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General Conference Pastors' School

2-4 April 2019



Moment

General Conference Pastors' School
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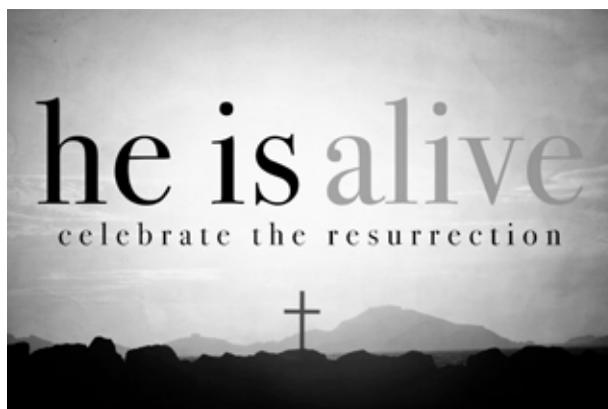
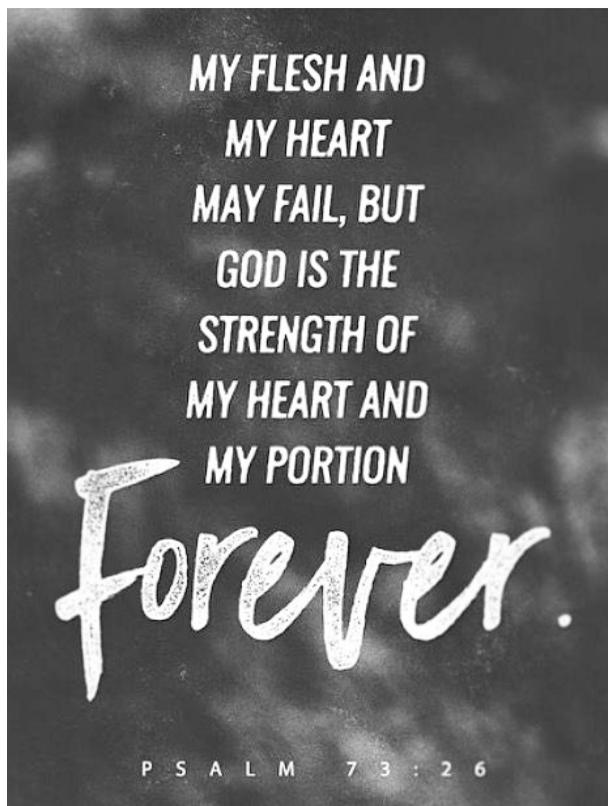
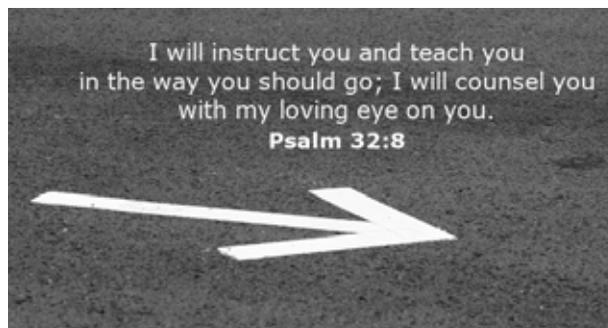
Essay

A Meditation On Worship



"A Church After
God's Own Heart"

- Every Methodist personally renewed in his/her first love for Jesus
- Every Methodist congregation revived as in the Book of Acts
- The Methodist Church to be refocused and reframed after the Word of God and the Holy Spirit



The “UNTIL” of Easter

For the majority of us in the Protestant churches, Lent is widely observed.
Lent is the 40 days [excluding the 6 Sundays] beginning from Ash Wednesday [6 March 2019]
till Maundy Thursday [18 April 2019].

Lent is a season of spiritual preparation *until Easter*, whereby believers follow after the example of the Lord Jesus in the 40 days fasting in the wilderness [Matthew 4] where he was sorely tempted in terms of His relationship with His Father and the mission that he came to fulfil. For Christians, this is traditionally a season in which we have an extended personal “spiritual retreat” - seeking to draw near to our Lord as our “*first love*” [Rev 2:4]. It is a season for deliberate self-examination, where we identify and turn away from areas that had caused us to “forsake our first love” who is Christ. The sincere and honest engagement **in prayer, fasting, abstinence [eg. from daily excessive practices, habits, negative attitudes etc] and deeds of vital piety and mercy** [such as alms giving, visiting the sick etc] are the focal practices during the Lent season.

This season of preparation, together with the holy observation of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, will help the believer **experience an emotionally and spiritually connected climatic celebration of joy on Easter day itself**. This is the result of having a personal spiritual and emotional walk of preparation through 40 days journey of drawing close to God; not merely celebrating in a kind of “easy certainty” manner - made “flat” by the predictable annual repetition and routine of this most important event in our church calendar. These cause the celebration to lose its spiritual fervour and emotional impact over time!

