

Berita NECF

Editorial

Partner Power

History is the story of God giving away power for the good of mankind. After entrusting the human species with the gift of free choice, God invited His representatives to act as partners, even to argue and wrestle with the One who created them.

Yet, virtually everyone God picked to lead a new venture – Adam, Abraham, Moses, David – proved disappointing in part. But it seems that God has committed to work with human partners no matter how inept they are.

In the New Testament, Jesus stayed on earth long enough to

assemble a dozen followers (who were no less flawed), to whom He handed the keys of the kingdom of God. We are “God’s fellow workers” to collaborate with His actions in the world. As God’s co-workers, we need one another to do His work effectively. Indeed, there is truth in the saying “There is strength in numbers.”

Likewise, NECF Malaysia as a national body does not work alone. It desires to serve the Christian community and the nation through the local churches. This is a lofty task which requires the partnership of local churches.

Of late, there have been many issues of public life and concerns that require our attention and action. Such issues cannot be handled by one single organisation or by churches alone. They need the input and counsel of the entire Christian community.

For example, the implications arising from the ‘Allah’ issue affect all facets of church life and require wise counsel and wisdom for the appropriate response.

Then, there is the issue of school principals closing down non-Muslim

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HELP FOR PAKISTAN FLOOD VICTIMS

NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Sam Ang (right) handing over a cheque for US\$10,000 to Crisis Relief Services and Training (Crest) Executive Director Lana Wong for Pakistan flood victims. CREST will use the money, which comes from the NECF Emergency Relief Fund, to buy food and medical supplies, and cooking equipment for the victims in Khyber Pashunkwa region.

The floods, the worst in Pakistan in 35 years, have killed thousands of people, devastated over three million people’s lives and destroyed vast areas of crops.

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Chairman's Message



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin

Few are familiar with these words, even Christians.

But these words will one day haunt every careless soul, every self-centred, godless church, every vile authority and every wicked nation.

These mysterious words were the famous "writing on the wall" found in Daniel chapter 5. Belshazzar the impious king was carousing with his concubines and debauched guests, thumbing their nose at the God of Israel, defiling the golden vessels of the Temple, revelling into the wee hours of the morning when all of a sudden, the writing appeared on the wall.

These words mean "God has numbered your days," "you have been weighed and found wanting," and "your kingdom is divided between the Medes and the Persians."

The all-powerful king had no inkling that his kingdom could end in less than 24 hours, well not at least without a fight. In his overconfidence he forgot his humanity and definitely the God his forefathers had encountered.

"The writing is on the wall" is today a common English phrase. As it happened to the most powerful man alive then, it can and it will happen to any who dares mock and fearlessly challenge our God. That fateful night spelt the end of the Babylonian empire, proving once again that no regime is exempt from divine dealings.

All too often, the rich and the poor,

the powerful and the weak, kings and paupers alike, forget that though we forget God, He does not forget.

To the individual who persistently sins, the day of reckoning will come. To the church who ignores the Word, defiles herself and has no time to be missional, the lampstand will be removed. To the nation who thrives on unrighteousness, injustice, and robs the poor – floods, earthquakes, fires and both economic and natural disasters will be the norm.

That night in BC 539, knees were shaking. The Babylonian wise men could provide no answers. Despite the sobriety in atmosphere and the willingness to seek counsel from the man of God (Daniel), nothing could change the course of history. It was not merely any writing on the wall – it was the writing written by the very finger of God.

Materialism, kickbacks and perks have desensitised many good people while compromise and the unwillingness to be disciplined have caused many churches to lose sight of her missionality. On the national front, corruption and wastage remain unashamedly unabated.

Know that the God who is in control of the universe, is not content to just keep spinning the planet. He is still capable of writing on the wall - and it could well be your wall, my wall or our nation's wall.

It would pay for us to take note, as the days will surely come when we would hear our "*mene, mene!*"

Do **NOT** Register with ROS

The Registrar of Societies (ROS) has clarified at a meeting with NECF Malaysia that churches are not mandated to register with it (ROS) as they have the right to exist under Article 11 of the Federal Constitution.

However, many churches are registering as societies to resolve practical problems such as opening bank accounts and holding properties.

“Properties can be held through a company or trustee,” explained NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Sam Ang. “Hence, there is no need to become an ROS member just so you can hold properties.”

As for the issue of opening bank accounts, ROS informed NECF that it would seek clarification from Bank Negara whether churches must be

registered as societies first before they could open a bank account.

Article 11(3)(a) of the Federal Constitution clearly states that every religious group has the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes.

The word “institutions” must necessarily include churches, temples and the like. The very expression “religious group” used here already assumes that religious practice is often a group experience.

No conditions are found in Article 11 or in the rest of the Constitution that require a religious group to form a legal association before it can be regarded as lawful.

On top of this, Article 11(3)(a) of the Federal Constitution states that every religious group has the right to

manage its own religious affairs.

This implies that these groups cannot be compelled to form legal associations as in doing so, they subject themselves to many additional requirements.

For example, by incorporating as a company or registering as a society, religious groups make themselves subject to all the requirements of the Companies Act 1965 and the Societies Act 1966.

They are also subject to the authority of the Registrar of Companies and the ROS who may direct them to do certain acts or comply with certain conditions.

Therefore, NECF’s stand is that churches do not need to be registered as societies.

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...continued from front cover: Partner Power

religious bodies (Christian Fellowships, Buddhist societies, etc.) at their whims and fancies, going against an earlier circular from the Ministry of Education allowing the establishment of such bodies with certain provisos.

Dealing with such overzealous civil servants will prove challenging for us Christians as we strive to maintain our religious space.

Will this issue be resolved once and for all? Perhaps not, as there will always be “Little Napoleon-Principals” trying to push their personal agenda. But that’s why we need the national bodies to guard the interests of their charges.

In early August, the Aljazeera broadcast channel carried a news report on the Pahang Government’s effort to convert the Orang Asli (indigenous people) to Islam by offering housing, electricity and material goods. The report showed images of brick houses belonging to those who had become Muslims and wooden, straw houses of those who chose not to convert to Islam. An Orang Asli man interviewed said he lost his native land to the state government upon conversion to Islam.

