



Asian Methodists Meet in Johor Bahru

The Asian Methodist Council (AMC) General Assembly

120 delegates from 13 Asian Methodist Churches met for the General Assembly of the Asian Methodist Council (AMC) from 24-27 June in Johor Bahru. This is the second assembly since its formation in June 2002. However, the Executive Committee has met every year except in 2005.

At this General Assembly the Bangladesh Methodist Church was formally accepted as a member of the AMC.

The theme of the Assembly was: "Let the Light Shine: Uniting Asian Methodists for Missions". Two theme talks were given by Bishop Dr Robert Solomon and Bishop Dr Hwa Yung.

Nature and Identity of the Church in Asia

In the first theme talk Bishop Robert Solomon gave statistics to show that the Church was growing in Asia as in other parts of the non-Western world. Although Methodists are not the biggest or fastest growing church yet it has a strong presence in many countries in Asia.

Speaking specifically of Methodist ecclesiology he noted that early Methodism



Colourful presentation from Korean ladies.



Procession of flags at the opening service. Seated front row from the right are Bishop Shin Kyuon-Ha, the outgoing Chairman of AMC, Dr John Barrett, Chairman of the World Methodist Council, and Bishop Hwa Yung.

had its doctrinal roots in Anglicanism but also in tension with its missional societies. And in Wesley himself we see both a churchman who held a high view of the Church but also showed an adaptive genius to the context in which he worked. In describing the nature of the Church Bishop Solomon added that "mission is one of the primary marks of the church."

Bishop Solomon saw the biblical descriptions of the church as the Bride and Body of Christ as the most appropriate for the Asian Church. As the Bride she is to show the "beauty of holiness", the character of faithfulness and loyalty, and to wait in anticipation for the Lord's return. As the Body of Christ, the church is to manifest unity, diversity and community to the world. These are founded on the Trinitarian God and

there is no tension or division between the persons of the Triune God.

And finally, Bishop Solomon asked what is missing in the Body? He gave three images in answer. (1) Blood that signifies the willingness to die for the Lord and the faith. (2) Head that is the acknowledgment of Christ as the Lord of the church and (3) the Spirit without whom there cannot be unity and the power to proclaim the gospel.

The Mission of the Asian Methodist Church in the 21st Century

Bishop Hwa Yung, in the second theme talk drew on John Wesley's clearly stated goal for Methodism: "To reform the nation and ... the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

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Tamil Settlement Centennial Celebration 1908 Centennial 2008



Greetings from TAC President



Bright lights of celebration



The shofar team



Choir leading the worship

The Tamil Methodist Church, Tamil Settlement celebrates its 100th Anniversary this year as a church in Buntong, Ipoh. To commemorate this milestone event, the leaders of the church decided to have a year long celebration. The theme for this Centennial Celebration is “Century of Grace”.

Tamil Settlement launched its centennial celebrations on 1st January 2008 – a New Year Service that would be remembered by many who attended the service. It began with the Watch Night Service and carried over to the New Year.

An original anniversary theme song was set to music by Ms Nishabel Anbalakan with lyrics by Mrs Helen Simson. A celebration logo was designed by Miss Selina Wilson.

The Centennial Thanksgiving service was celebrated on 31 May 2008 at 5.00 p.m. It was truly a day of glory and praise that brought more than 1,600 members and friends of the church together. The main guests of this service were our Bishop Dr. Hwa Yung, TAC

President, Rev. P.Tevaraji, TAC Perak District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. A.E. Joseph, TAC Lay Leader, Mr. Steven Solomon, State Assembly Speaker and Assemblyman of Tronoh, Y.B. Encik Sivakumar and Assemblyman of Buntong, Y.B. Encik Sivasubramaniam.

The service started with the wail of the shofars. It was a call for self-reflection and repentance. The surround-sound of shofar blasts was simply awesome and instantly filled the atmosphere that prepared everyone for worship. A special choir was formed for this Thanksgiving Service under the leadership of Mr. Anbalakan.

The church in commemoration of its Centennial Celebration established a benevolence ministry known as the Centennial Benevolent Fund. The purpose of the fund is to provide assistance for needy members in the event of financial crisis, hardship or emergency situation.

Rev. P.Tevaraji, the President of the Tamil Annual Conference extended his

greetings and in his speech reminisced the time when he was a young boy in this church.

It was an honor to have our Bishop preaching God’s word on that special day. The message text was taken from Joshua 24:1-18 and the message title was “Remembering Our Promise”. In his message, he challenged the church on three important things, i.e. to focus on evangelism and church planting, to reach out to the poor and needy and to avail our children for full time ministry.

After the service, all were treated to a sumptuous dinner. It was a wonderful and joyful time of fellowship. Fireworks display was the last event of the day. The display was beautiful and spectacular to watch and everyone enjoyed it. It was a fun way to end the momentous occasion.

*Vilson Daniel
Centennial Committee Chairman
T.M.C. Tamil Settlement, Ipoh.*

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What is Happening in our Annual Conferences?