The Lent preparation can help us understand and emotionally connect us in a deeper way to what the Lord had been, all along, telling His disappointed early disciples – that it was **necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and be crucified on the Cross; to take the sin, guilt, shame and death of the world onto Himself – and to rise again from the dead!** We can then hear and feel the words of power, hope and joy which penetrated the being of the penitent dying criminal [thief] that enabled him to face impending death with hope and certainty - **“TODAY – you will be with Me in paradise”** [Luke 23:43].

Until Easter happened - which was not a random miracle of the demonstration of God’s “exceedingly abundantly” amazing power, the powerful truth of “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come*” [2 Corinthians 5:17] of which Paul speaks about, could not come about.

Until Easter happened – Paul would not have been able to declare - ^{NLT} **Ephesians 1:19-20** – “*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms*”. The person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit is **now** with us.

Until Easter happened - we would not be comforted and assured of our loved ones who had died and preceded us into the presence of God; so that there is every reason to celebrate the traditional Easter Sunrise Service in our churches because of the words of the seen risen Christ in John’s Gospel. The living Lord had said to Mary who was mourning her dead sibling, Lazarus – **“Your brother will rise again... “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever believes in me will never die.”** [John 11:23, 25, 26]. He went on to declare **“...Because I live, you also will live”** [John 14:19].

As our churches breathe a great sigh of relief after the ending of a momentous celebration, do also remember, Easter is where it all begins. **Easter is the start**, not the finish, of a new story in the journey of faith. Let us be prepared for more to come...*of the new creation...of “the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him”of “because I live, you also will live”*.

God sent His son, they called Him Jesus;
He came to love, heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Saviour lives!
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!

[by Bill Gaither]

Hallelujah! Christ is risen to give to us renewed life,
love and happiness!

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

Highlights of General Conference Pastors' School 2019

1. Acts-like togetherness

The General Conference Pastors' School themed "A Pastor After God's Own Heart" was held at the Methodist Centre, Port Dickson on 2-4 April 2019 with the participation of 530 Pastors from all the Conferences.

It was an enriching time of togetherness – learning God's Word, fellowshiping, breaking of bread, prayer and worshipping God (cf Acts 2:42).

We were privileged to have Archbishop Glenn Naunton Davies (Diocese of Sydney, Anglican Church of Australia) as our key speaker for the three beneficial sessions, while Rev Dr Sivin Kit gave us food for thought on the role of the Church in new Malaysia.

Below are some key highlights:

2. Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik's exhortations

In the opening message, our Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik reminded us of our previous theme four years ago, i.e. "Shepherding in Turbulent Times". His perceptive words – "We refused to be discouraged. God answered us beyond what we can ask or imagine" (Eph 3:20; cf Acts 2:43) – extolled God's great work in our nation, even as His people persevered in prayers. Bishop then led us to praise our Sovereign and Almighty God with festal shouts – Hallelujah!

He highlighted three applications for us based on his message, "A Balanced Worker After God's Own Heart" (Acts 18:24–19:1) viz.:

- Scriptures (Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16) are irreplaceable in life and ministry
- The need to have God's perspective and sense of God's destiny for us (like Apollos on a journey; Acts 18:24–19:1)
- A balanced scriptural and spiritual life and ministry, amid the tough challenges (Rom 12:11)

Thereafter, he listed three action steps for us to take:

- Batik 2.0 (2019) – to be committed to "A New Creation: A Revived Church, A Renewed Nation"
- Methodist Church in Malaysia – new beginning in a nation that is facing transitional problems
- Membership Manual (2019) – discipleship formation is vital in our churches

3. Key takeaways from one of Archbishop Glenn Naunton Davies' messages

Archbishop Glenn Davies exhorted us saying: "Pray for spiritual growth of your church. What is your prayer list? Is it merely focused on physical things? Listen to a summary of Paul's prayer – 'We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.'" (1 Thess 1:2-3)

The difference between the churches in Thessalonica and Ephesus is as follows:

- The Thessalonian church is known for her faith, love and hope (1 Thess 1:3), which generated their activities. These virtues should also be the engine room for activities in our church.
- The Ephesian church is known for her deeds, hard work, perseverance and sound doctrine (Rev 2:1-3). However, Jesus had this against them – they had forsaken their first love (Rev 2:4). They went through the motions in the church. In our church, are we going through the motion with mere activities? If you abandon the first love, Jesus will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place (Rev 2:5). What is one word that characterises your church? How many of you would write "love"?

4. Rev Dr Sivin Kit's food for thought

During the session on the "Role of the church in new Malaysia", Rev Dr Sivin Kit posed three questions for pastors, but they are just as applicable for all Christians:

- a. What should a Pastor do in the new socio-political context?
 - Recall John Wesley's words: "Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection" and "works of piety and works of mercy."
- b. How can we participate in nation-building without being a politicised church?
 - Be wise and harmless in a hostile world (Mt 10:16).
 - "I am no politician; politics lie quite out of my province ... Our main and constant business (is) to 'preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'" (John Wesley)
 - However, there is a case for preaching on issues such as justice.
- c. How can we rediscover God's heart for a Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered response?
 - Members hear more messages from smart phones rather

than from pulpit; so help them to be more discerning. Go back to basics – encourage face-to-face encounters.

