

EDITORIAL

## Serious View on Small Matter



**T**he *Passion of the Christ* is a powerful film that has roused deep emotions and provoked much controversy all over the world. In Malaysia, the film has also stirred animated public debates, mostly centred on the government's restriction of the film to Christians only. (\*See page 3 for more on this.)

However, the Christian public has been so engrossed in this hullabaloo that they have missed the voice of one criticism leveled against the Church – that on the issue of piracy. Many Christians would have watched *The Passion* on pirated VCDs/DVDs prior to the Government's approval for the movie's public screening. Some churches have even screened the movie in their halls – obviously without consent from the local film distributor. Their intentions were sincere – to reach out to non-believers, while inspiring a deeper commitment to Christ among their flocks.

But have we considered how non-believers view this act? Recently, a church in the Klang Valley screened the film in its premises. Several non-Christians who knew about the screening then commented that the church had “illegally” shown the movie. They remarked something to the effect that Christians are no different from non-Christians.

### Small Matter?

Most Christians have no qualms about buying pirated discs or watching films on pirated DVDs/VCDs. For example, some who have viewed *The Passion* on

pirated discs might have rationalised their act as “the lesser of the two evils” since the film was not accessible at the time before the censorship board's approval. Others might have contended that it was a well-intentioned theft (if it was indeed a form of theft) and even used Bible verses to support their claim – “Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached” and “I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”

And why not? The pirated copies of *The Passion* has already struck a heavy blow on atheism in China and opened up a vast potential for evangelism in the Middle East. Others may also argue that it is ambiguous to put copyright laws under moral category, for it is more of a law of utility, which gives privileges to favoured groups. The more astute Christian consumer may go so far as to defend his purchase of a pirated VCD as legitimate since he had paid RM5 for it. (“I didn't sin. The manufacturer and the traders did.”)

So, is it an ethical issue if we watch *The Passion* on an unauthorised DVD/VCD?

We break at least two biblical directives on Christian living. First, Romans 13:1–7 clearly states that all governments are established by God and failing to subject ourselves to them is to oppose the ordinance of God. By direct application, the Malaysian Government, and the subsequent laws it makes, is to be obeyed. The will of God is that by doing right we “may silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15).

Unauthorised reproduction of

copyright property is currently against Malaysian Copyright Laws. Christians who participate through purchasing or copying or simply viewing are, in effect, endorsing lawlessness (iniquity) and thus opposing the ordinance of God.

Second, is blatant copying of copyright material for commercial sale a theft? Are those who contribute to the piracy market accomplices? From the secular legal dimension, movies are considered “intellectual products,” property of their respective *creators* under the Malaysia Copyright Act 1987. From the biblical perspective, both the eighth and tenth commandments of the Decalogue, “You shall not steal” and “You shall not covet...”, were given to encourage respect for others' property for the sake of stability in a society.

That means God's people are **not** to long for or lust after the legitimate properties of others. In other words, while those involved in unauthorised reproduction of original materials are committing a legal offence under the Copyright Act, Christians – who know God's laws – who buy, possess or even publicly screen a pirated copy of a movie have broken God's law.

Piracy is an offence. When we Christians buy or view pirated VCD or DVD copies of movies, we not only condone the offence, we encourage others to act against the copyright laws

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## LETTER

Dear Pastors and Leaders,

I want to ask whether it is correct to justify the means by the results? In other words, is the way we do something justified by the results we get by doing it?

I ask this out of great concern over the movie 'The Passion of Christ'. We all have heard the great reviews and the testimony of people coming to Christ through watching it and how it (has) so powerfully impacted lives. I believe it is a very powerful film and will be used to God's glory. But the question remains to churches, pastors, and leaders here in Malaysia – is it the right thing in the eyes of God to show a pirated copy to your church?

Yes, they are all pirated copies because it has not been released in the US on DVD yet. We can say we do not know, or maybe better, we do not want to know. What a testimony to people in the piracy business that the sale of this movie is so great. And that it is being bought by the righteous, holy, law-abiding Christians.

I was at a pastors fellowship where this was talked about and we were also talking about how the current PM is stomping out corruption and illegal activities. Then a pastor spoke up and said, if anyone knows how he can get a copy of the VCD to show his church, he wanted it. I about fell off my chair.

Another church we visited was going to show it and I spoke to the pastor and he decided not to and to wait for the original one. At another church, I preached from Colossians 3 on how we need to change the way we live and act when we come into the Kingdom of God. The pastor stood up and confirmed and enforced what was said and then announced that next week they would be viewing the pirated video. WHAT? That is what Jesus called hypocrisy.

I believe that this is a test and in many different ways, the fact that it is touching people justifies using a stolen copy. As long as it is in the name of Jesus and for the good of the kingdom of God, it is all right to steal and cheat. Yes, you are stealing from the film producer, Mel Gibson, as well as many others.

Then we try to tell our people not to be liars, not to steal... This is a test of the character of the leadership of the Church. Will we pass the test? If we do not, we lose our right to stand before people to tell them to run their lives or business with truth and integrity because we have not done the same. There is a saying, 'Practise what you preach', that my children would quote to me. I think it is a wise statement for all of us.

Please pray over this issue, that the Church would take a right stand before God and men and trust that God will use it just as powerfully, and even more, when we use a valid copy for His glory. I do not believe that the results justify the means in this or any other matter. It did not for Jesus and it should not for us either if we are to be disciples of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Just a Thought,  
(Name With-held)

Editor's Note: This letter came to us via e-mail.

## How 'Passion' Reach Our Screen

## Controversy Helped Publicise Film

NECF Malaysia never applied to the Government for *The Passion of the Christ* to be viewed by Christians only. Its Secretary-General Rev Wong Kim Kong stressed this to clarify the misconception arising from media reports and rumours that a certain Christian body was responsible for this "Christian only" viewing.

He suggested that the misunderstanding probably came about after the Government granted approval for the film with the condition that the tickets are to be sold through churches only and not made available to the public over the counter.

Wishing to set the record straight, he explained how the film came to our screen with the help of Dr Vincent Lim, the Prime Minister's political secretary.

He said: "When the film was released in the US and other parts of the world, NECF received many requests to get the



Government's approval for the film in anticipation of a government ban. Our response then was that this was a commercial enterprise and the Church should not be involved in the initial stage of application by the distributor to the Censorship Board.

"But there arose rumours that the film

had been banned and we decided to discuss the matter with the relevant authorities through the good office of Dr Vincent Lim. We were in constant communication with him verbally and it was relayed to him that the film has sentimental value to Christians and it also contains historical truths.

"During this time, several Christian groups wrote in to the Prime Minister to seek the approval for the film screening. One denomination particularly sought approval for the film to be screened in its churches. I believe that it was this denomination's application that sparked talks that the approval for the film was forthcoming.

"At that time, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox (the distributor) had not even bothered to send the film for review to the Censorship Board in view of our censorship laws that

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\* FROM FRONT COVER

of the country, and encourage the growth of piracy business. For where there is a demand there is always a market. We also commit theft indirectly by stealing intellectual properties. When we are careless about the laws, we discredit the name of our Lord. As such, there is no ardent difference in behaviour between Christians and non-Christians.

Christians know the importance of truth, honesty and integrity and we must lead by example, to be salt and light in the world. How do we pray for the nation if we ourselves violate the laws of the land and thus break the ordinance of God? Isaiah 59 indicates clearly the responsibility of God's people to uphold righteousness in His way so that He will hear our prayers for the nation.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear." (Isaiah 59:1-2)

For those of us who have transgressed in this area, perhaps we should consider how to make restitution.