The news report, entitled “Malaysia ethnic tribes ‘forced to convert’ ” was uploaded on YouTube which is being

circulated throughout the world.

Such unethical and unacceptable actions on the part of the Government highlight the unjust and biased position of the authorities against those who chose not to convert to Islam.

It showed how state benefits that are meant for the welfare of a particular cultural community have been manipulated for the selfish ends of some people. Again, moving against the tide of such irregularities demands concerted and united efforts from churches and the relevant organisations.

Predictably, the Malaysian Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JHEOA) denied offering material inducements for conversion to Islam, but even as they are busy denouncing the Aljazeera news, reports of similar enticements to the indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak were surfacing.

These are only a few examples. There are so many more issues that need to be addressed at the highest level and it takes collaborative effort to gather the resources and face the challenges. The vitality of partnership and networking is crucial and our call is for churches to avail their resources and work with us over the many critical national issues.

Will you contribute your resources for the sake of our Church and our nation? Find out how on pages 10 to 11.



'Allah' from birth to death

Word used by East Malaysian Bahasa-speaking Christians throughout life

East Malaysian Bahasa-speaking Christians have been using the word 'Allah' in all aspects of their faith throughout their lives – from the moment they were born to the second they die.

'Allah' is used in the full spectrum of life – from the time the baby opens his eyes to the time he permanently closes them.

The word is used in all the rites and rituals from baptism – including child baptism – to marriage, confirmation of baptism, ordination and commissioning of leaders, right down to funerals.



'Allah' is deeply ingrained in every aspect of our lives. – Alfred

"We use 'Allah' from the time we open our eyes at birth to the time we close our eyes at death," said Alfred Tais, NECF Malaysia Executive Secretary (Bahasa).

Alfred presented the various books in Bahasa Malaysia used by the Sabah Anglican Diocese for the different services and every book is heavily laden with the word 'Allah'.

These books have been around and used by the East Malaysian churches since pre-Merdeka, he said.

"The word 'Allah' is deeply ingrained in every aspect of our lives. How can anyone forbid us from using it?" asked Alfred, a Sabahan Kadazan.

► See page 6 for more on 'Allah'.

Cruising through the ups and downs of life

By Sam Ang

We live in a society of insatiable desires, prodded by the hidden persuaders of our society that we need to acquire, consume, upgrade and enlarge in order to have a good life.

In such a context, the concept of "enough" is a strange one. Then comes recession and a fierce struggle arises between our insatiable desires and not having the means to fulfill them.

Recession provokes strange, scary feelings, especially to those who have never known what it is like to have their desires unmet. It also creates "large-scale insecurity and uncertainty", as reported in Newsweek July 19, 2010.

People feel more exposed and they tend to plan for the worst rather than hope for the best. Their reluctance to make major purchase commitments (a new car or home) validates their pessimism by retarding recovery.

Where do we as Christians stand on this issue? How do we cope with the ups and down of life?

As Christians, one of the greatest virtues that we have been taught is Christian contentment. True contentment endures in spite of our circumstances; it does not rise and fall with every turn of providence.

True, lasting contentment comes only from knowing and trusting the Lord, a sure confidence in God's providence and provision.

In his letter to his spiritual son Timothy, Apostle Paul

advised in 1 Tim. 6:6: "But godliness with contentment is great gain." The key word here is "godliness."

Here are three suggested thoughts on how godliness should take shape in our lives.

1. Practise discipline in the things of God.
2. Remember that sin has been defeated
3. Believe in the sovereignty of God.

What are the practical steps we should take towards "godliness"?

1. Develop a lifestyle of limits, not luxury
2. Cultivate generosity, not greed
3. Emphasise personal worth rather than net worth
4. Invest in the eternal, not just the temporal

We are to anticipate that we will be ushering difficult times ahead. The economic outlook of the nation does not look rosy.

The disparity between the rich and poor has widened considerably. As reported recently, a theoretical household of 4.4 people would need RM858 a month per person in order for them not to be declared poor.

The ups and downs of life will remain the big challenge we all have to face.

Are we taking steps to tighten our belt and are we learning the art of contentment?

Fuss-free way to change religion data in MyKad

Baptism certificate not required

Christians who wish to change their religion to Christianity in their MyKad data are not required to tender any legal documents, such as baptism certificates.

They only need to fill in 'Borang A' to effect the change. ('Borang A' is available on the NECF website at www.necf.org.my)

This was confirmed at a recent meeting between NECF Malaysia and top officials from the National Registration Department (NRD). However, this is not applicable if they had been registered as Muslims.

For Muslim or persons who have converted to Islam, the provisions of the respective State's administration of Islamic Law enactment apply. Under these enactments for the most part of the 13 States of Malaysia, conversion back to one's former religion or to any other religion is either: (a) not allowed under Islamic laws; or (b) a criminal offence which means he/she may be fined, whipped, detained or imprisoned under Islamic laws.

When people convert to Islam, their person's MyKad will record the conversion and the front of their MyKad will bear the word "Islam".

Even if the person no longer practises Islam, he/she may be regarded as a Muslim and may be subject to fined, whipped, detained or imprisoned for violation of Syariah laws, such as praying in church and eating in public during the Muslim fasting month, etc.

It must be noted that when a person converts to Islam, that person does not gain Bumiputera status as some have mistakenly come to believe. (Those with Bumiputera status get special privileges such as discounts for new house purchases and easier access to enter public universities.)

At the meeting with NRD officials, NECF also raised the issue of East Malaysian Christians whose religion in their MyKad is recorded as "Islam" simply because their names carry "bin" and "binte".

This is a prevailing problem in Sabah and Sarawak where many indigenous citizens have names that carry "bin" and "binte". The NRD automatically assigns their religion as "Islam" even though many of them are Christians.

The NRD confirmed that those who are affected could change the data in their MyKad provided they had obtained clearance from the Syariah Court.

During the meeting, NRD officials admitted they were aware of this problem and have thus arranged for mobile NRD units to help those who wish to change their MyKad religion record.

NECF Secretary-General Sam Ang urged Christians who face this problem to get their religion changed to "Christianity" in their MyKad as soon as possible and to persevere until the change is done.

