

Berita NECF

Editorial

live out our **faith**

When we look around us, we will notice that a large portion of the world is in turmoil. In the past month, we have witnessed the Middle East uprising and its domino effect. Then at the opposite end of Asia, in northeast Japan, an earthquake and a tsunami killed thousands and impacted many more.

In times like these, we as the Lord's disciples, are challenged to consistently live out our faith according to Jesus's words: **"No one who puts his hand to the**

plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

John Stott in his book *The Radical Disciple* mentioned that the words Christian and disciple imply a relationship with Jesus, although 'disciple' could be the stronger word of the two because it implies the relationship of pupil to the teacher.

Our common way of avoiding radical discipleship is to be selective, choosing areas in which our commitment suits us. However, when we acknowledge Jesus as

Lord, we have no right to pick and choose but to submit fully to His authority.

Let us examine three basic principles of discipleship gleaned from a Christian leader.

Calling

We often use this word when we are led into full-time ministry. We make it exclusive, that it is for some and not for others. But there is an interesting verse in Matthew 22:14 in which Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (KJV),

Continued on pg 3...



Check out the main feature 'Broken For God's Glory' on page 8.

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Inside this Issue

Chairman: Polite, Positive and Proactive	2
Equipping Malaysian Leaders for Next-Gen Ministry	4
Speaking Truth to Power is Part of the Cost	5
Rise Up and Be Mighty	6
NECF Foundation Report for 2010 & Testimony from a Recipient	7
Broken For God's Glory	8
Igniting the Fire in Your Families... Your Church	10
Ethics = Not Business As Usual	13

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Chairman's Message



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Polite, Positive and Proactive

The recent Sarawak state elections saw the whole Church abuzz with every imaginable comment, statement and stand – unfortunately not all Christ-like or non-partisan.

Scripture reminds us that our speech must “always be filled with grace”¹ especially to those on the “outside”. The Government’s offer announced by Dato Sri Idris Jala on 2 April 2011 is the “best thus far”, a senior church leader commented. However, it still falls short of the expectations of many. Whatever our sentiments, many were caught up in the election fever and started barking at those with differing views.

Many a man of the cloth donned the activist’s garment and accusations that some segments of the Church were not non-partisan were fair comment.

It is indeed amazing that so many of us make good bedfellows when it comes to prophecies of doom. We are all too quick to criticise.

I think it is worthwhile recapping the positives in the 10-point solution:-

1. There is the offer to import and print the Alkitab; although in West Malaysia, the words “Christian Publication” are required.
2. There is the offer to work towards the “religious aspirations of all in accordance with the Constitution”.
3. It is not an “Idris’ offer”. It is a decision of the PM and the Cabinet.
4. The mechanism has been set up and is still being fine-tuned for future dialogue.
5. The Government appears to be honouring the religious freedom in Sabah and Sarawak.

Before one argues whether the “deal” is good or not, I think we need to remind ourselves that as Malaysians, we have yet to fully experience and enjoy the democratic freedom, which we desire.

Non-Muslim communities can cite the following examples where freedom of religion is not upheld: Bulldozers pulling down temples, insufficient religious burial places, the inability to offer our children Bible Knowledge in schools hassle free and the restrictions for travel to Israel to visit our ‘holy’ cities. This is our reality. In this context, what we have before us is in contrast a ‘positive’ deal.

We also cannot ignore the fact that the offer to print the words ‘Christian Publication’ on the Alkitab came from Christians as a concession after years of frustration when dealing with civil servants, vide CFM’s letter dated 9th April, 2005. The Government accepted this in December 2005. Although it was poorly implemented, the Government is now merely saying, “Let’s try again what you Christians suggested.”

But judging from the numerous negative comments, criticisms and clamour, I don’t think any deal can satisfy everyone.

I am reminded of a story. There was a man who once reared a dog who had the unique ability to walk on water. Excited by his dog’s prowess, the man decided to show off his dog to his friends. So one day, he invited several friends to a lake and took his dog along. With his friends assembled, the man threw a bone far into the lake and encouraged his dog to fetch it. The

Continued next page...

dog promptly walked on the water and retrieved the bone. The proud man asked his friends if they had noticed something different. There was silence for a while and then a friend quipped - "You know, come to think of it, your dog can't swim".

Sadly, such is the way we sometimes look at things.

If that is so, everybody loses at the end of the day!

I want to humbly suggest to Christians to move forward the **"ABC way"**.

Firstly, be **Asian**. Be polite and thank the Government for its offer, albeit a not perfect one. I grew up learning from my parents that we must say "thank you" even if we deem the ang pow not big enough.

Secondly, approach this issue the **Bible way**. The Alkitab reminds the

people of the Book to test all things – 1 Thess 5:21. So let's test it. Now that the Sarawak state elections are over, check if the offer is still valid. Does the KSU directive really work? Go and import more Bibles and see if the KDN stops us. Print the Bibles and see if the KDN harasses us again. Being polite and positive does not mean we are naive.

Lastly, do the **Common sense** thing. The Government has said they want to work towards the religious aspirations of all. Find out what that means. Can our Bibles be declassified as they are now considered "prejudicial to the security of the country"? Be proactive. Saying "thank you" does not mean we have accepted the 10-point resolution in totality.

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing - religious freedom

we all enjoyed when Tunku shouted the first Merdeka. Nobody can fault us for wanting to believe in Merdeka again. Why not start making practical suggestions?

Let's do another common sense thing. Hold our government accountable. If the offer was indeed an election ploy, the government can expect to face an angrier and more unforgiving electorate. So, the sensible thing to do is to prepare for the next GE today!

