



## HOLIDAY STUDY CAMP FOR SENGOI CHILDREN

30 November – 4 December 2009



Praise the Lord for a successful camp! Children who were shy and reticent and Teachers who were anxious, left camp feeling excited and encouraged by what had happened at camp. They were definitely a different bunch of people at the conclusion of the camp and wanting to come back the following year!

of God in their time together. As one of the teachers, Mrs Yew Siong Huong shared,

*After my first motivational session with the kids, I started to worry. The children were rather shy, there was the language barrier and we were short-handed. We were also short of ideas of interesting activities to pull us through the five days.*



This five day camp was jointly organized by Trinity Annual Conference, Persidangan Misi Sengoi Methodist (PMSM) and the Methodist Council of Education. It had the dual aim of motivating the Sengoi children to study and provide coaching in some school subjects.

*Go in faith and TRUST HIM! Soon ideas started flowing in and more helping hands arrived, and we enjoyed a spirit filled camp. The children clearly enjoyed the activities and warmed up to us with their 'Hello's', 'Thank you's' and 'Goodbye's' and also making small talk.*

*By the fifth day, all of us were reluctant to close the camp and are already looking forward to meet again in our next camp! Glory to GOD!!!*



Altogether 49 children attended the camp coming from various districts under PMSM. It was held at the Sengoi Workers Training Centre (SWTC) where they stayed and chaperoned by the students from the Training Centre.

Plans for the next one are being discussed for end November or early December. This time children will be sorted according to their levels of proficiency and subjects will focus on the 3Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic; literacy and numeracy. More teachers will also be recruited so there can be a better student – teacher ratio.



There were seven teachers and an 11 year old assistant (daughter of one of the teachers). Each morning classes were taught on Maths, Science, English and BM, with an hour of tuition in the night. There were also motivational activities and games organized on a group basis. Each night worship and devotions were conducted by Rev Bah Uda in the Sengoi language.

*Based on the report by Ms Tay Choon Neo, Deputy Executive Director of the Council of Education.*

The camp was a great encouragement to everyone involved, not only from the aspect of teaching but in the experience

# Rebuilt from an old church - the Methodist Heritage Gallery

Declaring the Gallery open



Local church history has long been neglected. But with the opening of the first ever Methodist Heritage Gallery rebuilt from the old sanctuary of Cing Ang Tong Methodist Church it is hoped that awareness of the history of the Sarawak Methodist Church will be raised among the Methodist congregations, which in turn will strengthen our faith by remembering God's amazing love and deeds in the old days.

Cing Ang Tong Methodist Church was first built in 1945. The Heritage Gallery was rebuilt to the exact replica of the church in the 1960s. The opening ceremony was held on 28 February by Rev Dato' Su Chii Ann, President of SCAC.

It was celebrated in a unique and symbolic way that recalled the early history of the church. It started with church leaders led by Rev Dato' Dr Su bicycling to the



Three wooden plaques



The Star of Bethlehem

good old Cing Ang Tong church. It brought us back to the old days when church pastors moved around by bicycles visiting church members door to door.

Before entering the sanctuary, an earthen jar of water was prepared for worshippers to wash their dirty feet/shoes. At the entrance, a big mirror was in place so that worshippers could further tidy themselves. Both settings reminded us of the attitude of reverence and readiness in coming to worship the Almighty God.

The uniqueness of the Trinity is displayed throughout the church setting. There are three crosses on top of the three lofts, three wooden plaques on which the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostle's Creed are written, three staircases to the altar, and a triangular glass on the windows.

On top of the main door, there is a colorful star in glass which was called "Star of Bethlehem" or "Star of Christ", reminding children of God that they should lead people to Christ Jesus just as the star had led the wise men from the East to find the newborn Christ.

Rev Dato' Su took this memorable opportunity to express heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the church to brother Ngu Bek Yii who contributed the neighboring land for a new sanctuary to be built.

Situated in Kwong Hua area, Sungai Maaw, at the opposite bank of Sibu, the Methodist Heritage Gallery opens from Monday to Saturday. For more detail information, please contact Ms Ngui Soon Chuo at 084-345031/346031.



Cycling to the ceremony

From *Connection* 14 March 2010

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### CHURCH

1. Pray that believers, young and old, will be attentive to God's will, even though some of His commands may seem non-essential; always ready to do the tiniest little or the great big thing to be His faithful followers and to extol His name with daily praises
2. Pray for Christian workers to devote ourselves wholly to God and to disciple lives

As Christian workers, worldliness is not our snare, sin is not our snare, but spiritual wantoning is, viz. taking the pattern and print of the religious age we live in, making eyes at spiritual success.  
~ Oswald Chambers.

Living witnesses are what we want. There are plenty preach the doctrine, but so few to say, "I have tried & proved it."  
~Hannah Whitall Smith

### 1MALAYSIA

1. Pray for rakyat of all ethnic groups to respect and accept one another.
2. Pray for political parties and leaders to cease manipulating racial and religious issues for their own gain.
3. Pray that national leaders and political parties will cease handing out election goodies or making empty campaign promises to gain votes, but will truly fulfill their promises to look after rakyat's wellbeing.
4. Pray for the youth and for the government to recognize the significance of youth in its policymaking and vision-setting.
5. Pray for the government and society as a whole to effectively address the issues of baby-dumping, child abuse and child neglect, and to give adequate protection to children.
6. Pray for the new cabinet-endorsed inter-religious committee to function independently, capable of addressing differences and conflicts among religions.

### EAST MALAYSIA

1. Pray that both federal and state governments to prioritize the wellbeing of the indigenous people groups and their rights to homelands.



