



Christian Careers with a Difference The GC Youth Conference

Christian Careers with a Difference



General
Conference
Youth
Conference

**CENTENNIAL CENTRE
SIBU, SARAWAK
25-27 MAY 2007**

Registration Fees: RM120/-



The Council of Youth of the General Conference is organizing this important event during the May school holidays. Bishop Hwa Yung will be the plenary speaker and the workshop will be conducted by Ms. Annette Arulrajah, the General Secretary of the Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Malaysia.

Excerpt from the brochure.

“The general tendency for Christian youths today is to approach the issue of their careers in a way that is no different from the rest of the world. But is this right? The Christian is called to be the ‘salt of the earth’ and the ‘light of the world’. How can we live this calling through our careers? Is there a Christian way of choosing our careers or vocations? How can Christians impact the world with the gospel of Christ through our careers?”

Side by side with this is the shortage of men and women in the full-time Christian ministry in the Methodist Church. How can we encourage our youths to take up the challenge of the call to full-time ministry? These are some of the key issues we will be addressing at this conference.”

For further information contact Rev. Christopher Rao at 019-2262402, 03-79542836 (TRAC office) or email: pastorpher@gmail.com

In view of the importance of building our youths we take a look at some of the programmes for youths from various Annual Conferences that have come to our attention. Not all Annual Conferences are featured and of course there are other programmes that are not covered here. The Chinese article is also

on the youths in CAC.

Short-Term Mission School (English) of MTS SibU

This mission school is a month long programme run by the Methodist Theological School (MTS), SibU. It completed its second year this February with 13 youths mainly from the English speaking churches of SCAC, but also included one from the Iban church and one from Sabah.

The aim of the course is to train the youths to be grounded in the Word of God and be exposed to the Great Commission of God. The programme included classroom course work, one of which was an intensive 40 hour course taught over 5 days, and one week of mission field work.



• Commissioning prayer for STMS graduates.



• STMS students and teachers.

>>>continue on page 6

Wesley Methodist School Gets New Building



• Bishop Dr. Hwa Yung unveils the plaque with YB Dato Dr. Tan Kee Kwong, Chairman of the Board of Management. (from the left, Ms. Goh Kai Lian (Deputy Principal), Ms Yin Kam Yoke (Education Secretary), Mrs. Vimala Matthews (Principal) and Mr. A.R. Peter (recently retired Principal).

putting up this building and he worked for 4 years to complete it.

The dedication service began with a prayer by Rev. Yew Nieng Song, the Pastor of Grace Methodist Church Sentul. This was followed by a splendid performance by the school choral speakers with their rendition of Psalm 111. Then we lifted our voices to sing 'To God Be The Glory'.

A powerpoint presentation on the growth of the school was shown. Evidently, the school has come a long way since its early beginnings in 1992. After the speeches and the dedication by Bishop Hwa Yung, the congregation was treated to an inspiring acapella rendition of

'Be Thou My Vision'. After the school song was sung the day ended with the unveiling of the plaque at the ground floor by Bishop Hwa Yung, followed by refreshments.

Many guests were impressed by this latest addition to the school and thankful for the way the Lord has blessed the school. Besides, they were delighted with the warm hospitality extended to them. Many went home, having been blessed by the dedication service.

Vimala Mathews AMN
Principal
Wesley Methodist School

22 March 2007 goes down as a significant date in the calendar of Wesley Methodist School, Kuala Lumpur. It marks the dedication of the new building by the Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, Rev. Dr. Hwa Yung. The 5-storey building accommodates the office, 2 science labs, six Forms 4 and 5 classrooms respectively, a multi-purpose hall, a staff lounge as well as four staffrooms. The school was encouraged by the presence of a sizeable number of friends, supporters and parents.

The recently retired Principal, Mr. A. R. Peter is credited with the vision of

Brian McLaren is well-known as one of the key leaders of the Emerging Church movement that has found a resonance from many Christians around the globe, including Malaysia. McLaren was in Malaysia 3 – 5 March at the invitation of Emergent Malaysia for a series of meetings.

In collaboration with CCM, STM and Glad Sounds the meetings were titled "Friends in Conversation: *A Quiet Revolution of Hope*" touching on the meaning of the gospel, church, discipleship and world for Christians who find themselves living in an epoch changing postmodern world today.

Brian McLaren also spent a morning at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia. He gave

Brian McLaren in Malaysia

a brief but interesting history of the key events and ideas that had formed the modern world, albeit seen from a Western perspective. Then he highlighted the changes occurring today that are giving rise to no less than a paradigm shift in thinking and living. This was followed by a time of interaction with some faculty members as conversation partners. There were important issues raised but time was all too short before it had to end.

For more information on Emergent Malaysia see their website:

www.emergentmalaysia.org



• *Explaining a point.*



• *Interacting with Faculty members. From left, Dr. Voon Choon Khing, Rev. Dr. Solomon Rajah, Rev. Joseph Komar and Mr. Sherman Kuek (adjunct faculty).*

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What is Happening in our Annual Conferences?

April

16-19	Mon-Thu	SIAC Pastors' School
19-27	Thu-Fri	CAC Mission Trip to Korea
20-23	Wed-Sat	SIAC Pastors & Lay Prayer Convention
21	Sat	TRAC Executive Board Meeting
23-26	Mon-Thu	CCM 12th Triennial General Assembly
27-29	Fri-Sun	SIAC Team Ministry with CHEMPRO* in Bintulu District
30-1/5	Mon-Tue	CAC Wesleyan Theological Seminar
30-5/5	Mon-Sat	SCAC Christian Listening Ministry Training

May

2-6	Wed-Sun	SCAC Seminars on Depression, Anxiety, Mental Health
3	Thu	TAC DS/Board of Ministry/Board of Finance Meeting
4	Fri	TAC Executive Board Meeting (II)
9-13	Wed-Sun	CAC Youth Camp
20	Sun	Aldersgate Sunday
18-20	Fri-Sun	SIAC Team Ministry with CHEMPRO* in Kapit District
23-25	Wed-Fri	SCAC Marriage Seminar
24-28	Thu-Mon	Council of Archives & History ~ Workshop on Oral History
25-27	Fri-Sun	GC Youth Conference ~ Christian Careers With A Difference
25-27	Fri-Sun	TRAC Church Planting Conference
27-3/6	Sun-Sun	SCAC International Leadership Institute National Conference
28-30	Mon-Wed	TAC Pastors' School
31-2/6	Thu-Sat	TAC Local Preachers Training Institute
31-3/6	Thu-Sun	SCAC Singles' Camp

* Community Health Education & Motivation Programme.