"This is important as it will contribute towards accurate statistics which is critical when we advocate on issues affecting the Malaysian Church, as well as to avoid undue complications, misunderstandings and conflicts with the Islamic authorities," he explained.

The officials also confirmed at the meeting that children of Malaysian women born of foreign husbands are automatically Malaysians provided the couples have Malaysian marriage certificates before the birth of their children.



POSTAL RATE

As the postage has gone up last month, please use 60-sen stamps in your correspondence to us. We have been paying a hefty fine to retrieve your letters from the Post Office."

The 'Allah' Journey in Malaysia

THE Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) recently released a chronological outline of the Alkitab and the 'Allah' issue to help Christians understand the beginnings of the use of the term 'Allah', the publication of the Alkitab from earliest times, and the subsequent ban on the use of 'Allah' in the Catholic weekly, Herald, and the Alkitab under the Internal Security Act along with its restricted use in the Federation of Malaysia. We highlight here the key developments from the four-page fact sheet which may be viewed in its entirety at the NECF Malaysia website.

- **1629** ► A. C. Ruyl translated the Gospel of Matthew into Bahasa Melayu. 'Allah' is used.
- **1733** ► First complete Malay Bible published. Translation of Genesis by M. Leijdecker. "*Pada mulanja dedjadikanlah Allah akan swarga dan dunja.*" (Gen. 1:1).
- **1879** ► Second complete Malay Bible. Translation of by H. C. Klinkert. "*Babwa-sanja Allah djoega salamatkoe.*" (Isaiah 12:2).
- **1938** ► Translation of Gospel of John. "*Maka pada awal pertama adalah Firman, dan Firman itu bersama-sama dengan Allah.*" (John 1:1).
- **1981** ► The Alkitab banned by order under the Internal Security (Prohibition of Publications) on Dec 2.
- **1982** ► The Alkitab banned by order under the Internal Security (Prohibition of Publications) on March 22.
- **1985/1989** ► Heads of Malaysian Churches meet in Kuala Lumpur (1985) and Kuching (1989) where they unanimously decide to keep 'Allah' and the Bible Society of Malaysia honour this decision when it publishes the revised Malay Bible, the *Alkitab Berita Baik* (1996).
- **1986** ► Circular letter to all Christian publishers from the Publication Control Division of the Kementerian Dalam Negeri (KDN) stating four words which are not allowed to be used in Christian publications: *Allah, Kaabah, Baitullah* and *Solat*. The prohibition is to maintain public order and prevent any misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians.
- **1998** ► First letter (an admonition) to the Catholic weekly, Herald, from KDN not to use 'Allah'.
- **2002** ► Second letter to Herald (a show-cause letter) to be answered within 14 days. Subsequently through appeal and Cabinet influence, Herald was granted the use of 'Allah' in its publication.
- **2005** ► Letter dated Dec 22 from Kementerian Keselamatan Dalam Negeri allowing Christian publications to be distributed on condition that the front page has a cross with the words "*Penerbitan Kristian*" (A Christian Publication). This is to prevent confusion among Muslims in Malaysia.
- **2006** ► Letter from Kementerian Keselamatan Dalam Negeri allowing the publication of the Bible in Bahasa Melayu in Malaysia with the conditions that it is stamped with the cross and the words "*Untuk Penganut Beragama Kristian*" (For Christians) and that the BM Bible is to be sold only in Christian premises or shops. This is to prevent confusion of Muslims in Malaysia.
- **2006** ► Third letter to Herald (a reprimand). Fourth letter to Herald (a warning). Fifth letter to Herald (another warning).
- **2006** ► Home Minister sets condition against the use of 'Allah' on Herald in renewing its publication licence. Herald seeks redress through the courts against the power of the Home Minister to set conditions on the use of the 'Allah' word. Sixth letter to Herald (a show-cause letter).
- **2007** ► Herald files A Writ of Summons and Statement of Claim on Dec 5. An Application for Judicial Review on the condition cited above.
- **2008** – Customs officers and Home Ministry officials detain the Alkitab at ports of entry and confiscate publications, Sunday School children's books and CDs belonging to Sidang Injil Borneo and Jill Ireland Lawrence Bill. Both parties initiate judicial appeals against the Home Minister.
- **2008** ► An Application for Judicial Review for Herald 2009 permit condition is filed.
- **2009, Dec 31** ► Herald wins court case against the power of the Home Minister to set conditions on the use of 'Allah' in the Herald publication. Government appeals the court decision.
- **Present** ► Awaiting Appeals Court to hear the case

“Be FAIR” – MCCBCHST tells Govt

Solve woes faced by non-Muslim family members of Muslim converts

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) calls for a just solution to the ordeals suffered by non-Muslim family members of converts to Islam

Conversion to another religion involves emotional and legal adjustments, not only to the convert but also to their parents, spouses, children and other family members.

As such, to convert in secret without due consultation with or making it clearly known to those the convert is intimately related to is surely not at all an acceptable practice.

This is especially the case when an adult converts to Islam from another religion. In cases of this nature, as has been evidenced in numerous news reports, the new convert seems to have unilateral powers to direct that his or her children be converted to Islam without the necessity of the consent of the other parent of the child/children.

Laws and regulations governing the civil marriage are immediately replaced by Islamic law and practice, among which are those pertaining to inheritance, divorce and alimony. Furthermore, it would seem that the civil courts are reluctant to hear such cases when one party of the marriage has become a Muslim. Under such blatantly unfair circumstances, why and how should non-Muslims accept these sudden changes that have come upon their lives?

The current move by government authorities who oversee the administration of the Islamic religion in Malaysia to plug loopholes in regulations on the registration of Muslim converts as reported by *The New Straits Times* (NST) on August 6 and 7 may seem a big deal to those same authorities.

But what effect would it in fact have on the affected non-Muslim spouses, children and parents? How would it be a source of comfort and relief for the loved ones of the converts who often only find out their change of religion upon their deaths as was the case with the Malaysian hero, M. Moorthy?

The fact remains that if the family members concerned were given no reason to even remotely suspect their change of religion, how would they think it was

necessary even to make a check on the Islamic register of conversions? As was the case of Moorthy, the family testified that he was a practising Hindu until the day he died, even observing penance at Thaipusam.