Joel Van Dyke



Kris Roche

*This is another article written for the Lausanne Movement in collaboration with Christianity Today in raising and addressing issues for the contemporary church leading up to the 3rd Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town this year. We have also printed one of the responses to this main article.*

# Singing the Lord's song in strange lands

by Joel Van Dyke and Kris Roche

The Psalmist writes, 'How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?' (Psalm 137:4). This is a beautiful question springing from the heart of a poet struggling to creatively live out in a strange land (Babylon) what he knows to be true in another, more familiar context (Jerusalem). The English poet e.e. cummings once wrote that, 'The beautiful answer is always preceded by the more beautiful question,' and in Psalm 137:4 we discover a beautiful question. It has given theological root to missional communities of grassroots leaders in six countries throughout Latin America (as well as urban centres in the Caribbean, Kenya and North America) under the banner of the Center For Transforming Mission (CTM).

We are learning how to read the Bible not to or even for those we serve but with those we serve – those who have been wrongly labelled the least, last and lost. Sustaining this approach is the belief that grace is like water; it flows downhill and pools up in the lowest places. We are learning to see God's grace pooling up in places of extreme poverty and violence.

The core theological values of CTM are formed by the incarnational mission of Jesus Christ. In the incarnation of Jesus – and here we take in all that Jesus did and said, including his death and resurrection to save us from our sins – the intimacy of human and divine is fully realized. Said plainly, the incarnation unites what the world divides – always, and in all ways. It says that matter matters, and not just spirit. Ministry that spiritualizes away the problems we face in the world of matter is simply not true to the biblical picture portrayed in the doctrines of Creation and the Incarnation. Biblical, incarnational ministry is radically holistic. It touches the body and the soul. It calls

forth personal transformation and systemic change. It invites righteousness and justice. It connects God and humanity, heaven and earth, and perhaps hardest of all, 'us and them.'

Our concern to incarnate Jesus among the least, last and lost has introduced us to some amazing grassroots leaders who are singing God's song in some very strange lands – such as populations of street youth, families in extreme poverty, prostitutes, women in the throes of domestic abuse and incarcerated gang members in the prisons of Central America. We have learned that 'misfits' are critical to the mission of the church. Let me (Joel) try to illustrate.

There is a men's prison in Central America with a surprising group of residents. Sleeping under and on top of the cement slab tables of what used to be the dining hall is a rag tag group of girl friends, wives, sisters and mothers of one of the major Central American street gangs. During a recent visit, their 'chaplain' (an ex-gang member) and I led a conversation centred around the person of Hagar in Genesis 16. These women quickly made personal application to the story. They heard the Angel of the Lord pay honour and respect to Hagar by becoming the only character in the narrative to address her by name. The angel then drops upon her a beautiful question, empowering her to tell her own story: 'Where are you going and where have you come from?'

The women in the prison could relate to being unnamed and used as property by people in positions of authority and power who never bothered to inquire of their stories. They knew what it felt like to live in deserts of loneliness caused by insidious rejection and marginalization. In Hagar's story they found their story.

Reading the Bible with those we serve means we learn to 'take the stained glass off the text of Scripture' and begin reading from the perspective of those who have been crushed by life. It is an adventure in mining good news out of the holes of Scripture into which the church typically refuses to climb down. Hagar's story is one of those stories and it is no small matter that she is the first person in Scripture who has the privilege of giving a name to God. She literally marvels, 'Could it be that I have seen the back side of the one who sees everything and am still alive?' She gives to God the name 'El Roi' (The God Who Sees). This element of the story seized the attention of these present-day Hagers in a vise grip of surprise and wonder.

A few weeks after the study, the chaplain was able to complete phase one of a prison rehabilitation project, building a cement block wall physically separating the women from the men. The idea emerged to paint a mural on that wall, and a discussion ensued related to what the women wanted to paint. They came to the unanimous decision to paint the story of Hagar, with the words, 'El Dios Que Me Ve' (The God Who Sees Me) as the focal point of the piece.

The larger missional implication is that Hagar grasps something about God that Abraham is not able to confess until six chapters later. In Genesis 22:14 Abraham names Mt. Moriah as 'Jehovah Jireh' (God sees/provides), using the same verb, ra'ah, that Hagar used in naming God. This leads us to marvel that perhaps the Hagers of the world arrive at a vision of the gospel long before the Abrahams do.

We see three gateways to transformation: prayer, praise and pain. The widest of all is pain. Ironically, pain is the most guarded gateway among those in power and it is the most accessible gateway among the people we serve. Kathleen O'Connor says, 'The first condition of healing is to give voice to pain.'

Perhaps this is why reality and authenticity are the currency of those at the margins. If it is going to work it has got to be Real. Perhaps that is why the Gospel begins with seeing things as they are, not as they should be. It is a hard lesson but we are learning that the primary task of the Church is to see God at work in the world and to celebrate what we see God doing. It is not to build, grow or extend the Kingdom of God – that is God's work. Our job is to see what is, to name it and to see God at work in it.

We are coming to see how the institutional church in Latin America often separates itself from the very people and places that could bring about the kind of vision she so desperately needs. This was reinforced for me (Joel) last year when I was asked to lead a consultation on gang outreach in the capital city of a Central American country. I asked incarcerated gang members from a neighbouring country if they would be willing to share some thoughts I could carry to the leaders who would be attending the event. Here is a small part of what those gang members gave me:

Frequently we have seen growth in the physical structure of many churches, leaders with a competitive attitude choosing it seems to 'compete' with other churches while abandoning the need that exists in prisons, neighbourhoods, slums and rehabilitation centres. The priority of these churches always seems to be focused on the comfort of their respective members so they can feel like VIPs and thus they have lost or perhaps just forgotten the vision of Jesus Christ who said, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations....' We don't want to simply criticize just for the sake of being critical but stand for the TRUTH that while churches are constructing huge sanctuaries there are children dying of hunger, gang members killing one another and prisoners suffering greatly while Christians comfort themselves in their big churches.

