowship:

- Pahang Christian Sanctuary, Raub, Pahang, pastored by *Tiang Kwong Huan*
- Agape Christian Centre, Air Itam, Penang, pastored by *Hannah John*

We also welcome three individuals as Associate Members.

Gift Ideas

Running out of ideas what to give your beloved this Christmas?

How about a gift of membership to NECF Malaysia? This gift will provide your loved one many benefits, including information on current issues affecting the Christian community in Malaysia and the world, discounts to our seminars and conferences, discounts to our books and other materials, and our bi-monthly Berita NECF.

To get a membership application form, just send an e-mail to editor@necf.org.my or mhlai@necf.org.my or patrick@necf.org.my with your address. We will immediately mail the form to you. Or call our office at 03-7727 8227. ■

ISSUE 64

Women to Women



A HEART OF COMPASSION

Caring for the Poor and Needy

by Nesam Ebenezer

We live in a fast-moving world. Speed in communication has resulted in a borderless world and this has brought challenges to many people. The poor remain poor and unwelcome acts like the abandoning of innocent children, incest and murder of family members are emerging in an alarming way. The Church cannot remain silent. Malaysian CARE through the Children and Families Services has been walking alongside individuals as well as communities to help them cope with their problems. At the same time we work with churches who are keen to work among the poor and needy.

We are committed first, to the children, and then to their families. We hope to see each child grow up in a peaceful and happy environment. Our community staff actively visit squatters and needy families. We are sad to note that the number of families that are not able to take care of their young children is increasing. Also increasing is the number of families where women are the heads of the households. The absentee fathers are either victims of alcoholism or drug dependency. Or they have remarried. The children are in dire need of guidance in all areas of their lives.

The Children and Families Services run learning and tuition centres for these needy children. We work with the local churches to achieve our goals. The Learning and Tuition Centres in Brickfields are held in the Tamil Methodist Church and the Lutheran Church. The Bestari Club in Sri Sentosa is an offshoot of the tuition classes run by St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya. The club seeks to instill good qualities and leadership skills in the children living in the high-rise flats in Sri Sentosa. The Learning Centre, which is run once a week on Thursday in Pandan Jaya, is a joint project between the First Baptist Ampang outreach centre and

CARE. Our services are helping the children now and we trust, will prepare them for their future. Some of these children also attend Sunday School and church services. Where the parents are unable to care for their children., our Rumah Care in Cheras offers them a home. The children are also referred to other Children's Homes. We have good rapport with the children's homes as we play an active role in CARNET (Children at Risk Network).

The children who stay in Rumah Care are taken care of by the staff who play the role of parents. But we also make sure that their own parents are being empowered to assume their responsibilities in the future. Parents' support groups and community meetings are held to encourage the adults to create a safe and happy environment for the children.

We are very much aware that women play an important role as wives and mothers in families. However, there are women who end up in prison and are unable to fulfil their roles. In August 2001 Rumah Kepercayaan opened its doors to offer refuge to women with prison records and addictions. This Home helps women to appreciate the need to approach life with a holistic perspective (spirit, mind, emotions and body) and to adopt a new basis on which to successfully build their lives. We help the women to achieve this through a Christian rehabilitation programme where there are Bible teaching, counselling, devotions, therapy and the learning of skills. Mothers with babies are allowed to keep them as they go through the programme.

Family reconciliation is an important part in all our projects. Our staff support and counsel the



A dance performance by the children of Rumah CARE

children and their families. Our ministry is in obedience to what Jesus said in Luke 14:21-33 (NIV):

"Go out into the streets and alleys, and bring back the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame...so that my house will be full." We need the help of the Lord and His strength to accomplish this important mission. Pray for us. ■

Nesam Ebenezer is the Director, Children & Families' Services, Malaysian CARE.

Nesam is also a member of the NECF Malaysia Women's Concerns Commission.

Children at the Brickfields Learning Centre





Run On!

by Aunty Amara

Uncle Amara, respected and loved by many, ran his race and finished well. In this testimony, Aunty Amara shares how the Lord ministered to her. Many names are mentioned in this testimony, a reminder that God, in His love, places us alongside each other that we may love and encourage one another.

I thank the Lord for this opportunity to share how I went through the woods after my beloved husband, Amara, went to be with the Lord on July 9, 2001. I was in a state of grief, shock and depression. Two days after the funeral I had a very bad fall in the bedroom and fractured my right humerus. I am right-handed and I felt really lost. Local and international calls, condolence cards, letters and telegrams poured in. When I answered the phone all I could say to the concerned callers was that I was OK and I thanked them. I was not my usual chatty self. God in His wonderful provision gave me so many wonderful people during this time to encourage and to help me.

