

# BERITA NECF

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

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EDITORIAL

## PRESERVING PASTORS FROM EXTINCTION

They labour tirelessly in God's vineyard—their voices as coming from the wilderness—straining to be heard amidst the cacophony of urgent pleas from the congregation and, in some cases, orders from the church board. Once in a while, perhaps, tiny thank-you notes stray in to break this heavy beat of duties.

They are our pastors, elders and church leaders—spiritual leaders who stand in the frontline of the battlefield, shielding their flocks from the relentless attacks of the enemy. Often, they stand alone with little support (but loads of fault-finding) from the pews.

The rigorous demands, heavy responsibilities and escalating pressure that modern-day troubles bring have naturally caused casualties in the field. Some burn out, others succumb to the pressures and become ineffective while several just quit the ministry altogether. Others plod on joylessly, serving out of forced obligation to God.

But it is not all bleak. Fulfilled pastors do exist, though the number may be dwindling. Concerned with the state pastors are in today, H.B London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman were prompted to write the book *Your pastor is an endangered species*.

Pastors (and those in the pastoral ministry) often experience strained relationships, or 'roadblocks', with the very people they are serving. They are expected to be available at all times, have fulfilled marriages, raise flawless children and be knowledgeable in everything. Pastors have needs too but their cries are often drowned by the ceaseless bleating of the sheep.

Unable to meet the unrealistic expectations of their members, many pastors have unconsciously developed a low self-esteem.

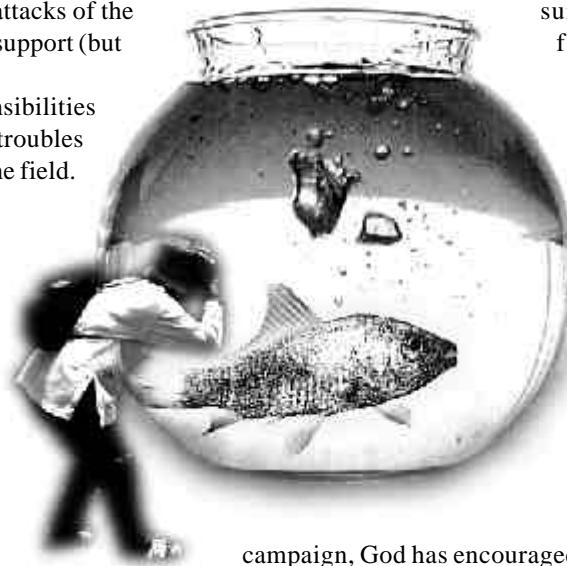
NECF Malaysia, as a national fellowship, recognises the strenuous situation pastors are in and is deeply burdened by

their plight. Early this year, we launch the Pastors' Prayer Shield nationwide campaign aimed at creating the occasion for the church to repent, reconcile and reaffirm its love and assurance of support for pastors.

Teams of NECF Malaysia staff, led by the Secretary-General, have been travelling to various parts of Malaysia to encourage church congregations to "SHIELD" their pastors.

At the same time, a national survey to ascertain problems faced by pastors and church leaders is underway; it is expected to help the Church and Christians prepare appropriate strategic responses to issues raised.

Like fish in a fishbowl, a pastor's life is open for all to see.



Through the prayer campaign, God has encouraged and strengthened the church as a whole to move forward. In some churches, emotional healing between the pastor and the laity has also begun. Although complete restoration of relationship between the two parties is a long and bumpy road, this is nevertheless a good start.

The farther we travel throughout Malaysia to launch the campaign, the more we realise the need to uphold our pastors, not only in prayer but also in affirmative actions.

The nationwide prayer campaign is expected to instill in the Church the 2As for pastors: Affirmation and Appreciation. Continual prayers by BERITA NECF readers are coveted for our initiative to be effective. ■

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# The Power of Intercession

By Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam,  
NECF Malaysia Chairman

**God** has given us a glorious powerful ministry—the ministry of praying for others. The church is calling you to pray not only for yourself and your own needs but also for others and their needs. Enlarge your prayer to include your pastors, neighbours, the work of Jesus Christ in other parts of our city, country and other lands.

There was an incident in Abraham's life, which illustrates the power of prayer on behalf of others. Gen. 18:22–33 records this incident where three men visited Abraham. They were actually angels sent by God to reveal a secret to Abraham. Through them, God told Abraham that He was going to wipe out Sodom and Gomorrah. When Abraham heard this, he was troubled because his nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom. So, Abraham petitioned God, "Please, Lord, don't do it."

Abraham pleaded with God for the sake of 50 righteous men, then 45 and so on. Each time God agreed to spare the city. But Abraham could not even find 10 righteous men. In the end, only Lot and his daughters were saved.



This incident illustrates to me the power of intercession. Like Abraham, you could be the key to the well-being of your pastor, your church or the salvation of some people you know. Pray. Be willing to stand before the Lord for them.

**Achieving Effective Prayers**

*"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man in powerful and effective."* (James 5:16)

Effective prayers can be gained through confession, seeking forgiveness from those whom we have wronged and repenting from our sins, including sins committed against our bodies. What does the Bible say about confession and prayer?

Firstly, there must be agreement according to Matthew 18:19. Confession brings unity; it removes the barrier between God and us, between our neighbour and us, and between our conscience and us.

Secondly, husbands must respect their wives the way God respects her, else their prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands, if you do not have respect for your wives the way God has for her, there will be disunity in your home. And when you kneel to pray, "Oh God, bless or change...", your wife may be praying on the other side and praying the opposite of your request. So there is a conflict in the petitions made to God and thus your prayers are hindered.

Thirdly, there must be reconciliation (Matt. 5:23–24). Do you wonder why sometimes there is no breakthrough in your prayers and victory in your life? The Bible teaches that healing, deliverance and blessings come through reconciliation.

Fourthly, there must be forgiveness (Matt. 6:15). In order to be forgiven, we must forgive others.

There is tremendous power in your prayer for another when you have made things right in your heart with God, with your neighbour and with yourself. ■

# Baring the pastor's heart

*Lay-people more appreciative of pastors' struggles*

The nationwide Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign has generated great interest among the churches, bringing to light the plight of pastors and their needs. The NECF Malaysia team has so far travelled the length and breadth of the country, to cities and small towns, to engage members to pray for their pastors.

At every place that the NECF Malaysia team had gone to launch the campaign, the team had highlighted the struggles and needs of pastors to the lay-people. The response from both pastors and church members has confirmed that the campaign was timely and necessary.

Pastors, especially those in the rural areas, repeatedly expressed their gratitude to NECF Malaysia for initiating the prayer campaign. One pastor honestly said,

"Now I know that you (NECF Malaysia) are on our side." The startling remark was not meant to be political but merely expressed the feeling of neglect within many pastors. "It is hard for us to express our needs. It is good that somebody is now speaking on our behalf," he added. In making that comment, he probably spoke for a host of pastors who feel it inappropriate to share about their needs to their congregations.

Another pastor said that NECF Malaysia took a "bold step" to initiate such a campaign. "Usually, we pastors are expected to pray for our



*Honouring pastors at the Prayer Shield launch in Ipoh. About 350 people from 19 churches attended the launch in end-March.*

*see page 4*

## Pastors helping pastors

It is lonely at the top. Pastors know this too well, which is why they need the fellowship of people who, not only understand their struggles but also, empathise with them. Where better can they find kinship and a place to unload their burden than at the pastors' fellowship (PF).