In a sermon focused on Luke 23 Tim Keller notes the 'outsiders' gathered around the cross. There is Simon of Cyrene, a 'cultural outsider'. A convicted criminal is a 'moral outsider'. There is also a centurion, a 'racial outsider' and the women witnesses, 'social outsiders'. Luke locates only one 'religious insider' at the cross who seems to be able to grasp the full significance of Jesus' death – Joseph of Arimathea.

'Due to the way Salvation is accomplished,' Keller says, 'those on the 'outside' tend to understand/see things before those on the inside; but all are welcome.' Further insight comes from Franciscan priest Richard Rohr who quotes Walter Brueggemann that the job of the prophet is to free people from their numbness. That, reflects Rohr, is also the task of the church. The church exists to wake people up, to bring them to consciousness, and not just to comfort them in their unconscious state. Rohr's fear is that soft piety and too-quick religious comfort do precisely that. 'The giveaway,' writes Rohr, 'is when one finds no attitude of service, volunteerism, or compassion for the outsider emerging from one's attendance at church services.'

At CTM we have discovered that a large part of our 'prophetic charism' for the church in Latin America can be summed up in the task of freeing the church from numbness. It is often a lonely task. It puts us in very hard places interacting with 'outsiders' who often become scandalous and surprising sources of numbness-breaking hope. Let me (Joel) try once again to illustrate.

Pastor Francis Montas and his wife Loly pastor a church of young people – Casa Joven – that meets on Saturday nights in a converted Santo Domingo nightclub. Their work with street kids, incarcerated juvenile delinquents and the 'Chicas de Sarasota' serves as a prophetic wake-up call to many others in the Dominican church.

About two months ago, Francis and Loly called a special Thursday prayer night because so many young people were having serious problems. They met near one of the most infamous streets for prostitution in Santo Domingo – La Avenida Sarasota. Their prayers for one another led them to pray for the girls on the street outside, and they left the building as if a tractor beam pulled them to the girls. The night I went out with them was their seventh consecutive night on the streets with the girls.

What we experienced over the next three hours was a numbness-shattering picture of God's scandalous grace. The face of each 'girl' with whom we stopped to talk lit up as the young women from the church called out to them by name and embraced them with huge bear hugs. The women on the street responded to a host of beautiful questions, updating us on their weeks, sharing stories about their children and receiving prayer with eager anticipation, all the while completely ignoring potential 'clients' who passed by.

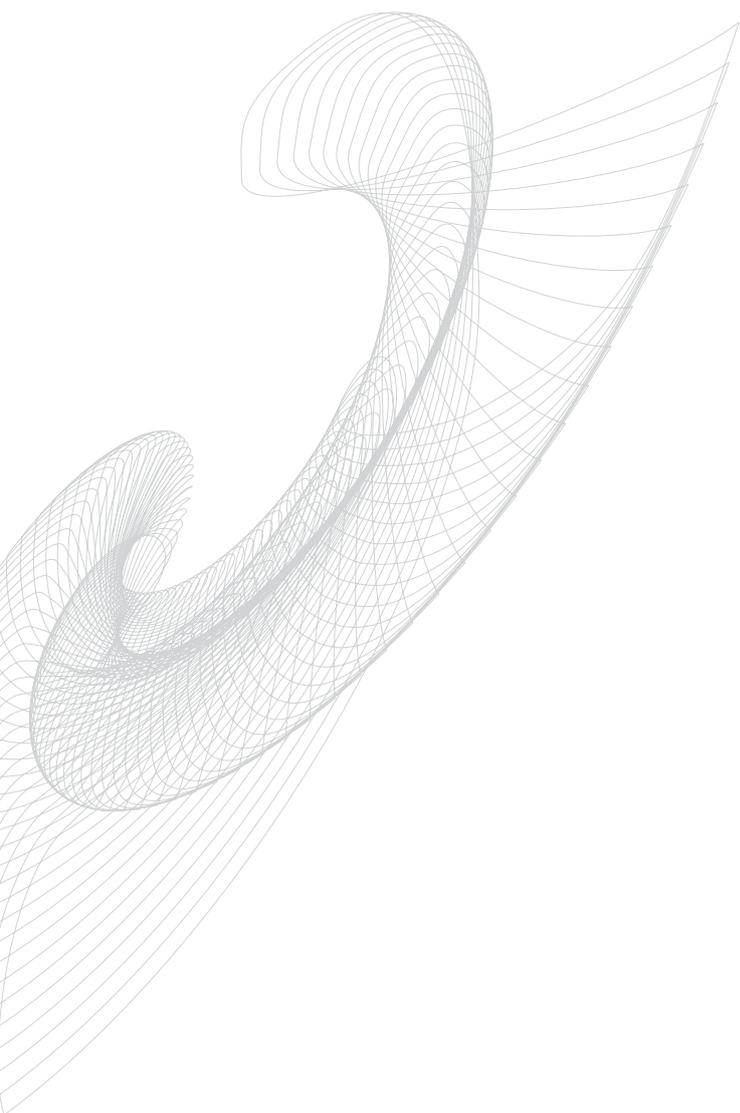
We had just finished sharing and praying with a group of three prostitutes when one of them whom I will call Gloria asked if she could pray for us. I held hands in a circle with my Dominican friends on a sidewalk on 'Avenida Sarasota' at 2:30am and heard one of the most beautiful prayers of my life. When Gloria uttered her 'Amen' a smile exploded on her face. She sheepishly confessed that it was the first time she had ever prayed out loud. I pretended to cough while trying to wipe the tears from my eyes. Gloria received more bear hugs from the ladies and an awkward handshake from me. She said that she planned to come to church that Saturday night when I was scheduled to preach.

She indeed came that night and when the service concluded Gloria received hug after hug from the young worshippers, including the guest preacher whose awkward and numb handshake on the street a few nights earlier turned into a bear hug of scandalous grace.

It would be impossible to detail here how blessed this church in Santo Domingo has been and how their vision and mission for their city has been recalibrated through their interaction with these prostitutes. There are churches in Latin America like Casa Joven that are engaging the Hags of their cities and by doing so are teaching the rest of us how to sing God's song in some very strange lands.