- Be confident of our faith while engaging others with different faith. We share common pains, e.g. Pastor Raymond Koh's wife (Susanna Koh) and Amri Che Mat's wife (Norhayati Mohd Ariffin).
- Know that "Your Kingdom come" (Mt 6:10) is not of the political kind.
- God of hope empowers us! (Rom 15:13)

Bishop Ong's apt rejoinder to Rev Dr Sivin's sharing are as follows:

- Be present, not absent, in the new Malaysia.
- Be concerned, but not consumed.
- Be broken, but not hopeless.

Bishop Ong's closing words: "We are never without hope. Our heavenly citizenship is unchanging, while we are citizens on earth. We need to balance the prophetic with Micah's exhortation: '... act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'" (Mic 6:8)

5. Glory to God!

As we look back, we thank God for the successful conclusion of the 2019 GC Pastors' School and the rekindling of the ties that bind us across Conferences. All glory to God!

Finally, "brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess 5:25). Pray that all our Pastors will pay careful attention to be Pastors after God's own heart.

Summary by Pastor Robert Khaw,
Subang Methodist Church

My Experience on Pastors' School

I am glad to be able to attend the GC Pastors School this year. This year is a special year as it is a year whereby all pastors from all conferences came together to learn, reconnect and make new friends. There was a time whereby we pastors were called to pray for one another. The pastor who was sitting in front of me was from the Sarawak Iban Annual Conference (SIAC). We decided that we should partner each other to pray for one another. It was heart warming to hear him pray for me in the Iban language. I have no understanding of what he was praying for me but I could see that he was praying for me with such conviction. After he finished, I prayed for him in English and likewise he could not really understand me. We ended our praying session by saying to

each other in BM that God understands! It was heartwarming!

I am also glad to be able to learn from the teaching sessions that we had. Through the sessions and also Bishop Dr. Ong's messages, I was reminded of some of things that cannot be neglected in my life as a disciple of Jesus and as well as my call as a pastor after God's own heart.

On a more personal note, the ample free time in the afternoon gave me the opportunity to rest, reflect and read.

By Gaurri Maniam (TRAC)

A Reflection on the General Conference Pastors' School

2-4 April 2019

The day of the 2nd April began early in the morning as I left Penang Island and travelled over the Penang Bridge. I had the use of the Penang Trinity Church van. This gradually filled up as we picked up colleagues from both the Northern and Perak Districts at various points along the way. Pretty soon there were nine (9) of us in the van and it seemed as if the Conference had already begun for us even before we had arrived at PDMC.

We arrived in good time at PDMC and the process of registration was smooth. It was indeed heart-warming to meet up with friends from the other conferences both from East and West Malaysia. It was particularly encouraging for me

to reconnect with old friends from all the Conferences and especially with the Orang Asli and Orang Asal friends from the interior whose friendships were forged through mission work and shared OA Ministry. At the Holy Communion Service, Bishop Ong Hwai Teik shared the Word. As Bishop Ong traced the events and milestones that marked the passage of time since our Conferences last met, I was reminded of our shared history and diverse ministry in Malaysia. We are all leaving our imprints in the shared lives of those we minister to and the history of our nation. The Batik 1.0 (2015) and Batik 2.0 (2019) evolution from pledging to "Serve and Minister in Malaysia" to being "A New Creation: A Revived Church, A Renewed Nation" were to me, a visual and subtle

reminder of our uniqueness as a Malaysian Church forged in this time and season and the weaving of our imprints and lives into the fabric of our multicultural and multiracial Malaysian society.

Archbishop Glenn Davies' sessions gave us much to reflect on our theology and praxis of being "A Pastor After God's Own Heart". In addition to that, the brief session with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who shared his thoughts on the "Role of the Church in Malaysia Baru" and answered some of our queries, added to the context of our socio-political history.

Both inadvertently lent truth to the words of Psalm 78:72 of the need for shepherding with "integrity of heart" and "skillful hands".

So with hearts renewed and hands at the ready to serve our Lord Jesus and His bride the Church, we made our return home northwards at the end of our conferencing. Shepherds after God's own heart pledged to be "A New Creation: A Revived Church, A Renewed Nation" to the glory of God.