August

8-10	Fri-Sun	9th Session GC Methodist Women
8-10	Fri-Sun	TAC 33rd Session Methodist Women
9	Sat	SCAC Celebration of 40 Years as Autonomous Methodist Church
15-21	Mon-Thu	SCAC Training on Christian Listening
18-21	Mon-Thu	SCAC Emmaus Walk (in English for men)
20-23	Wed-Sat	CAC Southern Bell 80th Anniversary and Literature Camp
25-31	Mon-Sat	TAC MW Week of Prayer and Self-Denial
29 Aug – 1 Sept		TAC MYAF Camp
30 Aug – 1 Sept		SPAC MW 3rd Annual Meeting
31 Aug – 2 Sept		CAC Youth Camp

September

1-4	Mon-Thu	SCAC Emmaus Walk (in Chinese for men)
8-11	Mon-Thu	SCAC Emmaus Walk (in English for women)
13	Sat	TAC Malaysian Missionary Movement Celebration
15-20	Mon-Sat	9th General Conference Session
25	Thu	TRAC Board of Ministry Meeting
26-28	Fri-Sun	TRAC Joint Boards / Executive Board Meeting

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The Ten Commandments: Precepts for God's People (2)

Worshipping The Invisible God

Rev. Victor Vethamani

While there may be a general aversion to rules and regulations, it should be noted that as human beings we would have a sense of security and confidence when we know where our limits are. This is not only true for little children but more so for adults. God in giving His Commandments to His people made His expectations and demands clear. As the initiator of the Covenant relationship with the Israelites, it was God's prerogative. There was no place for negotiation. Furthermore, He knew what was best for His people. In this series of the Ten Commandments, the Second Commandment stretches to four verses, although most of the time only the abridged form of this commandment is noted. But it is imperative that we see the whole Commandment to be able to understand it fully.

THE COMMANDMENT

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments

Exodus 20: 4 – 6; Deuteronomy 5: 8 – 10

THE CONTEXT

Israel was birthed in Egypt, where idolatry abounded and she was to settle in Canaan where it was equally so. God did not want His people to be influenced by the idols that they were so used to seeing and will continue to see. He did not want them to liken Him to be in a visible form like the gods of the nations. That they were already influenced is obvious when they, led by Aaron were quick to make for themselves an idol in the form of a golden calf to be a representation of the 'gods' who led them out of Egypt (Exodus 32:4). This

they did during Moses' short absence (less than forty days) from their midst. The Israelites were severely punished for their act. They could not restrain themselves, for their hearts and minds were not captured by the love and truth of God. It was at such a time in their history that this Commandment was given to them by God.

WHAT IT IS NOT

God does not condemn art or sculpture but rather the setting up of any picture or image or representation of Him 'to bow down to it' or to worship it. There are instances when God called for the construction of images, for example the bronze snake (Numbers 21: 8). Solomon had God's blessings to build a Temple, where he erected golden forms of two cherubim inside the Holy of Holies. Questions arise about the picture of Jesus, the Cross, etc. These aids or helps to focus on God should not be looked upon in any way as representing God and we should not venerate them or bow in worship.

FOUR PARTS TO THIS COMMANDMENT

1. The Prohibition

The Commandment prohibits the making of 'an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below' and ascribing worship to it. People create visuals to help enhance worship, but the representation of God in any form is not acceptable or permitted by God. God is the Creator and to liken Him in the form of His creation reduces and robs Him of His glory. His awesome majesty and great glory are beyond description. God is Spirit and cannot be seen in a form.

2. The Point

God goes on to explain the reason for this prohibition, that He is a jealous God. It may seem offensive to perceive God as being jealous, but God will not put

up with rivalry (sharing of worship) or unfaithfulness (shifting of allegiance). God is possessive of His people with whom He has come into a covenant relationship. Their devotion or dependence should not shift to an idol, which has no life. While it may be argued that the idol is not the object of worship but rather the means, more often than not it turns out to be the object and God does not tolerate. The jealousy of God also has to do with the fact that He is protective of His own; if His people were drawn to an idol, they would then go astray from Him and in doing so, move away from His shelter.

Idolatrous worship involves one or more of the following:

- a. Prostrating before an idol in adoration or reverential fear*
- b. Offering sacrifices or any gifts to idols*
- c. Eating and/or drinking before idols*

3. The Punishment

Two facts need to be noted: First, judgement is not arbitrarily meted out but it is for those who hate the LORD. 'Hate' would imply rejecting the LORD with whom they had come into a Covenant relationship. Punishment is extended only to the guilty. Secondly, punishment is till the third and fourth generation. Some have seen four generations to be one that normally encompasses the lifespan of a human being. The punishment will be meted out over that period alone. Also, when one person in a family goes the wrong way, especially if it is the head of the family, the influence that he has on his family often causes the others to follow the evil path; it may extend to even three or four generations. The kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel are a good example of this. Omri became king and did evil in the eyes of God (I Kings 16:

25). After him, his son Ahab became king and did more evil than his father (I Kings 16:30). Then Ahaziah son of Ahab became the king and followed the evil path of his forefathers (I Kings 22: 51, 52).

Idolatry causes us to shift our focus away from God, and that has very serious consequences. The patience of God and His mercy await and when they are not reciprocated, judgement is inevitable. That the one who sins is the one liable for punishment is not a later development; we see it already in Deuteronomy 24:16. "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin." The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel later mention the same point (Jeremiah 31:29 – 31; Ezekiel 18:3, 4).