## Malaysia Copyright Act

THE UN World Intellectual Property Organisation gives two main reasons for the protection of intellectual property:

1. To give statutory expression to the moral and economic rights of creators in their creations and the rights of the public in access to those creations; and

2. To promote, as a deliberate act of Government policy, creativity and the dissemination and application of its results and to encourage fair trading which could contribute to economic and social development.

Under the Copyright Act 1987 Malaysia, films are under copyright protection together with other literary and artistic works. The Act also explains when a copyright work is considered infringed.

"The copyright in a work is infringed when a person who, not being the owner of the copyright, and without license from the owner, does or authorises any of the following acts:

i. Reproduces in any material form, performs, shows or plays or distributes

## Please Pass the Tissue

Over 35,000 tickets sold



furtively drifted from the male ones. Some, unable to bear the sights of our Lord's sufferings, walked out of the show.

One viewer commented that the show was an "awakening film" that arouses deep feelings for the One who took our place on the cross. "The film captures the emotions of the characters like Mary (Jesus' mother). You can see the pain in her eyes. You can feel the pain Jesus suffered," he said.

Another viewer said the film helped him to understand what Jesus meant when He said during his last meal with His disciples, "This is my body broken for you."

IT'S one film that can thaw the icy heart and moisten the dry eye. And that's exactly what happened the premiere of *The Passion of the Christ* that was attended by pastors from the Klang Valley.

In the darkness of the theatre, unabashed sobs were heard coming from the female silhouettes while sniffs

The film is being screened in 17 cinemas nationwide for a scheduled two-month period beginning Sept 1. NECF Malaysia is coordinating ticket sales with the cinema operators, and by Sept 15, over 35,000 tickets have been taken up by churches.

The distributor, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, may extend the screening beyond October if

## No Gain from Ticket Sales

NECF Malaysia wish to clarify that in the July - August 2004 *Berita NECF* issue, it was reported that part of the ticket sales would go towards the NECF Foundation, a ministry launched this year to provide financial aid to needy pastors and full-time workers.

The Foundation board members had earlier proposed a fund-raising premiere to raise funds for the Foundation.

However, the NECF Secretary-General declined the proposal. Due to a miscommunication, the matter was incorrectly reported in *Berita NECF*.

We apologise for the error.

there is a demand. And, again depending on the demand, the film may be extended to other towns not on the current list which comprises eight cinemas in the Klang Valley, two each in Johor Baru and Penang, and one each in Ipoh, Melaka and Kuantan. In East Malaysia, the film is being shown in one cinema each in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu.

decided to print 50,000 copies of the "Experience the Passion of the Christ" booklet, which explains why Jesus died to, complement the film which shows how He died.

He appealed for understanding from the Christian community and urged those who have doubts about NECF's manner of handling matters to contact NECF directly for clarification.

The controversy over the "Christian only" viewing of the film was played out in the local dailies after one politician queried at a parliament session the government's condition that only Christians might view the film.

Ms Teresa Kok, the state assemblyman of Seputeh, argued that all Malaysians should be given the freedom to watch movies of their choice and that watching the movie would help promote understanding of other religions, something much needed in a multi-racial country like Malaysia. Ms Kok's eloquent argument opened a floodgate of opinions from many quarters, including notable

newspaper columnists and social activists.

There were also inaccurate and incorrect newspaper reports on the matter, which provided more fodder for argument. For example, one local English daily reported that the Government had banned the film on the grounds that it could affect sensitivities relating to the depiction of Jesus Christ... and "it later lifted the ban but decided to only allow Christians to watch it with tickets purchased from churches." The report is inaccurate in that the Government had never banned the film as the film distributor did not even submit the film for approval to the Censorship Board. Another newspaper criticised the Christian organisation - without naming it - for applying for the film to be screened to only Christians.

By applying for limited viewing to Christians only, the organisation was acting selfishly, the paper had said. Notwithstanding the reports - whether inaccurate or bias - the newspapers had helped to publicise the film.

• FROM PAGE 3: HOW 'PASSION' REACH OUR SCREEN

forbid the public screening of films depicting any of the prophets mentioned in the Quran and we know Muslims consider Jesus one of their prophets.

"We believe the Prime Minister sympathetically considered the various applications for approval and decided to get around the censorship law by granting the application but with conditions, including restricting the viewing to Christians only and restricting sales of the tickets through churches only.

"When we received news from Dr Lim that the PM had verbally approved the film to be shown, we contacted the distributor and assisted them in putting the application through. After the approval was formally granted, the distributor chose to work exclusively with us on the ticket sales according to the approval conditions outlined by the Home Ministry."

Rev Wong added that immediately after receiving the approval letter, NECF

## Sabah Restriction on Bahasa Words 'Unreasonable'

NECF Malaysia has protested against a Sabah *fatwa* that prohibits non-Muslims in the state to use certain Bahasa Malaysia words. The *fatwa* - a legal ruling issued by an Islamic counsel or mufti - was issued in June 2003 under Section 35 of the Sabah Administration of Islamic Law Act 1992. It forbids non-Muslims from using 32 words in any printed and audio-visual form.

In a recent letter to Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman, NECF said it was "unreasonable to prohibit any person of any religion from using words in our national language, especially in view of the Government's effort to promote the use of Bahasa Malaysia." The letter argued that some of the words, such as *Allah*, were already used before the birth of Islam. Restricting the usage of words - especially common ones such as *Allah*, *Injil*, and *imam*, distorts truth and contributes to breakdown in communication.

The prohibition "infringes on the rights of Christians in Sabah, as enshrined

in Article 11 of the Federal Constitution. Article 11 includes the right to have access to, and to the use of, scriptures and printed material in Bahasa Malaysia, a language that Sabahans dearly hold to," said the letter which was signed by NECF Secretary-General Rev Wong Kim Kong.

NECF also expressed concern on the State Government's attempt to impose the *fatwa* on non-Muslims when *fatwa* should only apply to Muslims. "Any attempt to impose *fatwa* on non-Muslims is *ultra vires* the Federal Constitution... The said *fatwa* is not consonant with the Government's assurance of respecting the rights of religious groups," the letter stressed.

It urged the CM to adopt measures that promote national integration and religious harmony, and that do not alienate or polarise the *rakyat*.

Copies of the letter were sent to Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Badawi and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (National unity and Integration) Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili.

## New Name for Revitalised NECF Youth Body

THE NECF Malaysia Youth Commission has been re-named NECF Malaysia YouthNet to better reflect the role and objectives of the group.

At a September meeting of youth leaders representing various churches and Christian organisations, the attendees also agreed on the group's purpose statement of "Serving Youth Ministries, Blessing the Nation" by targeting three levels: churches, youth pastors and leaders, and the nation.

In practice, YouthNet will provide a forum for interactions and prayers among youth ministries to foster mutual understanding and partnership, and provide consultation and research resources on youth issues to churches. It will also represent Christian youth ministries in engagements with the Government on youth issues such as education and National Service.

Although YouthNet's focus is youth ministries, programmes reaching youths may be held when opportunities arise. For instance, the group is looking into organising a youth rally featuring the famed street evangelist and author, Rev David Wilkerson, and his son in 2006.

## New building for illegally-demolished OA church

TEN months after the Kg Pasu Orang Asli (OA) church building was illegally demolished, work on a new building officially started on Aug 7 with the ceremonial planting of the foundation pillar on the site by two SIB Semenanjung leaders - Pr Dr Chew Weng Chee and Pr Richard Samporoh.