By Rev. Ronald Yap



布道所奋兴营

报道：关福龙传道、邱学新

酝酿和筹备近五百天的布道所奋兴营“布道所：福音的前线”，终于在来自五十四个牧区、四十九间布道所，共一百七十一位牧者和信徒领袖的代表热诚参与下，于主历2019年3月7至9日，在波德申卫理中心顺利开锣！

年会布道部主办布道所奋兴营的宗旨，是要召集关注福音事工的参与者，齐来商讨布道所的发展、策略交集、资源分配和彼此扶持、鼓励。

郭汉成会长和布道部主席暨营长—钱本华弟兄特别提及，营会所有讲员都是年会同工，在本土的福音禾场上，实战经验丰富，是针对本地布道所处境和难题的需要而特别安排的“本地姜”，绝对够辣，合口味。营会主题讲员是美佳梳邦堂的朱恩年传道，专题讲员是百美堂的彭河祥牧师，三个工作坊的讲员是武敦堂的郭进明牧师、增江堂的黄敬映传道和曼绒教区副会友领袖—彭宏国弟兄。

非一般营会

郭汉成会长在开幕礼上，语重心长地提及，有些布道所成长缓慢，或“惨淡经营”，原因包括地点不适合、人口迁移和缺乏服侍的信徒；也有布道所迅速成长，可成为学习的榜样。郭会长谈及《哥林多后书》8章9节是卫理公会学习联属精神的基础经文：“你们知道我们主耶稣基督的恩典；祂本来富足，却为你们成了贫穷，叫你们因祂的贫穷，可以成为富足。”他恳请每一间有能力的教会都应该如同基督，学习扶助比较弱小的教会。

这是非一般的营会，主题、专题和工作坊的主讲人，带动会众分组和讨论问题。从营员热切的响应中，可见各人看法都受重视，得以抒发其感受和负担。小组组员愉快地互动，相信讲员的经验之谈、圣经原则和神学观点，能帮助大家更具体地理解和消化种种疑问，进一步探究、栽植布道所的模式与其成长策略，这值得期待！

在营会节目组精心策划下，第一天下午在开幕礼后，来场团队动力（Team Dynamic）大比拼！主持人——朱恩年传道设立每一关游戏，团员必须紧密配搭，才能完成挑战。朱传道相信，若要建立好布道所，大家首先要一起“玩”！布道所圣工发展委员会之间应常有“游戏时间”，促进彼此搭配的默契。

第二天的高潮是“奋兴之夜”，十六个小组的营员浑身解数，藉诗歌和短剧等才艺表演，把开设布道所酸甜苦辣的经历，一一呈献在台上，处处激动人心，掌声迭起。在激励晚会上，每组桌面都点燃着蜡烛。在烛光摇曳下，每个营员的脸庞是温热的，眼里闪着奋兴的异彩，那一刻，福音火炬再次在心中点燃！

主题、专题、工作坊

朱恩年传道在主题第一讲中，从《腓立比书》1章3至6节提及三个至关重要的“看见”：看自己——协助完成主的大使

命；看教会——她在风吹雨打中缓缓前行；看耶稣——主必定完成自己开始的善工。朱传道说，建立布道所犹如军队占领一个滩头堡，从此开展深入社区的长期福音事工。在第二讲中，朱传道引用《约书亚记》22章，说明以色列人十二个支派在应许之地初步告捷后，虽然分居约但河东西海岸，但在认清承接的使命后，继续前进，彼此协助，完成征服迦南地的历史记述。朱传道鼓励教会应同心使用资源，共同发展。

彭河祥牧师在专题“布道所的动力”中，分享自己从带领四十多人发展到现有逾四百信徒的秘诀。他说，布道所的动力来自异象。异象可从数据、发展趋势等客观因素得知，亦可助布道所尽早纠正症结。第二个动力是继续传福音！福音让人获得上帝的恩惠（救恩）和平安（与上帝和好，修补关系）；第三个动力：布道所需要伙伴团队！合作良好的团队，是布道所前进不可或缺的动力！

彭宏国弟兄在主持“乡镇布道所的突破”工作坊时强调，辨识乡镇特色和按布道所的处境来服侍人群非常重要，牧区也要发掘有潜能的布道所据点，尽责规划布道所发展的事工。他表示，虽然年轻人离家到城市，但教会的主使用乡镇教会成为城市教会孕育人才的温床。彭弟兄认可弟兄姐妹在乡镇传福音的意义和价值。

黄敬映传道在“布道所服侍者角色”工作坊上提出八个要关注的方向，即成熟牧者的生命；强有力的领导能力；建立祷告的教会，靠圣灵行事；建立会友服侍团队，负责教会五大功能事工（敬拜、教导、布道、关怀和服侍）；设立细胞小组来传福音、牧养和关怀、基督徒肢体的生活；讲台传讲满足人生命需要的信息；善用本处传道、干事和探访同工；事工平衡进行。

郭进明牧师在“城市布道所的契机”工作坊上指出，要留意城市规划的蓝图，明白上主对教会的心意。郭牧师说，上帝呼召与差遣教会，赋予传福音的权柄，故，教会应以布道为主要导向。城市教会和布道所必须关注**城市人口倍增、城市发展、就业机会、教育的便利、民间传统的包袱、心灵之需和外资涌进**的趋势。