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• Bishop Hwa Yung

What's Right with Methodism (1)?

Revival and Vital Christianity is a Possibility

Many within the Methodist Church in Malaysia have struggled with one issue over the past few decades—Is Methodism passé? In other words, has it lost its spiritual vitality, and therefore its relevance as well? Some find the worship services dull and lacking in life, and the sermons dry and insipid. Others complain that the structures are too bureaucratic and rigid, with the church as a whole infected by the modern disease of ‘committee-itis.’ Still others are concerned that the church appears to lack evangelistic zeal and passion for holy living. Some think that the Holy Spirit no longer works within the Methodist Church and other traditional churches, but only in so-called charismatic churches. Thus many concerned Methodists do suffer from some degree of loss of confidence in their own church, and some have left to join other churches.

It is unfortunately true that some of the concerns raised are genuine and valid to differing extents. However, they also imply a lack of understanding of what Methodism stands for, and consequently a failure to fully appreciate and/or appropriate its distinctive strengths. It is out of this concern that I would like to do a series titled, ‘What’s Right with Methodism?’

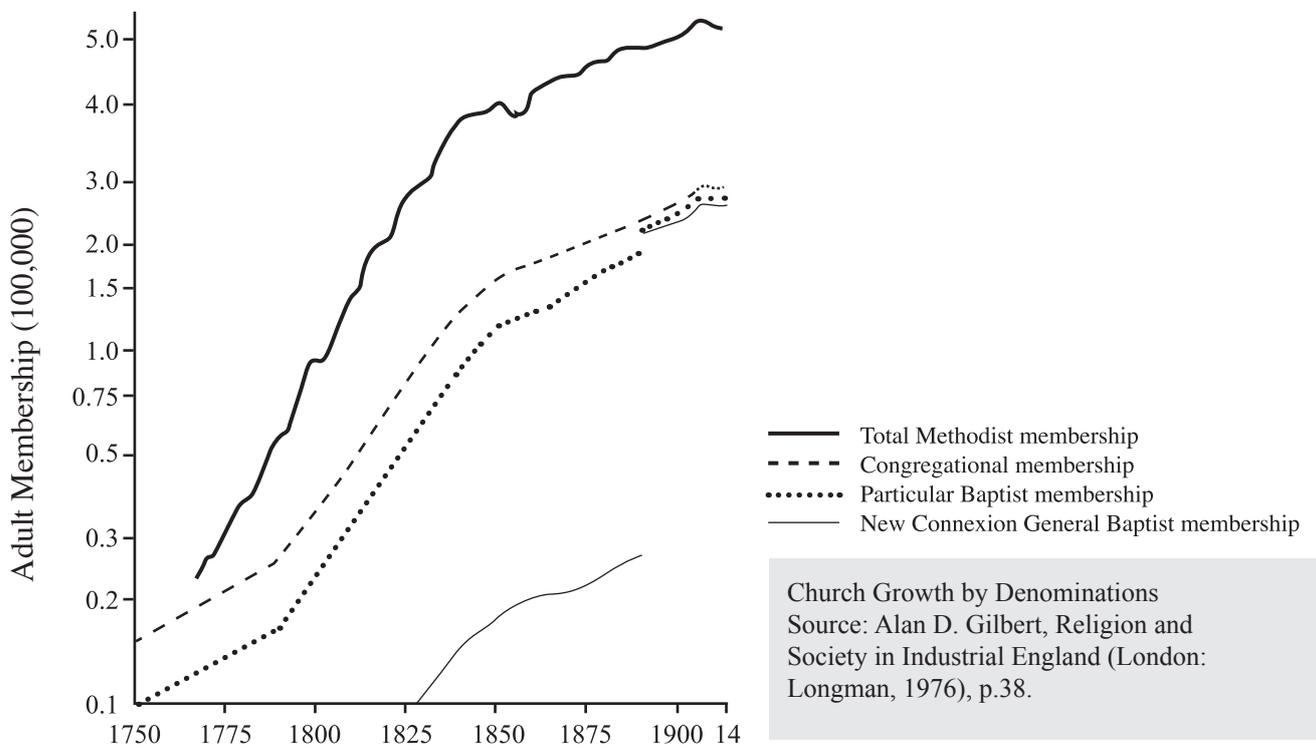
In this first article, I would like to address the issue of revival and spiritual vitality. Is this an important issue in Methodism? In asking this question, many forget that

Methodism began with the quest for revival and spiritual vitality. England in early 18th century had lost much of the spiritual energy of the 17th century Puritan movement. Church life was in steep decline and political leaders were no help. Both King George I and his son were indifferent to spiritual things, and Robert Walpole, Prime Minister for 21 years, openly hostile to the gospel. Immorality was widespread among both highborn and the poor, with the latter living in deplorable social conditions as well. John Wesley summed the conditions of his times as follows: ‘What is the present characteristic of the English nation? It is ungodliness ...Ungodliness is our universal, our constant, our peculiar character.’ And though deism, probably the earliest form of modern liberal theology, was successfully resisted, the church simply lacked the inner spiritual dynamic to turn the nation round.

This spiritual decline was not limited to England. It was the same in various parts of Europe, as well as in Scotland, Wales and throughout New England in North America. For example, when an earthquake hit Boston in 1727, everyone flocked to church. But a few weeks later, it was back to business as usual. Thus one Boston preacher reported sadly: ‘Alas, as though nothing but the most amazing thunders and lightnings, and the most terrible earthquakes could awaken us. We are at this time fallen into as dead a sleep as ever.’