That being the case, why would a non-Muslim family peacefully practising their own religion in Malaysia have any reason to check if any member of their family had converted to Islam unbeknownst to them?

We may perhaps understand the need for secrecy in conversion cases should they immediately be subjected to serious and unlawful persecution. But in the cases we are dealing with here, the converts are by no imaginable means subjected to persecution.

If they are, non-Muslims and Muslims alike should take up the case for them as religion is a matter of personal conscience. But in the cases we are here considering, it is the family members of the converts to Islam who are experiencing legal consequences rather than the converts themselves.

MCCBCHST is therefore compelled to urge the government to do the right thing and promptly set in motion what in the first place it had first proposed by its own cabinet decision. That is, to initiate legislation for a “conversion bill” which would address the vital issues related to conversion to Islam as it adversely affects the non-Muslim family members.

In this respect, MCCBCHST takes positive note of the statement issued by Malaysia Islamic National Organisation Secretary-General Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman (NST, Aug 7) who “suggested that the authorities also address the distribution of wealth to family members”, adding that “sometimes, the issue following a convert’s death isn’t so much about religion but inheritance. Islamic law bars a convert’s non-Muslim family members from receiving any of his property.”

He was quoted as saying that the religious authorities should advise and help new converts to distribute their wealth to their beneficiaries before the conversion takes place, adding that “this will ensure that non-Muslims will not be victimised.”

Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman’s comments are well taken and any discussion along these lines will surely make room for a just solution.

Editor’s Note: This is a press statement by MCCBCHST.



Pemandu CEO: Change Not Impossible

Believe in the power of prayer

Corruption is so rampant in the country that Malaysians are generally skeptical that it can be eradicated.

Dato Sri Idris Jala, the Chief Executive Officer of Performance Management & Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) believes otherwise.

“It is not impossible for the situation in country to change,” he told a crowd of several hundred people at the closing of the recent NECF Malaysia Missional Church Conference at Petaling Jaya.

Believing there is hope in the country because of a God who hears the cries of His people, he then shared his personal experience of how, through his and many people’s desperate prayers, God helped him to turn around the fortunes of two companies despite all the odds against them.

Under his leadership as Managing Director and CEO of Malaysia Airlines, the national carrier achieved a record profit in less than two years after suffering the biggest financial loss in its corporate history.

Several years earlier when he was Managing Director of Shell Sri Lanka, he helped to turn around the company’s LPG business despite bomb threats and other critical dangers.

All these happened because of the “discipline of prayer and action”, he shared during his talk on the Government Transformation Programme that he is overseeing.

A devout Christian who sounded more like a preacher than a civil servant, Dato Idris urged Christians to continue praying fervently for the nation.

“I truly believe in the power of prayer,” he said and revealed that he and his wife were participating in the NECF 40-day Prayer and Fast.

He urged the crowd to pray for change of mindsets and for strong spiritual values among the people to fight the scourge of corruption. “As Christians, we must stand firm as

beacons of light to fight corruption,” he added.

“Malaysia has never been in a more vulnerable position than it is now. But that’s not bad because vulnerability is a virtue.

“It is when we are vulnerable that we realise our need for God and we turn to Him for help,” Dato Idris pointed out and reminded that after we had done all we could in prayer and action, the power to deliver change is in God’s hand.

With that, he concluded his sharing, took some questions from the floor and rushed off to SIB Kuala Lumpur where he was slated to speak to some 1,000 people at the church’s conference.

Missional Church Conference

Earlier, some 180 participants were enlightened and educated about the mission of the Missional Church during three sessions of sharing by Dr Paul Alexander.

In his sessions on the Shape, Leaders and Mission of the Missional Church, the essence of Paul’s message is that “The Missional Church is one that reflects God”.

If we are to reflect God to the world, we cannot do it inside our church walls; we have to step outside to a hurting world and reflect Him to the desperate and needy people there.

Having ministered in some of the neediest countries in the world, Paul shared from his experience how he ‘evolved’ from one who just preached the Word to one who believed in and practised the “social gospel” – a dirty phrase to some Christians, he said.

“Many Christians are discouraged



Pemandu CEO Dato Sri Idris Jala (right): “It is when we are vulnerable that we realise our need for God and we turn to Him for help.” NECF Secretary-General Sam Ang looks on as NECF Chairman Rev. Eu Hong Seng presents Dato Sri Jala a memento after his closing address.

to practise the social gospel as they think it’s what liberal Christians do,” he said. “But how can we reflect God if we don’t get involved in doing good, especially to the poor?” he asked.

What makes a missional leader

During his session on missional leaders, Paul outlined five characteristics of a missional leader and concluded by encouraging the participants that evangelicals are the most ideal people to embrace the Missional Church concept because they have a similar view.

He said missional leaders 1) have excellence in their craft; 2) gladly invest in first class education and are committed to studying God’s Word critically and accurately; 3) have faith as their driving passion to impact their community; 4) have a healthy respect for their peers and high tolerance for those of other views; and 5) are motivated to redeem and not to condemn as they genuinely care for people, recognize they are sinners saved by grace and celebrate the diversity that God has made.

Participants also attended two workshops each from a selection of workshops designed to inspire them to

Continued next page...

JB Churches Collaborate on Community Project

Most churches prefer to carry out community projects on their own than to collaborate with other churches as it is easier to coordinate the work.

So, when news got around that Johor Baru churches have come together to do a joint community project, it raised more than a few eyebrows.

Called CRS, or Crisis Relief Store, the project has the participation of several churches whose pastors are members of the Johor Baru Pastors' Fellowship (JBPF).

Pr Sonny, JPPF spokesman, tells Berita NECF what the ministry is about.

Tell us about CRS

The store was set up as a collection centre for goods, such as clothing, electrical goods and foodstuff that are required in times of need. We mooted this idea when we conducted two rounds of "HELPING

HANDS", first to help the Karen Refugees in North-East Thailand, and then to communities in and around Johor Baru (such as the poor or less privileged), NGOs who are involved in running social homes (such as orphanages, old folks' homes and homes for the "orang kurang upaya" or physically disabled).