*Joel Van Dyke serves in Central America as the director of "Estrategia de Transformacion" (Strategy for Transformation) which is a strategic alliance between the Center for Transforming Mission and Christian Reformed World Missions. Kris Rocke is Executive Director of the Center for Transforming Mission.*

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# The Holistic Mission of the Church

*by Andrea Zaki Stephanous*

*A Response to Joel Van Dyke and Kris Rocke's 'The Beautiful Question of the Incarnational Gospel'*

There is a story that I cannot forget from one of the Egyptian villages where we have done development and social work through CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services). One day we found many children had diarrhoea, and some of them were close to death. The council of the village met and decided to open two new clinics to deal with the problem, but surprisingly the problem was not solved. Many more children suffered from diarrhoea, and the situation became worse and worse. The council met again. When they analysed the situation they discovered that there was a pool of dirty water at the entrance of the village where flies and mosquitoes bred and carried the virus to the children. The council decided to clean the area, and the result was no more diarrhoea among the children.

I take that as a parable about ministry. Each context is unique. We need to understand carefully the situation we live in so that we can apply the Word of God effectively and go beyond the problems to the root causes of these problems. This, I think, relates to Van Dyke and Kris Rocke's point that we must listen to 'outsiders.' Very often outsiders offer unexpected insights into the true nature of the problems, and help us see the root causes that are hidden to us.

In the Middle East we are living in a very difficult time. The world economic crisis, terrorism, climate change, political instability and religious extremism all contribute to the current thorny context. Yet when we study the ministry of the early church in the book of Acts, we find a context that could be even more difficult than today—a climate of persecutions, economic sanctions on believers, poverty and political oppression.

Reading Van Dyke and Rocke's thoughts on ministry to and with the poor, I found myself thinking about that early church and its response to community needs. I believe that they had a clear understanding of the root causes of the problems in their context, and that their ministry directly targeted those. Their context is not exactly ours, but their response is a good template for us as we shape our unique response. It fits very well with the holistic ministry the authors describe in Central America. Acts 2:42–47, which sums up the early church's operations, indicates three main focal points:

- 1) the teaching of the apostles,
- 2) partnership and
- 3) social responsibility.

### **The teaching of the apostles**

When facing poverty and persecution, it would be very easy to overlook the importance of teaching. Yet the early church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42).

The unique knowledge of the apostles was the life of Jesus. They had been with him and must have been eager to pass on their experience. Their teaching surely emphasized:

- a) The human aspect of the life of Jesus – the man they knew and lived with.
- b) Jesus' miracles as a response to the needs of people. For example, the story of the transfiguration tells how Jesus left his glory up on the mountain and went down to heal a human being who was in need. Jesus went out of his way to respond to human need.
- c) Jesus' openness to the outsider. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan because he would not consider anyone beyond the reach of God or unable to contribute to ministry. The Samaritan was not an object of charity; he was the 'outsider' who showed everyone else how to behave as a genuine neighbour.
- d) Jesus was committed to a holistic mission. He did not just do good works; he did them while preaching and living the Good News. In the early church there was always a connection between doctrine and action, a connection that reflected the teachings of the apostles about Jesus.

To follow the apostles' teaching is to go to the root of our problems, for it takes us to the way of Jesus.

### **Partnership**

People under stress are tempted to act individualistically, but the church in Acts 2 was devoted to the fellowship. This devotion created a sense of partnership.

Their partnership was not artificial or contrived. Rather, it was based on the early church's awareness of its true identity. They believed that they were the remaining faithful in Israel and that all prophecies of the Old Testament were coming true in their lives, fulfilled in the Messiah. Resurrection opened a window through which they were able to reread the life of Jesus and to understand his mission in a prophetic way. And that mission was also their mission, because they were the redeemed people of God called into existence by the Messiah himself. They shared bread together and experienced the power of prayer (2:42). The Lord's Supper was a meal where there were no poor and rich, educated and illiterate, men and women, elite and grassroots people. Everyone was equal and they ate together as the people of God.

As they prayed they became aware that their actions were also a part of God's response to prayer. You cannot pray for the poor if you are not ready to give some of your money to those in need and you cannot pray for people's salvation if you are not ready to participate in evangelistic campaigns. The church in Acts 2 knew that they were part of God's response to prayer.

### **Social responsibility**

The social responsibilities of the church in Acts 2 were based on Jesus' resurrection. He was truly alive, he had conquered death, and those who belonged to his kingdom had no reason whatsoever to fear or to cling to their resources.

Many of the new believers were poor, and some suffered economic sanctions for their new beliefs. In that context the early church carried out its social responsibilities in two ways. Some sold all they owned and gave it to the church. Others shared what they had with those who had nothing. I believe that how those early believers responded to financial needs was not as important as their attitudes. They honoured their brothers and sisters more than their possessions. Today we need not replicate the exact steps they took. We need to follow the concept rather than the methods.

### **Conclusion**

We learn from Acts 2 that the witness of the church must be holistic. It involves devoted teaching, which places a high value on the needs of others and connects word with deed. It leads to partnership, so that all members of the body are treated as family, and all share in a common identity regardless of their social status. Such a church can live up to its social responsibilities without fear, for we serve a risen Lord who will protect us and provide all we need. The church cannot preach and close its eyes to its social commitments.

When the church takes on this holistic approach, it carries out its prophetic role. That is what the church did in Acts 2. That is what is needed in the very complicated contexts in which we live today.

*Andrea Zaki Stephanous serves as vice general director for Program Affairs in the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services.*

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# First Private Primary School

## Opens in Ipoh

**I**t took only eight months from the first meeting of the task force to the dedication of the Wesley Methodist School Ipoh (Primary) on 4 January 2010 with 18 enrolled students.