It was against this background of widespread spiritual decline that we see God stirring up new life in different corners of the church. It began in Germany in 1727 with Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, who were to have a direct impact on Wesley. In New England in North America, under Jonathan Edwards the flames of revival began to burn in 1733. Then in 1735, Howell Harris led a revival in Wales. The Methodist revival began latest in 1739, but was destined to be the longest sustained.

John Wesley’s quest for spiritual reality began in earnest in his student days. Then beginning in 1725, a series of events, including the study of the writings of Jeremy Taylor, Thomas a Kempis, and William Law, further contributed to the shaping of his life and thought. He describes his pilgrimage as follows: ‘In



the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met Bishop Taylor's Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying. In reading several parts of this book I was exceedingly affected, by that part in particular which related to "purity of intention." Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts and words and actions, being thoroughly convinced there was no medium, but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or to myself; that is, in effect, to the devil.'

From that time onwards, Wesley began to strive after God with great zeal—a habit continued to his dying days. It involved watchfulness in his words and actions, constant self-examination against sin, the regular practice of prayer, bible study and public worship, and earnest striving for personal inward holiness. With fellow members of the Holy Club in Oxford, he committed himself to systematic Bible study, mutual discipline, regular personal devotions and communion, and good works such as prison visitation, helping the poor and sick, and running classes for poor children. The primary aim of the club can be summed be Wesley's words to his father in 1734: 'My one aim in life is to secure personal holiness, for without being holy myself I cannot promote real holiness in others.'

Yet, Wesley could not find peace in his heart—despite the fact he had been raised in a godly home, trained for and ordained into the ministry, and earnestly sought God! When he returned as a missionary to the natives Indians in America, with a deep sense of failure, he wrote: 'I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me?'

His intense and agonizing search for God of more than ten years finally climaxed at a prayer meeting on the evening of May 24, 1738 in London. He wrote: 'In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.' What followed is now history. It opened the way for Wesley to become part of the revival that had already begun through others.

Wesley and his friends were to receive together a deeper touch from the Lord a few months later, on the evening of 1st Jan 1739. Some 60-70 persons were gathered together in prayer that night, when the Spirit of God was poured upon them, as at Pentecost in Acts 2. This is

best described in Wesley's own words: 'About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord."' This, together with Wesley's Aldersgate experience seven months earlier, marks the beginning of the Methodist movement in history.

Wesley went on to lead the revival for another 52 years until his death in 1791. The revival was sustained for the next hundred years or so, both in England and in America. In England, Methodist membership grew to almost 5% of the adult population in the decade of 1840-50 and impacted the whole of church life in the country as well. Other churches, especially the Congregational and Baptist, benefited from the revival and grew in tandem. (See the accompanying graph.) In America, it grew even faster in absolute numbers than in England, and outstripped almost all other churches in the 19th century. It would be good if God in His goodness would do something similar in our midst once again.



• *Jeremiah School.*



• *Campus ministry.*



• *Concert Night.*



• *Having your portrait sketched.*

For many of the participants it was an eye-opening and life-changing experience. Jonathan Wong from Wesley Methodist Church, Sibu shared this:

During STMS, I drew closer to God. I found my spiritual gifts that were hidden in me for a very long time and now I want to use them mightily for God's Kingdom.

The mission component was truly a cross-cultural experience. The students, divided into smaller teams, visited and shared with the Iban and indigenous peoples in different localities.

At the end of the school there was a graduation service where the lecturers of MTS and teachers of STMS had prayers of commissioning for the students. There was a sense of God's presence and the hope that the future of these young people were in God's hands.

Campus Ministry in Sabah

Kingfisher Methodist Church was established near the University of Malaysia in Sabah (UMS) to reach out to students there. That was in 2003. Today the church has about 300 students attending the Chinese ministry and 50-60 the English campus ministry.

The campus ministry has now developed into a preaching point because of the potential for growth amongst the students in UMS with a population of over 20,000 students. Some 300 students from China are also studying there. Reaching out to the students and preparing them for the future service of God is a growing work.

SCAC Youth Club

The Information and Communication Board launched two websites catered for youths last year ~ www.mycentre.org and www.radio.mycentre.org ~ which celebrated their first anniversary in March.

The celebration was in the form of a creative Fun and Information Fair held at the long awaited Methodist Youth Centre, another milestone in youth development for the SCAC. The Fun Fair was also aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of youth ministry and youth issues through workshops, shows, games and the like. The day ended with

a musical concert with over 1000 young people attending.

TRAC Jeremiah School

This year was the fourth year running for the Jeremiah School, conducted from 3 Jan.-11 Feb. 2007. 12 youths spent six weeks together for a time of learning, building a living relationship with God, Christian formation and practical experience in service.

Originally conceived as a challenge to youths to enter the Christian vocation it has evolved into a school of Christian formation. The syllabus covers biblical foundations, personal relationship with God and personal holistic growth through spiritual disciplines, discovering one's gifts and calling, as well as service and leadership. It is not only classroom learning that is emphasized but the encounter with God the Father.

As one participant testified, "I thought that God only speaks to a select few persons. I always thought only 'holy' people get to see visions and dreams. During this JS, not only did I discover God was real, I experienced Him! Now my whole being is convinced that He is present and powerful."

The practical dimension is also not neglected. Weekends are spent visiting churches and there is a mission exposure week at the end of the school.

Some 93 youths have attended JS since its inception. It is with hope that they will continue to persevere and be a faithful generation of Christian leaders who are of a different spirit like Caleb was among his generation (Num.14:24).

TRAC Youth Prayer Conference

From 10-13 March some 120 youths gathered at the Stella Maris Centre in Penang for a time of learning about prayer. Led by Rev. Ong Hwai Teik, President of TRAC, and other practitioners of prayer these young people not only learnt the principles of prayer and intercession but began the experience and practice of praying for themselves, their youth groups and their churches.