The church, an outreach work of SIB Semenanjung, was torn down last September by several Pahang state government officers who had alleged that the church was illegally built on state land.

With the assistance of NECF Malaysia, the case was brought to the attention of Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who responded by agreeing to pay RM40,000 for compensation, and also permitted the church to be rebuilt.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, Pr Dr Chew thanked the Government for upholding the individual's right to practise his religion. He told the OA Christians not to fear any threats but to look forward to a church that will be a place of worship and learning the Scriptures, which will then result in a positive change in the OA community there.

NECF Executive Secretary (BM) Alfred Tais who represented NECF, explained to the OA Christians that the



UPON THIS PILLAR SHALL THE CHURCH STAND: Pr Richard (left) and Pr Dr Chew securing the foundation pillar at the groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of work on the new building.

country did not prohibit any tribe or individual to practise his religion.

Some 500 people, many from other towns and states, attended the joyous occasion. - Reported by Pr Mium Amat (Coordinator, OA Ministry, SIB Semenanjung)

# NECF MALAYSIA Ministries and Partners

WITH the recent conclusion of NECF Malaysia 9<sup>th</sup> BGM and the election of a 14-member council, NECF has also appointed Christians to sit in the various NECF commissions. The commission members will serve a two-year term with immediate effect. Following are the commissions and their members:

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Mrs Chan Tean Yin, *EFC Gospel Centre, Petaling Jaya*  
Ms Shereene Wong, *Pusat Aktiviti Calvary, Kuala Lumpur*  
Ms Carol Tang, *Sg Way-Subang Methodist Church, Petaling Jaya*  
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Pr John Abel, *FGA Kuala Lumpur*  
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Pr Loh Kan Hooi, *Gereja Lutheran Orang Asli Pengkalan Hulu, Perak*  
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Mr Lim Ton Lon, *Malaysian Chinese Evangelistic League, Kuala Rompin*

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Note: The Chairpersons for the Women's Concern, Youth, BM and Missions commissions will be appointed in due course.

## Empowering Women For Leadership

# The DEBORAH Principle

– By Chan Tean Yin

It is heart warming and encouraging to read of the Prime Minister's announcement that the government has set a target for 30 per cent of the people involved in decision making in the public sector to be women. He said very aptly, "I don't think there exists any position that is specifically for men. If you want a good person for a job, your thoughts must not be confined to one gender. The post should be given to whoever is capable for it" (The Star Aug 2, 2004).

As I read this newspaper report, my thoughts raced to the situation in the Malaysian Church and the place of women in Christian leadership. I wonder how many churches in Malaysia would embrace the position of our very open-minded and progressive Prime Minister? Are our church governing bodies consisting of a 30 per cent woman representation?

Actually, I feel it is not necessary to set the target of 30 per cent or whatever percentage. The principle should be giftedness not gender, God's appointment and not man's volition. In churches where more than 50 per cent of the members are female, it is only appropriate to have a corresponding female representation in decision-making and leadership roles.

It is not my intention to enter into a theological argument of whether women should be in church leadership. My premise is that Christ, through the gospel, has liberated women spiritually, and socially. He has broken through cultural barriers to make male and female equal in Him (Gal. 3: 28). Both men and women received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and were given spiritual gifts without gender discrimination. It was not evident that men were given one set of gifts and women another.

Consequently, being incorporated into

the Body of Christ, women like men, are members of the Body and thus have equal responsibilities to function according to their God-given role and function in the Body (1 Cor. 12: 13).

Just as God calls men to positions of leadership, He also calls women to leadership roles.

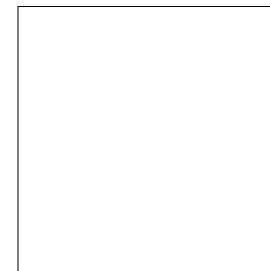
Are there models in the Bible that women leaders can emulate? Thank God we are not kept completely in the dark as we do have a wonderful model in Deborah who rose to prominence during the days of the Judges. A case study of Deborah's leadership role and functions shows us that a woman can be an effective spiritual leader, yet maintain her female distinctive.

## HISTORICAL CULTURAL CONTEXT OF DEBORAH'S LEADERSHIP

The book of Judges is one of the saddest parts of the Bible, humanly speaking. Some call it the "Book of Failure". The last chapter of Joshua anticipates continued blessing upon God's people in the land of their inheritance.

But we do not proceed far into the account of Judges before we sense that all is not well. While there are deliverances along the way, the tone of the book is predominantly one of oppression and defeat because "everyone did what was right in his own eye." When the gospel of God's grace does appear in the book, it shines forth in sharp brightness in this dark setting<sup>1</sup>.

When we come to the account on Deborah, Israel had again turned to idolatry, and experienced its consequences in two decades of oppression by the Canaanites. This time a woman, Deborah, identified both as a prophetess and a judge,<sup>2</sup> is the agent of God's deliverance. She accompanies a



Just as God calls men to positions of leadership, He also calls women to leadership roles.

reluctant general, Barak and directs the battle. Barak's 10,000 strong army defeated a much larger Canaanite force. In the confusion, the Canaanite commander, Sisera, escapes, only to be killed in an exhausted sleep by a woman, named Jael. Deborah's song, long recognised as one of the most powerful poems of antiquity, celebrates the Hebrew victory<sup>3</sup>

## LEADERSHIP STYLE OF DEBORAH

**1. Her leadership was divinely appointed/chosen**  
Deborah overshadows the whole story of Judges. Therefore, she must be seen for what she is: being a woman in such a position; she must represent a **sovereign activity of God**. This is all the more amazing because in the Old Testament cultural social context, women were not set over men. **But here in the case of Deborah, we have a woman by Divine consent and approval placed in a position of leadership.**

## 2. Multifaceted roles of Deborah's leadership

Deborah played at least three different roles (Judges 4: 4-5). She was a versatile leader.

•Deborah is identified as a **prophetess**. God used her as His spokesperson, communicating special messages to His people.

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“The text also says she was *“leading (judging) Israel at that time.”* This was very unusual in a society that emphasised male leadership and female subordination.

“The text also says that Deborah served as a sort of *“supreme court* and settled disputes that could not be decided locally.

Any one of these roles would set off any individual as special, male or female. Possession of all three roles indicates that *“Deborah was a truly unusual woman, with great personal and spiritual gifts. Deborah reminds us that society’s stereotypes need not hold for God’s people. God’s choice of Deborah shows that He is free to work through any human being. That choice reminds us that a person’s sex does not automatically qualify or disqualify him or her for significant ministry.”*<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Leadership by inspiration

Deborah led by

• Inspiring faith and inciting vision – vision of victory. She displayed the ability to inspire faith and courage. She not only possessed mental acumen and common sense but she was also a woman to whom the Lord had given the gift of prophecy and song. Because of these abilities, she succeeded in calling the hill folk back to Jehovah (encourage faith). She reminded them of their significant history in Egypt and Sinai and prophesied the coming of better days. Her songs passed from mouth to mouth and resounded from every hill.

*Thus, she inspired heroic confidence and awakened the glad hope of freedom in every tribe. Deborah demonstrated the spirit or principle of leadership, that is, inspiration.* So we see that the strength of Deborah’s leadership was *her power to inspire.* Both Barak and the leaders who took the lead fulfilled their leadership by reason of the inspiration received through Deborah. *Leadership is a matter of inspiration.* It is an endowment.

Our lesson then from Deborah is that, whether officially in the office of a leader or not, leadership is essentially a matter of the gift and power of inspiration, a contagious influence, an emanating

spiritual energy, and a potent example.