WMSI (P) is the first private primary school opened by the Methodist Church. The task force convened in May 2009 and an interim Board of Management was appointed by the Council of Education in July. A month later an application was submitted to the Ministry of Education. And in November the official word was received that the license for the primary school was approved. As of March this year there were 18 students in Year 1 and eight in Year 2.

The launch of the school was the result of faithful and available people providing support and financial backing such as those in the WMSI (Secondary) Board of Management and the many sponsors who gave time, energy, prayers and monetary aid. Ultimately it was God who brought us through every objection presented, every application faced and every problem encountered.

According to Ms Tay Choon Neo, Deputy Executive Secretary of COE, the school provides an alternative option from what is available, at an affordable cost. It follows the Government schools curriculum. But more importantly it offers activities and an environment that reflect the heritage of Methodist education, a holistic approach that includes building character, spiritual concerns and intellectual development.

Ms Tay adds that if the Lord should open the doors the COE is prepared to have more private primary schools. These will also act as feeders to our secondary schools.

Indeed, from the early days of the school come these testimonies of the kind of difference it can make. A Hindu parent said that it was a school with a difference. Not because it produced students with straight As'. (We haven't reached that stage yet.) But because we cared enough to call him up to bring his child in even as he sorted out his personal matters. "Your God is good", he says.

One boy rejected by both biological and adoptive parents has started to come for Sunday School. His touch from the Lord came through a Board member who gave him a hug one morning. He came back to school next week looking for that uncle.

Much prayer continues to be needed for the school to grow, its needs provided and to be a channel of blessings to the society it seeks to serve.

*This is based on the article written by Ms Claren Choo and interview with Ms Tay ChoonNeo.*



Dedication and launch of the school.



Break time.



The new CCA General Secretary,  
Rev Dr Hutabarat Lebang.



Called to  
Prophecy  
Reconcile  
and Heal

CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA  
13TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA  
APRIL 14-21, 2010

# Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal

*Christian Conference  
of Asia 13th General  
Assembly*

The 13th General Assembly of CCA was held in Kuala Lumpur from 14 – 21 April 2010. This once in five years gathering brings together delegates from member countries and churches of the ecumenical family in Asia. Altogether there were more than 350 participants comprising 164 official delegates, and over 200 others representing ecumenical organizations, special guests, the media, friends and observers.

The purposes for the Assembly is to celebrate in worship, study and action the unity of the churches in Asia; to receive and review the work of the different programme areas of the CCA and set directions for future mission and thrust of its work.

The General Assembly is the supreme body of the CCA and elects members to the Presidium and the Honorary Treasurer, the General Committee and the various Programme Area Committees.

At the Assembly a new General Secretary was elected, Rev Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang from the Toraja Church, Indonesia. Dr Hutabarat Lebang is the first-ever woman General Secretary of CCA, and is a well known ecumenical leader in Asia for many years. She served as CCA's Associate General Secretary for Program Coordination for ten years when CCA was still in Hong Kong.

At the Assembly, five new member churches and councils were accepted into the ecumenical family. CCA now has members in 22 countries in Asia including Australia, New Zealand and Iran.

The out-going General Secretary, Dr Prawate Khid-arn, writes, "The ecumenical ship in Asia is now under the helm of a new leadership. The task ahead is challenging and daunting. We know ours is a costly ministry. It is thus imperative to stay united, persistent and hard working as we follow Christ's way."

## Another **Step Forward** For Mission Schools

There are more than 450 Christian Mission schools in our country. These are schools under the purview of the Education Act ranging from pre-schools to secondary schools owned and managed by Mission Authorities, either Government-aided or non Government-aided.

Since last year's Conference for Mission Schools, efforts have been made to bring together the councils from the three regions of Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia under one body to work together more closely as they share many common aspirations, challenges and problems. There is also much that can be learnt from one another.

These efforts bore fruit in the formation of the Federation of Councils of Mission Schools

Malaysia, the Charter of which was adopted by the representatives of the three Regional Councils meeting in Kota Kinabalu on 7 April 2010.

This Federation will enable greater coordination of the policies of Mission Authorities that are of common interest concerning education, such as ensuring the continuance of the identity and traditions of mission schools, that Christian principles and values be adopted in their teaching and management. There is also the need to have a common voice to speak more effectively on behalf of the mission authorities and mission schools and to facilitate more effective communication with Government authorities through such a collective body.



The 18 members representing the three Regional Councils of Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia.



# TRAC MSF

## ANNUAL CAMP 2010

The 19th TRAC MSF Annual Camp 2010 was held at the Copthorne Orchid Hotel, Penang from 9-12 March 2010. The theme for this year's camp was 'Life Long Discipleship- Growing in Spirituality'. A total of 190 participants from the 17 MSF Chapters including 13 members from the Singapore Glowing Years Ministry, led by Rev David Wee attended the camp.

This camp was of great significance to the Johor Bahru Wesley MSF Chapter. The JB Wesley MSF chapter was inaugurated on the 25th February 2010, just 13 days before the camp. The idea of forming a chapter was mooted way back in 1998 and it took us 12 long years to accomplish it! It was truly a test of faith and perseverance in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The camp was very well organised and the programme was equally well planned to cater for both the spiritual and physical needs of the participants. The speaker for the camp was Rev Dr Simon Chan from

the Trinity Theological College Singapore, a world renowned theologian with an interest in convergence worship, the liturgy and church history. Mrs Simon Chan, who is the voice teacher and choir director of the same college also gave an inspiring session on "Music with Meditation". It was meaningful and uplifting.

Rev. David Loo was also there to share with us the vision and the need of establishing "Retirement Community Centres" - an issue that is close to all our hearts. Rev Dr Ong Hwai Teck, our TRAC president spoke at the Closing Service. He also conducted the Holy Communion and the Installation of the new MSF Board for the year 2010 - 2011.

On a lighter note, the accommodation was comfortable and the food was good. Both the guided Penang City Highlight Tour and the Penang Round Island Tour were very professionally organised. It was really a wonderful experience and opportunity for us, especially for the Johor Bahru members,

to view all the beautiful places, shopping for local delicacies and most of all enjoying the delicious Penang laksa and quenching nutmeg juice!!