青年活力敬拜

• *Exuberant Worship.*

“青年活力敬拜”于2007年3月3日晚上7时30分在吉隆坡福建堂引爆！虽然当晚下着滂沱大雨，然而出席者坐满整个会所，迟来者只好坐在楼上。这第一次的活力敬拜共有五百多人出席参加。这聚会由年会青年团契主办，中部教区、雪兰莪教区协办。

当晚，来自中部教区的乐手、领唱团和铃鼓团，以诗歌、乐器、跳舞等方式，带领青年人以心灵诚实敬拜赞美神，体验神。整个聚会非常传统，然而却充满活力；非常活力；然而却又是秩序有条！许多参加者在这聚会中得到激励，愿委身在音乐团队中。

“敬拜赞美-心灵诚实的敬拜，是进入神同在，体验神的途径之一。”莫泽川会长在分享如是说。他勉励青年人透过敬拜经历神的同在，使年轻的生活更多姿多彩，并得着丰富的生

命和有力的事奉。莫会长以使徒行传16章，保罗和希拉在狱中的唱诗赞美为例，让出席者意识到真诚的敬拜所带来的震撼效果。他也呼召青年们，共同体验真神、彼此激发爱心、彼此鼓励、献身事奉，让所领受的感动化为具体行动，包括：传福音、宣教、委身，活出信徒榜样等。

莫会长表示希望借着这次的敬拜赞美会，能凝集城市青年的力量，资源共用。他说：“我们正处在后现代的时代，后现代的人是要看得见的，摸得着的，因为对真理产生了模糊，因此现代人讲人潮、人流、大群体。反观我们各牧区的青年人少，小当然也有小的做法，然而，集体的敬拜赞美弥补了或提供了现代人在这方面的需要。”

青年福音歌手雷胜雄弟兄也在聚会中以诗歌分享他的信仰生命。

当晚也有数位长者出席参加，他们以行动鼓励关怀小辈。会后年会领袖黄敬映弟兄说，这聚会做的很好，会长的分享也感人和激励人心。感谢赞美主！他相信6月再次举行的聚会将有更多的人出席，他说他将继续在祷告中纪念此事。



• *Collective Worship.*

A Moving Experience for LCEC Members

Thirty members of the LCEC of Tamil Methodist Church Chaah, Johor had a weekend seminar at the Rompin Beach Resort from 9 – 11 February 2007. It was led by their pastor Rev. John Simson and the invited inspirational speaker pastor Sivakumar of the Assembly of God Church in Banting.

The programme had a mix of worship and prayer times, talks by Rev. Simson followed by group discussions and reporting, and talks on spiritual leadership by pastor Sivakumar with ministry times after that.

On the last day at the Sunday worship a very meaningful session was conducted by the speaker, pastor Sivakumar. He started to wash the feet of pastor John Simson, the LCEC Chairman and the church Lay Leader. Then Rev. Simson washed the feet of all the members

beginning with the eldest member. This was done solemnly and members were moved emotionally to tears. The husbands washed the feet of their wives, and the fathers the feet of their children.

When it was time to leave for home after lunch there was a sense that the members

achieved unity among themselves as the outcome of the seminar.

Based on the report by
Mr. David Pandian, P.I.S.
Hon Steward TMC Chaah.



• *LCEC Members.*

Faith to Live By:
An Exposition of the Apostles' Creed

Roland Chia

Dr. Roland Chia is Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Lecturer in Historical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College, Singapore.

13. *The Holy Spirit*

I believe in the Holy Spirit.

The third article is too briefly enunciated in the Apostles' Creed to be of significant help. This exposition will therefore be based on the expanded and more descriptive statement that is found in the Nicene Creed of AD 325. There we are told that the Holy Spirit is 'the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who, with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken to the prophets'.

First, we notice that every effort is made to clarify the status of the third Person of the Trinity. During the years before the Nicene Creed was formulated, there were a number of heresies about the Holy Spirit circulating in the Churches. Some taught that the Holy Spirit is just another name for the Son. These 'theologians' therefore do not embrace a trinitarian concept of God, but a binitarian one. Others, not knowing what to do with the Holy Spirit, maintain that the Spirit was an angel, a created being who is inferior to the Father and the Son.

Against all these erroneous ways of understanding the person and status of the Holy Spirit, the Nicene Creed, in its carefully worded statement, maintains emphatically that the Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son.

This is done by several important assertions. The first is the statement that the Holy Spirit is the 'giver of life'. By this the Creed maintains the creative role of the Holy Spirit, thereby asserting his Deity. The Holy Spirit is not a created being, but the third Person of the Trinity who was responsible for the creation of the world. The Creed thus makes the same assertion about the Spirit as it does about the Father and the Son. The Creed

had attributed the coming into being of the world to the creative work of the Father and the Son. And now the Creed makes it perfectly clear that the Spirit is in no way inferior to the first two Persons of the Trinity but is co-equal with them by describing the Spirit as the 'giver of life'.

By asserting that the Spirit 'proceeds from the Father [and the Son]' the Creed further stresses the deity of the Spirit. To modern readers, this statement may not appear to have sufficiently achieved its purpose. But for the crafters of the Nicene Creed, and for the Christian Church of the fourth century, the term 'procession' points to the fact that the Spirit was not a creature. Just as the Son was 'begotten' of the Father, so the Holy Spirit 'proceeds' from the Father. If the term 'begotten' shows that the Son was not a creature, but a member of the Godhead, the term 'procession' achieves the same purpose with regard to the Spirit.

And if even this is not enough to clarify the status of the Spirit, the Creed makes a final attempt in its assertion that the Spirit is to be worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son. Such an act would smack of blasphemy and idolatry, unless the Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son.