Yes, we can move forward.

.....
 ' Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. NKJV

...continued from front cover: Live Out Our Faith.

at the end of his teaching in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet.

The Lord demands complete obedience from us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Only he who believes is obedient; only he who is obedient believes." That means God does not want us to be a "bottom line believer". He wants believers who are prepared to allow Him to transform them. That was what the apostle Paul's calling was about when God told Ananias, "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:16)

Therefore, God's call on your life did not come with a list of guarantees but with His assurance of never-failing promises! (H.B. London)

Cost

It is not difficult to comprehend what cost means. We typically think of cost in monetary form like when we sacrifice a well-paid job or a career advancement. But cost is normally related to fear. When something costs us, we usually have fear.

We experience fear when we are in danger of losing something. Take the example of Simon Peter, who told the Lord, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will" (Matthew 26:33). Jesus responded, "I tell you the truth this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times" (vs.34).

Simon Peter knew the cost, yet he denied the Lord three times because fear caught hold of him. He feared

losing his life and forgot that following Christ could cost him his life.

Commitment

Our commitment should not be like the flash in the pan variety but instead we should be like the marathon runner who knows how to pace and finish the race well. As someone remarked, "People who drive need a destination." How true it is for we just cannot drive around not knowing where we are going.

The same applies to us as disciples of the Lord. Our commitment reflects our trust and faith in our Master. Our commitment gives us the motivation to keep our character and integrity pure as well as to serve with humility.

That is exactly what Jesus meant when he challenged us to take up our cross daily and follow Him - that we be willing to commit our lives to Him, to follow in His steps and even to die for Him.

To take up the cross may involve much persecution, which many have experienced in other countries. It is our attitude, not the amount of suffering and shame we endure that counts in God's sight.

To be overcomers in this world, we are reminded that we need to first be disciples of the One who has called us. God wants his people to become like Christ, for Christlikeness is the will of God for His people.

Equipping Malaysian Leaders for Next-Gen Ministry

Pastor Mark Conner, senior pastor of Citylife Church, Melbourne, Australia, visited Malaysia on 24-25 March for a special leadership conference hosted by NECF and Alpha Malaysia. The oversubscribed “Pastoring the Next Generation Church” conference was held at DUMC and attended by 120 pastors and leaders from 40 churches in Klang Valley and West Malaysia. Mark’s sessions focused on running a contemporary church and preparing the next generation of church leaders.

Over two days, Mark led the delegates to consider the future of their churches and how they might more effectively communicate and work with the young people in their congregations to raise them up as successful leaders. He shared from his church’s experience of how the baton of senior pastor was passed to him by his two predecessors. Mark’s church has grown tremendously since he took leadership.

He outlined the following framework for succession planning in the church:

1. The predecessor needs to choose a successor very carefully in terms of chemistry (between the two), character and competency (personally, he would look for strong leadership and communication competences).
2. Both predecessor and successor must be clear about the church’s mission and ensure that it continues after the baton is passed.
3. The predecessor needs to consider the right timing for transition.
4. A clear transition process needs to be detailed in terms of strategy, structure, style, etc.
5. After the baton is passed, the predecessor needs to make a decision to let go, eg. take a sabbatical to release oneself from any structural or even emotional attachment to the leadership position.
6. The successor needs to continually honour the predecessor, his team and even the old members that have supported the past leadership, and to find ways to win their respect.

Related information on the talk can be found in Mark Conner’s blog: <http://markconner.typepad.com>.

“This conference is an opportunity for two generations,” NECF secretary general Sam Ang said at the start of the event. “Empowering the next generation of Malaysian Christian leaders is something that the NECF has been actively looking into for the past year - this generation raising the next generation - and I am glad Pastor Mark Conner has come to help us.”

“There has been this great concern about the next generation,” Alpha Malaysia national director Foo Lai Wei said. “The next generation is coming into leadership, and there has been concern about raising up the next generation to effectively and powerfully present the gospel of Jesus Christ to their own generation.”

Alpha Malaysia is an organisation that exists to equip churches with tools for evangelism and transformation. Its key courses are The Alpha Course, The Marriage Course and Youth Alpha. It already has 180 courses registered across the nation for 2011.



Speaking Truth to Power Is Part of the Cost

When we think of speaking truth to power, we think of the Nobel Prize winner, Russian novelist Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn whose now famous writings have inspired many in their attempts to confront the powers of oppression. Nelson Mandela is another person who spoke truth to power and therefore changed the trajectory of South Africa. Mandela's story has inspired many. Although the man was imprisoned for nearly a third of his life, his experience did not break him or leave him bitter. Instead, Mandela preached forgiveness and reconciliation to a country torn by internal strife and dissension because of apartheid.

Real-life stories of courageous men who stick to their convictions must surely inspire ordinary Christians like us who in our present day encounter the "Allah" controversy and the ongoing Alkitab issue. Christians as "salt and light of this world" are reminded to "speak the truth in love" to the powers that be. Thus, we assert our constitutional right of freedom of religion and the right to free religious space to profess, practise and propagate our chosen religion. We maintain our right to have the Bible freely distributed regardless of its language medium so that all may be encouraged, strengthened and guided in life through daily devotion to and application of God's Word.

The moral discipline of "speaking truth to power" is often costly. In Solzhenitsyn's case, he was arrested for writing letters to friends, which contained "disrespectful remarks" about Joseph Stalin, the murderous dictator who led the Soviet Union through World War Two. After spending eight years at a labour camp, Solzhenitsyn was sent to exile for life at Kok-Terek in southern Kazakhstan.