We received all kinds of goods from people and we realised that we can do this on a more organised basis to respond to disasters which are beset-ting many countries.

We envision that in peace times, churches which are already helping the poor in the community can have access to this store to requisite goods for the needy.

In times of crisis, CRS store will be the first to be emptied to send relief supplies to the affected area.



CRS volunteers from different churches loading goods into a lorry to be despatched to the needy.



CRS is started by the JB Pastors' Fellowship. How did you manage to come together to do a joint project?

Some pastors in the fellowship were already active in this particular area and we decided to come together to go forth from another platform – that of partnership and networking.

Over the years of fellowshipping in JBPF, our relationship has become strong enough for us to come together. Remember an old song called "Pass It On?" The first line says, "It only takes a spark to get the fire going." We are just the spark

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If we are to reflect God to the world, we cannot do it inside our church walls. – Dr Paul Alexander

serve society.

The workshops – covering rural

development, education, arts and entertainment, youths, business and the media – were facilitated by practitioners in the field, all who are committed to the cause of the Kingdom in their area of work.

Pr Dr Paul Chen opened his participants' eyes to the needs of the Jehai Orang Asli community in northern Peninsular Malaysia and how the ministry has helped to improve their quality of life.

Rev. Elisha Satvinder spoke passionately about his work in setting up schools in needy communities around the country.

The multi-talented Colin Kirton enthralled the participants with his hilarious but inspiring stories in his experience in the entertainment

industry.

Pr Lim Jit Pang shared how he motivated and mobilized several hundred youths of various ethnicities and religions to do social work in Kluang, Johor. Entrepreneurs Bruce and Cathie Chong shared how they are helping the needy, especially single mothers, to generate income by setting up a small business.

Finally, Sreedhar Subramaniam spoke about the influence of the media on shaping mindsets and unveiled NECF's e-media, "Good Times", and its potential in helping to transform the nation.

Overall, the conference made a deep impact on the participants as they saw the need for the church to move out from its walls in to the community.

1United Church

to Disciple the Nation

By Eugene Yapp

In this issue's editorial, churches are urged to partner with NECF Malaysia in her role to resolve the many challenges and issues affecting the welfare of the nation.

In short, the editorial aspires to see the Christian community – irrespective of ethnicity, denomination, theological persuasion and practices – coming together to be “disciplers of the nation”.

The pertinent question to ask is: What does “disciplers of the nation” mean? Ed Silvano articulates the vision thus:

For the Bible to make sense... a series of paradigm shifts are necessary to allow us to become disciplers of nations, empowered by the redemptive work of Christ to fully reclaim the marketplace and worship God with our jobs so that we can take the kingdom of God where evil is still entrenched so that nations will have the honor and glory restored.¹

Is the fulfillment of this vision possible or even viable? What is its biblical basis and justification?

The Bible has a Great Commission for us and calls on all Christians to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matt.28:19 & 20).

Through the influence of missiologist Ralph Winter and theologian John Piper, the word “nations” has since exclusively been taken to mean “ethnic groups”,

“people-groups” or “cultural affinity groupings”.

The implication in terms of missions strategy and practice is that the church must give priority to reach the unreached people group of the world. Should the word “nations” therefore be understood in this sense only?

While affirming that “nations” embraces the ethnic dimension, rarely has the word come to encompass the geo-political dimension.

Stephen Spaulding comments through his extensive study that the church is no longer interpreting “nations” as geo-political entities but rather as ethnic entities when we read Scriptures, which to his mind is untenable.² Why?

Spaulding points out that when we talked of the word “nation”, we can certainly incorporate the ethnic dimension into this understanding but to cease talking about geo-politics is not possible as a huge part of the word ethne in Scriptures relates to kings and rulers, and this in turn relates to geo-politics in ways that “ethnic groups” will not.

Hence, when we speak of “discipling the nation of Malaysia”, it certainly cannot be confined to reaching out to the more than 100 people-groups in Malaysia.

Our emphasis, focus, programme, plans and activities must battle for the ‘soul of the nation’ with an overarching redemptive strategy that battles sins and prevailing evil in the various domains and institutions, seeking for grace and repentance for every clan, tribe, kingship, association, allegiance; ethnic, cultural, linguistic enclave and

political, civic, cosmopolitan state boundaries and affairs.

Is such a massive enterprise possible for any one church or Christian organisation?

In this era of globalisation, where inter-connectedness and inter-relatedness are core essential characteristics, the idea of partnerships is inevitable and it is imperative for churches, organisations, NGOs and others to be open to the possibilities of working together by venturing into constructive partnerships.

By ‘constructive’, we mean partnerships that are in accord with the kingdom agenda of mission being central and the expectations of parties met through discussions, commitment to each other, mutual understanding and interest in success by the pooling of resources.³

It is only with such constructive partnerships that Christians can ever harbour the hope of becoming followers of Christ in the task of “discipling the nation” – in its true and comprehensive sense of the word.

Partnership prospects

What prospect is there in this venture of constructive partnerships in discipling the nation? In view of the growing racial slurs and accusations uttered against other ethnicities, we will explore the possible potentials in the area of national integration.

Could our constructive partnership be geared towards reforming the “figured world-view” of nationhood in the idea of the sovereignty of the people, equality of citizens in a nation and democratic institutions of society

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and national identity?

To undertake such reforms, it will require input and attempts to alter the prevailing fundamental outlook of Malaysian society.

Historical factors such as the May 1969 racial riot and the implementation of State-led Islamisation policies that saw a progressive and systematic “Islamisation” of state institutions as well as the propagation of Malaysia as ‘Negara Islam’ has resulted in the co-existence of two dominant ideological strands which set the prevailing fundamental outlook of the social-political landscape in Malaysia.

Consequently, inter-ethnic relation in the country has deteriorated and this has in fact affected national integration and the state of religious liberty in the country. This is illustrated by the various Malay rights groups demanding that the government prohibit other ethnic groups from raising and discussing the special position and rights of the Malays.

This unique context providing the backdrop, as well as enveloping our social-cultural setting, presents a clear challenge for churches to be involved in pursuing a more multi-layered, multi-cultural worldview as part of Christian mission and witness to society and the nation.