### 4. Love as the motivation of leadership

Leadership is often regarded as an official matter. The leader must have a title, an office, an appointment. *Deborah teaches us that leadership is the expression of the ‘mother-spirit’ to embrace the whole of God’s people. “Until that I Deborah arose... a mother in Israel” (Judges 5:7), and not “I a leader, a prophetess, a Divinely- chosen instrument arose” but “a mother.” Hers was evidently a heart-concern, an affectional concern for the Lord’s people.* This element must be in all leadership – the element of a jealous yearning over the spiritual interests of those concerned. “I arose a mother,” said Deborah. *The incentive of her inspiring leadership was the mother-passion for a spiritual family.*

### 5. A strategic leader

She proved to be unusually wise and tactful. She had not leaped into full glory at once, but had by many years of exertion and organising activity prepared Israel for her war of independence. *After these had been completed, she acted quickly and decisively. She was a strategic leader. Deborah showed a great deal of discernment. She saw the strategic moment had come.* She called Barak and told him that the time was ripe for action. She told him the military strategy to adopt.<sup>5</sup>

~To be continued~

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Irving Lester Jensen, Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament, Chicago : Moody Press, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> The judges were leaders or deliverers. The judge was a charismatic leader raised up by Yahweh, on whom his Spirit came to empower to deal with a certain situation. He was not a king and did not establish a dynasty or ruling family. Judges were commissioned by God to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies, usually by war, and then to rule the people during the era of peace .

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, The Bible Reader’s Companion, USA : Victor Books, 1991, p.163.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence O Richards, The Bible Reader’s Companion, USA : Victor Books 1991, p.163

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Kuyper, Women of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids : Victor Books, 1975.

# Manorom Christian Hospital Revisited

– By Dr Felicia Lim



God etches some impressions deeply on our minds. That seems to be what He was doing when I first visited Manorom Christian Hospital in Thailand as a young medical student doing my elective posting. Although I do not remember much of that visit, it had actually made a great impact on me. I graduated from medical school and went on to do my postgraduate studies in anaesthesia. Yet the impressions of that mission hospital endured. For years I carried this dream of going back to visit the Hospital. Then in 2003, I attended a conference where I met someone from the Manorom Hospital. God was putting arrangements in place for my dream to be realised! We established contact and in August 2003 I made my first return visit to Manorom Hospital. Later that year, in November, I was at a conference in Bangkok and again I took the opportunity to make another visit to the Hospital. I had waited for several years and now God was giving me two visits in one year! I knew I would be back.

**August 2004.** I have just returned from my third visit to the Manorom Hospital. I spent two weeks there. Manorom is a small village in Central Thailand, situated about two hours by car from Bangkok. The Manorom Christian Hospital was set up by Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) in 1956. At that time this was the only hospital serving a big area in Central Thailand. Hospital staff consisted of missionary doctors and staff nurses. Local nurses were trained to be practical nurses (like our assistant nurses). Through the years, local Christian doctors and nurses have been recruited. The hospital has since been handed over to a local Christian mission organisation.

I provided anaesthetic service



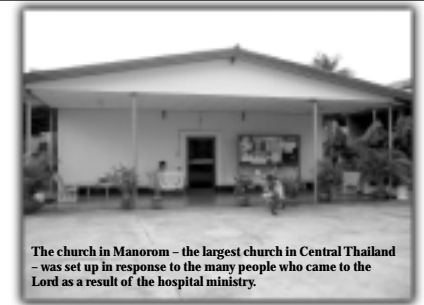
NO WASTING OF TIME HERE: A lady sharing the gospel to the patients waiting for their turn at the Outpatient Department.

during my two-week stint in the Manorom Hospital. An OMF missionary surgeon performs almost any surgery although he was trained as a general surgeon. There is no qualified anaesthesiologist but there are two nurse anaesthetists – one, a local staff nurse and the other, an American missionary nurse. Both of them have been trained in anaesthesia. Even though anaesthetic facilities in the operating theatre are basic, they have been doing a good job at maintaining a high standard of care and safety to their patients.

My visits to the Hospital have been meaningful. As I offered my services and they learned from me the finer points of anaesthesia, I also learned from them. So often I can easily forget that it is the Lord who gives life and who heals. Doctors and technology are just God’s instruments. When I was at the hospital, I was reminded that skills and knowledge, technology and machines are helpful in treating patients, but ultimately it is the Lord whom we should depend upon to see us through. It was also a humbling experience for me to see God bring healing to patients in the absence of all the sophisticated equipment that we have in a modern hospital.

The Manorom Hospital provides most of the basic facilities that are available in a hospital such as X-ray and laboratory facilities, a pharmacy, physiotherapy, an operating theatre, outpatient clinics, an emergency department and a dental clinic. Besides these, since its inception, the Hospital has been taking care of leprosy patients who are normally shunned by the community. In 1997, an AIDS programme called the Friday Friendship group was started for AIDS patients. It provides counseling and teaching about AIDS to HIV positive patients and their families.

Patients who come to the Hospital have the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Each morning, at the Outpatient Department, before the clinic starts, there will be a time of preaching of the Gospel by one of



The church in Manorom – the largest church in Central Thailand – was set up in response to the many people who came to the Lord as a result of the hospital ministry.

the hospital evangelists to those who are waiting to see the doctors. The hospital evangelists also visit patients in the wards to share with them the Gospel and to pray with them.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for foreign medical personnel to work in Thailand because of the need to sit for qualifying examinations in Thai in order to obtain a practising licence. It has also not been easy to recruit Thai doctors and nurses to work here, because it involves a lot of sacrifice. As a result of the shortage of staff, some services and some wards have had to be closed. There is a need to pray that more Thai Christian doctors and nurses will respond to God’s call to serve in this hospital. God had placed the call and vision in the hearts of His people to engage in this evangelistic medical mission 48 years ago. Many lives have been blessed and touched and it will be wonderful to see the work go on.

I had the privilege of joining them in celebrating the hospital’s 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Aug 14. It was exciting to hear the testimonies of many who have come to know the Lord through the hospital. Lives have been touched and transformed as a result of patients seeking treatment in this mission hospital. Manorom Christian Hospital has played a very significant role in evangelism and church planting in Central Thailand these past 48 years.

The church in Manorom was set up when the hospital was established. Today it is the largest church in Central Thailand with a membership of 120. Many of them came to faith in the Lord through the hospital. God has truly been faithful in sustaining His work in Manorom Christian Hospital. Let’s pray that God will continue to use it to extend His kingdom in Central Thailand. – *Dr Felicia Lim is a Professor and Consultant Anaesthesiologist with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She worships at Praise Baptist Centre, Bandar Sri Damansara, Kuala Lumpur.*

## WOMEN to WOMEN

Advisor/Co-ordinator: Goh Poh Gaiik

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

It has the broad objectives of:

- educating and raising awareness of the social and theological issues affecting women
  - stimulating efforts towards networking and dialogue amongst women
  - encouraging one another in the use of our gifts and talents for the Lord’s Kingdom
- Your letters and contributions (feedback, suggestions, ideas, articles, poems, cartoons, etc.) are most welcome.

Send to: The Co-ordinator, WOMEN to WOMEN  
NECF, 32, Jalan SS2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

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

## Will You Die for Your Country?

"DO you love Malaysia? Are you willing to lay down your life for your country?" This was the startling challenge thrown by Dr David Demien to some 800 people who attended the recent Klang Valley Merdeka Prayer Rally held in Kuala Lumpur.