Currently, in West Malaysia alone, there are about 40 inter-denominational PFs formed within regions. The active ones meet regularly and organise joint activities such as evangelistic rallies and festive celebrations. The closer-knit fellowships even organise retreats for their member-pastors and their families.

Much can be gained from being part of a PF. Besides the encouragement and support one gets from sharing and praying together, it is also an opportunity for the older pastors to 'mentor' the younger ones.

For Pr Alvin Tan of Daily Bread Church, he gets to "learn by sharing and observing how the more senior pastors deal with situations." He has also been encouraged to learn that his problems in the

ministry are "not uncommon. Other pastors also face the same issues."

In an inter-denominational setting, pastors involved in PFs also become more Kingdom-minded rather than church-minded. Said Pr David Goh of FGA, Selayang, of the Kepong PF: "The friendship and trust built amongst ourselves has led us to work together on many occasions to extend God's Kingdom." So far, churches represented in the Kepong PF have jointly organised an Easter evangelistic rally, an evangelistic celebration in the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Centre and a Chinese New Year evangelistic celebration.

Evangelism is a major concern with most PFs. In some cases, the Great Commission was the reason for the formation of the PFs. The KL North PF is one such case. Its coordinator, Pr Andy Chi, said the PF was formed to unite the local churches in north Kuala Lumpur for the purpose of evangelising the region.

"We realise that no one congregation can attain this goal. However, if we pool our resources together, we will be able to effectively touch a larger population of our region." ■



# OA Commission takes major strides

*Coming together is a beginning  
Staying together is progress  
Thinking together is unity  
Working together is success*

Quoting this at the First National Consultation on Orang Asli (OA) Ministries organised by NECF Malaysia in 1998, Rev. Wong Kim Kong outlined the process that would lead to a successful partnership among those involved in the OA ministries. Coming together that year was the beginning.

Since then, several key leaders of the OA ministries have continued to come together and taken some major strides along the road to partnership. So far, the commission has organised two national conferences, one in 1999 and one for OA Christian youths last year.

At the conferences, commission members discussed and agreed to a set of guidelines that they believed would promote cooperation and unity among those involved in the OA ministries. These guidelines were set out in a written document entitled "Code of Ethics" which

also includes the objectives, terms of reference, statement of faith and membership structure of the commission. Staying together through this process is clearly progress.

Pray for the commission members as they continue to think together and take

further steps towards a partnership according to Jesus' prayer, "... that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me..." (John 17: 23).—By *Leong Yew Lai* (Executive Secretary – OA Commission)



*Linking hands as a sign of unity...at the 1999 Orang Asli National Conference.*

## **Baring the pastor's heart:** *from page 3*

members. Now, it's the other way round. You are asking our members to pray for us," he explained.

Obviously, mindsets have to be changed and through the campaign, there are signs that the rift between both parties is closing, judging from the comments received from both sides. Lay-people are beginning to appreciate the struggles and sacrifices of their pastors and their need for support. With this appreciation, members are now more willing to partner their pastors in service.

Meanwhile, pastors are facing up to the fact that they cannot work alone. They need the partnership of their members and an avenue to express their struggles through a support group such as the pastors' fellowship.

There truly is strength (not only spiritual but physical as well) in prayer as Ruth Tan, a pastor of a church in Batu Pahat, discovered. Thirty-four of her church members signed up to pray for her at the campaign launch and since then, she has become unusually energetic. "It's really amazing that I don't feel tired so easily these days. Also, I've become more sensitive to God's promptings and can hear Him more clearly. This campaign has

been a great blessing to me," she shared.

Rev. Lawrence Yap concurred. As pastors are dealing with spiritual matters, they need prayer support to safeguard them, said the Senior Pastor of Charis Christian Centre (CCC), Kuala Lumpur.

To show their seriousness towards praying for their pastors, CCC leaders launched the campaign in their church with an overnight prayer gathering in March. Rev. Lawrence hopes that the campaign will continue to create greater prayer awareness which will lead to a stronger pastor-congregation bond.

Pr Koh Earn Soo of SS Methodist Church, Petaling Jaya, agreed that pastors needed their members to pray for them. "The call to pray for leaders is timely and much needed. The pressure on leaders is great. We are not just talking about the responsibilities of the ministry but also, the temptation and seduction of the world are very real too. I believe this pressure will increase, making leaders vulnerable," he added.

NECF Malaysia's desire is that the increased awareness of prayer will reduce the number of casualties in the ministry. But ultimately, the goal is a nationwide prayer revival. And it all started with a simple burden to pray for pastors. ■



# Cooperate in Survey, Churches Urged

*Survey will benefit you*

**NECF** Malaysia is seeking the close cooperation of churches and Christians to respond to the questionnaires for the nationwide survey on the lifestyle and spirituality of evangelical Christians. The questionnaires will be distributed in July and churches are strongly urged to respond to them.

This timely and strategic survey, conducted at the start of a new millennium, will gather pertinent data on churches, pastors and Christians as well as contemporary issues affecting the Malaysian Church. With the identification of problems and subsequent analysis, NECF Malaysia will be able to formulate strategic plans to overcome them. In addition, the data will enable NECF Malaysia to develop a proactive approach to our future challenges.

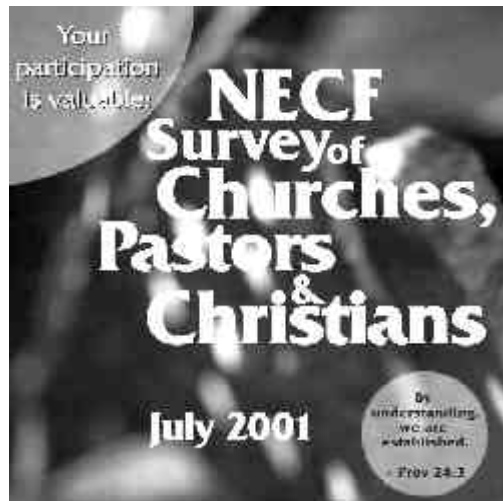
The survey results will also be released to the participating churches as a planning resource.

Besides studying churches, the survey, believed to be the first of its kind

in Malaysia, will also study and analyse the welfare of some 3,000 pastors and the spirituality of randomly-selected Christians from each participating church. It will be conducted by post and all questionnaire replies will be returned to NECF Malaysia on a completely anonymous basis.

To help in the survey, NECF Malaysia has appointed field coordinators to obtain basic information from churches and compile a comprehensive mailing list for the purpose of classification and size. The questionnaires will then be sent to these churches in July and replies are expected to be received within two weeks.

As an appreciation for assisting in the survey, all senior pastors who responded will receive gift vouchers. Also, 1,000 copies of a book on leadership by Tommy Tenney will be given away to early respondents. ■



## KNOW THE LAW, CHRISTIANS URGED

**There** is a need for more seminars on law, particularly aspects relating to religious practice and freedom, to educate the Christian public on their rights, privileges and limitations in practicing their faith in the country.