For Mandela, he was imprisoned on Robben Island where he remained for 18 years. While in jail, he performed hard labour in a lime quarry. Mandela remained in prison until 11 February 1990. He was incarcerated for nearly 27 years.

What does all this have to say to the Christian community? "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die," says German theologian and Christian martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

With these words, Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave powerful voice to the millions of Christians who believe personal sacrifice is an essential component of faith, writes the Amazon.com review. Bonhoeffer calls this costly grace in contrast to cheap grace. "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus

Christ, living and incarnate" while costly grace calls us to follow Christ and it is costly because "it cost a man his life and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life".¹

***"When Christ calls a man,
he bids him come and die,"***

says German theologian & Christian martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

For some of us, the cost may not be our lives but our comfort and wealth. But can we ever measure up to this cost of discipleship? Are we so fearful of losing our comfort and wealth to the extent that we do anything to hold on to and protect our earthly possessions? If we have fear, it should be the 'fear of the Lord'. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding" (Ps 111:10). The fear of the Lord is not a feeling of being afraid but a reverential fear that produces obedience before the presence of our great God. With this fear, Christians will be able to see life's matters in perspective and be informed on our engagement and response to the very complex issues surrounding our socio-economic and political life in Malaysia.

But have we "internalised" the fear of the Lord in our hearts and minds as the scripture exhorts us to? Has the fear of the Lord become so much a part of our daily living that our very thoughts and actions are an act of dedication to and a living sacrifice before the Lord? Admittedly, such pursuits are by no means easy and require spiritual strength and discipline on our part. But until we have internalised the 'fear of the Lord' to the extent we can say with the great apostle Paul, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21), we cannot say we are following Christ wholeheartedly in the task of ushering in His kingdom. Such passion and commitment are what Christians are called to live by for the sake of God's kingdom and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is only through such living that God's kingdom will bear much fruit. John 12:24-26 specifically tells us: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him".

Continued on pg 6...

...continued from page 5: *Speaking Truth to Power Is Part of the Cost.*

Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra explain the implication of these verses well when they say, “to the extent that the church participates in the suffering of Jesus, it becomes the bearer of the risen life of Jesus for the sake of the world”.² How might this happen? Joseph Tson, a Romanian Christian who went through suffering and persecution explains it well:

*When the ambassadors of Christ speak the truth in love and meet death with joy, a strange miracle occurs. The eyes of the unbelievers are opened, they are enabled to see the truth of God and this leads them to believe in the Gospel Herein lies its power to convince and to persuade: people see the love of God in the death of the martyr and are compelled to believe in God's love and sacrifice for them.*³

The challenge is clear. In the midst of this difficult and trying moment in the history of the Malaysian church, dare we carry the cost as part of our discipleship? If we view this cost in the affirmative, we need to seek the Lord and fear Him; allowing the awe and presence of the Lord to permeate us so that we are able to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him, speaking the truth as well as speak truth to power!

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. (New York, NY: Touchstone,), 45

² Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramamchandra, *The Message of Mission*. (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP, 2003), 196

³ Joseph Tson, “Modern Protestant Theology of Martyrdom”, *ERT* (2000) 24:1: 50-62, 54

Tamil Pastors and Leaders Conference: Rise Up and Be Mighty

By Rev. Gabriel Jabanathan

The 7th NECF Tamil Pastors and Leaders Conference was held on 15-16 of March at the Full Gospel Tabernacle in Subang Jaya. Over 650 delegates from all over the country, representing many churches attended the event. Themed “Be Mighty”, the conference was in line with the vision of NECF’s Tamil Commission to motivate Tamil churches to come out of an inhibitive spirit that cripples bold and daring leadership, so that they will be a Church that leaps forward and stays ahead.

The main session speakers were Rev. Dr. Henry K. Pillai, the senior pastor of Grace Assembly and Pastor Sawrnaraj, the senior pastor of the 5000-strong AG Church in Tamil

Nadu, India. Meanwhile, the speakers for the special sessions were Rev. Yang Tuck Yoong, the founder and senior pastor of Cornerstone Community Church in Singapore; Rev. Kalyanakumar, the founder of the Harvest Apostolic Ministries in India; and Rev. Dr. Philip Jayabalan, the senior pastor of the Victorious Assembly in Malaysia.

During the two days, the delegates were challenged by the speakers to rise up as a bold and courageous community of God’s people to face their giants. They were also reminded of the need to rise up to be a powerful missional and prophetic voice to the nation. It was a time of looking ahead and being a mighty people of God.



NECF Foundation Report for 2010

The NECF Foundation was established a few years ago to care for pastors and full-time workers. Through your generous donations, we were able to provide the following assistance:

1. Welfare assistance

We are committed to providing RM500 monthly to a 63-year-old retired pastor to help with his medical expenses. Besides his health problems, he has been caring for his mother who was in her 90s who recently passed away.

2. Insurance subsidy for East Malaysian pastors

We assist 348 pastors in Sabah and Sarawak with a 50% subsidy for Personal Accident & Critical Illness insurance cover. Although the insurance premium subsidy totaled RM62,040 for the year 2010, we thank God that insurance commissions helped offset half of the cost.

3. Study Loans

By the end of 2010, the Foundation had given out 19 interest-free study loans totaling RM266,272. On December 2010, repayments totaled RM75,956. In 2010, two new study loans were approved with instalments commencing this year.