He further asked: "Do you want to know God's plan for Malaysia?" After a pause, he continued, "Why should God reveal His plans to you if you don't love your country?"

Those questions cut to the core, evidenced by the unabashed weeping after his message when the congregation broke into small groups to pray for the nation.

Dr Demien was an eloquent speaker who spoke with passion and conviction and without notes, saved for the three occasions when he read passages from the Bible.

Believing that "the hour for Malaysia has come", he said that God has heard the cries of His people in Malaysia and would move regardless of "the impossibilities, the giants, the mountains and what you see around you". The Egyptian-born medical doctor who now resides in Canada, recalled the time when Israel was standing at the edge of Canaan after coming out of Egypt. God was going to lead Israel into Canaan even though the Canaanites were like 'giants', he pointed out.

"Do not let your fears of the impossibilities hinder you from believing; do not let the giants of the land melt your heart," he urged, and added that the Church had the responsibility to move God's heart.

"Sodom and Gomorrah were not destroyed because of their sins but because there were no 10 righteous people in the cities," he remarked. Likewise, God was looking out for righteous people who would intercede for their cities so that His judgement would be averted. "In His wrath, He remembers mercy," he reminded the attendees.

The rally was the final event of the NECF Malaysia Merdeka

**KLANG VALLEY RALLY**  
From left: Datin Joan and Datuk Dr Max Ongkili, Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, NECF Vice-Chairman Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, and the speaker, Dr David Demien.



**KLANG VALLEY RALLY**  
Many, like these, wept freely during the small-group prayer session in response to the message.

prayer programme which included the nationwide 40-day Prayer and Fast and the National Prayer Conference of which Dr Demien was a speaker. The other speaker was Dr Iman Santoso who is the General Coordinator of National Prayer Network, Indonesia, which develops prayer networks in cities throughout Indonesia.

Earlier at the start of the rally, when introducing the guests-of-honour representing the Government, NECF Secretary-General Rev Wong Kim Kong said the Government recognised prayer and had personally asked the Christian community to pray in times of crises – such as the bird flu crisis – and at critical moments, such as the recent general election.

The special guests were Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili. Speaking on behalf of the Government, Tan Sri Dompok conveyed the Government's appreciation for organising the event to pray for the country. He revealed there were at least four Christians in the Cabinet and they had been voicing Christian concern. "I see no way that religious freedom can be taken away from us," he said. While he was thankful for religious freedom, he cautioned Christians to take the responsibility to defend this right.

Tan Sri Dompok's message was followed by prayers from seven pastors and church leaders who each prayed over an aspect of the country including the Government, education, family, Orang Asli, and the Church.

The rally climaxed in a time of intercession following Dr Demien's message where the attendees gathered in clusters to pray for the nation. Many were seen and heard weeping as they prayed in response to the message.

### ELSEWHERE...

Prayer rallies were also held all over Malaysia on various days. Up north in **Alor Setar**, about 180 Christians from six English- and Mandarin-speaking churches had a patriotic ending to their rally on Aug 30 by singing *Negraku* at midnight, reported *Pr Kuilan*.

The following morning, 33 participants from five churches took part in the town's Merdeka Parade, marching under the banner "Gabungan Gereja-Gereja". In the afternoon, the churches held a social gathering with the poor as the special

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guests. Guest-of-honour Alor Setar MP Dato Chor Chee Heung gave away hampers to 80 needy people, most of them nominated by the State Welfare Department. The events were all organised by the combined churches and Alor Setar Pastors Fellowship.

Over in **Penang**, 450 Christians from 10 English-speaking churches gathered for a great time of celebration and prayer for the nation on Aug 29. Organised by the "Love Penang Network", the rally also urged participants to join a citywide inter-church "40 Days of Purpose Campaign" to be held next year to impact the city for Christ, according to *Pr Lim Soon Hock*.

In **Dungun, Terengganu**, over 30 members of the Dungun Elim Church ushered in Merdeka Day at midnight with shouts of "Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka" followed by "Jesus is Lord" 14 times – one for each state.

The meeting, held in Mandarin, was attended by youths, adults and senior citizens who interceded for unity among churches, evangelism within their communities and a righteous government to prevail. *Pr Patsy Lim* said the meeting ended with a prayer of declaration that

"the 'Dungun Church be a lighthouse that shines continuously from Dungun forever'".

Right down in **Johor Baru**, over 600 Christians from some 10 English- and Mandarin-speaking churches met at the rally organised by the JB Pastors Fellowship. *Pr Tay Wah Seng* reported that there was a joyful sense of expectation at the rally. Those who attended wished that more would catch the vision and burden to pray, he said.

In **Melaka**, over 130 people turned up at the nine-church rally on Aug 27. The rally was organised by Melaka Prayer Network together with the host church, Calvary Life Assembly, and participating churches. *Lyn Tan* reported a sense of unity at the rally.

*Marian Tan* reported that in  **Bintulu**, about 70 people from New Life Fellowship met on Merdeka Day to pray for the nation.

Finally, NECF's *Ngeh Hoong Eng* reported that over 1,000 Christians from the Chinese churches attended the **Klang Valley Chinese rally** at FGA Kuala Lumpur on Aug 27. The meeting was well organised, with enough time for the crowd to break for small-group intercession, thus making the rally more meaningful for the participants.



Part of the large crowd at the Klang Valley Chinese rally at FGA KL.



Christians in Bintulu praying at their rally.



MARCHING FOR JESUS: The 33-member contingent representing Alor Setar churches at the town's Merdeka parade.

## Merdeka Party in Singapore

ACROSS the causeway, Christians in Singapore joined in the Merdeka celebration at a fun-filled night themed "Malaysiaiku, Kampungku" (My Malaysia, My Home).

The gathering at TOUCH Community theatre was spearheaded by Rev Victor Wong, a Johor-born 30-something pastor at FCBC, Singapore. Most of those who attended have ties to Malaysia in that they were either Malaysian by birth and are now residing in Singapore, or married to Malaysians or they have relatives in Malaysia.

For many who turned up, the night was a nostalgic occasion of *lagu Melayu*, *satay* and *teh tarik* Malaysian style. It was also a time to remember their roots and express their love for their birthland in intercession.

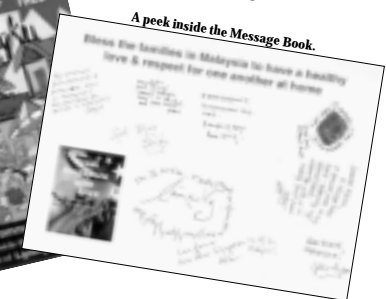
The participants also had the opportunity to write messages on a book which was presented to NECF as a token of love and friendship from Christians

in Singapore.

"My dad's from Penang. Without Malaysia, there's no me. God bless Malaysia!," wrote Ellen. "A good beginning to remember the root," scribbled Kampong Boy Hak Ming Fui Yan, evidently from Sabah, penned, "I love Malaysia. Malaysia Boleh, Sabah Boleh..."



Cover of the Message Book



A peek inside the Message Book.

## Court's Duty to Protect People's Rights

MALAYSIA practices parliamentary democracy and is ruled as a Constitutional Monarchy, with the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* as the Head of the country. Theoretically, the Constitution functions to create a form of government that is just and able to meet the needs and requirements of the people.

It ensures that the leader exercises his duties without abusing the power accorded to him. As such, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, the supreme law of the land, explicitly holds the principle of separation of powers and divides the authority of the Federation into Legislative (lawmaking body), Judicial and Executive (ruling body) to ensure the system of checks and balances.