We need to be cautious in what we do, for when we sin, it is not just the individual who suffers but the whole family is affected. Similarly when we do right, the family benefits too. God is just and His gracious hand seeks to bless but as a Holy God His wrath upon sin is also real and we need to take heed.

4. The Promise

Unlike the punishment, the promise that comes to those who love and obey God is incomparable; it is to a thousand generations (Exodus 20:6). These are the people who have implicit trust in God and do not waver in their allegiance to Him. The temptation to seek idols usually comes in times of stress and struggles. At such times, we need to continue to place our hope in the Living God whom we cannot see and not seek for some visible form of our God for solace.

Abraham trusted God and so did his son Isaac, grandson Jacob and many more in that family line. It is imperative that we, the 'children of Abraham' by faith, keep ourselves focused on the Living God and thus receive this immeasurable blessing of God. If we are exemplary and

uncompromising in our generation, then we will have an influence on the next and they on the next and so on.

It may seem offensive to perceive God as being jealous, but God will not put up with rivalry (sharing of worship) or unfaithfulness (shifting of allegiance). God is possessive of His people with whom He has come into a covenant relationship. Their devotion or dependence should not shift to an idol, which has no life.

HISTORICAL CASES

In the Book of Daniel

We have the classic example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refusing to bow down and worship the image of gold set up by king Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3). The authority that earthly kings have cannot supersede the laws and commandments of God. The response that these three gave comes as a challenge to us: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up (Daniel 3:16 – 18). God protected the three from death and displayed His power to the amazement of the king. It made the king acknowledge who was the true God.

Early Christians and Emperor Worship

Though God is able to deliver His children from physical harm when they face the consequences of obeying Him, there are times when He does not. We read of many martyrs during the Early Church period; they refused to bow to the Roman

emperors' images or declare that 'Caesar is Lord'. Such people have laid down their lives to be obedient to this Commandment of God. There is great power in their testimony among the people and great is their reward in heaven.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The demand of the Second Commandment has not in any way diminished in our time; in fact it comes forth in greater force. We live in the computer age, where 'seeing' is emphasized more than 'hearing'. We feel secure with what is seen (sight) and thus seek to concretize God. But we are commanded to respond in 'faith' not by sight. God has not left us totally without visuals either, for we have the beauty of His creation and the wonder of His Word. They should not become the objects of our worship, but as we see these, we should be moved to worship the Creator and the Author. The Apostle John gives us an instruction and a caution to show the seriousness of this Commandment: I John 5:21, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols."

Revelation 22:15, "Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

We should experience the reality of God's presence and power in our daily lives. This experience should come out of a close relationship with God. We need no visible form of God to keep faith. If we attempt to express this awesome God in any visible form, then we do injustice to Him and become guilty of transgressing the Second Commandment. The call is to go beyond human tendency and inclination and be obedient in faith to divine injunction.

*Rev. Victor J. Vethamani
Retired Methodist Minister
Tamil Annual Conference*

Partnership in Ministry Between the Conferences

Serundong Laut is a very small village deep in the interior of the tropical forest of Sabah, only accessible by water transport from Tawau. The Sabah Provisional Annual Conference (SPAC) has planted a secondary school there, as well as a preaching point. This center serves the indigenous people like the Muruts, Tedongs and the Kenyahs.

It began when Pastor Jaraning was called to return to his kampong after serving in the BM ministry in Keningau. Encouraged by Dr Romi, his lecturer and mentor at Sabah Theological Seminary (STS) where he studied, he returned to Serundong Laut. For five years he prayed and cried for the Lord's help.

He approached SPAC and with much prayer and encouragement from the BM pastor Rev Han Ai Fah, Dr Romi, the President of SPAC, Rev Ling Heu Uh and the pastor of Holy Grace Methodist Church Tawau, Rev Mo Mee Kiu, a working committee from Holy Grace was set up to look into the birth of this preaching point.

In 2005 with God's blessings work began on a piece of land from the Murut Christians Association and a building was completed with the first intake of students in August 2005. In January 2006 13 more students were added. With the increase of students one full time teacher and two assistants were engaged to help run the school.



Pastor Jaraning presenting a gift to Francis Choo.



The crowd learning a cultural dance.



Dedication of the Preaching Point and Methodist Secondary School.

This outreach project was undertaken by the Board of BM Ministry and Holy Grace Methodist Church. In June 2007 the Missions Committee of Trinity Methodist Church Petaling Jaya (TMCPJ) partnered with SPAC in this endeavour.

Mr Francis Choo, Chairman of the committee relates how he felt convicted to be involved with the indigenous peoples. He and others visited Sabah on exploratory trips and were informed of this work in Serundong Laut. Thus began this partnership with the Sabah Conference.

In 2007 two mission trips from TMC went to Serundong Laut to work in areas of personal health, education, agriculture and the improvement of their water supply.