4. Insurance Claims

Since the Great Eastern insurance scheme started in September 2005, there have been 20 insurance claims totaling RM833,055 as of 31 December 2010. In 2010, four claims that totaled RM190,612 were made.

In 2010, we received RM94,447 in donations. For those wanting to bless our pastors and full-time workers, kindly send a cheque payable to "NECF Foundation". For more details, visit our website at www.necf.org.my



Testimony from a Study Loan Recipient

It is truly by God's grace and providence that I can share this testimony today.

In 2005, I pursued a professional qualification for accountancy from ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) with financial assistance from my parents and income from my part-time job. However, it was very challenging for my family and I to rely on my father's income as a pastor in a small church.

During that time, I was informed of the help that NECF offers. I learnt about the interest-free loan facility that NECF has put in place for pastors' children who are in tertiary education. I then applied for a loan to ease my family's financial burden.

With NECF's help, I completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree, majoring in Commerce, from TAR College in 2009. I changed courses after realising that I preferred business administration over accountancy as the former offers more flexibility in my career path.

A month after my graduation, I found a good job with a foreign bank in Kuala Lumpur. After securing this reasonably well-paid job, I immediately started repaying NECF on a monthly basis. I wanted to repay the loan as soon as possible and in less than 15 months, I repaid my loan. I am really thankful and glad that I've fulfilled my obligation to repay NECF so quickly. It is indeed by God's grace that I was able to complete my studies without much worry. Thanks again to NECF for granting me the loan that has enabled me to finish my studies.

- A Grateful Recipient

Broken for God's Glory

Dr. Ng Kam Weng

None of the prophets of old have bared their inner soul as much as Jeremiah did in the course of carrying out his prophetic ministry. Jeremiah laid bare the emotional conflicts of a man who was chosen to bear the Word of God to a stubborn and rebellious generation even though he was reluctant to do so. His mission was marked by immense suffering. He was physically abused, put in the stocks and even left to die in a cistern. Though he loved his people dearly, he was denied friendships and even marital companionship. He was painfully ostracised by his close-knit community and his kinsfolk plotted against his life. So deep was his anguish that he cried: "Why is my pain unending, and my wounds grievous and incurable?" (Jeremiah 15:18) He came to the point where he cursed the day he was born and by implication, his prophetic calling (Jeremiah 15:10, 20:14-18). Once, in the depths of depression, he even accused Yahweh of having deceived him (Jeremiah 20:7). However, he remained faithful to his task and continued to prophesy until his death.

Divine Calling and Compulsion

By human reckoning, Jeremiah's ministry was a failure. What kept him from quitting when things got tough? I believe the answer lies in his unshakeable sense of divine calling. It was not that he was never tempted to quit but that he found it impossible to restrain himself from proclaiming the word of God entrusted to him. "But if I say, 'I will not mention Him or speak anymore in His name,' His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed I cannot" (Jeremiah 20:9). Surely this sense of divine compulsion is the secret to his perseverance.

How can we maintain a conviction that will sustain our ministry through the roughest of times? Jeremiah shows us that our ministry should be a result of a divine compulsion implanted in our hearts. If we were to ever entertain the thought at the back of our minds that we might be happier doing something else, we would be doomed to fail miserably in ministry. In the final analysis, it is not a minister's skill so much as his conviction that imparts itself to others. It takes a burning flame to kindle other flames. May the Lord lay on our hearts that sense of necessity, which will drive us forward in faithful service, even as He did with Paul who declared, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

God's Grace and Sovereignty

However, we should not underestimate the immense problems and trials that come with ministry. We are painfully aware of many casualties in spiritual battles. There are fellow workers like Demas (2 Timothy 4:10) who have betrayed their calling and deserted the flock, having fallen in love with the world. Some plod on only because they lack the courage to quit but what a deplorable rut to be in for those resigned to a miserable existence in a ministry that has long lost its lustre.

We thank God for His grace that is sufficient for us to overcome an attitude of resignation or cynicism. When Jeremiah was in despair, God assured him that He is the perfect Potter shaping nations and men in the way that He wants. This glorious truth of God's sovereignty must be grasped as an experiential reality if we are to be assured of enduring hope and joy in service.

It is imperative for us to recover confidence in the sovereignty of God. He is the one who ultimately decides the fate of nations and governments (Jeremiah 18:15-10) and He is on our side. What is even more amazing is that He has chosen us to act as His spokesmen. "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and

overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jeremiah 1:9, 10). We dare not quit from sharing God’s Word of judgment and reconciliation to a nation divided by racial tension but we are challenged and comforted by the assurance that when the Lord looks upon Malaysia, His primary concern is the welfare of His people.

“When Jeremiah was in despair, God assured him that He is the perfect Potter shaping nations and men in the way that He wants.”

The Potter and the Clay

But can we ever be equal to the task? Jeremiah had his moments of self-doubt as evidenced by him asking: “Who am I, for I am only a young man?” We are not to feel self-sufficient in our talents, training or experience for at our best, we can still fail the Lord. We are engaged in a spiritual battle against a tempter who has great powers and resources and is cunning, waiting to entice us with a bait perfectly fitted to the niche in our armour or character. This realisation should put fear in our hearts.

But to be paralysed by terror would mean a denial of the Lord’s sovereignty and of the sufficiency of His grace. Though we are but clay, His hands can and will shape us for the task He has entrusted to us. God will not thrust His children into battle without adequate preparation or equipment. We may be mere earthen vessels but if we allow Him to cleanse

us for His holy purposes, he will make us “useful to the Master and prepared for any good work” (2 Tim 2:21). Our confidence must be based not on our professional expertise but in a daily experience of God’s grace working in our lives. If we are going into the business of changing men’s lives by God’s power we must first experience its reality ourselves.