Mary Tan, also known as Aunty Mary

Kok, is a priceless gem. When she heard of Amara's homecall, she came at once to our home for the wake and she told me that she had come to stay with me. Mary stayed till the funeral was over. When she heard about my fall, she came again and looked after me for 10 days. All glory to God for such a true friend. She read the Bible to me, prayed for me and comforted me.

My children, Shirani, Ashok and Jane were also wonderfully helpful. Shirani applied for a maid for me as I really needed assistance badly. The Canning Gardens Methodist Church where Ashok is Senior Pastor was kindness itself. When they heard that I had broken my right humerus, they graciously told Ashok to stay on with me and assured him they would hold the fort in

his absence. When I heard a creak in my right hand, I went to Ipoh and came under the competent medical care of one of the church members, Dr Tai. Both he and his wife, Elaine, were gracious and generous to me. I thank God for this lovely couple. During my stay in Ipoh I had the company of my niece, Evangeline, from Sitiawan. While my arm was in a sling, I could not wear a sari and declined invitations from caring friends who invited me for meals or to do a spot of window shopping. Thank you, everyone, for your love and concern.

I also thank God for our pastor and his wife, June, our cell group members and relatives. They came every night for a month to visit us. My eldest brother, Louis Paul, who lives in Washington, noted this and he

“If you fall, just pick yourself up and continue to run the race.”



said that this was something they miss in the western culture. My youngest brother, Lionel Paul, also came from Bintulu to be with us.

Shirani was capably handling all the matters related to the funeral and the finances. She was also my teacher and advisor – telling me what programmes to watch, how to do the banking, etc. Amara had handled all these things. I had not wanted to go for our church family camp. But Bina assured Shirani she would room with me and take care of me. I am so thankful I went for the messages really ministered to me. Thank you, church family, for the love you showered upon me.

I then went to Bintulu with my second brother, Wilfred Paul and his lovely wife, Prem to visit my youngest brother, Lionel Paul, and his lovely wife, Meena. It was here in Bintulu that God continued to minister His love and healing. The days were filled with enjoyable company, delicious food, refreshing rest and long walks. Each day, for five days, Meena would put on the Calcutta Keswick tapes. Pastor Arun Andrews of the Emmanuel Methodist Church in Bangalore was the speaker. As I listened I took notes and now I am sharing these messages at a cell group in Petaling Jaya in the lovely home of 94-year-old Aunty Ruth Navaratnam.

It was Shirani who first mooted the idea of a cell group for Aunty Ruth. Praise God we’ve had eight sessions so far and again, the Lord has provided wonderful people. I thank God for a dear friend, staff nurse Kim Looi, who gives rides to me and anyone else who needs them. I am the self-appointed leader of this lovely cell group and we have had the most wonderful times together.

I could date my total healing to when I returned from Bintulu. Yes, life has been so exciting and I wait upon the Lord every morning. When I wait upon the Lord, I jot

down the things He wants me to do for the day: who to visit, to take some food to, to ring and encourage. I do not drive and Amara did all the driving. Now the Lord has raised up so many angels to drive me to different places. I am careful not to overstretch them. They come to help me once a week and so it has worked out very well. Lydia Wong drives me to visit 86-year-old Grace Shantha. We give her all the news, I play the piano and we sing. Lydia has a compassionate heart and will drive miles to transport visually and hearing impaired people to wherever they need to go. Evelyn Kheng and Kim Looi have also taken me to visit Grace. I thank the Lord for each one of them.

The Lord continues to give me open doors for ministry. Having gone through depression myself, I am now able to minister to the depressed. I continue my ministry to Seelan Richards who lives in Gombak. Seelan had suffered a stroke in 1998. I have taught him about 400 choruses and he has picked them up very well because he is very musical. Every

Monday morning I am on the phone with him for an hour or more. Praise God he is a committed Christian. I thank the Lord for opportunities to minister to Bhavari Samuel every Friday and also for the opportunity to be part of the intercessory group that meets in Malath Das’ home.

I truly praise the Lord for the way He fills my days with joy and excitement. My beloved Amara used to say that all who go ahead to be with the Lord will be cheering the rest of us on. “If you fall” he said, “just pick yourself up and continue to run the race.” The important thing is to keep running till we reach the finishing tape. Even if we are the last to reach the tape, we will get a standing ovation from those who are in the arena cheering us on. Yes, I am holding the torch and running on.