On 17 January 2008 the building was officially consecrated by Bishop Dr Hwa Yung, together with President Ling of SPAC, Rev Han Ai Fah, the chairman of the Board of BM Ministry, Rev Mo, Pastor Marcus and Pastor Tironi, both with the BM Ministry of SPAC. Three members of TMC PJ were also honoured to share in this joyous occasion.

The building is now officially known as SERUNDONG LAUT METHODIST PREACHING CENTRE AND METHODIST SECONDARY SCHOOL. Present student enrolment is Form 1 - 13 students, Form 2 - 6 students, Form 3 - 7 students and Form 5- 4 students .

*Pauline Choo
TMC Petaling Jaya*

Malam Muhibbah at TMC Petaling Jaya

On 2 August 2008, the Missions Committee of TMCPJ hosted an evening to inform the church of its indigenous ministries. Some members from Serundong Laut, together with Pastor Jaraning and Rev Han Ai Fah, were invited to come over.

Speaking fluently in BM, Rev Han shared briefly how she was called to the BM ministry. After preparing to serve as a missionary in Thailand God told her to go back to Sabah for another work. Although reluctant she obeyed and since then has found the joy of serving the indigenous peoples. She brought samples of the art and handicraft of the Sabah peoples. And a group from Serundong Laut presented a dance from their culture.

Besides the group from Serundong Laut, Rev Bah Uda Aman, Superintendent of the Sengoi Mission Conference gave a briefing of their work in the five centers that have been established. Also present was a group from the Protestant Church of Sabah that meets in Shah Alam. Francis Choo and the Missions Committee had helped them with equipment and repairs of their rented premises they used for their church ministry.

The evening ended with the melodious music and singing of indigenous peoples. Many from the crowd came out to learn the accompanying dance.

Asian Methodist Council 2nd General Assembly STATEMENT

We the delegates to the 2nd General Assembly of the Asian Methodist Council, representing 13 Asian Methodist Churches meeting in Johor Bahru, Malaysia from 24th-27th June 2008, have looked at various crucial issues that affect the ministry and mission of our churches and our world.

We praise God for blessing our churches and for challenging us to live up to our calling as Asian Methodist Churches in our needy world. We recognize that our identity and vocation are deeply rooted in our Triune God and that they shape the way we live and carry out our mission faithfully and effectively within our Asian cultures and contexts.

In view of our various discussions and prayers, we ask that the AMC Executive Committee look into the following and develop programmes to enhance our

mission in these areas:

- (1) That we seek effective ways to co-operate in mission through joint projects, endeavours and partnership.
- (2) That we organize programmes for young Methodists to bring them together, to train and inspire them.
- (3) That we look into ways to minister to migrant workers in our various countries and to address their many needs through our connectional network and partnerships.

We ask our churches to also work together with the AMC Executive Committee in seeking to address these issues.

We have also noted with concern the extensive loss of lives and damage to properties, and the dire needs of those tragically affected by natural calamities in our region. Most recently, we pray for the victims of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar

and the earthquake in Sichuan, China. We commit ourselves to respond to such crises in the future.

We are also concerned about global problems faced by the peoples of the world such as poverty, violence, conflicts, and other social ills, as well as serious problems such as global warming and environmental damage. We call upon our churches to pray and take the necessary action to seek healing, reconciliation, and other solutions to these problems.

Together as Methodists in Asia, we seek to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, and live up to our biblical and Wesleyan ideals of personal and social holiness, and in so doing bring glory to God and advance the mission of God.

27th June 2008.

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This meant in practice, for Wesley, the preaching of the gospel wherever and to those who need it and want it most. But 'saving souls' was more than deliverance from hell and going to heaven. Rather it meant "the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy and truth." It involved sanctification that leads to personal and social transformation.

Bishop Hwa Yung noted that personal holiness was "one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the early Methodists." However, he emphasized that Wesley was concerned not merely for

personal holiness but for a social holiness that expressed love for the neighbour as ourselves. Thus, Wesley pioneered various social reforms that "did much to transform Britain and America, especially in the 19th century."

What is to be the mission of the Church today? Bishop Hwa Yung highlighted two main thrust. One is evangelism and church planting both in our own countries and overseas missions. The other is social transformation and nation-building, the church being truly salt of the earth and light of the world. However, all these efforts are to be rooted in personal holiness and genuine Christian character without which there can be no effective mission.

New Executive Committee

A new Executive Committee was elected to serve for the next three years. Every member church is represented by the Bishop or its equivalent and one layperson. At its first meeting the Committee elected the following office-bearers: Chairman - Bishop Hwa Yung (Malaysia); Vice-Chairman - Bishop T.S. Sagar (India); Vice-Chairman, Lay - Mdm. Lim Hye Sook (Korea); Secretary - Bishop Nathanael Lazaro (Philippines); Assistant Secretary - Mr Kim Seah Teck Kim (Singapore);



The office-bearers of the new Exco. Front row from left: Bishop Enoch Kuey, Rev Dr Li Ping-Kwong (representing Rev Prof Lo Lung-Kwong), Bishop T.S. Sagar, Bishop Dr Hwa Yung, Mdm. Lim Hye Sook, Bishop Nathanael Lazaro, Mr Kim Seah Kim Teck.

Treasurer - Rev Prof Lo Lung-Kwong (Hong Kong); Assistant Treasurer - Bishop Enoch Kuey (Taiwan).