Ironically, it is possible to offer God’s grace to others and yet be strangers to the effectual workings of the gospel, which we preach. We can starve while we prepare food for others. As Richard Baxter writes in *The Reformed Pastor*, “For it was necessary to consider what we must be, and what we must do for our souls before we consider what must be done for others, lest one, while healing the souls of others, should catch the disease himself through a neglect of his own safety. Or, while helping his neighbours, he should neglect himself, or fall while raising others.”

Immersed in the cares of this world, non-believers often regard the efforts of the minister of Christ to press home the claims of God upon their lives as impertinent and interfering. Arguments, however profound, men can ignore. Our preaching may be rejected as phoney shrieks coming from some moral legalist. But a life bearing evidence of rest and trust will not fail to attract and even overcome the indifference and hardness of men’s hearts. Only as we bear the fruit of a restored life can we persuade others to yield their lives to God.





THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

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Presented via videocast














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Igniting the Fire in Your Families... Your Church

By Professor Ben Freudenburg

When I get to Heaven, I believe my Heavenly Father will ask me, “Ben, how did it go with the gifts I gave you? Do the daughters I’ve blessed you with know and love me?” I believe King Jesus will be asking me this question, not the pastor, not the youth worker and not their teachers.

I think He will ask the church a different question. One that sounds like:

“How did you support parents in shaping children who love and obey me?”

What is the Church’s family ministry?

We begin examining the Church’s family ministry by questioning the philosophy undergirding it. My philosophy of family ministry is:

Parents are the primary shapers of faith and life in their children; and the role of the church is to partner with the home in that process.

For parents to be successful in their role as primary faith and life shapers, they need to have a healthy marriage, parenting skills for every age and stage of family life, and faith imparting skills. They also need resources to shape their family’s view of human sexuality and the ability to use God-given resources effectively. And, if they lose a spouse through death or divorce, and choose to remarry, they will need a new set of skills to raise a blended family.

Therefore, the church’s family ministry is all about creating a culture at church that impacts positively on the home. This Biblical church culture supports parents and grandparents as the primary agents of faith formation and equips them for that role by providing an intentional training centre. The church will then equip the home to be all God intended it to be.

Church not responsible for kids’ faith formation

I believe the current church culture has led parents to believe that the church is responsible for faith formation in children. I call the current church culture “church centered, home supported”. Family ministries should help the church move towards a home centered, church supported” culture where the church is the community of faith, agreeing with the Biblical view of supporting the home.

*“Don’t you see that children are
God’s best gift?... Children are the
fruit of the womb; His generous legacy.”
Psalm 127:3-5*

Listen to what David shares in Psalm 127:3-5. He asks, “Don’t you see that children are God’s best gift?... Children are the fruit of the womb; His generous legacy.” Children were not given just to sustain one’s lineage but to be added to God’s legacy of faith. How blessed are parents! What an honour and responsibility to receive the gift of children from God and ensure His gifts return to Him.

We know that a Christian marriage that lasts a lifetime is God’s plan and the best environment for raising Godly children. I like how the

*And what does He
want from marriage?
Children of God.”
(Malachi 2:13).*

Message version of Scripture makes it so clear. “And what does He want from marriage? Children of God” (Malachi 2:13). God intended the home to produce children who love God with all their heart, soul and mind, and their neighbour as themselves.

Scripture clearly says that the home is responsible for faith formation. My favourite is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Here God is talking to His people and reminding them to love Him with all they have - heart, soul, and strength. The commandments were not to stay on stone, but to be upon our hearts. Why? So that we, the parents, could teach them to the gifts our Father gave us; our children. We are to impress them on our children’s hearts by talking about God’s will and ways all the time. The church must not do what God intended for the home to do.

Shift from Family

In recent years, there has been an unintentional shift away from the family unit. The church has moved from a congregational community built on families to a church that separates children and teens from their parents. Parents worship in an adult-only service while children and teens go to distinct and separate children’s or teen churches.

As a result, faith is less evident in teenagers’ lives than ever before. Families and marriages are also less valued. Kids

today consider their “family” those who care for and love them. Many don’t define family in terms of the biological family.

Congregations experience a change when they return to a Biblical understanding of family ministry. They find a wonderful connection between parents and children that can transform congregations. Unchurched people will also be drawn to seek help from the local church for their family and marriage.

The Church must build deliberate and intentional family life education systems that support homes and marriages via intentional marriage and family forming centres that partner with the home. The end goal? More children have a safe and secure place to grow and develop as God’s children and make it home to the eternal destination their Father in Heaven has prepared for them.

The Family Friendly Partners Network

Strengthening the Christian family according to God’s design in Scripture is the focus of the Family Friendly Partners Network (FFPN), a ministry founded by Professor Ben Freudenburg of Concordia University Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States that has benefited many churches in recent years. It involves an intentional, three-year process to train and equip congregations desiring to be intentional in equipping families to pass on faith in Jesus Christ to the next generation. In 2010, FFPN started the first Singaporean-Malaysian network.

The Church must build deliberate & intentional family life education systems that support homes and marriages via intentional marriage and family forming centres that partner with the home.