闭幕礼拜的讲员是年会会友领袖—李祖国弟兄，他强调，布道所要进步，需要完全依靠上帝的大能，也要信徒积极与主配搭。布道所成功的关键包括：

- 一、人力资源——专职牧者或同工牧养，圣工委员会积极领导和信徒积极参与。
- 二、有效率和有感染力的牧养——包括有感染力的讲台，震撼人心的敬拜仪式和门徒栽培；彼此相爱和活泼的团契生活。
- 三、接触社区——教会要在社区活出积极的形像；乡镇教会应注重幼教、青少年、家庭和老人事工。
- 四、金钱支援——母堂、教区，或年会应为布道所提供所需的资源。

临近营会尾声，参与者皆表示受到极大的鼓励和祝福，决心靠主兴旺布道所的圣工。钱本华营长希望大家能在自己的布道所落实所领受的信息。



郭会长勉励会众



主题讲员—朱恩年传道



专题讲员—彭河祥牧师



回响交流的环节



团队动力游戏



大合照

Devotion

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

An Earth-Shattering Event

Jesus has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man . . . Everything is different because He has done so.

(C.S. Lewis)

IN WORD: The Jews were split on the issue. Some believed that God would one day resurrect human beings, others did not. The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, but certainly not in a physical resurrection. For everyone, however, the issue was a mysterious, one-day-we'll-understand issue. No one—absolutely no one—expected to see a resurrected human in his or her lifetime.

Not until Jesus came, anyway. He raised a few people from the dead Himself—Jairus's daughter and Lazarus, to name two—but those were temporary resurrections. Everyone knew Jairus's daughter and Lazarus would die again one day. Still, the fact that they could be raised for a time gave hope to eyewitnesses that permanent resurrection was at least theoretically possible. And then when Jesus appeared after being in a tomb for three days. . .

This was the earth-shattering foundation of the church.

Jesus' teachings were profound, His miracles spectacular; but they didn't define the church. The new movement that began in a small Roman outpost was based on a revolutionary, shocking truth: The specter of death had lost its power. A man, certifiably dead, was now alive. And He promised life to everyone who believed in Him.

IN DEED: It's impossible for us to understand, two millennia later, how utterly radical the idea of resurrection was. It was not an illusion of prescientific people; Jesus appeared to a lot of people, for many days, and displayed His eternal body. Many who saw Him were later martyred for admitting it. That doesn't happen en masse with illusions. It only happens with historical fact.

If you think about it, this fact changes everything. It changes how we live, how we think, how we plan, how we work—everything! Let it change you; no, let it define you. Resolve this year to live a resurrected life.

What I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins. . . that he was raised on the third day . . . and that he appeared.

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

DEVOTION

BB Sarawak attends BCM

“It is important especially for Captains to attend this meeting to get updated with various happenings and new programs introduced.”

– BB Sarawak State Commissioner Hon. Capt. Hii King Ong



Sarawak Boys' Brigade Officers group photo

220 Boys' Brigade (BB) Officers throughout Malaysia attended the 55th Brigade Council Meeting (BCM) held in Ipoh from April 26-28, 2019.

Hosted by the Perak State Council and organized by The Boys' Brigade In Malaysia, the annual event concluded with key changes to its Constitution and new Office Bearers elected.

Perak State Executive Councilor of Youth, Sports and Human Development, YB Howard Lee Chuan How, was the Guest-of-Honor.

Sarawak State Council was represented by 50 Officers from various Companies throughout the state. “I'm pleased to note that we have a commendable representation to the BCM,” commented Sarawak State Commissioner Hon. Capt. Hii King Ong. “It is important especially for Captains to attend this meeting to get updated with various happenings and new programs introduced.”

Sarawak Northern Region Chairman Hon. Capt. Lawrence Wong was encouraged by the attendance of Officers from Bintulu, Miri and Limbang. “I thank you all for the excellent coordination on the travel arrangements despite travelling from different towns. I pray all the 12 Companies in Northern Region make a conscientious effort to attend next year's BCM in Selangor,” he added.

During the meeting, reports were received from the Board of Finance, Board of Secretariat, Board of Pre-Juniors and Juniors Section, Board of Seniors Section, Board of Primers and Officers and Board of Headquarters.

Reports were also received from Penang State, Perak State, Selangor State, Kuala Lumpur State, Melaka State, Johor State, Sarawak State and Sabah State.

New Office Bearers elected for 2019-2020 were: Brigade Pre-



BCM in Ipoh - Recipients of Awards

sident – Capt. Nicholas Yeap, Deputy Brigade President – Hon. Capt. Lo Hoi Fook, Brigade Vice-Presidents: Capt. Melvin Seah, Capt. Tan Giok Hui, Brigade Treasurer – Capt. Andy Tan, Brigade Secretary – Capt. Voon Zhen Yi.