At the end of the General Assembly a statement was endorsed calling for the churches to work together to address the issues that affect the ministry and mission of Methodist churches in Asia, in particular three that were highlighted for special focus in the next three years. (See the accompanying AMC Statement.)

Christopher Cheah



General Assembly in session.



Words of Life: Teaching SPM Bible Knowledge

Many Christians today are still not aware that the books of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles can be studied as a SPM subject. As Ms Moey, currently CEO of Methodist College and BK teacher for 35 years, explained at a recent training seminar for BK teachers held at the DUMC Dream Centre in Petaling Jaya, the first BK paper in this country was in 1949. Back then, the SPM paper came from Cambridge and was marked in England. BK was a subject taught in the mission schools during school hours. It was offered at both SRP and SPM levels.

After the new KBSM syllabus was introduced in 1993, BK was dropped from the PMR exam, but the SPM BK paper is still around, “Hakcipta Kerajaan Malaysia” (“copyrighted to the Malaysian Government”). It has been set locally by a panel of Christian teachers since 1988. Its existence was threatened in 1994, when along with French, Punjabi, Music and other elective subjects, it was dropped from the SPM and considered a Sijil Am Pelajaran (SAP) subject instead. Thanks to the persistent efforts of a Member of Parliament, that group of subjects was reinstated to the SPM in 1995. The exam remains in English.

But BK is not just another examination subject. “Are we ready to raise up another generation of leaders?” says Ms Moey, citing the thousands of BK students who grew up to become the church and political leaders of today. BK teachers are passionate not just for their students to score A’s, but for them to know their faith and be firmly grounded in godly values, especially for those who come from Christian homes.

Mr Wrutheran Sinnudurai, a retired teacher who began by teaching his own son BK in Kuala Terengganu agrees. “Very early in the teaching of BK, I was surprised at how shallow the students were in their Bible knowledge despite coming from

Christian homes. Sample question: What do you know of Moses? Answer: Is that the guy who built the big ship?”

“So one of the things I try to do is help the students understand some of the basic Christian doctrines from Luke and Acts. After two years, I get the satisfaction of seeing them understand the basics of their faith, before they leave home to continue their studies. What they learn in BK helps them to be grounded in their faith so that they are in a better position to withstand adverse peer group pressure and other negative influences. I have seen that in most of the kids who did BK, including my own. Most of them got involved in a local church or a CF group in their place of study, where they continue to be nurtured in their faith. For me, that is more rewarding than the grades they get. After a year or two, nobody really cares what grade they got for BK in SPM. But what they learnt of their faith, I am confident will take them a long way.”

In fact, the teachers themselves, volunteers from different walks of life, have found themselves benefiting. “Basically its one way of sharing the Good News with students and this always brings a certain joy to the teacher. I feel it can be a very spiritual journey and keeps one in touch with the Word,” comments Brother Albinus, a Catholic priest from Kuching, Sarawak.

While the government has given assurances that “as long as you have one candidate, we will still offer BK”, Ms Moey challenged the Christian community to “wake up and reclaim our privilege and heritage... if we lose it, it will be our own fault.” With our youth under siege from so many influences today, it is vital that they have the Bible as an anchor and a moral compass for life.

“Saturate your hearts and minds,” says Ms Moey. “My vision is that long in the

future, long after they have left school, every decision my students make will be based on the knowledge of God’s word.”

Former students have taken up the challenge to teach BK. Tee Shern Ren, who took the SPM in 2005, is currently pursuing further studies in Australia. During his holidays at home, he teaches BK at his church. At the other end of the spectrum, the formidable Ms Yeo, almost 70 years old and hampered by polio, teaches almost 50 students in her living room every week.

Organisations such as the Malayan Christian Schools Council (MCSC) and the Teachers’ Christian Fellowship (TCF) have produced essential resources for studying and teaching, such as comprehensive study guides, sample exam questions, a training VCD. There are now even sample videos of BK classes online.

When Ms Moey started her class years ago, like all the other BK teachers who have followed her since, she did not charge tuition fees. “My fees will be paid in heaven,” she told her students. “My only request is that you study hard.” Why did she start? “These boys are so clever, knowing all the pop songs and everything on the Internet,” she said to herself. “I want them to be as clever in God’s Word.”

For more information about SPM Bible Knowledge or if you are interested to teach a class contact either the MCSC (03-79565310) or TCF (03-56375623 and www.tcfmy.org). See BK class videos online at <http://tuitionlah.wordpress.com/>

Karnival Pembangunan Belia 3K TAC Campus Ministry

Once again, the Higher Education Team of Campus Ministry TAC organized the 2nd Karnival Pembangunan Belia 3K (Kepimpinan, Kemahiran & Keusahawanan) from 4-6 June 2008 at the Coral Bay Resort, Pulau Pangkor.

The 3-day programme was fully sponsored by the Ministry of Youth & Sports Malaysia under the Ninth Malaysian Plan. About 78 young people between the ages of 16 to 20 participated in this Karnival, which has become an annual event by the Higher Education Team.