Professor Freudenburg and a team of well-respected family life specialists

IGNITING THE
FIRE
IN FAMILY MINISTRY

DATE:
JUNE 28, 2011
(7.00PM – 10.00PM)

&

JUNE 29, 2011
(9.00AM – 5.00PM)

VENUE:
FOCUS ON THE FAMILY MALAYSIA

COST:
RM120 per person
RM100 per person-for group of 4 or more

will be in Malaysia to conduct the Igniting The Fire In Family Ministry conferences on 28 and 29 June (PJ) and 1 and 2 July (Kuching). Please call Focus On The Family Malaysia (PJ) office 03-7954-7920 and Kuching office 082-417416) for more information.

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Profile: Ben Freudenburg has been a director of Christian education for 38 years, working with children, youth, and their families to nurture their love for God and each other

through the church and is presently serving as Family Life program director and professor in Family Life Studies at Concordia University Ann Arbor and is the founder of Family Friendly Partners Network. He is married to Jennifer and is father to two children and grandfather to four. He has written for a variety of education and youth journals and family magazines. He has recently created the Family Friendly Partners Training Network and has led networks of churches in USA, Singapore, and Malaysia.



THE GLOBAL Day of Prayer

12 June, 2011

「全球祷告日」

உலக ஜெப நாள்

Pray with many around the clock for ten days, 2-11 June 2011
 Sepuluh hari doa tanpa henti, 2-11 Jun 2011
 十天恒常祷告: 2011年6月2日-11日
 பத்து நாள் இடைவிடாமல் ஜெபித்தல்: 2-11 ஜூன் 2011
www.globaldayofprayermalaysia.com

Global Day of Prayer rallies will be held in various towns across the nation during Pentecost weekend. For further details please visit our website at www.globaldayofprayermalaysia.com



照亮我们的国家

我在他们中间寻找一人作伴祷告。在我面前为建国的在火口防堵。使我不能逃避。却找不着一个。(创世二:30)

LIGHTING UP THE UNITY ALTAR 2011 全國點燃祭壇

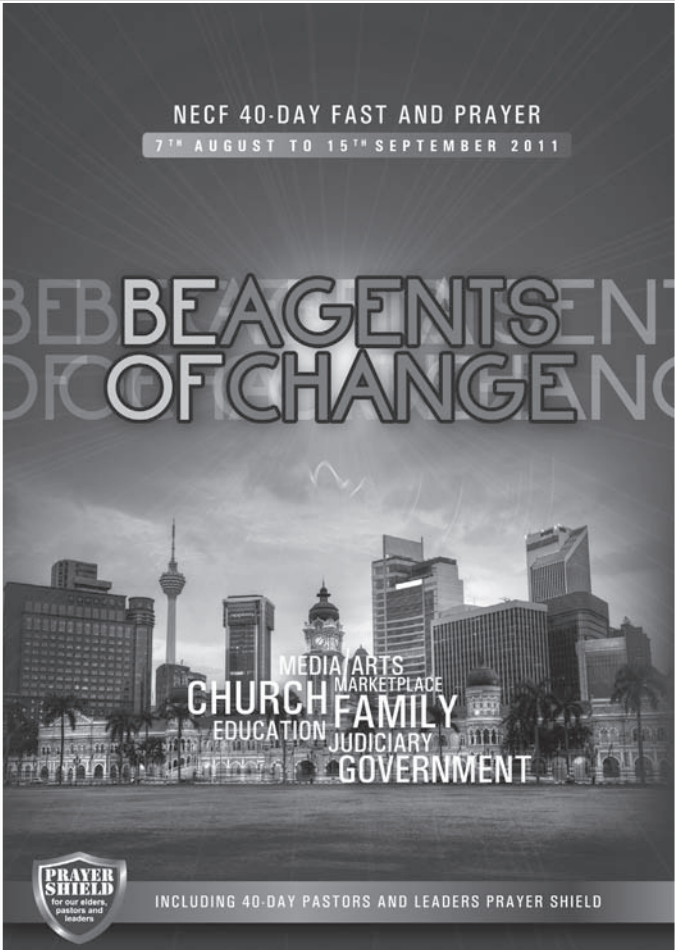
更新生命 | 連結教會 | 轉化國家

地点 吉隆坡卫理公会福建堂
 日期 2011年7月3-5日
 报名截止 2011年6月21日

营会讲员

			
华勇会督	王美神博士	尤吉成牧师	罗伯寿牧师

主办单位: **NECF MALAYSIA**
 特别节目 中马圣乐促进会及众星同呈献



NECF 40-DAY FAST AND PRAYER
 7TH AUGUST TO 15TH SEPTEMBER 2011

BE AGENTS OF CHANGE

CHURCH FAMILY
 MEDIA/ARTS MARKETPLACE
 EDUCATION JUDICIARY GOVERNMENT

PRAYER SHIELD
 for our elders, pastors and leaders

INCLUDING 40-DAY PASTORS AND LEADERS PRAYER SHIELD

Themed “Be Agents of Change”, this year’s emphasis is on encouraging the Malaysian church to be ‘missional.’ That means all of us are called to be “missionaries” wherever we are and to carry out that corresponding responsibility. It also means that all generations can be involved in this Great Commission. In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar looked among the Jews he had brought to Babylon for young potential leaders who could “serve in the King’s palace.” He had decided to enrich his kingdom by making use of the abilities of capable people from a minority race. We too, as Christians, stand in the minority but have been called by God to make use of the abilities that He has given us. As God’s chosen generation we have been called to make our impact in the various spheres of influence. As laymen and women we are to exercise our faith and uphold the values of our Christian heritage. For ours is the story of a faith that triumphs in adversity – a faith that overcomes against the odds. The Order Form and sample copy of the prayer booklet will be sent to members via ordinary post. Should you not receive it, kindly download it from our homepage (www.necf.org.my) and return it soonest possible to enable timely delivery.