My daughter, Shirani, has a heart for the poor and so both of us are involved in the ministry to the squatter children who live near our church. We teach them English on Saturday afternoons. Praise God for each one who helps in these English classes: my niece, Shenara Ponniah, Doris and her daughter Felicia, Kun Yeap and her son Anthony and her daughter, Alice Lee, Joana, Bina, Lalitha, Ting Leng and our Pastor Cho Hui who is solidly behind the ministry. I also wish to acknowledge Yeoh Beng Keat and his wife Kam Fong. They are great supporters and encouragers.

I praise God with all my heart for His love and grace and for all the wonderful family members and brothers and sisters in the family of God. Praise the Lord again and again! ■

Aunty Amara is a great encouragement to all who know her. She loves the Lord and serves Him cheerfully and enthusiastically.



Women's Finest Hour

Early in the morning, after having spent the night at His favourite prayer mountain, the Mount of Olives, Jesus went to the Temple. When all the people came to Him, He sat down and began to teach (see John 8:1–2). It was a peaceful setting that Jesus definitely enjoyed.

Suddenly, the tranquility was rudely shattered when the Scribes and Pharisees forcibly brought before Him a woman caught in adultery. They demanded that Jesus sanction her death as prescribed by the Law. At first, Jesus did not answer. He just stooped down and, with His finger, wrote on the ground, while the religious leaders persisted in their demands for lethal force (see John 8:3–6).

As terrible as the sin of this woman was, she should not have had to stand accused alone, since it takes two people to commit adultery. Where was the man? Why was he also not brought in? The Law specifies that both of them should be stoned. In the eyes of the accusers it was all right to condemn the woman but not the man. What a contradiction!

Equal Responsibility

The picture above is similar to what we often see in ministry circles today. People driven by excessive zeal intentionally focus on passages of the Scriptures that favour their biased points of view. They demand judgment on women 'caught ... in the very act' (John 8:4) without paying attention to men's share of responsibility for the violation. While this goes on, women stand exposed, humiliated and defiled. Deprived of legitimate male covering, they are often driven to adulterous substitutes.

While Jesus wrote on the ground, He chose not to bring up men's sins in general and not to ask that the male adulterer also be brought in. Neither did He tell the self-righteous accusers that they were as guilty as the woman and the man caught in adultery. He, however, knew this was true, because He was able to read the men's hearts.

Why did He keep quiet? Because He is a reconciler, not a divider. He is an intercessor, not an accuser. He purposely refused to take sides because taking sides is what the devil does. Jesus came "to seek and to save which was lost" (Luke 19:10). And what was lost is not in one piece or in one pile. It is broken and

scattered all over the place. He does not pick the best-looking parts and reject the most damaged ones. He waits until He is able to embrace all the broken pieces, take them in His arms, place them close to His heart and then fix them!

In the same manner, Jesus refuses to take sides when it comes to the gender gap. He will not lower men in order to elevate women or vice-versa. Instead, He meets them at whatever level they are at in order to bring both of them up to His level. This is the way of the Cross. Jesus is faithful, even when we are unfaithful, because He cannot deny Himself. He is a Saviour, not a condemner.

A Radical Message

Is Jesus' approach effective? Yes! Where do you think those men went after they left Jesus that day? Most likely they went home to their wives. Having seen themselves reflected on the troubled face of the accused woman, they must have realized how close they had come, at one time or another, to standing accused like her. Jesus' silence forever stamped the ugliness of adultery in their memory.

To the woman He said, "From now on sin no more" (John 8:11). What a liberating message overflowing with so much hope! Rather than dwelling on the past, He covered it with mercy and pointed the woman in the direction of restorative holiness. Sinning no more meant breaking up with her fellow adulterer and repairing her damaged marriage – a difficult but necessary assignment that calls for gender reconciliation at the deepest level.

Is such a radical change possible? Yes! Immediately after uttering the command not to sin anymore, Jesus proclaimed, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). He knows about our darkness. He knows we need His light. Rather than cursing our darkness, He shines for us to see the way and to follow Him. When we do, we leave darkness behind, forever.

Shortly after Jesus declared HE was the light of the world, a very intense theological discussion erupted. At first, many people resisted His words and accused Him of false testimony, a severe offence under the law. However, Jesus stood firm. He said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" (John 8:28). When

the crowd heard His unwavering words, "many came to believe in Him" (John 8:30).