Special Awards Recipients: President's Award – Ang Kang Liang (1 Png), Aaron Leong (12 Kl), Jonathan Leon (6 Iph), Ding Lijie (1 Mjg), Ting Siew Hui (1 Mjg), Wong Yong Wei (1 Mjg), Yeak Zu Yuan (1 Mjg).

Officer Bronze Service: Capt. Teng Phun (19 Png)

Officer Silver Service: Capt. Joel Goh (18 Png), Lt. Ng Kim Tee (18 Png)

Officer Gold Service: Lt. Hu Wei Ung (1 Sbu)

Officers Training Program (OTP) Purple Award: Capt. Nico Kuek (3 Sbu), Capt. Tan Sin Onn (8 Sbu), Lt. David Wong (8 Kch), Lt. Ting Tiew Whong (8 Kch).

“We are proud that our State Executive Secretary Lt. Hu Wei Ung received the Officer's Gold Medal Service Award. Seeing him serve faithfully in his Company 1st Sibul for the past 20 years really makes me thank God more for sending Lt. Hu to us,” said an elated Capt. Edmund Wong, the Chairman of Sarawak Southern Region Council. “For the first time, we also have four Officers receiving the Purple Award for the Officers' Training Program (OTP). This recognition of our Officers makes us all proud and thankful to God as we glorify Him.”

Other highlights of the event included ‘God Ask’ talk by Mr William Chan, and Our Daily Bread (ODB) engagement by Rev. David Boey.

Exhortation ‘God's mercy on me’ was preached by the Brigade Chaplain, Rev. Chieng Yu Hoo of USJ Methodist Church, Subang Jaya.

by Lt. James TC Wong,
4th Miri

A Thanks-Living Life

APRIL, MIRI – At the end of last month, my wife and I were in Sibü for Qing Ming. During our stay, we invited our friend, Pastor Jabez Tiong Huong Ong, for dinner. Since his posting to Sibü two years ago, Pastor Jabez has been busy and was not able to meet up for fellowship. I was glad to arrange for three of his former congregation members to join us too.

My family and I have known Pastor Jabez since he was first posted to Senadin Methodist Christian Gospel Centre (SM-CGC), now known as Senadin Methodist Preaching Centre (SMPC). That was in 2011 when the young, enthusiastic pastor was still a bachelor taking charge of the Preaching Centre. The congregation of about 70 members, mostly non-Mirian undergraduates, were from nearby Curtin University. Pastor Jabez also served as an Assistant Pastor at Grace Methodist Church for the next few years.

I attended Pastor Jabez's wedding in Bintulu when he married his sweetheart Siew Ling, a pharmacist, in September 2011. My friendship with Pastor Jabez was initially on a collaborative platform. To do an activity outside Bible studies, I initiated my Small Group to serve chicken soup twice a year to the SMPC members before every semester examination from 2010-2017.

The chicken soup, affectionately called the Love Soup, is traditionally served in Chinese families. The nourishing soup is known to enhance mental alertness and energy in preparation for exams. Over the years, as my Small Group matured in spiritual life, becoming more thankful knowing that it was more blessed to give rather than receive, we also witnessed the amazing growth in SMPC led by the good shepherd.

The batches of members came and went as the years passed by. Encouraged by their caring pastor, the members took up Red Book Disciple Class and even joined local short-term missions. In 2014, Pastor Jabez and I joined Pastor Ling Bui and his 31-member team to Pa' Adang, a small Penan settlement five hours' drive from Lawas. Being first-timers to Pa' Adang, our eyes opened to another dimension of God's beauty and grace. I appreciated Pastor Jabez more from a 'front-row seat' view, knowing that physical prowess is not his forte yet he persevered carrying timber planks daily under the hot sun from the store to the construction site without a single voice of complaint. Likewise, all the team workers – from doctor to kitchen helper, worked tirelessly to glorify God.

The Pa' Adang episode reminded me of the psalmist David when he said (Ps 23) God refreshed him with 'green pastures' and 'quiet waters' (vv. 2-3). He gave him guidance, protection, and comfort (vv. 3-4). David concluded: 'Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life' (v. 6).

Because of his good people skills, Pastor Jabez got along well with the young adults like an elder brother. His ability to listen,

communicate and relate to others on a personal or spiritual level made him a very approachable pastor. His pulpit preaching was relevant and often anecdotal, and therefore it was not surprising that his congregation grew to near 200 members during his tenure as pastor-in-charge. The premises of SMPC had to be extended to another shop lot unit. His pastoring was firm but friendly. He encouraged members to prioritize their objectives, and also made it a rule to intending couples to seek counsel with him before entering into a biblical courtship.

I'm going to live a Thanks-Living life this year. Maybe you would like to as well? We have many reasons to thank God for; your family, your friends, your pastors, your health, your talents – the list goes on.