Ethics = Not Business As Usual

By Debbie Loh

For South African construction magnate Graham Power, 56, it pays to be ethical. The litmus test he applies to his work and personal life is: How would I feel if the decision I've made were to be published in newspapers and if my family were to know about it?

It is a probing question, because the problem is not that people do not know what right and wrong are. Rather, it is more about not getting caught. And not getting caught was what Power and his company, the Power Group, had been ably doing along with everybody else in the industry.

From 1999, following his conversion to born-again Christianity, Power vowed to live and do business based on "ethics, values and clean living".

Power says that he and his company now pay all taxes due when before they did not. They no longer give inducements to curry favour with politicians in exchange for contracts, and no longer join in colluding with other industry players for price- or tender-fixing.

The Power Group's about-turn in 1999 startled other major industry players who were not used to one of their

kind turning against them.

Power Group, which Power started when he was 28 with three casual labourers and a second-hand pick-up truck, grew rapidly to become a multi-billion dollar private limited company, one of South Africa's largest in highway construction and property development.

Power, the executive chairperson, currently owns a 70% stake, while 30% belongs to 500 of his longest-serving staff.

Playing by the book meant making major changes to operations and convincing personnel.

Power says it took the company about two-and-a-half-years to wipe the slate clean. They started declaring all incomes and taxes due honestly.

This also meant enforcement against staff, including himself, from charging personal expenses to the company.

"By then, the business had been running for 16 years. A

Continued on pg 14...



...continued from page 5: *Ethics = Not Business As Usual.*

lot of the tax evasion we had done was history and there was just no way we could go back and calculate all of it to pay back. But we resolved to start paying everything due from then on," he says.

The next task was a gamble. Internally, the Power Group resolved to stop colluding with other construction companies.

Among the things the big players do, Powers says, is to meet over lucrative tenders to agree as to whose turn it was among them to get the contract. The spoils from that bid would then be divided out.

"We indicated to the rest of the industry that we would no longer be a part of this club, and to please stop contacting us for such meetings," Powers says. Word spread quickly, he adds, and "those whom you thought were your friends no longer spoke to you".

"It was a lonely period. Some of the other players tried to retaliate by turning our clients against us. With government officials, they would appear supportive of our position, but you never knew what they were doing behind your back, if they were favouring others instead of you."

To convince his board of directors, Power staked his job on his principles.

"The board was debating the key question, which was, if we don't play dirty, can we still survive? I told them that if the company disagreed to operate on an ethical basis, from then on, I would exit as majority shareholder."

Power left the meeting to let his colleagues debate the matter, and they stood with him.



Power ... when there is a mass movement of people who will stand for ethical practices, that is when demand is created for corruption-free businesses.

The Power Group's website now openly states its commitment to "honesty, fairness and integrity" and has an online form and several hotlines for whistleblowers to report foul play within the company.

Was there a price to pay for being ethical? "Initially," Power says. "We looked back after the first two years and could see no measurable setback. Whatever business we lost, we regained and more as people came to know about our position."

Power also suffered negative press when he went public with his ownership of personal property in Spain and an offshore bank account with millions of Rand, which formed his safety net should the earlier apartheid era have caused South Africa's collapse.



Making a stand ... challenging Malaysians to sign the pledge committing to an ethical lifestyle

These assets had been illegal under national law until 2002 when the government allowed an amnesty for those holding monies outside the country.

A scathing newspaper headline announced him as a Christian businessman who had "raped" the country of millions. Ironically, he says, the bad press prompted more South Africans with overseas assets to own up despite the public stigma.

When there is a mass movement of people who will stand for ethical practices, Power believes, that is when demand is created for corruption-free businesses.

When there is a mass movement of people who will stand for ethical practices, Power believes, that is when demand is created for corruption-free businesses.

In 2009, he rolled out his ethos in a country-wide campaign called Unashamedly Ethical. To participate, individuals and organisations sign a 10-point pledge to be ethical, are listed in an online directory, and must agree to be accountable to an ombudsperson.

Power is now taking the campaign global. It was introduced in Kuala Lumpur recently at a seminar and roadshow from 1-2 May, 2011.

During the local sessions, Power noted how Malaysia and South Africa were just a 0.1-point score apart from each other on the Transparency International Corruption

Perception Index for 2010. Malaysia is ranked 56th and South Africa 54th out of 178 countries.

Forming communities of people who pledge to be ethical is essential for the campaign to work. By building a directory of companies which have signed the pledge, people who only want to collaborate with like-minded companies and individuals can have a network to draw from.

Accountability is also a necessary ingredient of the campaign, or signing the pledge would be meaningless.

The campaign has procedures for signatories to lodge complaints with the ombudsperson against another signatory for unethical behaviour. The ombuds will adjudicate and is empowered to take disciplinary action, such as suspending guilty parties from the list of signatories and the online directory.

Power says there are now Unashamedly Ethical communities in 70 countries since its international launch in June 2010. Communities are formed by signatories according to region for networking and accountability.

In Malaysia, Power estimates that over 2,000 people would have signed the pledge by the end of the roadshow.

It is possible to do business transparently, and to win without cheating. This comes from a man who admits that the early days of his career were spent "chasing the wind" -- material wealth and earthly possessions -- and who had it all but still felt empty.

"I realised that for all my wealth, I could not take any of it with me when I die. People aren't going to remember you for your bank balance or your material possessions but for the kind of person you were," Power says. --
Courtesy of GoodTimes.my

NECF MALAYSIA

welcomes new members...