Participants were mainly from Perak, most from Ipoh, while a few came from Taiping, Sungai Siput, Teluk Intan, Kampar and Tanjung Malim.

The programmes conducted varied from spirituality to opportunities for higher education, value-based leadership characteristics to current issues especially among Indian youths.

The forum on Indian youth issues was amongst the highlights of the Karnival. The young people gave their ideas freely and were encouraged to speak out.

While many of them agreed that it was their friends who had a great influence on what they did, many felt that these friends were indeed the MOST loyal and trustworthy. This is because many of them have a very formal relationship with their parents or none at all in their homes.



Facilitators giving input.

They voiced out their difficulties in communicating to their parents and thus sought other avenues for encouragement and support.

Participants were asked on their perceptions of their neighbourhood “watchdog” or Rukun Tetangga, the police, school authorities (teachers, disciplinary master and Principal) and youth organizations’ role in reaching out to them. Sadly, many said the various agencies had a very minimal impact on them and their neighbourhood, while school authorities could do very little as long as they were not in the school compound. It was surprising to discover that hardly any youth organization or

youth wing association had tried to reach out to them.

Many of the issues faced by these young people may seem petty to us and very often go unnoticed. But this is untrue as these issues are struggles which develop into bigger problems when not dealt with carefully and properly, affecting not only the person but the family unit, society and the nation at large.

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.” - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mr. Daniel Alexander (jesumiel@gmail.com)
Coordinator of Higher Education Project.



Prayer for the youths.



Time for fun.



Interactive discussions.

Training Faithful Women for Christ

SCAC Pastors' Wives' Retreat

“We have weak churches because we have weak families. We have weak families because we have weak fathers and mothers. We have weak fathers and mothers because no one has personally explained to each one his or her specific leadership responsibilities. The training of faithful women is fundamental for every church yet it is also easily forgotten or is being ignored,” said Ruth Koh, keynote speaker of the Pastors’ Wives’ Retreat, in her introduction.

This annual event was held from 26-29 May 2008. A group of 40 pastors’ wives from Sarawak and Sabah attended.

Mrs. Koh explained in detail the 10 benefits of training faithful women.

1. It will raise up godly examples for other women to follow. The Bible has many examples of godly women. Examples speak louder than words. A godly person should be consistent both inwardly and outwardly.
2. It will maintain doctrinal purity in the church. She spent much time explaining the roles of older and younger women mentioned in Titus 2:3-5 and suggested many practical applications.
3. It will reduce the danger of pastors and women becoming emotionally involved and beguiled.

4. It will provide a fulfilling ministry for qualified widows. “Then they (older women) can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” (Titus 2:4-5)
5. It will motivate men to become the leaders God intended them to be. Mrs. Koh used her personal example to encourage all the participants to show respect and honour to their husbands.
6. It will motivate godliness in young women by having them look to the church and not to the world for future security.
7. It will strengthen marriages.
8. It will restore God-given functions to the home.
9. It will re-establish the desire of women to have children and train them up in the ways of the Lord. She suggested establishing “A Wall of Thorns” to pray for the children everyday. “A Wall of Thorns” consists of 3 points: bind the power of Satan over the child’s life, through the blood of Jesus Christ, and claim the promises of protection from God.
10. It will help increase the finance of the family and the church.



Mrs Ruth Koh



Celebrating everybody’s birthday.

“Pastors’ wives should be the examples for other women to follow in the church especially in the area of faithfulness,” remarked Mrs. Koh, a pastor’s wife herself in Singapore.

On the third day, she spoke on controlling the tongue for ladies. “A godly woman should watch her tongue. Whatever comes out from her mouth could be a mark of her inner life.” Towards the end of that session, all the participants were invited to stand up to make a covenant in front of God not to be slanderers.

This retreat brought much laughter and a closer bond between the pastors’ wives. One participant who attended this retreat for the first time was truly delighted to find that the retreat could be so fun-filled as well as so inspiring. Still another was deeply convicted of her role as a wife and a mother in the eyes of God. She shared, “I do not need to seek fulfillment from another job.”

Winnie
Connection
 30 June 2008



Blowing bubbles. Which group has the longest line?

SCAC Raises Fund for Relief Work in Myanmar and China

In response to the appeal to raise funds for the cyclone victims in Myanmar and earthquake victims in China, the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference (SCAC) called upon the churches to take an additional offering during the worship services on 25 May. Up to 30 May, SCAC has collected a total of RM 578,000.

The fund is divided thus: RM 200,000 for the victims in Myanmar and RM 378,000 for the victims in Sichuan, China.

The fund will be distributed through the World Federation of Chinese Methodist Churches and the General Conference of the Methodist Church in Malaysia in assisting relief work such as distributing food items, installing sanitary equipment, supplying tents and shelters, rebuilding the victims' lives and the community.

President Su Chii Ann of SCAC said, "I feel grateful for the quick and overwhelming response from the pastors and the churches. This fund raising shows that we care for the world and the people. The worth of the money is in the way we use it in caring and serving others. You all have proved to be good stewards of money. Relief work is a long term ministry. Our Church can continue to care, pray and give."