In doing so, the church must take the lead in ensuring the social dynamics are structured along genuine inter-ethnic interaction, but allowing for cultural differences or diversity.

This requires the promotion of a broad-based policy of education and bringing awareness to the population at large to perceive social realities based

on mutually agreed universalistic core values rather than affirmative action in favour of one ethnic group over another based on ascriptive criteria.

Such an approach will likely extenuate racial tension and prevent any one group from projecting ethnicity in terms of special privileges or the seeking of advantages in terms of access to benefits and resources solely.

The above scenario and discussion demonstrate that it is imperative for churches to come together in the gathering of resources for the common good of the nation.

No doubt this will require concerted and united prayer, cutting across denominational barriers.

But we believe that in this moment of the “call to truth”, the Lord expects more than prayer and spiritual warfare. It demands the church to review and reflect on the following:

- Redefining the church—looking into who we are and what the church is supposed to be doing for the sake of a “One United Malaysia”.

In this respect, it is incumbent on Christians to firmly plant our feet in Malaysian soil to take hold of our place as part and parcel of Malaysia and see that we have the rights to ensure a viable future for ourselves, our children, grandchildren and all other fellow Malaysians.

- Refocusing on the task – what constitute the churches’ actions and activities in contra-distinction from the world’s agenda and how are we to organise ourselves to fulfill this “new” task.

In this respect, churches must

avoid a parochial vision of ministry and sectarian interest in favour of shared resources for the benefit of not only Christians but the needs of every community.

- Rethinking on the trajectory – what is the sum total of all that we seek to accomplish and what’s in store for all that the church seeks to do.

In this respect, churches must place before them the ultimate hope that is inherent in their calling as the people of God – the hope of reconciliation for all communities that serves as motivation and encouragement to all who persevere.

May God bless our witness to Malaysia!

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STRONG FAMILY STABLE NATION



By Lee Wee Min

It has been said that “the state of union of a nation depends on the state of union of the family”.

This basically means that the family is the basic functional unit of society and the well-being of the society depends on the well-being of the family. If the family is sound and stable, it will result in a stable society which will eventually lead to a strong nation.

Many social ills confronting the nation are related to a crack in the foundation of the family. The family provides the main platform where positive values are taught and caught, and if the family unit is not present to pass on such values, children will be influenced from outside the family. Unfortunately, oftentimes, the influence is not positive or wholesome.

It is so important for children during their formative years to have strong positive influence in their lives. As the Bible clearly says in Proverbs, we should train a child when he is

young so that he would not depart from it when he is old. Hence if family members are intentional and purposeful in developing strong positive values within the family, this will eventually be manifested in society and will result in a strong and stable nation.

Focus on the Family (FOTF) has several tools to help families build strong foundations. Couple Checkup is one of them. This is an online diagnostic tool developed by marriage and family experts for people who are dating, engaged or married. “By answering 124 questions, the couple will be able to know the state of their relationship and individual personality in 20 different areas.”

This is an excellent tool as it is able to focus on the main components of a marriage relationship and hence, one does not have to speculate nor mind read each other. As the Checkup has high levels of scientific rigour, its results are very accurate and reliable.

With the results, married couples can then work on improving on areas which require some effort or to seek assistance in these areas which are of concern. Couples can also be affirmed in areas which they are doing well and hence, continue to strengthen these areas.

As a married couple is the starting and the foundation of a family, it is so important that this union is constantly being refreshed and renewed. Strong married couples will also make the role of parenting much easier. We have to constantly remind parents that the greatest gift they can give their children is to love each other.

Through Couple Checkup, relationships and marriages can be strengthened and when marriages are thriving, so will the family and eventually the nation.

(Lee Wee Min is the Executive Director of FOTF Malaysia. To know more about Couple Checkup, check out FOTF website www.family.org.my)

Join 100 million Christians on 10.10.10 to pray for the poor

MICAH CHALLENGE is a global coalition of Christians responding to the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). The MDGs were agreed by 189 nations in 2000 to reduce extreme poverty by 50 per cent by 2015.

Micah 2010 is the campaign for this year, culminating in a day of prayer for the poor on 10.10.10 (October 10, 2010). Some 100 million Christians worldwide are expected to pray for the leaders of the 189 nations to remember their pledge to bringing half a billion people out of extreme poverty.

As a sign of the promise, participants will raise their hands in promise, and then make a special handprint. Hands mean worship, hands pledge support

and we use our hands to demonstrate God's love.

Politicians need to hear that people care and that they will be held accountable to their pledge. Handover of handprints will remind them that they have only five years left to fulfil their promise.

In Malaysia, churches may give their handprints to Malaysian Care who will then hand them over to a Minister.

Malaysian Care and NECF Malaysia are excited to be part of Micah 2010 and invite churches to participate.

For more information, check out Malaysian Care website www.malaysiancare.org and www.micah2010.org

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in the hands of God who will get this fire of the church reaching out to the community going.

What are the benefits of churches working together on a project compared with a church doing it alone, as in the case of CRS?

There's a verse in the Bible which says, “If one of us can put a thousand to flight, two can put ten thousand...” This is God's multiplier effect. We believe strongly that this will be the impetus to reach the community in a more effective way.

Religious leaders condemn principal's racist remarks

A Johor secondary school principal's racist remarks against her non-Malay

students have roused a storm of protest and among the public.

Her case is being investigated by the police and Education Ministry after over 50 parents and students lodged reports against the principal.

During her speech at her school's Merdeka (National Day) celebration on Aug 12, the principal had allegedly described non-Malays as "penumpang" (passengers) in the country and told the Chinese students to study in a Chinese school or go back to China.

She was also alleged to have said the prayer strings Indian students tied around their necks and wrists were similar to dog leashes.

Joining the chorus of protests is the Malaysian Consultative Council

"The nation needs just and fair actions rather than just words."

of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) who immediately issued a statement following the media reports.

MCCBCHST says: "In the light of the latest, in an increasing line of provocative racist remarks, this time by a principal of a school in the state of Johor, MCCBCHST calls upon the authorities to take prompt and appropriate action to demonstrate that such dastardly acts and words perpetrated by government servants, regardless of their rank, is not and will not be tolerated in Malaysia.