What does it mean that those who "lift up the Son of Man ... will know that I am He?" The word "Man" in "Son of Man" does not only refer to males. It is the Greek word *anthropos*, which includes both men and women.

It is about time we lift up the Son of Man, the Saviour of both men and women. When we see Jesus as the Son of Man (*anthropos*), we will find that in Him, men and women are reconciled; we will take our position in Christ, and we will begin to minister harmoniously side by side, like Adam and Eve did in the Garden. ■

From Women, God's Secret Weapon by Ed Silvano

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.



WHY STUDY?

By Dr Leong Tien Fock

Good education holds out the promise of a good life in the future. Hence, the frantic pursuit of higher education and better paper qualifications. In this compelling article, *Dr Leong Tien Fock* calls for a re-thinking on the purpose of education in the light of God's Kingdom.

Most Malaysian Christians would, and should, support the recent emphasis on English even if some would oppose the way it is implemented. However, we need to be aware of the assumption that comes with this emphasis.

The official reason given for the emphasis is that Malaysians need to be competitive in the global market. In itself, there is nothing wrong with this. What is questionable is the accompanying assumption that the goal of education is basically economic. Thus, tertiary education must be market-driven, not just market-sensitive, and most tertiary students think only of pursuing an economically rewarding career.

There is nothing wrong with a Christian having a materially rewarding career. What is of concern is when Christians also have the assumption that the goal of tertiary education is a well-paid and well-respected job.

Traditionally the goal of higher education is the quest for truth, including

scientific truth. Most of the early universities in the West began basically as Bible colleges and most of the early scientists were Christians. In fact Sir Isaac Newton wrote more on theology than on science and his passion for science was driven by his Christian faith. Industrialisation has changed all that.

The current emphasis on English, and the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English, assumes as well as promotes the materialistic view of education. If Christians support the emphasis – which they should, for a higher purpose – without being conscious of its assumption, they will likely be further influenced by this materialistic view, without their permission.

The Endangered Species

What are the practical implications of Christians (consciously or unconsciously) having such a view? One concrete consequence has become a crisis for the Malaysian Church: Christian teachers in the public schools are fast becoming an

'endangered species'.

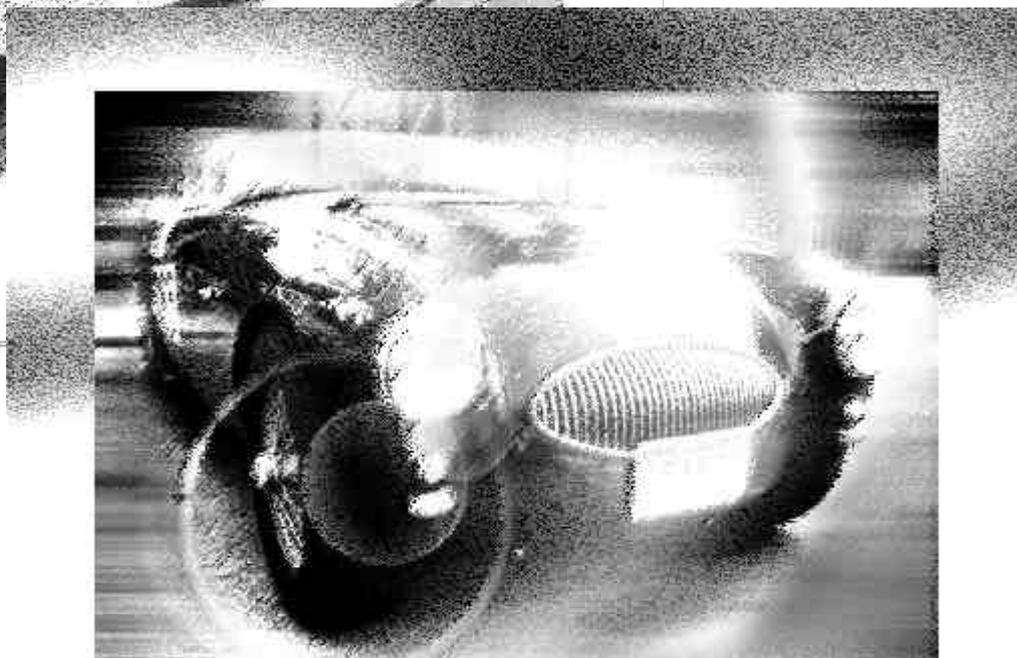
The public schools are where almost every Malaysian has his foundational and formative education. The influence of the schools, for the better or for the worse, is so encompassing (touching most Malaysians) and so far reaching (for the rest of their lives) that it is frightening to think of the future of the Malaysian Church if current trends persist.