From *Connection*
30 June 2008



Mr Hii Ching Chiong, Lay Leader of SCAC, passing the fund to Rev. Dr. Su Chii Ann, Chairman of the World Federation of Chinese Methodist Churches.



Mr Ling Liang Hui, Director of the Board of Social Concern, passing the fund to Mr John Ting, Treasurer of the General Conference of the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

Dedication of Serundong Laut Preaching Point and Methodist Secondary School in Pictures



Students presenting a song item.



Rev Ling planting a seedling at the school.



Bishop Hwa Yung with Rev Ling Heu Uh, President of SPAC, next to him.



Celebrations continue at night.



“They Call Him A Hero, But We Only Want Our Son Back”

Celebration of the life of Kerk Zi On

1982 - 2007



Mr & Mrs Kerk Choon Keng shared their thoughts over the past six months.

Kerk Zi On

Behind these words was the longing of a father and mother for their lost son. They expressed so poignantly the grief felt at the service held in memory of their son who was swept away by strong currents after he had rescued a young woman from the treacherous waves.

This “Celebration of Life” tribute service was held on Sunday 22 June 2008 at Teluk Intan Wesley Methodist Church. On 5 December 2007 Kerk Zi On, six weeks short of his 26th birthday, together with some friends went to Moreton Island, off Brisbane, Australia for an outing. While swimming at one of the lovely beaches they were overwhelmed by four meter high waves without any warning. Despite that everyone managed to get back to the safety of some rocks. But Zi On saw two other swimmers in difficulty. He plunged back into the sea to help them. One of them managed to get back and as he guided the second woman onto the rocks he was swept away by the strong currents. His body was never found.

Over 600 people gathered that afternoon to remember the life of this young man. Zi On grew up in Teluk Intan and was a member of the Boys’ Brigade, attaining the rank of Sergeant and Band Major. He graduated from the Australian National University. His parents shared how he got his name from Psalm. 50:2, “Out of Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.” Indeed, as Rev. Ong Hwai Teik, President of Trinity Annual Conference shared in his message, the instinctive response to go back into the dangerous waters was an action that came from the inner core of the person. No doubt, as Mr Kerk Choon Keng said in one of his letters to friends, this instinct was endowed by God through the cultivation he received in the Boys’ Brigade and the church.

Rev. Ong presented a tribute from TRAC in recognition of Zi On’s act of bravery. Perhaps a prayer written in his journal can give us a glimpse of the inner core of this young man.

Lord,
Make me a man of substance
Make me a man of courage
Make me a man of dependability
Make me a man of persistence
Make me a man of drive
Make me a man of compassion and empathy
Make me a man of true friendship.



Some of the pastors present.

The many tributes shared by relatives, friends and church members, in letters, poems and even songs are a witness to the way Zi On strived to be the man he prayed to be.

Christopher Cheah

If life is like a race, then it is important that we make sure we are in the right race. This book uses the metaphor of a race to explore the most important things in life that are often neglected in the rush, breathlessness and distractions of modern living. Using stories and insights, it digs into the best wisdom from the past and present to point the reader to the best life. Here is biblical wisdom for those who are confused, exhausted or dissatisfied with the way life is going, and those who are looking for a better way to live.

"This book is a succinct and very readable reminder to Christians who have been sidetracked from the race to which they are called."

Mr S Dhanabalan
Chairman, Temasek Holdings

"This is a book of theological depth and practical wisdom – ideal for the journey of life."

Dr David Wilkinson
Principal, St John's College,
Durham University

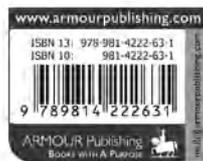


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bishop Robert M Solomon is the Bishop of The Methodist Church in Singapore. He had served previously as a medical doctor in government service, pastor of two churches, and principal of Trinity Theological College. He holds a PhD in pastoral theology from the University of Edinburgh. Having written several books and contributed articles to books, theological dictionaries, and journals, he is also an international advisor to the *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* and sits on the editorial board of *Conversations*, a journal on spiritual formation. He has an active speaking and teaching ministry in many countries. He is featured in *100 Inspiring Rafflesians, 1823-2003*.



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Finding the
Real Journey in Life

>> from page 16 – *Asian Methodist Bishops*

There are now 758 Korean Methodist missionaries in 73 countries in the world. This number will rise to 1,000, including ministers of the Korean Methodist churches serving abroad.

The KMC is also providing assistance to a seminary in communist North Korea.

- Touching on the challenges faced by The Methodist Church in Malaysia (MCM), Bishop Hwa Yung said in his report that the MCM is developing a comprehensive vision for the life of the church; nurturing a prayer movement; revamping its work in education through schools and colleges; and strategising its programmes for social outreach and nation-building.

Elaborating, he said the church would focus on evangelism and church-planting, discipleship, church and society and missions.

- Ministry to migrant workers, both land and sea-based, remains as one of the core programmes of The United Methodist Church in the Philippines.

Pastors are being sent to minister to Filipino migrant workers and other nationalities all over the world. "We have Filipino pastors in South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, England, Dubai, Italy, Canada, the United States and other parts of the globe."

The church also has a ministry to indigenous communities and a ministry to street children.

- Bishop Dr Robert Solomon highlighted in his report that The Methodist Church in Singapore (MCS) supports the need for religious harmony.