The judicial authority of Malaysia is vested in the Federal Court, the High Courts and Subordinate Courts. Presently, the Federal Court is the highest court in Malaysia. The Head of the Judiciary is the Chief Justice of the Federal Court. The Court plays an important role in interpreting the law and protecting the aspiration of the Constitution. It is empowered to hear and determine civil and criminal matters, as well as to pronounce on the legality of any legislative or executive acts.

By law, justice is to be granted in disputes not only between citizens and citizens but also between citizens and the government and its agencies.

The constitutional role of judges is to deliver their judgment in accordance with the law and the evidence presented before them, independent of political or improper influences. Therefore, a decision made by the court may not conform to government policy, or a state project may be suspended in view of the right of some individuals or organization. To put it simply, the judges' duty is to safeguard and protect the people's fundamental freedoms and rights provided by the Constitution.

In order to perform its judicial functions impartially, the judiciary must be independent, that is independence of the individual judges in their exercise of judicial functions and independence of the Judiciary as an institution.

In his written response to an issue raised at the Dewan Rakyat recently,

Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Badawi affirmed that the judiciary was indeed independent and there was no need to set up a royal commission to restore its independence. The existing system in the appointment of High Court judges – maintained by the Government – was sufficient to ensure the independence of the institution, he said.

and her estranged husband, who has converted to Islam, and which also concerned the conversion of their two minor children to the Islamic faith, drew much attention and criticism from the public.

The High Court judge, on one hand, ruled that the conversion endorsed by the Syariah court was not binding on the

"In order to perform its judicial functions impartially, the judiciary must be independent, that is independence of the individual judges in their exercise of judicial functions and independence of the Judiciary as an institution."

Furthermore, the Government has always adhered to the principle of separation of powers. (*Bernama*, July 20, 2004)

Nonetheless, we cannot afford to ignore the public concerns over the independence, impartiality and integrity of the Malaysian Judiciary. Two fundamental questions have been raised:

1. Is the rule of law in this country equally applicable to all citizens?
2. Is the law enforcement conducted without fear and favour?

### Public Losing Faith

The Malaysian Judiciary was said to be independent until 1988 when a number of suits against the Government resulted in the attacks on the Judiciary by several members of the Government. The subsequent removal of judges including the Lord President Tun Salleh Abbas, and ultimately the amendment of Article 125 of the Federal Constitution, raised awareness on the deterioration in judicial independence.

Further, the narrow interpretations of the Constitution, instances of refusals to exercise jurisdiction and inconsistencies in decisions by some judges have created doubts in the integrity of the system as a whole. Today, when there is a case before the court, the most probable question to first arise is, "Who is the judge?"

The recent July verdict on a child custody case involving a Hindu woman

Hindu mother and that the father "cannot literally convert the children without the consent of the mother. They were converted in a shroud of secrecy and hence there was no automatic conversion." On the other hand, he placed a caveat on the mother, who was granted actual custody of their children, that she would lose her right if there were grounds to believe she might "influence the children's present religious beliefs or make them eat pork" (*The Star*, July 21, 2004).

Indirectly, he confirmed the conversion, thus denying the mother's right as equal party in the choice of religion for her children. Such contradictory statements could not persuade the public on the impartiality and sound judgment of the said judge, and the existing laws to ensure religious freedom were consequently ignored.

A subsequent case on apostasy also raised public discontent. The Chief Justice on July 21 dismissed the appeal by four Kelantanese (one deceased while in imprisonment) for a declaration that the Syariah Court had no jurisdiction over them.

"Although they had declared themselves *murtad* (apostates) in 1998, they can still be brought before the Syariah Court in 2000 because it concerns an

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## State of Our Missionaries

**ReMAP II is a 22-nation study on long-term missionary retention and agency practices – what keeps them in ministry and what organisational factors contribute to this. The survey was launched last year by the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission, of which the NECF Malaysia Missions Commission is a member. The project in Malaysia was coordinated by PHILIP CHANG, who is Intercare Chairman and a member of the NECF Missions Commission as well as Asia Member Care Task Force. He is also an associate of the WEA Missions Commission. Currently he has a full-time job in the financial services sector. He reports key observations of the study on Malaysia.**

THE respondents have been sending for an average of 20 years. Hence, Malaysia is quite new as a sending country. The total number of active long-term missionaries sent as of Dec 31, 2002 was 121. About 40.5% of them have children aged below 21 years. This is lower than the global figures as well as other regional figures.

It is a common fact that the majority of long-term missionaries from Malaysia are singles and mostly women. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of married couples with children venturing out into long-term missions, which is a healthy trend.

**Allowances**• The estimated percentage set aside for retirement is 8.77%, which is similar to global averages.

**Ministry Priorities**• Among

Malaysian missionaries, Evangelism and Church Planting among Unreached Peoples command the highest percentage at 35.24%. Taking second spot is Services at 21.94%. About one-fifth or 19.17% are involved in Social and Community Work, 13.69% in Evangelism and Church Planting among people with more than 1% evangelicals, and lastly, 9.96% in Supporting Ministries to existing churches such as Bible teaching and pastoral. Overall, nearly half of all Malaysian missionaries are involved in Evangelism and Church Planting work.

**Candidate Selection**• Malaysian mission senders place the most emphasis

on having a clear calling and mature Christian character, as well as the endorsement of the home church pastors or leaders. Importance was also given to agreement with agency's doctrinal statements, knowledge of agency's principles and practices, good character references and good health. The blessing of family is also an important factor that is reflective of the local culture. Having previous cross-cultural experience was of least importance.

**Education**• An overwhelming majority of 65.02% of Malaysian missionaries have a Bachelor degree, diploma or the equivalent. Another 11.51% have a Master's degree and only a small percentage of 1.85% have doctorate degrees.

**Pastoral Member Care**• Malaysian senders spent on average about 10% of their total time and about 10% of their budget on pastoral care. However, only 14.71% of these resources represent preventive member care. This is rather poor compared to the global average of

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offence committed when they still embraced the Islamic faith" (*New Straits Times*, July 21, 2004).

The questions on citizens' constitutional right to renounce their religion – in particular, the Islamic faith – posed by the appellants, were left unanswered. By declining to answer, the Federal Court, in effect, suspended a person's right to choose his/her religion, which contravened the provisions in the Constitution.

### Dilemma of Two Courts

The above examples also indicate the dilemma of dual jurisdiction (Syariah and Civil). A recent public seminar in June at the Bar Council pointed out that issues of religious freedom, conversion and renunciation, particularly in family disputes, remain unresolved mainly due

to the attitude of the Malaysian judiciary. Raja Muda of Perak Raja Nazrin Shah then eloquently said that "the sovereignty of the law cannot be compromised and should instead be protected in a firm, bold, transparent and open manner" (*NST*, Aug 10, 2004). The guardian of this sovereignty is the civil judiciary, who must ensure that the people's rights are protected and that everyone is treated equally before the law.

However, we must not dismiss the sound and impartial judgments with emphasis on public interests in our judicial history. The upright judgments are beacons of hope to the public. But, while there are judges whose integrity and impartiality are commendable, there is still a need to restore public confidence. It is not enough for the Government alone to have confidence in the judiciary.

"... the judiciary would count for naught unless it is made up of fearless

and uncorrupt judges." – Tun Hussein Onn, when opening the 10<sup>th</sup> Law Asia conference on 29 June 1987, Kuala Lumpur. Besides being free from interference – be it from the legislature or executive – accountability and transparency of the judiciary are essential for democracy in this country.