According to Prof. Awang Had Salleh, the "modern, Western type education began in this country about 30 years after the coming of the British to Malaya. The first English school was the Penang Free School, established by the Rev. R. S. Hutchings, in 1816. For about 100 years, education was left in the hands of missionaries until the (British) government took over in the early 1900s". The Christian impact of this aspect of Malaysian history is still being felt today. But not for very long more unless there is a dramatic turn in how Christians view education.

Seek First the Kingdom

Christians are commanded to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness", that is, God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. To set us free to obey the command, Christ promised "all these things shall be added to you". Our common calling

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Why Study?: from page 11

as Christians is to contribute in one way or another to the extension of God's Kingdom on earth. Our specific calling ('vocation') is the means through which we accomplish that.

Depending on the natural talents and spiritual gifts God has blessed us with, and in line with our passions, personalities and experiences, we may be called to be engineers, businessmen, doctors, or pastors. Or teachers. It is also through our vocation that the Lord adds "all these things" (and often much more) to us. But the materialistic view of education tells us to seek first "all these things" ... and much more.

This has serious consequences not only on the mission of the Church but also on the well-being of Christians. Unless our work is somehow in line with our calling, we will always be a square peg in a round hole. We cannot be truly fulfilled no matter how prestigious our social status is. And we cannot really enjoy life no matter how much money we make.

Influenced by the Christian concept of calling, even non-Christian career counsellors are beginning to talk like spiritual advisers. According to Richard Leider and David Shapiro a "perfect job" is one in which "you're applying the talents you enjoy most to an interest you're passionate about, in an environment that fits who you are and what you value". They affirm that "people do find, or invent, or create these jobs".

For someone who is talented in teaching

and is passionate about little children her perfect job is found in a kindergarten. Think of the long-term impact such a Christian can have on successive generations of children in their early formative years. Besides, since she is doing what she naturally loves and is successfully touching lives she will experience a sense of fulfillment that no amount of prestige or money can give. But Christians called to be kindergarten, or even public school, teachers will miss their calling if they seek first "all these things ... and much more".

Currently, teaching in the public schools is not at all attractive to Christians. The 'prospects' are not much while the problems are many. Further, it may require them to first endure the STPM to get into a Science or Arts with Education course offered only in a public university. Going to a private college right after SPM is so much more appealing and 'rewarding'. But if we are called to be teachers, teaching is our mission.

If the missionaries had looked at the prospects and the problems in the mission field and the need to first endure learning a foreign language, how many would have

Unless our work is somehow in line with our calling, we will always be a square peg in a round hole.

come? If they had not come, barring God's intervention, how many of us would be Christians today?

When we find purpose and fulfillment in what we do, prospects and problems do not matter. Even Nietzsche (who coined the phrase "God is dead") said, "He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*". ■

(Dr Leong, a member of the NECF Malaysia Research Commission, is a researcher and lecturer-at-large with Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ. He has a degree in civil engineering from the University of Malaya and obtained an M.A. in Old Testament Studies from Wheaton College, and a Ph.D in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from the University of California.)

COMING UP ...

Pastors Appreciation Evening (PAE)

NECF Malaysia is initiating this programme nationwide as part of its ongoing Pastors Prayer Shield campaign launched last year.

Eating together does wonders for inter-personal relationships, and so the PAE will be in the form of a dinner banquet cum message held at various regions. Churches located within the region are encouraged to take their pastors and spouses to the dinner as their way of appreciating and honouring them, but more than these, this small gesture will spur them on in their ministry.

The first PAE will be held in Ipoh on Jan 9, 2003. For more information, contact Rev. Lai Moo Him at 012-5055836 or 03-77278227.

Thanksgiving Tea on Dec 7

This yearly get-together of prayer leaders and intercessors from all over Malaysia is organised by the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission to celebrate what God has done through the commission during the year.

The gathering is also an occasion for those in the ministry of mobilising intercession to network and bond with each other.

There will be a review of the various prayer initiatives undertaken throughout the year and a preview of what the commission hopes to do next year.

The gathering will be held at Full Gospel Tabernacle, Subang Jaya. Churches are urged to send their representatives with a participation fee of RM5 each to cover the cost of refreshment.

NECF to Visit South

An NECF Malaysia team will visit pastors and church leaders in JOHORE from Jan 23 to 28 as part of the organisation's church relations programme aimed at strengthening relationships with member-churches throughout the country, especially those outside the Klang Valley.