The banquet which was held on the first night was superb. The singer was a 72 year old veteran, who entertained us with lots of oldies. You would think he was a young man just listening to him! His grooves to the tempo were equally interesting. The Fellowship Night was, and always has been the highlight of the camp. It was truly an unforgettable night. The presentations put up by the various chapters were both interesting and inspiring, especially the "Black and White Minstrels", rendering lovely songs of yesteryear. The "angklong" presentation was special too. The members of the Singapore Glowing Years Ministry contributed two interesting items, one of which was an action song which encouraged everyone to stand up and participate. It was good exercise for the body, mind and spirit!

We left the camp with fond memories of meeting old friends and making new ones. I am sure everyone looks forward to attending the next MSF Annual Camp which will be held in Malacca in 2011.

*Michael Lim*  
President  
JB Wesley MSF Chapter

# CHURCH HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

20-24 August 2010

Wisma Methodist Kuala Lumpur

In conjunction with the 125th Anniversary of the Methodist Church in Malaysia this year the Council of Archives and History has planned this symposium which is both a looking back and looking forward for the Methodist Church in our country. The following are the topics for the symposium

Keynote Address:

**The Christian Presence in Malaysia in Retrospect – Faithfulness to Christ, Engaging the Nation**

Speaker : **Rev Dr John Roxborough.**

Respondent : **Dr Lee Kam Heng**

Moderator : **Ms Aileen Khoo**

Paper Presentation:

**The Wesleyan Traditions of Personal and Social Holiness: The Methodist impact on social change in Malaysia or The impact of autonomy 1968 and 1976.**

Speaker : **Rev Dr Lau Hui Ming.**

Respondent : **Rev Dr Herman Shastri**

Moderator : **Rev Sam Men Biew**

## Directions for the future.

Panel Discussion:

**Quo Vadis the Methodist Church in Malaysia: Learning from the past, coping with the present and planning for the future.**

Panel Speakers: **Rev Dr Ezra Kok (CAC),**

**Rev Dr Joseph Kumar (TAC),**

**Dr Samuel Ong (TRAC),**

**Dato' Ngeh Koo Ham (CAC),**

**Rev Dr Lau Hui Ming (SCAC)**

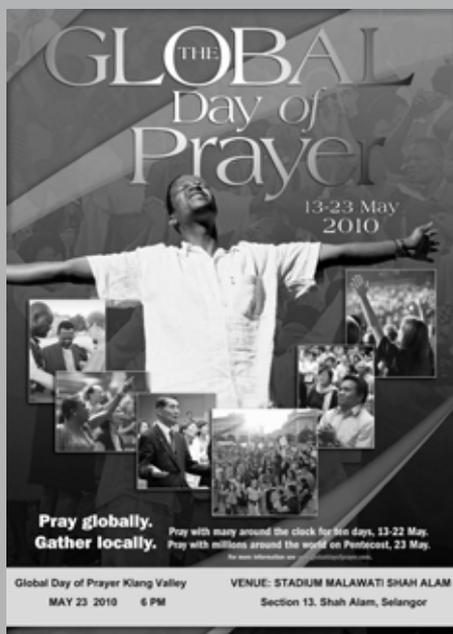
Respondent : **Bishop Dr Hwa Yung**

Moderator : **Mr Goh Keat Seng**

Two public evening lectures on the topic, **How Malaysian Christians Can Impact Malaysia**, will be delivered by Dr Ng Kam Weng, the Research Director of Kairos Research Centre, Malaysia.

# Global Day of Prayer 2010 in Malaysia

23 May, Stadium Malawati Shah Alam



## Pray Globally, Gather Locally

The Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) is celebrated worldwide in more than 200 countries on Pentecost Sunday. It began as a movement of Christians in South Africa who sensed God calling them to seek Him in repentance and prayer and to call people across their country to assemble in

united prayer for their cities and nations. This took place in 2001.

This day of prayer gathering soon spread to the rest of Africa. In 2005, together with other prayer streams from around the world, the Global Day of Prayer was celebrated in 156 countries on Pentecost Sunday. Christians across denominational traditions gathered in unity to answer the same call for repentance and prayer in their own respective nation.

2010 is the tenth year of this prayer movement. Malaysia will hold it at the 11,000 capacity Stadium Malawati on Pentecost Sunday, 23 May at 6.00 pm.

## 10 leading to 1 followed by 90

However, the GDOP event is not just about that one evening. Following the pattern of the birth of the church in the book of Acts, there was ten days of prayer after Jesus' ascension leading to Pentecost that was witnessed by the whole city, and then followed days of blessings to the church. Likewise the GDOP is planned with three parts.

**10 days** of constant prayer beginning on Ascension Day, 13 – 22 May. Millions of Christians will be praying in different ways during these ten days – individually, in groups, over 24 hours daily or in concentrated times each day. A guide has

been prepared based on the Lord's Prayer and Joel chapter 2 for study, reflection and prayer.

**1 Day** - The Global Day of Prayer, 23 May 2010. On Pentecost Sunday, Christians in almost every country will assemble to pray. Many will gather in small groups in homes. Many will assemble in large stadiums and other public venues.

**90 Days** of blessings, 24 May – 21 August. As in the first Pentecost, transformed Christians transform their communities as they offer themselves to God as instruments through which their prayers can be answered. The Global Day of Prayer anticipates the forming or furthering of local alliances among pastors, churches, missions and business leaders to bring practical, transformational blessing to their communities.

For more information and to download prayer guides and resources for these events go to the GDOP websites: [www.globaldayofprayer.com](http://www.globaldayofprayer.com) and [www.globaldayofprayermalaysia.com](http://www.globaldayofprayermalaysia.com)



# Latest claim of Noah's Ark discovery like others for now, experts say

Despite the notable lack of significant evidence, the media and the blogosphere are abuzz over the cries of a team of Chinese and Turkish explorers who claim that the wooden structure they found on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey is none other than Noah's Ark.