The Johor school incident occurring as it did in the run-up to the coming National Day celebrations casts a sombre shadow over the

nation's commitment to a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society where all citizens can be guaranteed a shared destiny in Malaysia as Malaysians based on peace and justice.

The time has passed whereby mere platitudes and words from the national leadership and

enforcement authorities in themselves will be enough. The nation needs just and fair actions rather than just words.

MCCBCHST calls for its component religious communities and all other Malaysians, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, to join together to pray that the sitting government will take responsibility to take appropriate action to stop blatant racist acts and utterances.

At the same time, let all peace-loving, fair-minded Malaysians join together to raise an unignorable chorus of disapproval against racism in all its forms.

LET US STOP RACISM BEFORE RACISM STOPS OUR NATION!

Helping pastors and leaders to handle church finances responsibly

Church governance is seldom taught in Bible seminaries, but it is a subject that is increasingly needed to equip pastors and ministers to better manage their churches' finances.

As churches grow, they need a good sound structure and processes to ensure a healthy environment for stewardship and accountability of the resources provided by God through the community of believers.

Unfortunately, churches have been mired in controversies, as highlighted in a recent newspaper report (*The Star*, 10 June 2010) where some churches and other religious bodies were accused of committing "unholy acts" of factional feuds, non-compliance on procedures of fund withdrawals and non-adherence to their by-laws and constitutions.

While churches that are registered with the Registrar of Societies or Registrar of Companies have external laws to regulate proper governance procedures, the non-registered ones may fall prey to such problems.

Realising the critical need for good governance and leadership to present the Church as "blameless and above reproach", NECF Malaysia and Malaysia Bible Seminari decided to collaborate to offer a course on "Church

Governance and Spiritual Leadership".

This first-of-its-kind five-session course runs over five weeks beginning Sept. 7 at the NECF conference room. Course participants will learn what church governance and leadership are in the context of the physical church, and the proper processes to be established for elected leaders to be accountable for their financial decisions.

Among the things participants will learn from the course are:

- The different types of registration of a church available under Malaysian laws, and the right thing to do, if does not want to be registered;
- The difference between legal structuring as compared with Biblical structuring of the governing body (elders, deacons, ministers/pastors and board members); and
- Simple keeping of financial records, preparation of financial statements and reports.

The course is facilitated by Cheah Foo Seong, a retired company secretary with over 20 years' experience in corporate advisory services relating to secretarial practice, accounting and tax.

Pastors and leaders who missed out on the first intake are strongly urged to register for the next intake.

Shah Alam Christian Cemetery Opens

After 10 years of countless meetings with the authorities, Shah Alam churches – both Roman Catholic and Protestant – finally have their own cemetery.

The Shah Alam Christian Cemetery was officially opened on July 29 by Shah Alam Mayor Dato' Mazalan Md. Noor.

The cemetery was earlier dedicated last Oct 24. It contains 1,132 burial plots for adults and 100 plots for children.

Organised by Shah Alam City Council (MBSA), the

opening ceremony was attended by MBSA officials, members of Shah Alam Christian Fellowship (SACF) and representatives from the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM). Other guests included SACF founder member Rev. Fr. Raymond Pereira and former SACF committee members.

The Christian cemetery is an inter-denominational cemetery reserved for the burial of Christians residing in Shah Alam. It is managed and maintained by MBSA while SACF acts as "Friends of the Cemetery" and assists MBSA in maintaining the area. SACF too assists in endorsing the burial forms of the deceased Christians.

Guests were later treated to tea sponsored by Nirvana Memorial Park. SACF chairman Pastor David Tham expressed his gratitude to all involved in realizing the dream of having a cemetery for Shah Alam Christians.



Finally, a burial place for Shah Alam Christians.. From left to right: Pn. Hjh Norakma (Pengarah Jabatan Penilaian MBSA), Pr David Tham (SACF Chairman), Rev. Sean Prasad (SACF Vice- Chairman), Dato' Mazalan Md Noor (Shah Alam Mayor), MBSA officer, and Rev Fr. Raymond Pereira

JOB VACANCY

NECF Malaysia is looking for an **ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY** to assist the Nation-Building and Prayer ministries in the organisation. To apply, contact Ching Bee Gai at the NECF office (tel. 03-7727 8227).

Bribery and Corruption: Biblical Reflections and Case Studies for the Marketplace in Asia

Author: Bishop Dr Hwa Yung

The external pressures faced by Christians in the marketplace in Asia are the same as those faced by Christians worldwide. Few of us have sufficient inner spiritual strength and pastoral support to deal with the relentless power of sin as manifested in the corporate world.

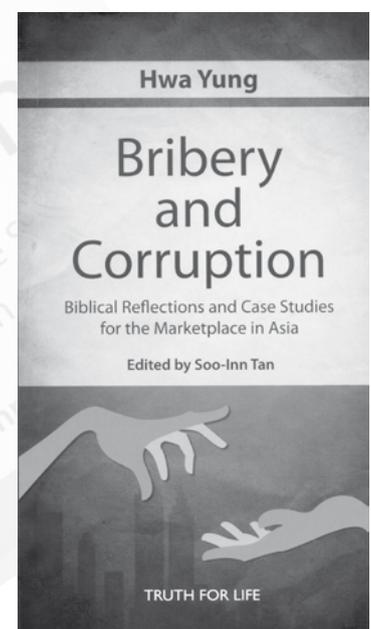
Increasingly too in a globalised economy, there is a need for Christians in the West to understand the ramifications of working in Asia.

This short book is one attempt to respond to the need to help Christians in Asia find a biblical response to

the real pressures they face in the marketplace. It takes seriously both the Scriptures and the context in which Asian Christians function.

In order to provide a holistic look at the issues involved, *Bribery and Corruption* begins with a theological framework for grappling with real-time problems, continues with responses from various theologians on the framework presented, and concludes with actual case studies from the marketplace.

Available at all Glad Sounds outlets.



All-expense paid holiday for PKs and MKs

December 7–9 • Swiss Garden Resort Kuantan

Calling pastors' and missionaries' kids (PKs and MKs) aged between 15 and 25 years. Register quickly for an all-expense paid holiday at the beautiful beachside hotel, Swiss Garden Resort Kuantan.