The team, comprising members of the NECF staff, will update churches on the current trends and issues affecting the Church in Malaysia. In return, it hopes to get feedback about any problems facing the churches down south.

East Malaysians in the Peninsula

The NECF Malaysia BM Commission will hold a two-day consultation next March to identify the problems facing East Malaysians living in Peninsular Malaysia.

The consultation will help pastors and workers in the BM ministry in Peninsular Malaysia to be more effective in their work among the approximately 75,000 East Malaysians living here.

The consultation will begin with the presentation of papers by three speakers: Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili (Migration and Problems Facing East Malaysians in the peninsula), Kon Onn Sein (Education Trends) and an authority who will speak about East Malaysians' criminal activities here.

The Commission hopes to hold this consultation every six months to monitor the programmes that have been planned to help the East Malaysians living in the peninsula.

For more information, contact Alfred Tais of NECF at 019-2683119 or 03-77278227 (tel.) or artm@pc.jaring.my (e-mail).

SHARING RESOURCES

NECF Anniversary with Anne Graham Lotz VCD

This one-hour VCD presents a compelling message by Dr Anne Lotz Graham about hope and heaven based on John's writing in Revelations.

Anne, the second daughter of Dr Billy Graham, delivered the message at NECF Malaysia's 20th anniversary dinner at Petaling Jaya in June. The VCD also contains a 15-minute multimedia presentation of NECF's ministries.

Call NECF at 03-77278227 or e-mail enquiries@necf.org.my for orders. ■



Year-End Greetings

The Council and Staff of NECF Malaysia wish all our readers a blessed Christmas and a meaningful New Year. May you continue to grow in love, faith and service in the year to come.

F O R E I G N N E W S

UN Report on Arab countries

A recent UN report by Arab scholars links a lack of basic freedoms with social underdevelopment in the Arab League's 22 nations.

Compared with other world regions, Arab countries rate lowest in individual liberties, civil participation and press freedom. More than half of Arab women are illiterate and female participation in government is the world's lowest.

The combined GDP of all 22 countries is less than Spain's. Labour productivity has been low and is declining; Arab countries have not developed as quickly as other comparable regions. —*Pulse*

Indian Government Threatens to Abolish Minority Rights

The Indian Church is being seriously threatened by government attempts to abolish minority rights and enact legislation against conversions, reported *Compass*. India's federal government, led by the pro-Hindu BJP part, is opposed to the concept of minority rights and has promised to move toward eliminating them.

The government has argued before the Supreme Court that minority educational institutions could not seek aid from the government as a matter of right. Christians have seen this as an attempt to cut off aid to schools run by the church.

K.S. Sudarshan, chief of the RSS Hindu fundamentalist organisation, has suggested that legislation is needed against religious conversions in order to ensure good relations among communities.

On Oct 5, the state of Tamil Nadu enacted such a law, banning conversions either "by force, allurement or fraudulent means," and levies imprisonment and a hefty fine on those found guilty.

Meanwhile, *Pulse* reported that militant Hindu groups have alleged that all conversion to Christianity happens by force or fraud and they reportedly influenced the ordinance's passing. So far only one other state, Orissa, has a similar ordinance in force, but Christians fear this will spread to other states.

There is a similar bill pending in the national Parliament, which even claims that the provision of free education by Christians is an "inducement" to conversion and will incur heavy penalties, *Compass* said. Such an ordinance would make it easier for extremist groups to harass and obstruct Christians witnessing to non-Christians.

The Growth of the Pentecostal Church

A study of church growth in the U.S. has revealed Pentecostal churches to be among the fastest-growing groups, experiencing double-digit growth nationally from 1990 to 2000. According to *The New York Times*, "Religious Congregations and Membership: 2000" found that the Assemblies of God was the third fastest-growing denomination, increasing 18.5 percent or 2.6 million since the last survey in 1990.

Released in September by a Roman Catholic research group, the study discovered that "conservative Protestants" gained while "moderate" and "liberal" Protestants continued to suffer an exodus of membership.

Conducted every 10 years by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies and published by Glenmary Research Centre, the survey looked at more than 150 Christian and non-Christian groups.

The fastest-growing religious group in the last decade was the Mormon Church, boosting its national membership by 19.3 percent to a total of 4.2 million. Southern Baptists remained the largest Protestant denomination with 19.9 million, but registered just five percent growth nationally. —*Ministries Today*

More Muslims Than Evangelicals In Germany

The number of Muslims in Germany is rising steadily due to immigration and a higher birth rate (among the Muslims). There are 3.45 million Muslims in "Luther's country" today, compared with 3.24 million one year ago. Most of them are Turkish

immigrants; only 12,000 Muslims are of German descent.