Experts in history, archaeology, and bibliography, meanwhile, are making note of the claim but not taking the bait.

They say they've heard the cries before and will need a lot more than the confirmation of 4,800-year-old wood to take the claims seriously.

"Periodically, there are announcements, almost always by enthusiasts without real background in archaeology, about the discovery of Noah's ark somewhere in Turkey," says Dr Aren M Maeir, a professor at Israel's Bar Ilan University and director of the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project.

"As with other fantastic discoveries relating to biblical archaeology coming from non-professional archaeologists (location of Mt Sinai; the Egyptian army in the Red Sea; the deciphering of the Copper Scroll, etc, etc) these announcements are quite suspect, since the full information is never published in 'real' scientific journals, and all one gets to see are the media announcements and website info," he adds.

On Sunday, the team from Noah's Ark Ministries International (NAMI) that explored Mount Ararat announced at a press conference that the wood specimens they had retrieved last year from the "large wooden structure" they discovered more than 4,000 metres above sea level were found to be 4,800 years in age – a figure that would correspond with the time of Noah, based upon a literal reading of the Bible.

Backed by Turkish government officials and his group's own set of experts, NAMI representative Man-fai Yuen said, "We believe that the wooden structure we entered is the same structure recorded in historical accounts and the same ancient boat indicated by the locals."

Dr Oktay Belli, an archaeologist at Istanbul University: "The search team has made the greatest discovery in history. This finding is very important and the greatest up to now."

According to Belli, there has never been human settlement above 3,500 metres on Mount Ararat, which has long been considered the location of where Noah's Ark settled following the receding of the flood recorded in the Bible.

In Genesis 8, it is recorded that "the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat".

"Mount Ararat is a holy place and has rich historical accounts about Noah's Ark on the mountain," said Belli on Sunday. "Many people have searched the mountain for the holy Ark. This time's discovery is the first serious search that the team found a wood structure under ice."

Also present at the press conference was Dutch Ark researcher Gerrit Aalten, the head of NoahsArkSearch.com, who claimed "there's a tremendous amount of solid evidence that the structure found on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey, is the legendary Ark of Noah".

Among the "many details" Aalten listed were the height at which the structure was found, the "slightly tilted" way it was situated on the mountain, its "reddish/brown wood appearance", and its "very dark, long and rectangular" appearance.

The structure, he said, is "very solid and of high quality".

Dr Eric H Cline of George Washington University, however, says the structure could be anything.

"The problem with going out specifically to find a particular object, such as Noah's Ark in this instance, is that one frequently finds what one is looking for, whether there is any merit to it or not," the archaeology professor told The Christian Post on Wednesday.

"All that we know at the moment is that the expedition members are showing us pictures and samples of a structure made out of wood. It could be ancient, it could be medieval, it could even have been constructed last week. Even carbon-14 dating will only tell us how old the wood is; it will not tell us when the structure was constructed," he commented.

That's not to say, however, that the respected archaeologist is ruling out the find. But like many others, he's waiting for the results of more independent and comprehensive probing.

Even Young Earth creationists at the Christian apologetics ministry Answers in Genesis said they "will withhold judgment until further study".

"Over the decades, we have learned to be cautious about such Ark claims," it reported Tuesday.

But the ministry said it has "no doubt, however, that there once was a massive ark that served as a vessel of salvation during a global flood and landed on the mountains of Ararat, as recorded in the book of Genesis."

Bar-Ilan University's Maeir, meanwhile, said he "seriously doubts this one is real".

"When and if the finds are published in a full and comprehensive manner, one will truly be able to assess it," he told The Christian Post. "Meanwhile, it joins many other such discoveries - and sound quite hard to believe."

According to NAMI's announcement Sunday, the ministry will invite other scientists to participate in the search and study of its discovery, and is committed to uncovering the truth behind it.

They read and signed a cooperation agreement in which they agreed to collaborate with any further probing of their discovery, noting that their results "are of significance to the whole world in that humankind should cherish its common beliefs and origins".

They said: "We believe that the discovery of Noah's Ark will resolve centuries of national ideological conflict. We are dedicated to working towards a better, peaceful world."

by Christian Today  
[www.christiantoday.com.my](http://www.christiantoday.com.my)

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# Edinburgh 2010



In 1910, Edinburgh was the venue for the historic World Mission Conference. This was a gathering which caught an epoch-making vision of the church as a truly global missionary community.

As the centenary of this event approaches, it is time to reflect on its significance in the light of the experience of the past hundred years and the realities of Christian Mission in the 21st century.

The WCC will play a leading role in the organization of a celebrative and widely owned mission conference in June 2010 in Edinburgh, in coordination with partners in the ecumenical movement, within and outside the WCC's fellowship.

A multi-denominational and international process has been set up to commemorate the 1910 World Missionary Conference, and to provide new perspectives on mission for the 21st century.

From 2 to 6 June 2010 a Centenary Conference will take place in and around the historic sites of the 1910 conference. 250 mission leaders from all over the world will come to Edinburgh to witness to Christ today.

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# FIRST WOMAN ELECTED TO HEAD ASIAN CHURCH GROUPING

**Maurice Malanes (ENI).** The first woman elected as general secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia has vowed to help heal wounds "not only in our societies, but also within our churches" in the world's most populous continent.

"As brothers and sisters in such a time as this, we are 'called to prophesy, reconcile and heal'," said the Rev. Henriette Tabita Hutabarat-Lebang, referring to the theme of the church grouping's 13th general assembly, meeting from 14 to 21 April in Kuala Lumpur.

She was addressing the gathering after being presented on 15 April to the applause of more than 300 delegates and guests at the meeting.