Besides all the fun-filled but meaningful activities, sumptuous meals and Spirit-lifting messages, there are many grand prizes to be won, including I pads and Netbooks.

This treat is made possible through the generosity of Christians who want to appreciate PKs and MKs. After all, life for them can be tough with high expectations on their behaviour – dress holy, talk holy, act holy.

This retreat is an opportunity for PKs and MKs to unload their burdens (if any) among people who empathise with their struggles, and then be ministered to by speakers from the US, Australia and Malaysia.

This rare retreat jointly organised by NECF Malaysia and Impact Pastors, Impact Nation (IPIN) Australia. We pray that through this retreat. God will raise up a new generation of pastors and church leaders.



NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ORDINARY MEMBERS

Pusat Revival Kristian Negri Sembilan, *pastored by Lok Yem Sew*; Breakthrough Network Centre Bhd, Kuching, *represented by James Lim Tin Hoon*; Church of Praise, Johor Baru, *pastored by Rev. Patrick Tan*; Immanuel Revival Fellowship, Banting, *pastored by Alexander Manisekaran*; The Ambassadors International Church, Kuala Lumpur, *rep. by Rev. Amos Great Enebeli*; Gateway City Church, Penang, *rep. by Edward Lim Chen Tee*; Gereja Shalom Gemencheh, Negri Sembilan, *pastored by Rev. Samuel C. Jesudasan*; Paya Terubong Chinese Mission Church, Penang, *pastored by Elder Tan Eng Chye*; C3 Church Klang, *pastored by Joseph Ramayah*; C3 Church Kuala Lumpur, *pastored by Joseph Ramayah*; C3 Church Kuala Selangor, Selangor, *pastored by Subramaniam Ratnam*; C3 Church Kapar, Klang, *pastored by Mageson a/l Muniandy*; Pantai Baptist Church, Petaling Jaya, *pastored by Rev. Marvin Wong Kang Yee*; Pertubuhan Penganut Agama Kristian Mount Sinai Glory, Ipoh, *pastored by Stephenson a/l Dhas*; Bandar Puchong Gospel Centre, Puchong, *rep. by Ong Hock Chye*; and Gempuru Besai Kristian Jaku Iban (M) Bhd, Kuching, *rep. by Pr Greman Ujang ak Slat*.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S Prayer Conference 2010

• 22–23 (Mon–Tues) November 2010 •
DUMC, Petaling Jaya, Selangor

Who should attend?	Parents, pastors/Children's Ministry workers and children involved in intercession ministries
Objective	To launch Children's Prayer Cells/ Children's House of Prayer
Organiser	NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission and Children's Prayer Network
Fee	Adult RM60, Child RM20

Contact Mei Sean at 012-329 0680 for more information

Suffering Foreigners in our Midst

This issue, we focus prayers on the 2 million migrants and refugees living in our midst, many of whom live in destitute conditions with little to hope for. The contents are extracted from the prayer guide "Disappointed By Hope" jointly produced by YWAM Penang and Raise Their Voice Against Injustice (Canada).

Sex Slaves Women from China, Vietnam and other Asian nations arrive in Malaysia with valid work contracts, expecting to work as domestic workers, in factories or in the food industry. In some cases, they discover that their agent has lied and are forced into a life of prostitution that is difficult to escape.

Crime syndicates boldly entrap women and use loopholes in the legal system to meet the demand for prostitution. There are insufficient law enforcement resources to combat trafficking effectively.

Women who have been rescued are kept in shelters while their cases are investigated. Some victims want to go home immediately. Others fear return because of reprisals by the gangsters who brought them to Malaysia or those who owned them while they were here.

Once they are confirmed as victims, the women must remain at the shelter for a minimum of three months. They are isolated with occasional visits from social workers. There are few programs or resources available to keep the women occupied. Many battle boredom, fear and depression.

- PRAY**
- For the release of the many women who are "kidnapped" into prostitution;
 - For more women counselors to be trained to minister to these women rescued from trafficking; and
 - For improved cooperation among the Malaysian police and local NGOs to help the trafficked women and for increase in resources for the police Anti-Trafficking Unit.

Burmese refugees As of Jan 2010, there are 79,284 refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia. Of these, 73,287 are from Burma, comprising some 17,712 Rohingyas from the Northern Rakhine State.

The Rohingyas are particularly vulnerable in Malaysia. Stateless for nearly three decades, the political junta revoked their citizenship in 1982.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas have left Burma, most of them seeking refuge in Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia where they are heavily taxed, denied the publication of literature, violently treated, subjected to forced labour.

During their stay in Malaysia, many Rohingyas have been detained, deported, whipped and sold to traffickers on the Thai border. Others regularly face arrest and extortion from irresponsible personnel in the police and RELA.

Malaysia is one of the few countries in the world that has yet to sign the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol and therefore, does not offer Burmese refugees protection or legal status while in the country.

- PRAY**
- The government will ratify the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and work together with local NGOs to provide aid to the Burmese refugees;
 - The government will allow the Burmese refugees here to work so they can have a better life;
 - For awareness among Malaysian Christians on the plight of the Rohingyas and other Burmese

refugees and more churches will step forward to support the UNHCR's work in providing vocational skills training such as sewing and carpentry; and

- The Government will recognise refugees registered with UNHCR as genuine refugees.

Refugee children

According to a Suaram press statement issued in Aug 2009, the total number of detainees in Malaysia's 13 Immigration detention centres from 2004 to 2008 was 235,397.

Of these, 3,675 were children – 2,652 boys and 1,023 girls. Detainees often suffer from overcrowding, poor nutrition, insufficient clothing and inadequate access to health services.

Refugee children endure the trauma of being smuggled out of their nations into their country of refuge only to endure long days of boredom, punctuated by fear as they hide inside apartments.

- PRAY**
- Malaysia has ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Pray the Government will uphold its obligation to protect all children, including the migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children;
 - For His comfort on those children presently in Immigration detention centres or separated from parents who are detained in these facilities; and
 - God to protect the refugee children left alone all day and for more churches to step forward to minister to the children by starting day-care centres, schools and crèches.