According to figures published by the Central Islam in Soest nearly 74 percent (2.55 million) take their religion seriously. This exceeds the estimated number of 1.5 million evangelicals. —*idea*



More Pregnant Teenagers Worldwide

Despite sex education and contraception, more and more teenagers get pregnant. According to Unicef, each year 1.25 million girls between the ages 15 and 19 are expecting a baby; one in three has an abortion.

Out of 28 industrial nations, the U.S. has the highest number of teenage abortions — 52,100 per year. The U.K. comes next with 30,800 and in third place is New Zealand with 29,800.

Austria (14,000), Germany (13,100) and Norway (12,400) rank in midfield, while Switzerland (5,500), Japan (4,500) and South Korea (2,900) are at the bottom of the list. —*idea*

AIDS Update

Some 40 million people are infected with HIV, the AIDS virus. Another 20 million have already died from it. About 9,000 people die of AIDS every day and 15,000 more are infected. AIDS kills mostly people in poor countries. The worst affected countries are in Africa, but serious threats are developing

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New WEA head urges the global church to “go together”



Gary Edmonds is the new secretary-general of World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), a global network of more than a million local evangelical churches in 110 nations, including Malaysia. WEA assists national evangelical fellowships, such as NECF Malaysia, to disciple their nations. In this interview with *World Pulse*, he shares his vision for WEA's role in equipping churches around the world.

What is your vision for the global church today?

The Church, the people of God, have to have a united relationship—dynamic, harmonious and interconnected. Before, people would plan and act independently of one another; I say no more of that. Jesus prayed John 17:20–23, “that they may all be one, so that ...” There’s a response: “... the world may believe.”

Our unity is not a theoretical unity, but it has a functional, missional component. It’s the same unity that the Father, Son and Spirit have – a dynamic, active unity. There’s movement, rhythm, joy and vitality. One member cannot move without the others moving.

What social dynamics could affect the church “going together”?

The movement of the gospel is in cultures influenced by Buddhism, animism, secularism, Islam and Hinduism. We need to realise that a response to Jesus is as much a social as a spiritual decision. People are saying, “You talk about bringing life, freedom and wholeness to us.” These communities have a way they structure society. A person knows that they’ll be loved and cared for. They know where to go when they have problems, need wisdom and counsel.

The issue of Christianity is: “Can you

show me a community that is better or equal to the one you’re asking me to leave?” So, it’s as much a social as a spiritual decision.

Where have you seen these social dynamics at play?

I’ve travelled to India, the Middle East, and Europe among others. Grinding poverty, social decay and hope are real issues in these cultures. Do we realise that Jesus loved people as whole people? We can’t reduce the gospel down to a spiritual salvation because the compassion, love and power of God touch us in our wholeness.

God in His great wisdom has raised up incredible diversity in skills and

2,000 known evangelical Christians. The Church in Turkey has a huge desire to grow, to raise its own national leaders. Other members of the body can come alongside to say, “We’ll be there to help mentor a new generation so it can stand up on its own strength.” We need to ask, “How can we connect the body of Christ so that the Turkish church can initiate a church planting movement within its own nation?”

I sat with a group of 10 Kabyle Berber church leaders in Algeria. They believed God had called them to see a church planted in every town in Algeria. What impacted them to follow Christ? They said they saw Christians working in their land

“Sometimes we think of unity in high concepts. We need to boil it down to knowing each other by name and speaking well of each other. Than we can explore how we can work together.”

specialisation. He’s saying to us, “This is the body, diverse members, but one body.” Let’s learn how to move and operate together as one. In so doing we’ll present a clear picture of God.

What will operating “as one” look like?

In Turkey, for example, there are 1,500 to

who knew each other by name, who spoke well of each other, and actually did things together in loving ways. Sometimes we think of unity in high concepts. We need to boil it down to knowing each other by name and speaking well of each other. Than we can explore how we can work together. ■

AIDS Update: from page 14

in China, India, Indonesia and Russia.

Meanwhile in **Uganda**, its abstinence education is producing significant results in reducing AIDS, according to a new Harvard University study. The HIV infection rate dropped 50 percent between 1992 and 2000.

When the programme started, 21 percent of pregnant women were HIV-positive; by 2001, the number was six percent. Education starts with an abstinence programme for youths called “True Love Waits.” More than 30,000 Ugandan youths

are currently involved in the programme that focuses on abstinence until marriage.