A pastor's daughter, Hutabarat-Lebang hails from Sulawesi, one of the four larger islands of Indonesia. She was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1992 and has served in senior positions in Asia and internationally.

"A lot of wounds hound not only our societies but also our churches so let us walk hand in hand as we journey together for the next five years and with God's grace and with your support, I'll try to walk with you, and God will open the way for us if we trust in him," Hutabarat-Lebang said.

The CCA consists of almost 100 member churches and 16 national church councils in Asia.

In a greeting to the meeting, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, had said that the

CCA's assemblies have been "milestones in the common life of Asian churches".

He described Hutabarat-Lebang's election as "another important milestone in the ecumenical movement. I look forward to cooperation and collegiality with you and all your colleagues, exploring ways to mutually support and empower one another in our different tasks and roles."

Hutabarat-Lebang takes up office in November at the Chiang Mai offices of the CCA after the term of outgoing general secretary Prawate Khid-arn ends in October.

She is a vice-president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and is a member of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church.

WARC general secretary the Rev. Setri Nyomi said, "We in WARC have benefited from Dr. Hutabarat-Lebang's leadership skills and deep commitment to global ecumenism. We extend our congratulations and best wishes to her in her new appointment."

At an earlier press conference, Hutabarat-Lebang said poverty, migration, the build up of armaments, violence, human rights violations and the impact of globalisation persist as the challenges to which her leadership, along with the churches in Asia, seeks to address.

She noted that poverty in south and southeast Asia continues to force people to migrate to more developed countries in the region such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and South Korea. Migrants, many of them women in search of work, end up abused and alienated in receiving countries, she said.

"So as we advocate for the rights of these migrant workers, we have to engage with both sending and receiving countries to ensure that migrant workers' rights and welfare are respected and promoted," said Hutabarat-Lebang.

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# A New Look

## Methodist Chefoo Centre

The Chefoo Centre as it is commonly known was closed for almost 9 months for a massive facelift to offer better facilities and comfort to campers and for those in pursuit of retreat in the hills. The fully renovated and refurbished Methodist Centennial Chefoo Centre was re-opened in mid-November 2009.

The Centre has accommodation ranging from a guest house with five beds, chalets (with 7 to 10 beds), double, three or four bedded rooms, and dormitories with double-decker beds. In total it can accommodate 210 persons.

It is situated on six acres of land with surrounding hills and greenery. On the grounds it has a big playing field and a basketball, volleyball, futsal and tennis court. For meetings there is a conference hall for 300 persons and smaller meeting rooms for 60 people or less.

For more information,

call **03-79541811**

email [resorts@methodistchurch.org.my](mailto:resorts@methodistchurch.org.my)

or visit our website [www.methodistchurch.org.my](http://www.methodistchurch.org.my)



*The Guest House*



*Fun for children*



*View from the field*



*Chalet room*

## HO SENG ONG SCHOLARSHIP LOAN FUND

Applicants are invited from those interested in pursuing teaching as a career for study loans from the Ho Seng Ong Scholarship Loan Fund. Applicants must have obtained admission into courses leading to a degree/diploma in education in local universities.

Applications Forms may be obtained from:-

**The Chairman,  
Ho Seng Ong Scholarship Loan Fund,  
Methodist Council of Education,  
67, Jalan 5/31,  
46000 Petaling Jaya.**

Please enclose a stamped (50cents), self-addressed envelope with your written request for application forms.

The closing date for the submission of application is:

**31st May 2010.**

Shortlisted applicants only will be called for interview at a date to be fixed by the Chairman of the Fund.





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## Xiao En Centre

Xiao En Centre, as a complex for social education and life ceremony, is complemented with function halls for memorial services and funeral rites. We are also equipped with facilities to hold cultural & community events including art exhibitions & seminars. The centre's design, which combines the modern sensibilities & traditional concepts which appraise human values represents our unflinching commitment towards celebration of life excellences.

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# Agape Centre Opening Ceremony

## PM's Wife Stressed on Importance of Spiritual and Mental Development of Special Children



At the Methodist Care Centre



Datin Seri Rosmah speaking to one of the special needs children.

In conjunction with the visit of the Prime Minister to Sibul, Datin Seri Rosmah was invited to officiate at the opening ceremony of the Agape Centre and also to visit the Methodist Care Centre. She had a lot of praises for the Agape Centre and the people who were responsible for these various branches.

Datin Rosmah said that good environment and advance technology cannot entirely help special children. What is important is how they can be helped to enter society and live a normal life. "Although they are special in certain areas they too wish to lead normal lives. They do not necessarily want to become helpless people. When we help them we also have to consider their mental and spiritual needs," she said.

At the same time she encouraged the various organizations to liaise with relevant foreign organizations and share experiences. This will lead to a more diversified professional training to help special children in enhancing their working capacity. She reminded the officers to further their knowledge in their fields and related technology as well.

As birth rates of special children have increased in recent years Datin Rosmah hopes that the respective organizations can do more research to find out the causes of this problem. If the government knows more and is better equipped much more can be done.

"Every year a large sum of money is spent on helping these special needs children. If this money is spent on improving education and ways to reduce these incidences perhaps our society would have fewer special needs children."

From *Connection* 14 March 2010  
English translation by Changyi

## Towards Wesleyan Studies at STM



**Cheque presentation** – (From left) Mr Anthony Row (Conference Secretary of the Methodist Church), Bishop Dr Hwa Yung, Mr Richard Wong King lion (Council member), Rt Rev Ng Moon Hing, Rev Dr Ezra Kok (Principal of STM) and Bishop Dr Solomon Rajah (of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Council member).

The Methodist Church in Malaysia made a donation of RM1 million to Seminari Theoloji Malaysia towards establishing a Chair for Wesleyan studies there.

During the STM Council meeting on 10 March 2010 at the Methodist HQ, Bishop Dr Hwa Yung presented the cheque to Bishop Ng Moon Hing (of the Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia), President of the STM Council, who received it on behalf of the Council.