Ordinary Members

- 1.Kuching Antioch Church
pastored by Angela Tay Bee Yiung
- 2.Kingdom Living Community, Subang Jaya
pastored by Joseph Chandran Michael
- 3.Faith Covenant Church, Subang Jaya
pastored by Rev. Steven Kau Yuen Fook
- 4.Living Water Bible Centre, Subang Jaya
pastored by Yew Siew Tsuey

Associate Members

- 1.Pr. Ting Moi Kieng
- 2.Mr. Mark Tan

MISSIONAL CHURCH CONFERENCE
ITS CONTRIBUTION TO TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

Life Outside Church

Speakers:
Dr Paul Alexander & Carol Alexander

10 August, 2011 (Wed) • Johor Baru • vineyard@streamyx.com
11 August, 2011 (Thurs) • Kuching • ccckch@pc.jaring.my

STEP OUT if you want your church to make a difference in your community. Be the Missional Church that touches lives, uplifts standards, transforms society. Come and learn more about the Missional Church - her role and purpose, and how Malaysian Christians may be nurtured and mobilised into every sphere of society to be agents of transformation in every aspect of human life.

Dr Paul Alexander has over 30 years' ministry experience in the pastorate in three different nations. His ministry has taken him on extensive travels to over fifty nations and today, he continues to motivate leaders and churches to reach their full, missional potential.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?
Pastors, Elders, Church Leaders and every Christ-loving Christian who thinks the world can be a better place.

NECF MALAYSIA

This seminar aims to explore the biblical understanding and mandate how the church may impact community and society. This conference is not a missions conference; instead it is about getting the church to step out of its comfort zone to make an impact on their communities. It will also provide examples to inspire and encourage your church on how you may be a missional church to impact their communities in the seven spheres of influence in society.

JAPAN A month has passed since the earthquake, devastating tsunami and radiation leakage. The death toll has topped 10,000. There are over 17,000 missing and all feared dead. The affected areas of Miyagi, Fukushima, and Ibaraki are some of the most spiritually needy places in Japan. About 0.15% or 9,000 out of 4.9 million people there who are active Christians. Fukushima has the lowest average worship attendance with only 19 people per church.

PRAY for the restoration of electrical power and the risky restoration of the vital functions at the nuclear power plants. Pray also that the Japanese people will find true hope in the Lord through this enormous tragedy. - WEA

SUDAN For many years, Sudan was torn by a civil war between the North and the South resulting in the deaths of millions of civilians. Since the civil war ended in 2005, Sudan has seen a steady decrease in violence and political tension. In January this year, the citizens voted successfully in a referendum for the independence of Southern Sudan. As the North is more Islamic, many Christians are now migrating to the South to start a new life.

PRAY for a smooth transition as post-referendum arrangements are being put into place to create an independent government for the new state. Also, pray that Christians will be effective peacemakers for the healing of the nation's wounds. - WPPC

PAKISTAN Let us keep Pakistani Christians in our prayers as they face an unparalleled time of persecution. The recent assassination of Mr Shahbaz Bhatti, Minister for

Minority Affairs and Human Rights in Pakistan is a reflection of anti-Christian sentiments in the country. Other human rights activists also received death threats for their work on repealing the country's controversial blasphemy laws.

PRAY for the safety and protection of all those who are standing up for the rights of the Christian minority in Pakistan. Pray that this growing persecution against Pakistani Christians may turn out for the furtherance of the kingdom of God! - WEA

INDIA Two pastors and 16 newly converted Christians were arrested for responding to the Gospel of Christ without official permit in Orissa's Mayurbhanj district in India. The Christians were charged under the "Orissa Freedom of Religion Act," which prohibits any conversion without governmental authorisation.

PRAY While they are on bail, PRAY that the state government will withdraw the charges and halt all anti-Christian violence. Pray for God's protection and strength especially over the newly converted Christians in India, who are undergoing such persecutions. - VOM

BHUTAN While the constitution grants the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion to all citizens, the Religious Organisations Act of 2007 only recognised Buddhist and Hindu organisations. As a result, no church building or organised Christian activities are allowed in the country hence worship services are held in the homes of local believers, Bhutan has a population of 708,484 people, of which roughly 75% are Buddhists. Christians are estimated to number between 6,000 to nearly 15,000, about 2% of the population.

PRAY that the government will amend the law to allow the registration for a national body to represent the interests of Christians. Pray also for dialogues between the church and the government in order to remove misunderstandings and suspicions. - CDN

SYRIA While the government is considered a moderate regime, it has been harassing Christians to appease religious extremists opposed to conversions to Christianity. Last year, six buildings that Christians used for religious purposes were closed. The government monitors the activities of all religious groups and discourages public proclamation of the gospel. Out of its 22.5 million population, 90% are Muslim and 6.34% are Christian.

PRAY for wisdom for the local Christian when sharing their faith in this environment. Pray also that the current uprising will result in greater political and religious freedom in Syria. - WINTF

EGYPT In March, a mob firebombed a church building in a village south of Cairo, after a local imam, issued the call during Friday afternoon prayers to "kill all the Christians". The church building was completely burnt but no one was injured. In response, about 2,000 people gathered outside the Radio and Television Building in Cairo to protest not only against the attack but also the government's reluctance to address the persecution of Christians.

PRAY that the heightened tension between Muslims and Copts in Egypt would subside especially among the older generation. Pray for God's protection over Christians as they speak out for religious freedom and justice. - CDN