For starters, I thank God for sending Pastor Jabez to my life. I pray goodness and love of God will follow him all the days of his life.

Rev Jabez Tiong Huong Ong is the Pastor-in-charge of Sibü Wesley Methodist Church since 2018. He graduated from National Taiwan Normal University in Educational Psychological and Counseling degree. Following that, Pastor Jabez attended Asbury Theological Seminary, USA, obtaining Master of Divinity and MA in Counseling degrees.

Pastor Jabez is married to Siew Ling. They have two young sons. He also has an identical twin brother, Wesley, who resides in Bintulu. Pastor Jabez likes reading.

by James TC Wong



Top Left Clockwise – Pastor Jabez with his SMPC flock, Pastor Jabez and family with Japan-based missionary Karen Goh (dark tee), Pastor Jabez and wife savoring the chicken soup, Pastor Jabez with a SMPC member.

多言合适的话语

文: 邓志文

大斋节乃是基督教的主要节期之一。在普世教会欢庆主复活的四十天前的期间, 许多信徒选择定时禁食、祷告、读经, 为要更亲近主, 纪念主为我们受苦、舍命。除此以外, 本人想提倡另一种操练, 即多言合适的话语, 禁言伤人的话。

言语是天赐一般人的本能。况且, 人民在近代历史不断争取言论自由。我们可随时随地与人交谈, 天南地北的话题, 任君选择。可惜, 人在享受天赐的本能和自主权有疏忽, 连信徒也不例外。

总有人喜欢以他人的事借题发挥, 作为‘讨论题目’, 是极精致的掩饰术。要是被提的人前来质问, 他们常自辩, 以此为由: “随便聊聊罢了, 讲讲笑嘛, 不讲大家没得笑”。是的, 这看来无碍, 只是说说笑笑, 大家无需太认真, 都是听者有意, 说者也无需负责。

但是, 若不顾及他人的感受, 人的“舌头就是火, 在我们百体中, 舌头是个罪恶的世界, 能污秽全身, 也能把生命的轮子点起来, 并且是从地狱里点著的”(雅 3:6)。难怪“惟独舌头没有人能制伏, 是不止息的恶物, 满了害死人

的毒气”(雅 3:7)。

众所皆知, 基督徒是世上的光和盐。许多基督徒对此经文已滚瓜烂熟。为此, 我们要不时重温光和盐的作用。光照亮人, 盐有调味、保存之作用, 是具体的, 可促动人的感官。这意味他人要因我们的言行得益。“合适的话语如良药, 正如“你们的言语要常常带著和气, 好像用盐调和, 就可知道该怎样回答各人。”(西 4:6)

难免, 人多口杂, 听者又如何胜过伤人的话呢? 首先, 要谨记我们的安全感源自上帝。唯有使我们“躺卧在祂的青草地上, 到可安歇的水边”(诗 23:2) 的上帝能赐给我们力量胜过带有杀伤力的话语。再者, 我们是上帝所造、所爱的, 祂“造我们, 奇妙可畏”(诗 139:14), “祂的眼早已看见了; 祂所定的日子, 我尚未度一日, 祂都写在你的册上了”(诗139:16)。因此, 我们的一生并非凭他人口中的言语所定。反之, 上帝早已为我们预备, 祂应许赐给我们平安的意念(耶 29:11)。

总而言之, 说者慎言, 听者分辨, 让我们多言合适的话语, 何时何地都荣神益人。

Psalm 34:1-22 (NIV)

- 1 I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
- 2 I will glory in the Lord;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
- 3 Glorify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
- 6 This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.
- 7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.
- 8 Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
- 9 Fear the Lord, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.
- 11 Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

- 12 Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good days,
- 13 keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from telling lies.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry;
- 16 but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil,
to blot out their name from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
- 18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
- 19 The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all;
- 20 he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.
- 21 Evil will slay the wicked;
the foes of the righteous will be condemned.
- 22 The Lord will rescue his servants;
no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

A Meditation On Worship

H. B. A.

Discovery:

I remember once I walked all night along the edge of the lake,
Talking to the stars—
Was the strange Nearness that walked with me that night God?
And when I talked to the stars
Was it God I lifted my mouth to breathing words?
I talked to the stars because I was happy:
My life in that hour seemed to reach itself out
In a great vista before me, holy triumphant;
I seemed in that hour to give myself over to life, grasping on all
the might of the world—
Or was it God I gave myself to, and God was that giving?
And His that triumph and that holiness, and His that might of the
world, that might of joy?

– Helen Hoyt

The Mood of Worship:

Consider, for example, a form of prayer used by many on the first awakening when the night has washed the spirit clean and even cells of brain and body are heightened. First a mere strong impulse to be briefly free of the body. Then a stronger impulse to transcend the mind. Then a desire to inhabit one's own spirit and to rise with it to one's own highest conception of God. A definite lift of being, toward God. Then the return, through spirit, through mind, to body—and the day begun thus permeated, stamped with the highest form of beauty that one knows. Though the day or before sleeping, whenever there is a moment when solitude can be entered or achieved, this same touch with the highest form of beauty that one knows. Here is a meeting place with God, not made with hands.