Participants at the recent Seminar Undang-Undang organised by the NECF Malaysia Bahasa Malaysia Commission felt that deeper understanding and wider knowledge of the law would help to dispel certain fears and uncertainties. It is equally important to know the limitations to avoid violating the law.

Sixty-seven participants, mainly pastors and church leaders of Bahasa Malaysia congregations, from 24 churches attended the seminar held at the NECF Malaysia Conference Room on March 26.

Lim Heng Seng and Lee Min Choon conducted the one-day seminar, organised primarily for those involved in the Bahasa Malaysia ministry. Mr Lim is the Chairman of the East Malaysia Industrial Court while Mr Lee, a lawyer, is a member of the Disciplinary Committee of the Advocates & Solicitors Disciplinary Board and also a legal advisor to the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) and NECF Malaysia.

Mr Lim urged Christians to obey the law, because all

governments are instituted by God, but above that, they are to fear God. Mr Lee delved into the laws relating to the practice of the Christian faith and update participants on current legal events affecting the Christian community.

The BM commission is planning similar seminars for BM churches outside the Klang Valley. ■



# Sowing seeds on 'sick' soil



*HCFAKL committee members. Its president, Dr David Wong, is standing on the back row, far right.*

**Hospitals** are a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of salvation. In the uncertainty that illness brings, the afflicted person is normally more contemplative about life and more receptive to the Gospel.

More Malaysians pass through hospitals than churches. Recognising the enormous evangelistic potential in hospitals, many churches have formed hospital visitation teams and made them a part of their evangelism effort. Similarly, Christians working in the Klang Valley hospitals have responded likewise and sometime in the early '80s, they began meeting in small groups in various hospitals for encouragement, prayer and evangelism.

From here, a network was established between the groups, leading to the formation of the Healthcare Christian Fellowship Association Kuala Lumpur

(HCFAKL) last June when it was registered with the Registrar of Societies. The fellowship was endorsed as a Christian body when it was received into the membership of NECF Malaysia recently.

As a fellowship comprising members in the healthcare profession, HCFAKL is strategically placed to reach out to hospital patients. Furthermore, they present a more credible witness to the patients because of their knowledge and involvement in healthcare.

HCFAKL's mission is to "extend the Kingdom of God, through prayer, evangelism and discipleship, thereby providing a credible witness for the Lord Jesus in the local healthfield," according to its president Dr David Wong. But, he added, this could only be realised if Christian working in the healthfield are committed to the Great Commission call and not merely see their workplace as a source of income.

Weekly visitations to hospital patients are a regular feature of HCF groups and these intensify during crisis situations such

*Flashback: Healthcare Christian Fellowship members praying for a victim of the JE virus outbreak in 1999.*



as the JE virus outbreak in 1999. During the crisis, the HCF groups worked together with churches to minister to the JE victims and their family members. Through this, several became Christians.

The regional fellowship has a long-term plan of going nationwide; once it has received membership from seven states in Malaysia, it will re-register as Healthcare Christian Fellowship of Malaysia.

To expand its ministry, the fellowship is on the constant look-out for Christians with a burden to reach out to patients or colleagues at their place of work or hospitals. "We will meet these Christians and share the overall HCF (Healthcare Christian Fellowship) vision. We provide the biblical-based training in starting a small HCF working group and also give prayer and financial support as well as opportunities to be involved in medical missions," Dr Wong said.

HCFAKL also holds an annual camp for all HCF groups and occasionally organises educational seminars such as the recent one on "Ministry to Sick Children" conducted by South African pediatrician Dr Mary Reeves.

Through the course of ministry, patients, and even healthcare workers, are sometimes won to the Lord and require proper follow-up. The fellowship, therefore, seeks the partnership of local churches to disciple the new converts. Likewise, members of local churches who are employed in the health-field are urged to join the HCF groups in their respective localities.

Church members, who are hospitalised or whose friends are hospitalised, may also contact their local HCF groups for follow-up.

For more information on this ministry, contact Dr Wong at 019-3833864 or e-mail [wongkl@pfizer.com](mailto:wongkl@pfizer.com) ; e-mail Elisabeth Alfred at [elsual@tm.net.my](mailto:elsual@tm.net.my); or Woon Soo Chin at 03-79675775. ■

I S S U E 5 6

# Women to Women



## PRAY FOR US

—a call to pray for pastors and church leaders

by Mrs Tik Aye Teoh

### Casualties

WE know of more than a dozen full-time pastors who have fallen because of sexual sins, about ten others who experienced frustration and problems in the ministry and gave up, and another dozen who became ineffective and were sidelined. The total score: almost three dozen full-time ministers in Malaysia and Singapore whom we personally know, have ended up wounded and disillusioned, and in some cases have had their lives "destroyed." Although about ten of them have managed to come back to the ministry, their effectiveness has never been the same again. These were people who once felt called and had entered the ministry with anticipation. A dozen key church leaders we know had also fallen into grievous sin or else, for various reasons, had left the church.

As my husband and I, in preparing to write this article, look back on the 25 years we have been in the pastoral ministry, we are saddened to have known of these casualties among our contemporaries. This type of statistics is both frightening and tragic, and certainly would provide enough reason for us to seriously appeal for prayer support for our pastors and leaders.

What are some of the reasons or issues that have contributed to these failures? I can think of the following:

1. **Pastors and leaders are up-front people.** They, together with their families, live in goldfish bowls. They must constantly be seen doing and saying all the right things, demonstrating right attitudes and carrying out right actions besides providing dynamic leadership. Such pressure takes a heavy toll and many are unable to bear it.
2. Pastors and leaders naturally become **targets of Satan's warfare.** Much has been said in this regard about their humanness and vulnerability and how strategic it is for the enemy to make them casualties, so there is no real need to further elaborate.
3. **Poor support, lack of encouragement and appreciation** in a very demanding situation are also serious issues; in fact they are more serious than we care to think. In a recent sermon on leadership, my husband described the dilemma faced by a fulltime

minister in this way: *He must be strong like an eagle in doctrine, gentle like a dove in caring; get up with the lark to pray, stay up late like an owl to work; be friendly like a pigeon to all, be patient like a buzzard in all situations; but when it comes to*