Therefore, it is crucial for Christians to understand the judicial authority of Malaysia, the importance of the role of courts in the application of the law without fear and favour, and finally to uphold the system and the judges in prayer. – *Report by Linn Siew Foong, NECF Research Executive*

Note: This article is available in its complete form on the NECF website in the "Research" section. The article ends with a name list of all the judges in Malaysia and links to the government judiciary website which explains the role of the various court.

• FROM PREVIOUS PAGE: STATE OF OUR MISSIONARIES

27.6%. This strongly suggests that more effort and resources should be devoted to preventive member care such as prevention, personal development and support, rather than responsive care or crisis resolution.

**Communication and Leadership**• Malaysian mission leaders gave top ratings to a culture of prayer being actively promoted within the agency and leaders as a good example of the agency's beliefs and values, which are quite consistent with most other countries. On the other hand, lowest rating was given to the handling of complaints from missionaries. Perhaps this is a cultural thing or it could be the lack of experience or knowledge in dealing with such issues.

**Ministry**• Top ratings were given to commitment to ministry and loyalty to the agency. Like most other countries, Malaysian missionaries were seen to be overloaded in the amount of work they do. As far as **Ministry Outcome** is concerned, mission leaders strongly believed that the churches on the field value the ministries of our missionaries, and that they are developing good relationships with the people they serve. In general, ministry outcomes have been rated positively.

**Personal Care and Family Support**• Highest ratings were given to emphasis being placed on the maintenance and growth of personal spiritual life. Two items scored quite poorly; firstly, the resolution of interpersonal conflicts in a timely and appropriate manner; and secondly, the satisfactory schooling opportunities for missionary kids or MKs. On the resolution of interpersonal conflicts, this could perhaps be related to the low rating given to the availability of documented and adequate procedures for handling complaints of missionaries, as well as the relatively low level of resources given to preventive member care. As for MK schooling, this could also be related to the relatively low percentage of missionary families with children; hence, sending agencies and churches may generally be lacking in terms of experience and knowledge in dealing with MK education.

**Finances**• High ratings were given to having sustained financial support and the transparency in handling finances. On the other hand, low rating was given to the availability of financial back-up for missionaries with low or irregular support. This is indeed a serious problem - if missionaries do not receive enough or regular support, it is only a matter of time before they are forced to leave the field prematurely. One Malaysian missionary once remarked, "We missionaries don't just live on fresh air and fresh water alone; in fact, most missionaries live and serve in hard places where there is not even any fresh air nor fresh water!"

**Home Office**• Malaysian mission leaders gave positive ratings for most agency practices, with the highest rating given to home office staff praying regularly for their missionaries. Lowest rating was given to re-entry arrangements being provided for missionaries returning for home leave. This is clearly an area of weakness, which requires much more improvement in the Malaysian context.

**Retention** (or the number of missionaries still in active ministries)• The total Retention Rate for Malaysia is 95.79%, whereas the Retention Rate for Unpreventable Attrition is 96.97% and Retention Rate for Preventable Attrition is higher at 98.82%.



NECF Research Commission will release in September the fourth installation of its **WATCHMEN'S FORUM**, a compilation of research articles focussing on current issues. This time, the theme is "The Realities of Christian Living". Among the articles are "Faith and Fengshui", "Christians and Knowledge Economy", "Cronyism in Asia" and "Christian Earthkeeping". The book is available from NECF office at RM10 per copy.

### New Members

We welcome the following into our Fellowship as **Ordinary Members**:

- **Calvary Charismatic Centre, KL**, pastored by *Winston Chew*;
- **City Harvest Church, PJ**, pastored by *Kevin Loo Seng Pung*;
- **In-Touch Trinity Baptist Centre, KL**, pastored by *Clarine Churn*;
- **SIB KL (BM)**, pastored by *Kenny Tham Yun Ken*;
- **The Salvation Army, Melaka**, represented *Esther Ong*; and
- **New Life Restoration Centre, Shah Alam**, pastored by *Lee Chin Ban*

We also welcome 8 **Associate Members**: Pr Richard Engan; Rev Lian Mong King; Rev Alan Thayalan a/l Sivalingam; Pr Kaliappan a/l Palanisamy; Charis Quay Huei Li; Mr Lim Sun Heng; Rev Joseph Hong; Ikpyo; and Ms Chen Yoke Ming.

During the two-year period between Jan 1, 2001 and Dec 31, 2002, the percentage of Malaysian missionaries who left the field including retirement was 2.94%, which is significantly lower than the global average of 5.42%, but slightly higher than the new sending countries' average of 2.72%. These Malaysian missionaries who returned had served an average of 7.43 years, compared to the global average of 9.11 years.

**Lessons from the research**

From this survey, the obvious key areas for improvement are: handling of complaints from missionaries, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, and re-entry arrangements. The survey also suggests that more investment is required in terms of training and dissemination of information to be given to mission agencies and churches on the areas mentioned above, while adequate resources should be channeled towards preventive member care.

In addition, as Malaysia matures in mission sending, more families rather than singles will be going out. The issue of MK schooling therefore needs to be addressed adequately and MK Care would become even more relevant in time to come.

Note: This is an excerpt. The complete article first appeared in "The Connections", published by the WEA Missions Commission. The booklet, which also contains full reports from other countries, is available from Intercare at RM10 each. Contact tel. 03-7784 8430 or e-mail icare@streamyx.com

**2003 Merdeka Charity Campaign**

A total of RM 370,000 was distributed to 51 charitable homes and organisations, of which 36 are run by Christians.

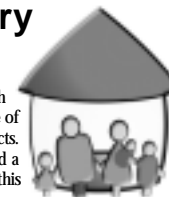
**Christian Charitable Organisations**

- True Light Vision Centre, Kedah
- Relau Rumah Charis, Penang
- Jesus Cares Centre, Taiping
- Persatuan Perkhidmatan Komuniti Taiping
- Ray of Hope, Ipoh
- The Vineyard Keeper, Ipoh
- Salvation Army Home for the Aged, Ipoh
- Diamond Home, Air Tawar, Perak
- Kenosis Home, KL
- Rumah Sayangan, KL
- Bridges EIP, PJ
- Good Samaritan Home, Klang
- Cornerstone Drug Centre, Klang
- Dayspring Training Centre, Klang
- Reach Community Centre, Dengkil, Negri Sembilan
- Persatuan Kebajikan Charis Cheras, Ulu Langat, KL
- New Creation Centre, Kajang
- Ark Drug Rehabilitation, Kajang
- Living Water Assembly of God, Tampin, Negri Sembilan
- Salvation Army Homes, Melaka
- Shekinah Home Services, Melaka
- Calvary Care Home, Melaka
- Gospel to the Poor, Pahang
- Rumah Keluarga Kami, Kajang
- Community Services Centre, KL
- Home for the Aged, Ipoh
- Beautiful Gate, PJ/KL/Seremban
- Migrant Ministry Klang
- Malaysian CARE
- Rapha Homes, Pahang
- Rumah Damai, Terengganu
- Persatuan Kebajikan Kalvari Segamat, Johor
- Eagles Nest, Kajang
- CARNet (Children At Risk)
- Step-by-Step Early Intervention Centre, KL
- Compassionate Dept., Zoe Christian Fellowship, Selangor

**Others**

- Lembaga Pelawat Rumah Seri Kenangan, Bedong Kedah
- Community AIDS Service Penang
- Asia Community Service, Penang
- Yayasan Sultan Idris Shah, Ipoh
- Persatuan Kebajikan Orang-Orang Kurang Upaya, Ipoh
- Independent Living and Training Centre, Rawang
- Persatuan Kanak-Kanak Istimewa Hulu Langat, KL
- Pusat Penjagaan Kanak-Kanak Cacat Tamasan Megah, PJ
- Yayasan Kajian & Pembangunan Masyarakat, Selangor
- Pusat Haemodialysis Mawar, Seremban
- Joy Training Workshop, Melaka
- ROTARY Hospice Programme, JB
- Persatuan Hospis Negeri Kelantan
- Hospice Association of Sandakan, Sabah
- Kuching Hospice Cancer Care, Sarawak

**Family Life Ministry Conference**



RARELY does one find a conference with eight speakers, all with intimate experience of and well-qualified to speak on their subjects. At this conference, participants will be fed a rich diet of family development skills by this variety of speakers.