In other nations with high HIV infections, such as Zimbabwe and Botswana, condoms were promoted as the solution to the AIDS crisis. —*Pulse*

FOR Your Prayers



BALI / INDONESIA

The Oct 12 Bali bombings finally pushed the Indonesian government to take the first firm step in weeding out terrorist groups operating from the country. President Megawati Sukarnoputri signed two anti-terror decrees immediately after the incident at the resort town of Kuta that killed about 190 people, mainly foreign tourists. The decrees will give authorities wide powers in the hunt for the perpetrators of the bombings. Indonesia has even asked the United Nations to put Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), suspected to be behind the bombings, on its list of terrorist organisations, according to an AFP report. JI is the regional terror group based in Indonesia and linked to Osama's al-Qaeda. Its leader, Abubakar Ba'asyir who is now being questioned by the Indonesian police for the bombings, is a self-confessed al-Qaeda member. Please pray for God's hand to be upon the authorities investigating the bombings and for the fragile situation in Indonesia where there are great fears that militant Muslims will react to the government's action against JI; for Jesus' love to be demonstrated to the suffering Balinese during this time through the love and practical helps from Christians.

BELARUS

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko officially signed the country's highly repressive new religion law, described by Keston Institute as the most repressive of its kind in Europe. The new law outlaws unregistered religious activity; requires compulsory prior censorship for all religious literature; bans foreign citizens from leading religious organisations; restricts publishing and education to faiths that have 10 registered communities, including at least one registered in 1982; and bans all but occasional, small religious meetings in private homes. All religious organisations must apply for re-registration within two years. Many small groups will not pass the requirements for re-registration and will be rendered illegal. Other groups that did not have a registered community in 1982 (at the height of the Soviet era) will be banned from ever becoming a "religious

association", a status necessary for publishing and importing literature, or running charities and schools or theological education. Pray for spiritual wisdom and peace for all evangelical Protestant pastors and leaders whose ministries and congregations are affected by this law, that they may have grace to lead well and that they remain bonded in a spirit of love and solidarity.

IVORY COAST

The conflict here, whilst basically political, is essentially religious at its roots. Northern Muslims, led by rebel Muslim soldiers, are demanding a Muslim government. The Christian population, living mainly in southern and central Ivory Coast, support the government of President Gbagbo who is a Christian. A tenuous ceasefire has been brokered after four weeks of heavy fighting that has left more than 300 dead and 200,000 displaced. Christians trapped in rebel-held areas are still in extreme peril. Most are hungry and fleeing 50 to 100 km through the bush to southern villages to save their lives. The situation is horrendous for all, but especially for the elderly, children and pregnant women. Please pray for their safety and for the miracle of peace; pray against this 'melt-down' in what has been a centre for mission and Church growth in West Africa; for strength and healing from the Lord for Christians who had been bereaved and traumatised through the conflict; great wisdom for President Gbagbo and his government as they negotiate for peace and national reconciliation.



LEBANON

A Bible college in Lebanon trains Christian leaders from many countries in the Middle East. Pray that this college will be effective in its strategic role of providing leaders for churches throughout the region. Since Sept 11, the college has encountered great difficulty in obtaining visas for potential students from certain Arab countries. Pray that God will open the door for the affected students.

IRAQ

Christians in Iraq are the convenient scapegoats to be punished in retaliation for any aggressive actions by the West, particularly the US, over the nuclear arms issue. Many Muslim Iraqis identify them with the 'Christian' West, the enemy. Pray that Iraqi Christians will know the Lord's peace and protection during this time of fear and insecurity. Meanwhile, a recently-established Christian ministry in the Middle East is providing practical training for Iraqi Christian refugees and also other Christians. It teaches computer repair skills and offers courses in sewing and weaving to women. With these skills, they will be more able to find work. Pray for the smooth running of these courses, and that God will supply over and above all the materials and resources needed to run them.

SRI LANKA

The Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka says the Society for the Preservation of Buddhism is aggressively trying to establish chapters in every district of the country to monitor growth of Christianity and prevent conversions. Radical Buddhists also aim to close down churches in traditional Buddhist villages. Attacks on evangelical churches in rural areas have escalated. Buddhist monks have reportedly incited local people to carry them out because they feel that these small fellowships threaten to undermine the cultural and religious unity of this predominantly Buddhist nation. Pray that this situation will not intimidate the Christians, but instead, spur them to reach out to their people in ways that will glorify His name.