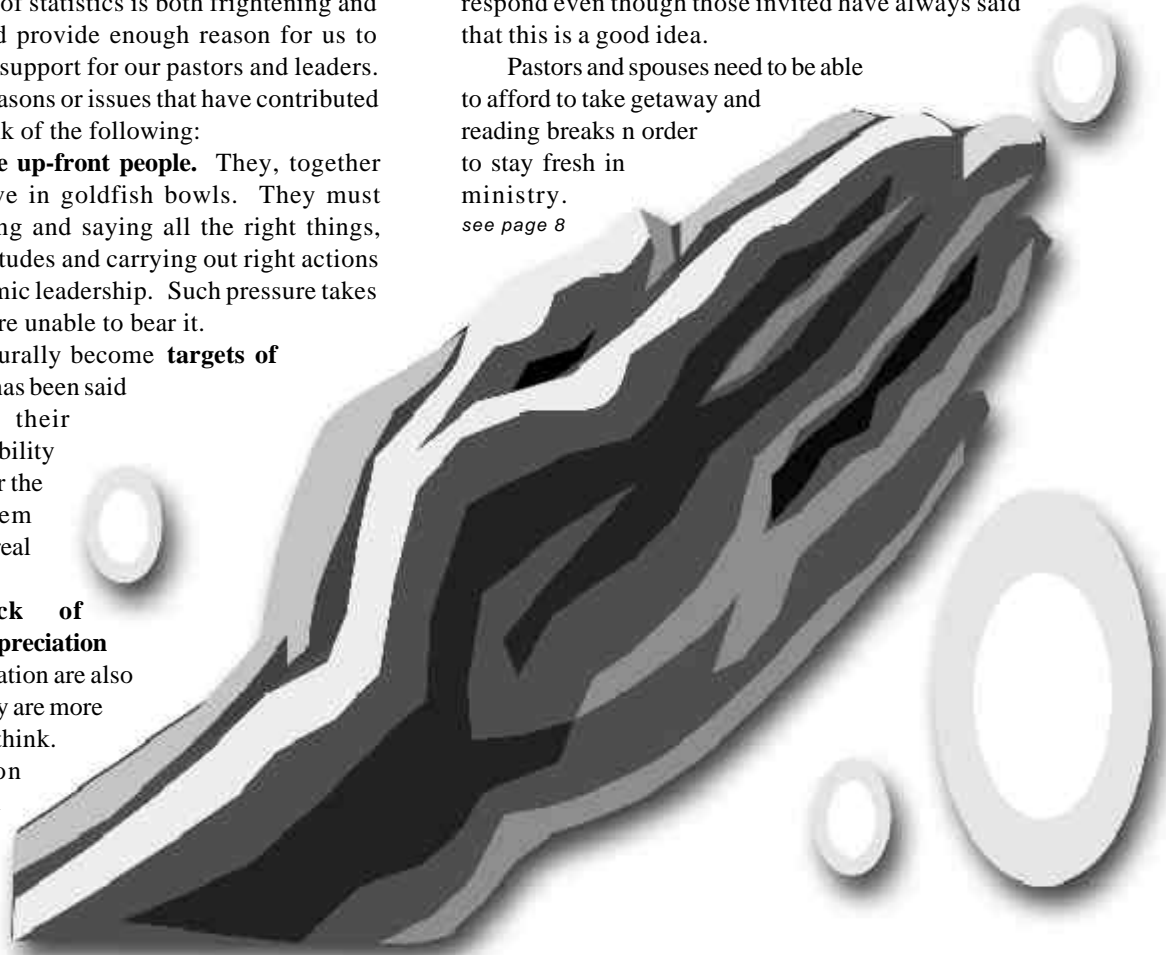
*his needs, he is fed like a sparrow - just enough!*

From what I know, words like: "I enjoy your sermon; I appreciate the sacrifices you are making; thank you for your insight; I support your leadership; we faithfully pray for you" expressed at appropriate times are treasured like gold by pastors and church leaders. Unfortunately, most of the time when members of the congregation speak to them, it is to complain, protest or criticize.

4. **Too much work and too little recreation** is also a serious issue. Some pastors and leaders are the so called workaholics but most of the time, for the diligent ones, there are just too many things to take care of. Those who are not effective in ministry do not last long anyway but for those who do, the problem is usually too many demands on their time. My husband and I have, on several occasions, invited pastors and their families to come for regular fellowship and to enjoy the facilities at our condominium. We have yet to see them respond even though those invited have always said that this is a good idea.

Pastors and spouses need to be able to afford to take getaway and reading breaks in order to stay fresh in ministry.

see page 8



Pray for us: from page 7

Furlough breaks are vital for renewal. But as I understand it, most pastors have either not been given or taken sabbatical leave. This is an important issue and churches need to discuss this and come to a decision on this matter.

5. **Pastors and church leaders, because of time constraints, do not spend enough time in prayer and fellowship** with those they work with. If they can develop real friendships, several potentially divisive and unpleasant issues can be resolved and injury eliminated.
6. **The spouses of pastors and leaders** need a lot of prayer support simply because they are human and therefore have weaknesses. Some of them are career-minded and cannot labour beside their spouses. Others tend to nag and have over-bearing personalities. Some are over ambitious for their husbands (the spouse of a local missionary lamented that her husband was big talent put to small use). All these make for interesting and sometimes explosive episodes with members of their respective congregations and the ministry could well be affected.

I have listed above some very obvious reasons why pastors and church leaders cannot do without the under-girding ministry of prayer. The list is by no means exhaustive. We can never conclusively answer the question: "Who pastors the pastor?" but Christians can definitely, through prayer, support and thereby increase the effectiveness of the ministry of their spiritual leaders. There was a time when churches, especially the more traditional ones, would withhold full support and honorific address for their pastors until they had proven themselves faithful and able in the different areas of their responsibilities. This included the ability to endure longsuffering. Today, confidence in leadership appears to have shifted toward the installation of men and women who have proven themselves in the secular world. I believe the biblical emphasis on the qualifications for church leaders is always on the calling, the training, the faithfulness in life and ministry and the prayer support given to them. The leader himself will have to be responsible for the first three requirements. The church will have to bear the responsibility for the prayer support.

Please remember to pray for your pastor and church leaders.

*Tik Aye ministers alongside her husband, Ronnie Teoh, Pastor of Balai Baptis Kalvari, Petaling Jaya. The Teohs have an extensive family crisis intervention ministry. They have two sons. Ernie works for a bank in the area of IT and Willy is a college student.*



# TURNING FULL STOPS INTO COMMAS

By Anneke Companjen

*Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering. Hebrews 13:3*

ABOUT thirty years ago, I heard about the Suffering Church for the first time. Brother Andrew was the speaker at a church, and he was sharing about his many travels behind the Iron Curtain, bringing Bibles and encouragement to Christians who were severely persecuted for their faith.

"I believe that in the measure we help them carry their burden, their weight gets lighter," Brother Andrew told us.

His words brought to mind one of my Physics classes. Physics was far from my favourite subject in high school, but I knew what Brother Andrew said was true in the natural world. If we have to move a heavy piece of furniture and Johan (my husband) and I work together, he may shoulder the majority of the load, but the weight I carry is deducted from his share of the burden.

The same kind of rule applies in the spiritual realm. And there are several ways in which we can lighten the burden of our suffering brothers and sisters. Let me share a few with you.

## The Power of Prayer

It may surprise you that I've put prayer on top of the list, but it is not done by accident. In fact, prayer is the most important effort we can make. Perhaps you've noticed that prayer is often the first thing the apostle Paul asked for when he finished his letters of the New Testament. He knew how strategic prayer was, and it still is.

Whenever we ask persecuted Christians on our visits what we can do to help them, we get the same answer almost every time. That answer is, "Please pray for us." Why? Because the Suffering Church understands the amazing power of prayer.

We don't always see the results of prayer from a distance. Sometimes it affects our lives in a very personal way. And sometimes we find ourselves on the receiving end of prayer. When that happens, it makes us realise just how powerful prayer can be.

## Prayer for the Suffering Church

Paul tells us to remember the prisoners as if we were imprisoned with them (Hebrews 13:3). I can't think of a better way to feel a little of what the Suffering Church is going through than by identifying with them in prayer.