Perceptive readers would have noticed that I have enclosed the phrase 'and the Son' in parenthesis. This phrase was not part of the original version of the Creed, which was formulated in AD 325, but was inserted later in the year AD 589. This revision was the result of a unilateral decision of the Western Church, prompted by its struggle with a group of Spanish Arians. The Eastern Orthodox Church

objected to this addition firstly because its insertion into the Creed was not an ecumenical decision, and secondly – and more importantly – because this phrase distorts the doctrine of the Trinity.

Space does not allow the discussion of the intricate details of the controversy. What is pertinent here is that the inclusion of this phrase is controversial, and that it is still an enormous obstacle to ecumenical relations between the Western and Eastern Churches today.

Again, for reasons I cannot go into in the context of this essay, I am of the opinion that the Western addition is unofficial and unwarranted. Unofficial because unilateral revisions cannot be entertained in an ecumenical Creed (such acts, if allowed, would fly in the face of the ecumenicity of the Church and the ecumenical nature of the document in question). And unwarranted because this clause is not necessary to combat the vestiges of Arianism in Spain. The original wording of the Creed, which was formulated to refute the teachings of the early Arians, is adequate in challenging later manifestations of the heresy.

We leave this discussion to focus our attention on an entirely different subject: the phenomenon of the pentecostal and charismatic renewals and its relationship with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Can these movements be said to be the work of the Holy Spirit? This question goes right into the heart of the issue, compelling us to make a theological judgement regarding these movements.

From their inception until today, this question has been a subject of investigation



and debate among theologians from the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions. This has resulted in a proliferation of literature on the subject, ranging from scholarly articles and monographs to popular paperbacks. In the main, most theologians have concluded that these movements are historical manifestations of the work of the Spirit in the Church. On the evangelical front, theologians like James Packer and Michael Green have in different ways also argued for the validity of these movements.

This consensus notwithstanding, theologians are critical of some aspects of the movements, concerning both their doctrines and practises. Criticisms are of course to be welcomed, although they must be carefully weighed and assessed. The Church must never naïvely mistake all criticisms for scepticism or mischief. There is an incipient but fast developing sub-culture in the Church, especially among its leadership, which politicises all criticism by portraying them categorically as negative and destructive. The emergence of this trend signals the fact that the Church and its leadership have already given in by patterning their approach after the totalitarianism that is evident in secular corporate cultures.

This line of thinking is as naïve as it is dangerous. It was the great twentieth century theologian, Karl Barth – perhaps the greatest that the previous century has produced – who stressed that the Church of every age must be self-critical. Once the Church fails to be self-critical, once it becomes too satisfied with itself or accepts teachings and even authority uncritically, then it begins to suffer from atrophy. This emphasis can be traced to the Reformers – especially Luther and Calvin – who never tire of reminding the Church of the constant need for reformation. And reformation implies that the Church always adopts a self-critical stance towards its own condition. The Church becomes intellectually and theologically weak and flabby when it fails to exercise its muscles of theological and spiritual discernment!

This brings us to the final statement in the Nicene Creed regarding the Holy Spirit: ‘who has spoken to the prophets’. If the previous statements describe the Spirit’s person, this last statement describes his activity. The Spirit speaks to (and through) the prophets, and, by extension, he is the divine inspiration behind the human writers of scripture. But the work of the Spirit is not just confined to this. Insofar as the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who indwells believers and the Church, he continues to inspire the work of the Church. He continues to empower them and direct them in God’s mission in the world.

But the Spirit is also the Spirit of Truth, who leads the Church into all truth. Thus the Spirit is profoundly involved not just in the missionary work of the Church; he is also involved in the Church’s theological work. He is involved in the work of the Church’s theologians (who may not always be the ‘professional’ theologians teaching in universities!), and in the Church’s priests, pastors, preachers, and missionaries.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the Spirit of Truth works exclusively among the Church’s theologians and clergy, important though they are. The Spirit is at work in the whole Church, that is, in the universal Church, for he is the ecumenical Spirit, who brings all of God’s people to the truth. This means that the theological work of the Church although always contextual is however never parochial. The Church engages the questions posed by its own particular context by marshalling the theological wisdom of the entire household of faith, both past and present, and across the denominations and traditions.

To confess that we believe in the Holy Spirit ‘who has spoken to the prophets’ is to embrace an ecumenical theology in the best sense of the term. It is upon this understanding of the Holy Spirit that we are able to construct the biblical teaching concerning the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, which is the next theme of the Creed.

Insofar as the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who indwells believers and the Church, he continues to inspire the work of the Church. He continues to empower them and direct them in God’s mission in the world.

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The Spirit is at work in the whole Church, that is, in the universal Church, for he is the ecumenical Spirit, who brings all of God’s people to the truth ... The Church engages the questions posed by its own particular context by marshalling the theological wisdom of the entire household of faith, both past and present, and across the denominations and traditions.

In the wake of yet another case involving the rights of a non-converting spouse before the Civil Courts both the Christian Federation of Malaysia and the MCCBCHST put out press statements. We print here the more detailed account for readers who may not be fully aware of the issues involved. Also included here is the call to prayer by the CFM Executive Committee in conjunction with campaign launched by MCCBCHST on 31 March 2007.

MALAYSIAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF BUDDHISM, CHRISTIANITY, HINDUISM, SIKHISM AND TAOISM

PRESS STATEMENT ON COURT OF APPEAL DECISION ON SARAVANAN v. SUBASHINI

In the wake of the majority decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Saravanan A/L Thangathony v. Subashini A/P Rajasingam [Rayuan Sivil No. W-02-955-2006] we, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism, are greatly disappointed that once again, the non-converting non-Muslim wife of a convert to Islam has failed to get relief from our Civil Courts. Hitherto, in the case of Shamala a/p Sathiseelan she was told by the High Court that it had no jurisdiction to declare as unlawful her young children's conversion into Islam without her knowledge or consent and was advised to seek the assistance of the Islamic authorities. Then the widow of Everest hero, Sgt. M. Moorthy also failed to get relief from the High Court on the ground of jurisdiction.