– Zona Gale

The Stairway:

I climbed to heaven by a stair
Of locust tree and wind-cleaned air.
A rainbow-circled gate was wide,
Inviting me to step inside;
And there, within a dappled wood,
Felicity and Beauty stood.
I knew at once that they were kin
Of my own soul who drew me in
To share with them the ecstasy
Of law-created harmony.
Unrest, frustration, fled away;
I was at home.....at home. . . to stay.
Oh, wonder-hour when tree and sky
Heard a lost starveling's lonely cry
And made of leaf and flower and sod
A stairway to the heart of God.

– Mary Stevens

The Essence of Prayer:

Prayer is no mere feeling of exaltation, no mere hallowed mood, no mere prostration before a supreme good. It is rather a real in-

tercourse of God with man, a living fellowship of the finite spirit with the Infinite. And just because the modern has no correct conception of the immediacy and tenderness of the relation effected by prayer in which the simple devout soul stands to God, he is constantly confusing with genuine prayer these more general religious phenomena—adoration and devotion—which have their analogies even outside the religious sphere.

Religious persons and students of religion agree in testifying that prayer is the centre of religion, the soul of all piety. The definition of the essence of prayer explains this testimony; prayer is a living communion of man with God. Prayer brings him into direct touch with God, into a personal relation with Him. Without prayer faith remains a theoretical conviction; worship is only an external and formal act; moral action is without spiritual depth; man remains at a distance from God. Johann Arndt says: "In prayer the highest and the lowest come together, the lowliest heart and the most exalted God."

– Friedrich Heiler

A Song of Assurance:

*Send forth thy light and thy faithfulness; may they guide me,
May they bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling-place.
May I go to the altar of God, to God my highest joy;
And may I praise thee with the lute, O God my God.
Why art thou brought low, O my spirit;
And why dost thou murmur within me?
Wait thou for God; for I shall again praise him,
The salvation of my countenance and my God.*

Psalms 43:3-5 From "The Bible,
An American Translation."

A Prayer:

Almighty God, who art beyond the reach of our highest thought, and yet within the heart of the lowliest; we pray thee to come to us in all the beauty of light, in all the tenderness of love, in all the liberty of truth, and make thyself known to us. Mercifully help us in the struggle to be pure and good; encourage us in every effort to be true, loyal and loving; to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with Thee. Sanctify all our desires and purposes, and upon each of us let Thy blessing rest. Amen.

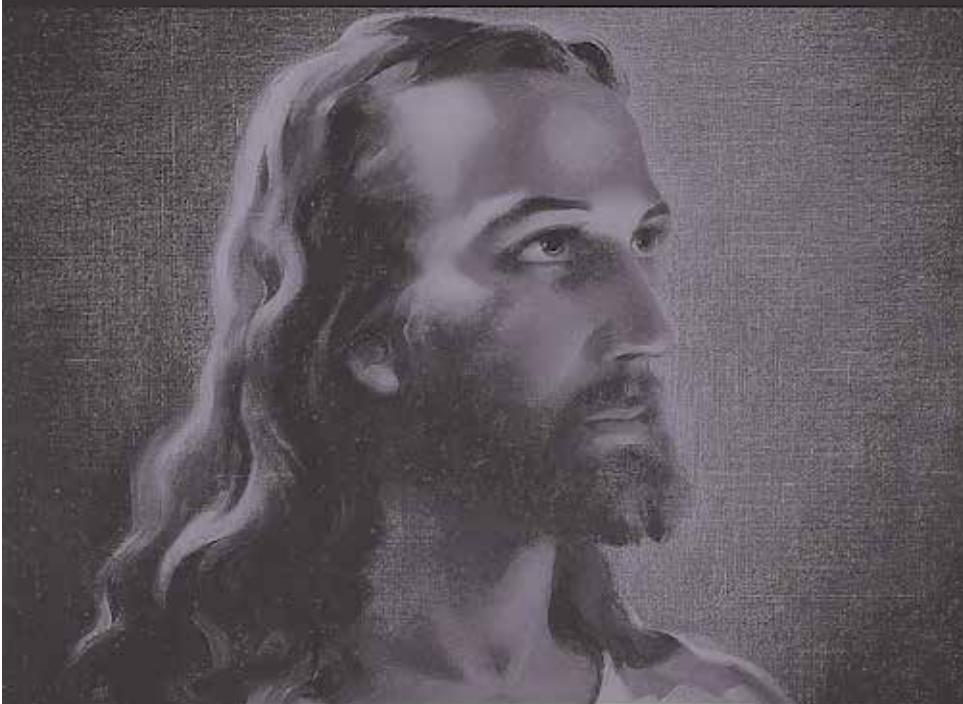
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