Years ago, I loved to visit a dear old lady from our church. We

see page 9



Turning full stops into commas: from page 8



called her "Moe (for mother) Schaaap". Moe had a burden to pray. Her list of missionaries was very long. She not only prayed for persecuted Christians, she also cried a lot when she prayed.

As she grew older and was unable to walk or remember much of what she was reading, she developed a special way of prayer. She put prayer letters or news briefs on her lap, and said, "Lord, I cannot remember all of this. Would You please come and sit beside me and read what's here?" Then she would close her eyes and just sit there, trying to feel what the prisoners were feeling. I believe God understood her tears and sighs. She was an example to me of what it means to remember those who suffer "as if you yourselves were suffering." When we pray, He is not impressed by our eloquent words but by the humble condition of our hearts.

### Staying Informed

To be able to pray specifically, we need to know who is persecuted for their faith in Christ and where.

### Advocacy for the Suffering

One way to become involved with the Persecuted Church is to be an "advocate" for suffering Christians around the world. An advocate, according to Webster's Dictionary, is someone who "pleads the cause of another...defends, vindicates, or espouses a case by argument...is friendly to an upholder; a defender."

Writing letters to ambassadors, congressmen, presidents, members of parliament and others in authority—these are all ways in which we can lighten the burden of those who are persecuted for their faith.

### Commas instead of Full Stops

My husband Johan likes to speak on Acts

14 when he challenges Christians around the world to care for the Suffering Church. In that chapter we read how the authorities won the crowd over and they stoned Paul. They dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead.

"Full stop!" Johan tells the audience. The devil wanted to put a full stop here. Paul was finished as far as the enemy was concerned. But God had other plans. The story continues, "But after the disciples had gathered

around him, he got up and went back into the city" (v.20). Something happened that

turned the devil's full stop into God's comma. What made the difference? The disciples' prayers.

God loves to change the devil's full stops into commas, and He's still doing it today. It is my heart's desire that He will use you and me to make a difference in the lives of Christians who are persecuted for their faith around the world. We can reach out to them, each in our own church and community and in our own way, through awareness, through action, and most of all, through prayer. ■

Anneke Companjen is the wife of the President of Open Doors International.



# Afternoon Tea with Anneke Companjen

Come, have a cup of tea, and listen to Anneke Companjen share about the forgotten women of the persecuted church. Then take time to pray for these women who are our sisters in Christ.

Date: Saturday 30 June 2001

Time: 3pm-6pm

Venue: NECF office

To register, please call NECF office at 03-77278227 or Goh Poh Gaik at 012-3263100.

RM5.00 for tea per person to be paid on Saturday. Please call to register to enable us to prepare for tea. ■

Organised by NECF Malaysia Women's Commission.

# Lessons from Hannah

By Mrs Gloriosa Rajendran

## Stay-at-home Mum

IT IS probably with some reluctance that the woman of the twenty first century would accept her role in the home as being crucial to the health and happiness of that home. So often the role of the woman is abrogated due to a career that takes precedence or some social interest or activity that seems to give prestige and value to the stay-at-home mum. Too often, in affluent homes, children are left to maids with only a peripheral influence from parents.

After my retirement I have learnt to appreciate more fully the role of the stay-at-home wife and mother. It is easy for such women to let themselves “go” and to neglect their mental and spiritual development. They may also get unduly involved in a social whirl and even in church work...anything to take them away from home.

I have found the story of Hannah one that has much to teach us about this special role of the wife and mother. Her day begins at six in the morning and may go on to ten or eleven at night. It is by no means an easy task and it needs tremendous energy and saintly patience. The modern woman must be careful that she does not jeopardize her role in the home just because she has a career or because she can afford a maid. More importantly, as Christian women we need to look at what we are called to be in the home.

## Communion and Comfort

When we read 1 Samuel chapter 1, we see here a very human situation of jealousy, unfair criticism (v.6) and love (v.5). Many of us can empathize with Hannah as she is belittled, made to feel “lesser” and humiliated just because she has not had a child. We can feel her pain and ask ourselves how often we too, as women, have been criticized unfairly for something which is really not our fault. **Criticism** is a very common feature in the home and so often it is the cause of deep hurt and unhappiness. Have you as a woman been criticized for meals that are not tasty or a home that does not have sufficient space? Have you been the victim of insufficient money in the home yet expected to provide sufficiently with the barest minimum?

Let us look at what Hannah did. She was angry and almost

bitter. She threw a tantrum. Does this sound familiar? But through it all she took her pain to the Lord in prayer. She wrestled with her God and entered into covenant

relationship with Him, something we so often fail to do. She went to the One who understood and although we are told that Elkanah loved her dearly, he loved her as only a man could. She went to her God who loved her as her Creator. She could unburden her pain before Him as she could not before her husband or priest. Eli did not understand the depth of her relationship with God and thought she was drunk (v.12-16). That **covenant relationship** led her into a deep communion with her God. She reached a level of **communion** that gave her the **comfort** she needed. Do we go to God in the same way? That is something very beautiful and moving here. We are told that after her communion with God she was able to eat and she stopped wrestling. Her physical composure and happiness was restored although she did not know yet that she was to become a mother. She had gained the comfort of “casting all her cares upon Him” and she knew He cared for her (1 Peter 5:7).

Do we take the things that worry and trouble us as women in the home to our God and lay them at His feet? There would be less hypertension among women and no harsh retaliation when criticized if we react as Hannah did. She took her trouble to God and let Him deal with it. Her **commitment** was complete.

## Loving Father

In the child Samuel we see the action of a loving and caring Father who never lets us down. He not only gave Hannah her heart’s desire. We are told that Hannah had three sons and two daughters after Samuel (2:21). Let us learn from this simple woman what that commitment involved. It meant keeping the promise she had made and taking this precious, longed for son to the Temple when he was old enough and leaving him there. “Samuel” means “I asked the Lord for him” (1:20). A difficult promise to keep but remembered all the same. Do we make promises to God when we are in desperate situations and then conveniently forget them? Not Hannah.

We need to emulate this woman who not only bore the son she longed for but gave to the people of Israel a leader and prophet who was a godly example to many and a blessing to Eli and the nation. Godly women have throughout history left children who have been a blessing to the world.

Hannah knew her God in a very deep and personal way and that is why her song of praise in chapter 3 is echoed by the mother of our Lord Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. She says: “*The Lord is a God who knows and by His deeds are weighed*” (2:3b). When we turn over our many responsibilities as wife and mother to the Lord, He takes control and we will be able to learn with Hannah, this important lesson that “*it is not by strength that one prevails: those who oppose the Lord will be shattered* (2:9b).” ■

*Mrs Gloriosa Rajendran is a retired principal. She writes regularly for the TCF newsletter In Step. She is also a lay leader and a women’s conference speaker both locally and abroad.*

## WOMEN to WOMEN

Advisor/Co-ordinator: Goh Poh Gaik

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

It has the broad objectives of:

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

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

Send to:

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

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

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

# Globalisation

## in the Age of Unrestrained Self-Interest

By Dr Lee Kiong Hock

**Globalisation** has resulted in many benefits such as the spread of technological progress, increases in total world production, and exposure to greater freedoms in speech, assembly, religion and property. However, it has not been as effective a panacea for poverty that the proponents of globalisation imagined.