Following an uproar from civil society, the Right Honorable Prime Minister had declared that although Article 121(1A) of the Constitution would not be amended, laws will be amended to remedy the situation. Though it has been more than a year since then, there have been no amendments to any law as yet to clarify the jurisdiction of the Courts.

It is our duty to inform the authorities that there is growing discomfort amongst the non Muslim citizens of Malaysia, who form 45% of the population, many of whom feel that the judiciary are failing in their constitutional duty to ensure the equal protection of the law for all Malaysians.

In Subashini's case, the husband converted to Islam and converted the eldest son, aged 3, to Islam without the wife's knowledge or consent. The husband then applied to the Syariah Court for custody of the son, again with no notice to the wife.

The wife then presented a petition for divorce and ancillary relief and applied to the High Court for an injunction restraining the husband from (i) converting the children of the marriage to Islam and (ii) commencing or continuing with any proceedings in any Syariah Court with regard to the marriage or the children of the marriage. The High Court initially granted an injunction after hearing only the wife who at that time did not know of the substance of the Husband's applications in the Syariah courts. This injunction was continued whilst the case was heard in the High Court. After the husband submitted his evidence, and after the High Court heard both parties, it refused to give the injunction. However, the High Court granted an interim injunction to the wife pending the hearing of an appeal to the Court of Appeal, known as an "Erinford Injunction".

The majority decision of the Court of Appeal dismissed the wife's appeal and set aside the Erinford Injunction with costs, effectively shutting the door on Subashini's rights as a mother to prevent the Syariah court making a determination as to her marriage and as to the custody of her children. To add to her problem,

the majority have ruled that Subashini, a non-Muslim, must apply to the Syariah Court, instead of applying to the High Court. Of particular concern to us is the statement by YA Dato' Hasan Lah, JCA that the High Court and the Syariah Court must be regarded as having the same standing in this country. We are also concerned to note that in his grounds of judgment YA Datuk Suriyadi Halim Omar, JCA quoted a verse from the Quran and appeared to be elevating the role and prominence of Islamic law and the Islamic judicial system in Malaysia.

We would respectfully remind members of the Judiciary that the Federal Court, Court of Appeal and the High Courts in Malaya and in Sabah and Sarawak are all civil courts and Judges of those courts take an oath of office to uphold the Federal Constitution, which guarantees all persons, including non Muslims, the fundamental liberty of professing and practising their faiths in peace and harmony.

It is very clear and specific in the State legislative list in the 9th Schedule of the Federal Constitution that the "Syariah Courts ... shall have jurisdiction only over persons professing the religion of Islam ...". The learned Judges in the majority appear to note that requirement in their judgments, but with respect appear to contradict themselves by then requiring the non Muslim wife to go to the Syariah courts.

We express our objection to any requirement for non-Muslims to have to go to the Syariah Court for relief as such courts apply Islamic theological law. Religious laws cannot be applied to people who do not profess that religion. The Court of Appeal in this case and civil courts are expanding Article 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution. We are also concerned that Syariah Courts are usurping functions which are not theirs. Consequently, non-Muslims are unable to obtain relief when the Syariah Court makes an order which interferes with their fundamental liberties guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.

The Federal Constitution is the supreme law of Malaysia. Our highest court had declared in the case of Che Omar bin Che Soh v. P.P. (1988) 2 MLJ 55 that Article 3 of the Constitution was never intended to extend the application of Syaria to the sphere of public law.

We object to any interpretation of our Constitution or our laws that deprive any person of his fundamental liberties, and deny access to a non Muslim to the High Court applying the general civil

law. We urgently call on the Government to immediately make the necessary legislative amendments to safeguard the rights of all Malaysians and to ensure non Muslims have full and proper access to justice in the civil courts.

Dato' Chee Peck Kiat,
President
23.03.2007

SOLIDARITY PRAYER
CAMPAIGN
CFM Newsbrief March 2007

Holy Week 1- 8 April 2007
In view of the latest Court of Appeal decision in the case of Subashini, and of all the other cases of similar nature that left non-Muslim spouses without legal redress in civil courts, the Executive Committee of The Christian Federation of Malaysia joins the MCCBCHST in launching a prayer campaign in order to share in the distress and anguish of individuals, their families and communities, who have stood up to their conscience and refused to be subject to Syariah courts.

Through the Prayer Campaign we want all Christians to know that it is unconstitutional for courts to oblige non-Muslim to be subject to syariah courts that are govern by religious laws not professed by non-Muslims.

WHY? IT IS CONTRARY
TO THE SPIRIT OF THE
FEDERAL CONSTITUTION,
THE SUPREME LAW
IN MALAYSIA, AND
THE GUARANTEES
ENSHRINED IN IT.

1. The prayer will remember individuals and families affected by court decisions that deny them redress.
2. To seek God's guidance to move the hearts of our leaders and elected representatives to safeguard the rights of all citizens as enshrined in the constitution.

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GEREJA MALAYSIA
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CHURCHES OF
MALAYSIA**

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Fax: 03 ~ 79560353
E-Mail: cchurchm@streamyx.com

Press Statement

The Council of Churches of Malaysia welcomes the sincere and forthright assertion of Raja Nazrin Shah, the Raja Muda of Perak, that "this country belongs to all Malaysians" and that the Federal Constitution is supreme and provides an enduring foundation of our nationhood.

His Highness made this assertion in the context of his speech on "Prospects and Challenges for Nation Building" at the Young Malaysians' Roundtable Discussion on National Unity and Development in Malaysia, held in Kuala Lumpur on 5th April.

The Council of Churches of Malaysia supports several of the points made in his speech which calls for the freedom for all Malaysians to live their lives within the framework of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.

The Council of Churches of Malaysia has always called for the core tenets of our

Constitution, namely, freedom, equality, social justice, and peaceful coexistence, to be made evident to a greater degree in the affairs of our nation.

We call on the government to take heed of the royal advice provided by His Highness, and allow and foster constructive dialogue with all quarters of society, in order to ensure that mutual understanding, respect, goodwill, and social harmony will grow in our nation.



Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri,
General Secretary
Council of Churches of Malaysia
5th April 2007

CCA Celebrates 50 years (1957-2007)

On 9 March 2007, the last day of the two-day General Committee meeting of the Christian Conference of Asia held at Medan, Indonesia, members were united in expressing gratefulness to the Indonesian churches for their generous hospitality and their very able and systematic organizing and hosting of the 50th anniversary events in Parapat, in Pematang Siantar, and in Medan, all in North Sumatra, Indonesia.

The fact that all the churches in Indonesia (including CCA member churches as well as those that are not) had come together to host the activities from 4 to 7 March is a concrete sign of the unity that is already there in Christ Jesus, our common Savior.

The kind support of state officials, including the presence of Muslim brothers and sisters to greet during some parts of the events, was also a concrete sign of the wider unity that we are all called to live out as we get engaged in "building communities of peace for all", the theme of the CCA in the years 2006-2010.

However, the committee members expressed sympathy for the loved ones of the victims of the two calamities that

had happened (an earthquake and a plane crash) during the time of the anniversary celebration. These sad incidents in the life of Indonesian people heightened the concern for environmental sustainability in Asia, with a visible sign of commitment being made not only through discussions at the international symposium and speeches during the other events, but most especially through the tree planting activity at the government-given land in Parapat, which is now the CCA garden.

In a speech to a crowd of around 150,000 people gathered at the Teladan Stadium in Medan on 7 March, Dr. Prawate Khidar, General Secretary of CCA, described the 50th anniversary as not merely a time to celebrate, but also to "thank God for accompanying us right through the past 50 years. We have also come to seek God's forgiveness for our lack of courage to witness and to take a stand for justice and peace amidst the challenging realities and to renew commitment to become ambassadors of Jesus Christ to transform the principalities and powers of this world which kill the innocent, deny food, shelter, education, and security, to the majority of our people and abuse God's creation."

Speeches of the early ecumenical pioneers who conceived the Christian Conference of Asia (then the East Asia Christian Conference) in Parapat in 1957 recalled the challenges that went with the movement for genuine independence from colonization and imperialism among the countries in Asia. The ecumenical movement was born as a concrete sign of the Asian people's determination to uphold their freedom and dignity and to live out their being a witnessing community, called to witness to the reconciling power of Christ.

What will happen next? What will be the direction of the CCA in the coming years?

CCA needs to strengthen links with member churches and councils.

CCA needs to explore relationships beyond the member churches and councils. The plurality in Asia calls for a wider ecumenism, i.e. for unlimited relationships.

CCA must explore the emerging missiological / theological issues of the present time.

Taken from CCA Update 10 March 2007

Amazing Grace

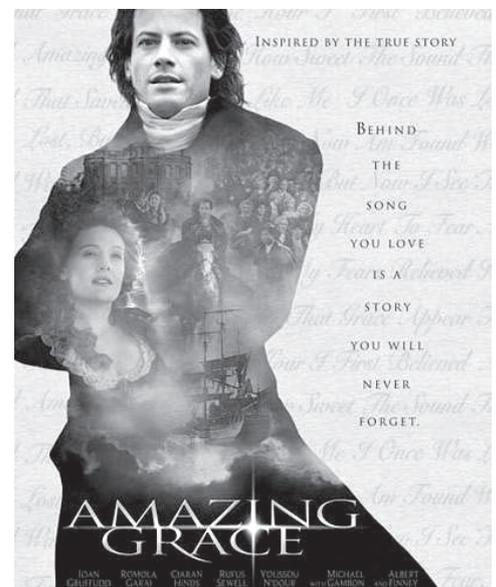
~ A Film on William Wilberforce and the Abolition of Slavery

This film was recently released in conjunction with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in March 1807. It centers on the political dimension of the fight to end slavery, in particular on the 20-year effort by William Wilberforce to get the British Parliament to end the slave trade.

Amazing Grace is the name of the world famous hymn by John Newton who was a slave trader until his dramatic conversion to Christ. He met Wilberforce several times and in the film he is the one who finally convinces Wilberforce the Parliamentarian to seek the abolition of the slave trade.

This film shows the perseverance against opposition and the prospect of failure, the decline in popularity and health, for a goal that is driven by Wilberforce's faith and the moral and spiritual imperatives deriving from it.

According to reviews the film is well-crafted with fine actors to make it a movie worth watching. It reached number six in the UK film charts and took in more than USD16 million at the US Box Office. This is a good film for churches to have in their libraries.



Methodist Prayer Convention 2007

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN CAPITALS
Each person should complete a separate form (forms can be photocopied). When applying as a group please return your registration forms together with collective payment.

Name: Rev / Dr / Mr /Mrs / Ms / Others (Please specify)

Address:

Telephone

Email

Church (Full Name)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE (Please tick one)

- CAC SENGAI TRAC
 SCAC SPAC
 SIAC TAC

Conference fee per person is RM30
(Does not include meals or refreshments).

PAYMENT (Please tick one)

- BANK DRAFT
 (Payable to "The Methodist Church in Malaysia")
 MONEY ORDER
 (Payable to "The Methodist Church in Malaysia")
 CHEQUE NO:
 (Payable to "The Methodist Church in Malaysia".
 Cheques outside of Selangor, please add 0.50 for bank charges.)

DO NOT SEND CASH!