By the end of the conference, they will be equipped to lead the family-life ministries in their local church, as well as interface with other churches and pro-family organisations on matters involving family life. The conference will richly benefit Christians leading family ministries in their church and family-life related organisations. The speakers are:

**John Bethany**, Director of International Relations for Asia-Pacific and Africa of Focus On The Family (FOTF) USA;  
**David Leong**, Executive Director of Scripture Union (SU) Singapore as well as SU East Asia Children's Ministry Network Coordinator;

**Lee Wee Min**, Executive Chairman of FOTF Malaysia;  
**Pr Dr Lew Lee Choo**, a paediatrician who is now a pastor at SIB Kuala Lumpur where her husband, Dr Chew Weng Chee (formerly a gynaecologist), serves as Senior Pastor;

**Bruce Peppin**, Director of International Communications of FOTF USA;

**Daniel Scott Mays**, Director and International Consultant of Lifeway Australasia, Africa and India; and

**Tan Ah Eng**, an afternoon supervisor in a national secondary school in Petaling Jaya.

**Conference Date: October 22-23 (Friday and Saturday)**  
**Time: 9.00am to 5.00pm**  
**Venue: Tropicana Golf and Country Resort, Petaling Jaya**  
**Registration fee: RM150 per person**  
**Organised by: Focus on the Family (FOTF) Malaysia and NECF Malaysia**


For more information, contact FOTF at 03-5882 3343 (tel.) focus@family.org.my (e-mail).

### Thanksgiving Tea

The NECF Malaysia Prayer and Research commissions are jointly organising the tea to review God's goodness during the year.

Date: Dec 4, 2004 (Saturday)  
 Time: 2pm - 6pm  
 Venue: Level 4, Wisma FGA, Kuala Lumpur

All are welcome to celebrate God's faithfulness. The organiser appreciates a love gift of RM5 per person to cover cost.





# FOR YOUR PRAYERS



## CHILE

THE archbishop of Santiago decried the existence of Satanic groups in Chile in the wake of the July murder of a priest in the metropolitan cathedral. Servite Father Faustino Gazziero de Stefani, 68, was slain after he had celebrated Mass.

Archbishop Cardinal Francisco Errázuriz, who is also president of the country's episcopate lamented that legislative proposals to curb Satanic groups have not been addressed with greater care. He warned that "the phenomenon of Satanism in Chile, as in other countries of the world, is growing strongly". Numerous groups are active in the country, especially in the cities, although in recent years their presence has also spread to minor urban centers. Authorities identified the assailant as Rodrigo Orias Gallardo, 25. After killing Father Faustino, the youth knelt down by his side invoking Satan's name.

Pray this tragic event will lead people in Chile to renounce any connection with Satanism, and that the leadership in all churches worldwide will call upon Christians to recognise evil, calling upon the powerful Name of Jesus to combat the works of Satan.

## BULGARIA

ACCORDING to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), police allegedly closed down 250 churches nationwide and detained several priests in the largest crackdown on clergy since the collapse of Communism. Officials disputed the numbers and said Bulgarian police evicted dissident Orthodox priests from dozens of churches across the country, which they were occupying in defiance of a 2001 law that handed their property to the traditional church.

The BHC has criticised the Denominations Act that awarded properties to the traditional church.

Pray the Holy Spirit will move in power to unite the rival bodies of the Orthodox Church and the Alternative Synod, bringing them together in their love for Jesus; that He will draw close to the priests who have been detained and

give them His love for their persecutors; and that the people of Bulgaria will rejoice to be part of the Body of Christ wherever He is truly worshipped.

## VIETNAM

THE Vietnam Evangelical Fellowship (VEF) has just released a statement on Vietnam's new Ordinance on Religion, due to take effect on Nov 15. The VEF is an organisation of about 30 unregistered house church organisations representing many hundreds of house churches. The Aug 30 letter states, "This Ordinance will create many problems and disadvantages for the church, especially for our gatherings for worship. At the same time, it is likely to permanently outlaw our house church organisations, none of which have been recognised since 1975. Many articles in this Ordinance will also provide a legal basis for local authorities to hinder and persecute the church."

This new law purportedly guarantees religious freedom in one article but uses most of the remaining 40 articles for detailing a long series of complicated regulations to ensure close state management of religious activity.

Pray that all believers in local areas would faithfully gather to worship the Lord and stand firm in all circumstances (Acts. 5:41-42); that all leaders of the churches, all leaders of small groups, all of the host families of churches would have the wisdom and courage needed to lead the flock (Acts. 4:29-30); that the government of all levels from the central to the local, throughout all of Vietnam, will soon recognise God's sovereignty so that they will withdraw the Ordinance issued on June 18, 2004, so that they will give up their prejudices towards the Church, and stop all forms of persecution and hindrances to the Church's activities.

## CAMEROON

RELIGIOUS tension is rising in northern Cameroon (which borders troubled northern Nigeria) as foreign Islamists infiltrate to stir up the local Muslims against the local Christians. The Cameroonian authorities report that the

region has been inundated with Islamist tracts inciting hatred of Christians. The Islamists are urging local Muslims to marry and convert young Christian girls, as well as drive Christians out by raising rents and refusing to let property to them.

Bishop Yves Steven of Extreme North Province reports some Christians have already been forcibly evicted from their homes. Unless this threat is tackled decisively, the situation could deteriorate with northern Cameroon descending into religious conflict. Please pray an outpouring of the Holy Spirit will revive the churches of Cameroon (and all West Africa), so that they will be emboldened and effective with the gospel of salvation and transformation; that God will grant the government wise judgment, a hatred of corruption, and a commitment to justice; and that God will redeem this stressful, threatening situation for His purpose and glory; in the face of this threat. May the Cameroonian churches, especially their leaders, be motivated to love and unity, holiness, discipleship, mission and prayer.

## ERITREA

REV Haile Naizgi and Dr Kiflu Gebremeske, leaders of the Full Gospel Church, have been imprisoned without any legal charge by the government since May 23, and Pr Tesfatsion Hagos of the Rema Evangelical Church since May 26. Meanwhile, evangelical pastor Mense Tweldemedhane and popular Christian singer Yonas Haile managed to escape from the Sawa Military Center and flee to Sudan in late June. Christian vocalist Helen Berhane remains under severe confinement in a shipping container since her arrest on May 13. Despite the Eritrean Constitution's guarantees of religious freedom, President Isaias Afewerki closed down the independent Protestant churches in May 2002, forbidding the 20,000 members of 12 banned denominations to worship even in their homes. Pray that Christians worldwide will protest this inhumane and illegal treatment of Christians; that God will protect the prisoners who were able to escape and other prisoners still in jail.