The gap between the rich and poor has increased rather than decreased. The proponents of globalisation argue that this is because the low- and middle-income nations have yet to open up their economies to free trade and competition. However, in the real world, as globalisation marches onward, nation states have become less effective because although their powers are restricted to geographical borders, the processes they are supposed to govern and the problems they are supposed to solve – whether it be monetary policy, climatic changes or social inequality – now have significant cross border dimensions over which they have little or no control.

One major concern, particularly for low- and middle-income countries, is the global integration of financial markets and the speed at which capital moves across international borders – something that was not a part of the *theory of comparative advantage*. When the theory was first propounded, capital moved with difficulty from one country to another. That, however, is not the case now. East Asia witnessed the fury of such capital movements in 1997 and many have yet to recover from it.

A second major concern is that while globalisation can yield benefits in the form of increased economic well-being and greater freedom for those who are equipped to seize the opportunities it affords, it has the potential for dire consequences for those



who cannot. At its optimum, the benefits will accrue mainly to a tiny minority of people who sit at the hub of the process and to a slightly larger minority that can retain an economic connection to it. The rest of humanity may be left with little improvement in their economic well-being, faced with greater uncertainty as they serve the needs of giant transnational corporations made largely in America's image.

The problem lies not with free trade per se or globalisation per se but with unrestrained self-interest. In the interest of self, corporations merge and, in the process, destroy competition. Herman Daly and John Cobb, Jr. (op. cit.) note that "competition involves winning and losing, ... Winners tend to grow and losers disappear. Over time many firms become few firms, competition is eroded, and monopoly power increases." This takes away the very basis of Adam Smith's arguments for competition as a force that will ensure that everyone benefits from

economic growth. Unless we can level the playing field, we are not going to create a world in which everyone benefits to the same (if not at least to almost the same) measure.

More importantly, as corporations compete they have geared themselves increasingly for flexible or just-in-time production that enables them to gear up and gear down rapidly in response to changing demands. In the process, workers become just-in-time employees whom businesses can hire and fire on a moment's notice to fill a moment's need. Man becomes nothing more than a resource, like any other commodity.

### **Christian Leadership in the Global Economy**

As Christians, we acknowledge that globalisation is an inescapable reality that will impact us in almost every aspect of our lives. Henry Kissinger (Washington

see page 12

## S H A R I N G R E S O U R C E S

## Encourage your pastor

In conjunction with the Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign, NECF Malaysia is producing packs of VCD-cum-card for sale to church members at RM5 per pack. The VCD contains segments of the prayer launch meeting, which was held in late February, for the Klang Valley region.

Church members are to retain the VCDs as a visible reminder to pray for their pastors and give the cards to their pastors as an appreciation and commitment to pray for them. Available from the NECF Malaysia office.

## Booklet on Globalisation

NECF Malaysia will publish a booklet entitled *Engagement or*

*Isolation? A Malaysian Christian Perspective on Globalisation* as a follow-up to the recent International Consultation on Globalisation held in Kuala Lumpur. The booklet will contain the Malaysian paper (of the same title) that was presented at the consultation, and the speeches of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Minister for Transport Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik given at the consultation's opening and closing ceremonies respectively.

The paper was written on the basis of personal encounter with the impact of globalisation and presents a helpful Christian perspective on the subject matter. Churches are challenged to go beyond their own agenda and private plans; to encourage one another to think and act globally because Christians are called to be salt and light to the world (Matt. 5:13-14).



## A gift for your congregation

BERITA NECF is available for sale to churches in bulk. Pastors and church leaders are encouraged to subscribe for their congregation members so that they can stay abreast with issues affecting the Christian community in Malaysia. The newsletter is the official voice of NECF Malaysia and is published bi-monthly. Cost is RM1 per copy excluding postage. To order, contact Kathryn at NECF office: 03-77278227 (tel.); enquiries@necf.org.my (e-mail).

**Globalisation in the age of unrestrained self-interest:** from page 8

Post, December 20, 1999) notes that "the challenge is to foster an international sense of social responsibility without strangling a successful economic system." This is a challenge that Christians should lead because we are, of all peoples on the globe, called to be a foretaste of unity in diversity, a people called to social responsibility. Christians are called to light the path that ultimately points to our common humanity, and our common heritage in our one Creator.

The World Council of Churches has provided us with a lead. It has committed itself to working with others on creating effective institutions of global governance to check the unaccountable power of the transnational corporations, banks, and financiers to operate around the world with almost complete impunity.

They have also called upon Christians to advocate and support calls for a wide range of issues including the cancellation of debt for the poorest of the poor, new ethics for borrowing and lending, limits to unregulated capital flow, and initiatives to address unemployment and deteriorating conditions of work faced by workers in the Third world.

On the individual level, Christians need to rise up to meet the challenges of globalisation in the image of America's neo-liberal ideology. This ideology views man as self-interested individuals rather than members of a community, as essentially competitive, consumerist and materialistic, given to the maximisation of individual pleasure. This ideology produces a graceless system much like a

Darwinian "survival of the fittest" worldview—a view that is clearly contrary to our Christian heritage and message.

Christians have a leadership responsibility for creating a culture in which emphasis is placed on frugality and relationships. On the negative side, as Christian individuals, we can set the example by not yielding to hedonism and planned obsolescence. On the positive side, we give emphasis to the development of strong relationships built on the basis of love, not self-interest.

In work, we give emphasis to productivity and profit tempered by compassion and community; seeing our fellow workers not as mere resources or inputs in a production process but as man made in God's image.

The Church as a community must prepare itself for a world that will be increasingly characterised by greater uncertainty in the guise flexibility for it will not be easy to turn the present tide. We must be ready to be a source of comfort and compassion to an increasingly larger proportion of people who will be faced with greater stress and loss of self-respect, and families that may be increasingly dysfunctional.

Ready to restore dignity to man as corporations increasingly treat people like commodities to be bought and sold. We are, nevertheless, able to do these things because Christ Jesus our Lord has shown us the way.



*Dr Lee Kiong Hock formerly lectured economics at Universiti Malaya. He now lives in the US.*

## C O M I N G U P ...

## Orang Asli Sunday School Teachers' Training Camp – May 28 to 30

To be held at SUFES campsite, Tapah. Organised by the NECF Malaysia OA Commission, the camp will train Christians who are involved in the Orang Asli Sunday School ministry. Those with a desire to be involved in this ministry should also attend the camp.

The trainers are Rev. and Mrs Lieow Meng Kuan and Pr Saraban Arun. The

camp is in line with the OA Commission's emphasis on the children ministry to raise godly, biblically-based Christians.

Camp fee is RM53 which includes food, accommodation and materials. For more information, contact Leong Yew Lai at 03-77278227 (NECF office)/012-6066738 (mobile) or Pr Miun Amat at 05-4956476.

## Rayakan Yesus National Conference – June 4 to 6

To be held at Full Gospel Assembly, Kuala Lumpur. Organised by the NECF Malaysia BM Commission in partnership with local BM churches to encourage and equip the BM churches to face the challenges and opportunities of the new millennium.