Payment to accompany registration form(s) and mailed to:

**Methodist Prayer Convention,
69 Jalan 5/31, PJ 46000.**

Closing Date for Registration: 15 July 2007

WORKSHOPS

DAY 1 • 31st AUGUST 2007

(Please rank your first 3 choices)

	Workshop	Speaker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deliverance (Chinese)	Rev. Ho Yong Seng
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership & Spirituality (Chinese)	Rev. Morley Lee
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Church Leader's Prayer Life (Chinese)	Rev. Dr Tie King Tai
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intercessory Prayer & Missions (English)	Dr. Patrick Fung
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inner Healing (English)	Rev. & Mrs Vincent Lau
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer & Revival – The Columbian Experience & Case Study (English)	Mark & Alice Goodwin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Starting & Establishing a Church Prayer Network & Movement (English)	Ms Wee Lay Ching
<input type="checkbox"/>	Holy Living (Tamil)	Dr. Sam Kamaleson

Day 2 • 1st SEPTEMBER 2007

(Please rank your first 3 choices)

	Workshop	Speaker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Global Day of Prayer: A Case Study (English / Chinese)	Dr. Dion Forster / Dr. Graham Power
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intercessory Prayer & Missions (Chinese)	Dr. Patrick Fung
<input type="checkbox"/>	Holy Living (Chinese)	To be confirmed
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Church Leader's Prayer Life (English)	Rev. Dr. Tie King Tai
<input type="checkbox"/>	Holy Living (English)	Dr. Sam Kamaleson
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer & Sacraments (English)	Rev. Dr Lorna Khoo
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Church Leader's Prayer Life (Tamil)	Rev. Vinsant Rayar
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual Discipline (Tamil)	Rev. Vincent Jayaraj

In the event the workshop of your choice is full, we reserve the right to assign you any available workshop on a first-come-first-served basis.

CCM 12TH TRIENNIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

23 ~ 26th April 2007
at Pulai Springs Resort, Johor

Theme: United to Build and to be a Blessing

We are thankful to God that the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM), since its establishment in 1947, has given 60 years of faithful ecumenical witness and service in the nation, as the oldest ecumenical institution in the country.

In conjunction with the 12th Triennial General Assembly to be held from 23-26 April 2007, CCM is organizing the fundraising 60th ANNIVERSARY DINNER, as follows,

Date : Monday, 23 April 2007
Time : 7.00pm
Venue : Dewan Kencanaपुरi, Pulai Springs Resort,
20km Jalan Pontian Lama, Johor Bahru.

For more information contact the CCM office:

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THE 1ST ASIA-PACIFIC ADVENTURE MINISTRY CONFERENCE 2007

'The Church, 23rd - 24th June, 2007 YMCA Kuala Lumpur OUTDOORS'



The event is jointly organised by :

■ MAPs (Ministering through Adventure Programmes) Services ■ NSA (Non-Stop-Action) Ministry ■ Asia Pacific Youth for Christ (APYFC)

Venue and fees

The venue will be the conference halls and classrooms at YMCA Kuala Lumpur, which is near KL Sentral, Malaysia's International Land Transportation Hub. The fee is RM100.00/S\$75.00 (before 31st May). Availability is on a first-come-first-serve basis with a maximum capacity of 150 pax.

Fees are inclusive of 1 lunch, 1 dinner and 2 teas, conference facilities and materials/handouts.

**Fees are made payable via cheque/
cash to:**

- Maps Services, Malaysia (RM)
- Singapore Youth For Christ (S\$)

For more information, please contact:

• Malaysia

Secretariat : 31-12-3A, Lakeside Towers, Tingkat Bukit,
Jambul Satu, 11900 Penang, Malaysia.
Contact : Tan Wen Yen **6012-596 1018/6014-244 5308**

• Singapore

Secretariat : 10, Lorong 27A, Geylang #03-01,
Emmanuel House, Singapore 388107
Contact : Yin Pei Yun **65-6742 0525/65-9297 1647**

www.adventureministry.org
Email: instructor@adventureministry.org



• *Migrant Returnees.*



• *Fellowship with Nepalese pastors.*



• *Worship at Wesley Church, Kathmandu.*

MMM - TAC MISSION TRIP TO NEPAL

A group of ten leaders from Malaysian Missionary Movement - TAC went on a mission trip to Nepal from 14–24 February 2007. The team included the President, Rev. P. Tevaraji, senior pastors and leaders.

The main focus of the trip was mission exposure, ministry adoption possibilities and to visit Nepali migrant workers who have returned from Malaysia. Although we started the trip with a 12 hour flight delay and had a “cold welcome” of 2 degrees Celsius in Kathmandu we had a very exciting time thereafter, with very good team spirit.

Some of the highlights of our trip are described here.

The “mountain Tamang tribe.”

This is an unreached people group (UPG) in central Nepal that we visited. After a two hour bus journey the supposed 30 minute walk to their village took 2 ½ hours through mountainous terrain. Though very tired the team was still in good spirit.

We met with families who are completely cut off from urban life and communications. It made us realize how difficult it is to reach some of these groups in Nepal. We were challenged by the missionaries there, Mr and Mrs Deepak Bardewa, by their commitment to the call and love for these unreached peoples.

Visiting Nepali Returnees

Meeting up with some of these migrant Nepalis was a cause of great joy for all of us. About 14 TAC churches are involved in ministry to Nepali migrants in Malaysia. Some shared how they are growing in the Lord and reaching out to their own families and communities. Some are in Bible schools and serving as evangelists and pastors.

We visited a church in Ghorkah which was built by one of these returnees. The church has more than 150 members including children. It was a joy to meet the leaders and members and to visit the homes of some of the Nepali brothers who had worked in Malaysia. We handed over the money raised by TMC KL for their church building fund.

The Challenges in Nepal

We visited several churches and were exposed to various Nepali worship services. We had the opportunity to visit the Wesley Methodist Church which has just been formed.

We also had the opportunity to meet with senior pastors and leaders of mission agencies and ministries, and Bible schools in Nepal.

We learnt a lot from this trip. Besides giving us a taste of beautiful Nepal, hiking over Serankot mountain and shopping (of course), we also realized the great challenge faced by missionaries and mission agencies of reaching these unreached people groups cut off from civilization.

Reaching Nepal for Christ can be made easier if our churches in Malaysia work together amongst the Nepali migrant population to reach them for Christ.

Jeyarajah
MMM - TAC



• *Ministry to the only Christian family in the hills.*



• *New Church with worshippers.*