"The escape of Mas Selamat Kastari, leader of the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, from detention in Singapore, as well as the release of the film 'Fitna the Movie' by the Dutch politician Geert Wilders which denigrates Islam, presented a test in our inter-racial and inter-religious harmony.

"Through the Inter-Racial Confidence Circles and the Community Engagement Programmes, we continue to have dialogue and engagement with people of other faiths to build confidence, friendship and trust with each other."

On the work of the MCS, he reported on the following areas of ministry: Educational mission, social service hubs, social concerns, missions work and the Women's Society of Christian Service.

The MCS runs 13 primary and secondary schools, a junior college, a school of music and an international school in Jakarta in partnership with Sekolah Tiara Bangsa. There are more than 22,800 students enrolled in the academic schools, half of whom are Christians.

On social concerns, he reported that the MCS has been working on relief efforts in the aftermath of recent natural disasters in Myanmar and Sichuan, China.

Through the Methodist Missions Society, the MCS has planted 21 churches and 15 preaching points in Cambodia, China, Nepal, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

Peter Teo is the editor of Methodist Message of the Methodist Church in Singapore. This report appeared in the August 2008 issue of the Methodist Message.



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CCA Assembly 2010 Calling Asian Artists

The Christian Conference of Asia will hold its 13th General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur from 15-22 April 2010. CCA is the oldest ecumenical organization in Asia and draws its membership from nearly 100 churches and fifteen national councils from nineteen countries.

Theme of the Assembly: Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal. God's call to people to be a prophetic voice, a reconciling and healing community is a tremendous challenge and a call to costly discipleship.

Invitation to Asian Artists:

- (a) To produce a Logo for the CCA Assembly
- (b) To produce a painting to use it as the CCA official poster.

"The winner of each category will be awarded a cash gift of US\$300.00"

Closing date of the competition will be **October 25, 2008**
For further information, and all entries with the name, address and contact number,

Or e-mail should be sent to the following address:
General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia
C/o Payap University
Muang, Chiang Mai, Thailand
E-mail: ccagensec@cca.org.hk

For further details go to the CCM website at www.ccmalaysia.org



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Annual Gathering of Fellowship of Asian Methodist Bishops

Asian Methodist Bishops swap updates on new church work

By PETER TEO

In the midst of rapid changes and challenges in the region, Asian Methodist Bishops met in Singapore recently to share common goals and update one another on new developments in church work in their respective countries.

The Annual Gathering of the Fellowship of Asian Methodist Bishops (FAMB) at the YWCA Fort Canning Lodge on June 22 and 23, 2008 received situation reports from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and host Singapore.

Immediately after the meeting ended, the delegates proceeded to Johor Bahru to attend the Second General Assembly of the Asian Methodist Council from June 24 to 27.

Here are snapshots of the situation reports:

■ In the past few years, poverty alleviation has become one of the major directions of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong because of the growing disparity between the rich and the poor.

Presenting his report, the Rev Dr Li Ping-Kwong, a past president of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong, said: "We are happy to see increasing cooperation among our local churches, schools and social service agencies serving the needy and new arrivals in Hong Kong.

"We have continued to work ecumenically to voice out Christian views on social issues and to launch campaigns and projects to alleviate the plights of the underprivileged, including the setting up of food banks."

The Rev Dr Li, who was attending the FAMB meeting on behalf of the Rev Professor Lo Lung-Kwong, President of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong, said they would continue to support



Asian Methodist Bishops at their Annual Gathering at the YWCA Fort Canning Lodge: A time of sharing and bonding. – *Methodist Message* picture by DANIEL LIE.

financially the Chinese ministries of The Methodist Church in Britain as they had done in the past 15 years.

As for mainland China, they continue to support churches and seminaries through the China Christian Council and the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

■ In his report, Bishop E. P. Samuel of The Methodist Church in India, said the church in India today faces many major challenges:

"Firstly, people are suffering because of poverty, conflicts, diseases, unemployment, negative impact of economic globalisation and war on terrorism. Secondly, the nuclear threat looms large and thirdly, religious conflicts, racial violence and territorial disputes have led to mass killings.

"Therefore, it is imperative for the church to promote life-enriching morality and spirituality in order to be witnesses for Jesus and help bring peace to the world."

On the positive side, Bishop Samuel said the Methodist Church is seeing "a great awakening among our youth"

and successful young Methodist professionals are showing "a keen desire to give back to the church which nurtured them – they are coming forward wholeheartedly to support church projects".

■ Bishop Enoch Kuey of The Methodist Church in Taiwan reported that membership has risen slightly in 2007 and the church has established the Day Care Centre for the Elderly and Wesley Community Service Centre in the city of Kaohsiung.

"The theme for our work this year is 'Charity and Outreach', this being the year of social service. In 2009, our theme will be 'Spiritual Revival, Soul Saving', and we will evangelise to save people by means of courses and faith-sharing," he said.

■ The Korean Methodist Church (KMC) reported that cooperation with world churches has been expanding since the late 1990s. More than 20 churches in the world have worked together with the KMC through its Partnership Agreement.

>> continue on page 13