Among the speakers are Dr Jeff Hammond who has served churches in Indonesia for the last 20 years. He will share on church growth through the cell church concept. Another speaker is Archdeacon Fred David who has served for the last 20 years among the people of



*Pdt Dr Jeff Hammond*



*Pdt Welyar Kauntu*



*Archdeacon Fred David*

interior Sabah and helped to plant more than 80 churches there. He will share on the importance of the BM ministry in the new millennium. Welyar Kauntu, a song composer and record producer, will share on music in worship. Conference fee is RM40. For more information, contact Alfred Tais at 019-2683119.

## Appreciation for BM Pastors – July

Klang Valley pastors of Bahasa Malaysia churches will be appreciated at the launch of the Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign for the Klang Valley BM churches in July. There are currently

32 BM churches of various denominations in the Klang Valley. The date and venue will be confirmed. Please call Ann Low or Alfred Tais for more information.

## 2nd National Orang Asli Ministry Conference – Nov. 12 to 14

To be held at Nan Hwa High School, Ayer Tawar (near Sitiawan). The conference is organised by NECF

Malaysia OA Commission. The theme: *Pergi! Beritakanlah!* E-mail OA@necf.org.my for more information.

## Merdeka Day Prayer Celebration – July 21 to August 31

This year's celebration comprises three activities: 40-day Prayer and Fast, Merdeka Eve Prayer Rally and Merdeka Day community projects.

The Prayer and Fast will begin on July 21 and end on August 29 but it will be launched on July 1 to publicise and mobilise Christians to enlist in the consecration call.

The annual Prayer Rally will be held on August 30 at PGRM Hall, Kuala Lumpur. As usual, the rally will focus on praying for the nation and church unity.

On Merdeka Day, churches all over the country will hold community activities such as fun fairs, cleaning-up projects, and visitation to hospitals and charitable homes.

The theme for this year's prayer celebration is *Lighting Up the Nation 2001*, a continuation from last year's focus. To know more, contact Ann Low at the NECF office or 013-3649239.



## Charity Run – June 3

Asian Youth Ambassadors (AYA) together with Yayasan Nanyang Press will hold the "Dream Run 2001" charity run starting at 5.00pm. Flag-off point is Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, to raise funds for the operational expenditure of the Nanyang/NKF Dialysis Centre. To know more, contact Yayasan Nanyang Press at 78776000 (tel.) or NYFound@nanyang.com.my (e-mail); or AYA Network at 7378737 (tel.) or www.aya.com.my (website).



Richard Wurmbrand

## Richard Wurmbrand Dies After Prolonged Illness

Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian Lutheran pastor, whose fearless determination to spread the gospel of Christ led to his being imprisoned for 14 years and tortured by the Communist authorities, died on February 17 aged 91, just four months after the death of wife Sabina.

Born of Jewish parents in March 1909, he first came to prominence in 1964 when he was ransomed from the Romanian government by a group of Norwegian Christians for \$10,000. From then on, he exposed the atrocities of communism and campaigned for religious freedom. His books *Tortured for Christ* and *In God's Underground* became classics influencing a whole rising generation of Christian young people in the West.

During his years in jail, Wurmbrand was regularly beaten, given mind-altering drugs and forced to watch the humiliation of fellow prisoners. For three years, he was held in solitary confinement in an underground cell. He kept sane by preaching himself a sermon every night, fixing more than 300 of them in his mind with mnemonics and rhymes. Only once did he have contact with anyone else. This was a prisoner in the next cell to whom he communicated in Morse code by tapping on the cell wall. The prisoner was converted to Christ.

After their release from Romania, the Wurmbrands moved to America where he founded the Christian Mission to the Communist World, the forerunner of what

is now Release International, an organisation which draws attention to religious persecution around the world. In May 1996, Wurmbrand testified in Washington before the Senate's Internal Security Sub-committee. He stripped to the waist to show 18 deep torture wounds covering his body.—*Evangelicals Now*

## BRUNEI: Four Christians Released

Four of seven Christians arrested in December and January for alleged "cult" activities and detained under Brunei's Internal Security Act have been released. It was not known if any conditions were attached to their release, which occurred during the week of February 11, but they were reportedly told not to leave the country or talk about their detention.

Three Christians remain in detention, including Freddie Chong, who was earlier reported to have been released. A source close to the case said the Christians were detained because of their participation in a well-organised prayer programme. Islam is the state religion in Brunei.—*Compass*

## Southern Protestants Officially Recognised In Vietnam

For the first time since the communist takeover in 1975, authorities in Vietnam have granted legal recognition to a Protestant organisation in the south. Most observers see the move as a positive development, but they warn it is only one step on the long road to religious freedom in this nation.

"There's still well-documented persecution of Christians in Vietnam, but as a trend, this is important," a Western diplomat told a correspondent from Knight Ridder Newspapers.

In a document dated March 16, the government's Bureau of Religious Affairs (BRA) stated that the southern

Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) "may operate within the framework of the laws of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." Yet these are the same "laws" that are often unclear and subjectively interpreted by local officials. They have been used in the past to prevent religious activity.

It remains to be seen whether the ECVN will now be given the freedom to train clergy, print Christian materials, build and repair meeting places and connect with Christians outside the country.—*Compass*

## Israeli Parliament Threaten Christian Freedom

Israel's Parliament, the Knesset, has once again given preliminary approval to a bill intended to outlaw all written forms of evangelism.

Rabbi Moshe Gafni of the Torah Judaism Party sponsored the bill which threatened to imprison for three months anyone who distributes "a document by means of the mail, the fax, the electronic mail or by any other means, in which there is some form of persuasion to change religion, whether directly or indirectly."—*Evangelicals Now*



## Bible Translation

The complete Bible or Bible portions are available in 2,261 languages, according to the United Bible Society, Reading near London. Last year, 28 new languages were added. Six hundred and seventy-two translations are underway.

This makes the Bible the book with the largest number of translations in world history. So far, the complete Bible is available in 383 languages, 13 more than a year ago. The New Testament is available in 987 languages, most of them in Africa with 274 languages.—*Idea*



## Britain's Aged Leaving the Church

NO longer are the elderly counted as pillars of shrinking church congregations, reports *The Guardian*. According to a 20-year study, less than half call religion important, in contrast to 75% in 1980. "The findings contradict the assumption that people turn to religion more actively as they confront approaching death," the publication writes.

Also at play is the aging of the 1960s generation. A researcher says, "This appears to be part of a general questioning of authority in society." One retiree told *The Guardian*, "Roman Catholic and (Church of England) faiths are increasingly irrelevant to many people. It's not death, but dying that most people now fear."—*Pulse*

## Colombia: A Perfect Environment to Prepare Missionaries

If there's a silver lining to the cloud of danger in Colombia, South America, missionary Kelly Green believes he knows what it is. "I think it's the perfect environment to prepare missionaries, the kind of missionaries we want to produce for hostile lands," said Green, who with his wife Cherie has ministered in Medellin for two years with Omaha, Nebraska-based Christ for the City International.

His ministry is "Mission Caleb," a

project designed to get Colombian believers to see themselves as missionaries and to train them for cross-cultural missions. "(Colombia) produces the Christian familiar with suffering," he said.

"They are constantly being challenged." 'Challenged' is a positive spin on what Colombia's Christians endure in their homeland that's become a war zone with no safe haven. Green said threats, robberies, and murders of loved ones are common in this embattled country. But Christians there live and witness amid danger, such as some evangelists he knows who feel called to win guerrillas to Christ and pastors who risk all to help victims of civil strife.—*Pulse*

## Ancient Rhythms of Prayer Returns Tired

of living on ad hoc conversations with God, evangelicals and charismatics are rediscovering the 'daily office' a term that refers to a variety of services of set prayers and readings that are said together through the day. In some places, this can add up to seven services a day! It is also variously called the liturgy of the hours, morning and evening prayer, or common prayer.

This pre-Reformation form of spirituality is bringing people of all Christian traditions to prayer communities in France, England and Scotland. One such community in Taizé, France, welcomes 2,500 to 6,000 visitors each week during summer, with a total of 100,000 pilgrims from all over the world each year although Taizé is off the beaten path (in France's Burgundy region, midway between Lyons and Geneva).

Another place is the St Mary Virgin Church (now Anglican) on the island of Lindisfarne in Great Britain. Each year, 140,000 people visit the church, partly because its pastor, David Adam, is the popular author of more than a dozen books of Celtic Christian poem-prayers, including an office, *The Rhythm of Life*, which Adam wrote because so many people, including Anglicans, are unfamiliar with the office. Its short prayers and Scriptures can be memorised quickly, so those who use it can be nourished at all times and places.

Adam said: "Offices were written for people who had a more leisurely start to their day. Nowadays most people set an alarm, jump up and travel miles and are in a hurry. The office says... 'Slow down, take your time. Make some space.'" — *condensed from an article in Christianity Today*

## Humankind Will Become Increasingly Religious

Humankind is becoming increasingly religious. The number of atheists and non-religious people continues to decrease, according to two leading religious statisticians, David B. Barrett (Virginia Beach) and Todd M. Johnson (Richmond).

Their latest statistics show that non-religious people and atheists number almost 925 million, slightly more than 15% of the world's 6.1 billion inhabitants. By the year 2025, their number will have decreased to 13.2% of the world's estimated 7.8 billion inhabitants at the time.

During the same period, the number of believers will increase in most religions. The largest world religion continues to be Christianity. Christians number two billion at present constituting one third of the world population; by 2025 their number will have increased to 2.6 billion or 33.4% of the world population.

Islam will be growing considerably faster, from 19.8% (1.2 billion) to 22.8% (1.8 billion). The percentage of Hindus will practically stay at 13.4% while the number of Buddhists will decrease slightly from 5.9% to 5.3%. The percentage of animists (3.8), new religionists (1.7), Sikhs (0.4) and Jews (0.2) will hardly change at all.

By continental distribution, Europe still has the largest number of Christians: 537 million. By 2025, however, their number will have decreased to about 533 million, while they are increasing on all other continents: in Latin America from 483 to 635 million, in Africa from 344 to 600 million, in Asia from 314 to 459 million, in North America from 214 to 235 million and in Oceania from 22 to 28 million.—*idea*

# For Your Intercession



## H A I T I

More millionaires per person live in Haiti than in any other country in Latin America or the Caribbean, estimates *New Internationalist*. The imposing houses with mango trees along Cap Haitien Boulevard with the backcloth of mountains and views over the Atlantic Ocean suggest a tropical paradise. The appalling filth, rubbish and poverty down town reveal otherwise. Ninety per cent of the 200,000 inhabitants of the capital are unemployed. Thirty years of oppressive, corrupt rule by Papa and Baby Doc followed by 10 years of political and economic instability have left Haiti in chaos.

Nearly half of its 7.2 million people are under 18. Eighty per cent of the population live below the poverty line. Voodoo—the belief that God is manifest through spirits controlling nature, health, wealth and happiness—has long been practised. Yet there is a tremendous hunger to hear God's truth. There is a desperate need for Bibles and Scripture teaching materials. UNICEF reckons children here are more at risk than anywhere else in Latin America. Some Christians are teaching street kids to fish and grow fruit and vegetables to earn money instead of trying to survive through prostitution, drugs and stealing. Pray that through this work, God's love and hope will dawn on the poor. Pray also for more Christian entrepreneurs to be involved in such self-help projects.

## T H A I L A N D

Many tourists are drawn to northern Thailand, an area of great beauty—green rolling mountains flanked by paddy fields and picturesque hill tribe villages. Yet from there each year thousands of young girls are sold to the south to become prostitutes, beggars, domestic, factory and construction workers largely because of family poverty and debt. Pray for Christian groups who run hostels here to rescue and help transform the lives of youngsters.

The Samaritan Children's Hostel at Chiang Rai, run by Asian Outreach, houses 170 youngsters. It provides them with clothing, food and education—and an opportunity to come to know the God who created them. Some of them have gone on to Bible schools and other training, some becoming pastors and teachers. Having been transformed and re-directed by Christ, they are sharing His love, especially among the vulnerable children in Thailand where it is estimated that over 800,000 prostitutes are under 18.

## M O R O C C O

King Mohammed VI's proposals to extend women's rights in Morocco have brought protests from Muslims, including the accusation that he is trying to Christianise the country. Pray that God will bless the King's good effort and that he will withstand the accusations. Pray also that he will create a fair society, including the freedom for the Church to openly proclaim the Gospel.

## C H A D

Chad, the fifth largest country in Africa, varies from the Sahara desert in the north to thick bush in the south. It is inhabited by some 180 people groups ranging from mainly animistic tribes in the south who are chiefly farmers, to Muslim tribes in the north, many of nomadic background. Pray for effective means to reach Chad's people with the Gospel.

## P E R U

In mountain villages near Ayachucho, Peru, are Christians with a burning desire to spread the Gospel. For over a decade, their faith has been encouraged and strengthened through listening to *Faith Comes by Hearing* cassettes, a Scripture cassette programme. These people have suffered at the hands of Sendero Luminoso Maoist terrorists and government forces who have accused them of supporting the rebels. Yet they

display no bitterness, only forgiveness and great joy. Pray for them as they spread the Good News and for the FCBH cassette programme.

Many Christians are among those still in Peru's prisons falsely convicted of terrorism. Last September, President Fujimori pardoned and released 47 such prisoners. While delighted with the releases, one of the campaigning groups, Christian Solidarity International, urged Peru's leader to "support a fully functioning and adequately funded commission to review the cases of hundreds of other prisoners who did not receive a fair trial." Pray for our brethren who are still prisoners in Peru.

## L I B E R I A

One of the most alarming trends in conflicts around the globe is child soldiers—about 300,000 of them, according to UN estimates. Many of them lose their lives. Nearly all lose their childhood. A British Christian group, Jubilee Action, is bringing the Back to School programme to Liberia. The project is dedicated to caring for children who carry deep scars of war. Its aims in Liberia include providing Christian trauma counsellors for former child soldiers, income-generating projects for students when they leave school and help with community re-integration and reconciliation. Pray for the project and for the war-traumatised children to discover the love of Jesus.

## A M E R I C A

The romantic image of the American cowboy is one of solitude, strength, grit and self-sufficiency. But for the rodeo rider, western rancher or rural labourer, the Hollywood image carries a heavy burden. Cowboys have spiritual needs like everyone else and International Bible Society is helping to meet those needs through a special edition of the Scriptures, *The Way for Cowboys*. Pray that many cowboys will find Christ through reading it.