



When The Rains Came...

This report is based on information and reports given by Rev. Tevaraji, President of TAC, Rev. Yew Nieng Siong, TRAC DS for Southern District, and Rev. Low How Juan, Chairman of the Board of Social Concerns, CAC. Photographs were supplied by Jason Low, Segamat. Editor



• Segamat Town.



• Submerged cars.



The floods in the south of Peninsular Malaysia that hit us on 19 December, and again in early January, were a shock to the whole nation. It was on a scale quite unprecedented in terms of the number of people affected and in the cost of the damages to property and livelihood.

Methodist churches were spared the devastation but many members' homes were affected and some had to be evacuated. The CAC reported 81 families were affected, the TAC 39 families and TRAC 9 families. Towns most badly affected were Segamat, Chaah, Sungai Rambai, and Melaka. Some member's business premises and clinic were also damaged by flood waters.

Although church buildings were spared the Segamat Wesley Seniors Home was flooded on the ground floor. However, the first floor was still used as a place of

refuge in the immediate aftermath of the floods!

However the Calvary Charismatic Centre in Segamat has several homes for the physically handicapped, drug rehabilitation, and the destitute that were badly affected. Some of them were housed by the Chinese Methodist Church. These homes will need some substantial funds to be operational again. A total number of about 110 residents were affected.

Churches in the affected towns responded as well and fast as they could, given the sudden rise of waters without warning. Thankfully there was no loss of lives.

Wesley Methodist Church Melaka opened the Wesley Hostel for flood victims. Some TAC churches were used as refuge centers. Wesley Segamat



• *Cleaning the day after*

released RM1000 as immediate aid. The General Conference released RM10,000 to help the TAC families.

So far about RM12,000 have been disbursed to these families from TAC, each family receiving RM300. But this is not enough and more is needed to help them. The TAC continues to raise funds from their churches. The General Conference's appeal has met with good responses from fellow Methodists in Sarawak and Sabah as well as churches from the Peninsular. Mr Tung Kam Seng, Conference Secretary, reports that so far about RM80,000 has come in.

The CAC Board of Social Concerns had Area Relief Work Committees set up in Melaka, Segamat, Johor Baru and Sungai Rambai. In total these Work Committees disbursed about RM85,000 in the form of cash, aid items like food, drinking water, mattresses, etc. This also included financial aid to 225 students of a secondary school.

The churches in these areas are now also helping other victims as well. Over 100,000 people are affected and there is much to be done. Wesley Segamat is collecting good, usable clothes for their G-Mart store they have set up. Wesley Johor Baru initiated a distribution of pre-packed kits – a basic health and education kit, each costing between RM5.00 to RM10.00. (See also the Chinese article on page 5.)

These floods have raised questions about their causes and how far they could have been prevented or at least damages reduced. People still feel anxious when heavy rains are forecast, uncertain if the rivers will overflow yet again. But this has also been an opportunity to share in Christian care for those within the Christian family as well as those outside of it. ✿

Methodist Prayer Convention 2007

The Secretariat

Since January this year the Secretariat for the Prayer Convention started operations. Manned by Ms Chang Meng Chien and based at the Methodist HQ, the Secretariat will be the coordination centre for the Convention.

Amongst the myriad matters that are on-going two things that will be coming out soon are the application brochures and a CD for the churches to introduce the Prayer Convention to their congregations. Watch out for these in your in your church.

Introducing the Coordinator for Intercession

~ Dr. Chan Geok Oon

It is very appropriate and indeed essential that a Prayer Convention as we are having be sustained and covered by prayer. Dr. Chan will be gathering



• *Meng Chien (left) and Dr. Chan at the Secretariat.*

a team of intercessors from Methodist churches to pray for this meeting well before August. During the three days of meeting the intercessors will be praying round the clock.

Dr. Chan taught in the School of Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, in the 1970s and early 80s. In 1982 God called her to serve Him in another way,

and from the mid-1980s she began her intercessory ministry with the Lydias Prayer Group in Penang. Based in Sitiawan with the Light House Watchmen now, Dr. Chan is helping to raise more small cell prayer groups of like-minded people eager to pray, that will meet faithfully, weekly to pray for people, institutions, events, cities, Malaysia and nations as the Lord leads. ✿

Content

- page 4 • Doing The Right Thing
A Practical Guide on Legal Matters
for Churches in Malaysia

NEWS

- page 5 • Kota Tinggi Flood
士古来 (皇后花园) 卫理公会赈灾记
- page 6 • Hidup Yang Kelimpahan
Wesley Methodist Church, Segamat
- page 7 • Louise Leonard McGraw, 1915-2006
- page 8 • A Trip Into The Sarawak Interior
- page 10 • Dr. John Sung Sang Chieh,
The Great Chinese Evangelist

Faith to Live By:

An Exposition of the Apostles' Creed

- page 12 • 11. Ascension and Session



Chinese Articles

This month we include two news reports in Chinese. It has been part of our plans for some time to print news items and articles in Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil and perhaps even Iban. This year we aim to feature such articles in at least four issues.

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To those who celebrate the Chinese New Year season greetings to you all from Bishop Hwa Yung and everyone here at Methodist HQ.

Christopher Cheah
Executive Editor ❀

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Doing The Right Thing

A Practical Guide on Legal Matters for Churches in Malaysia,
Kairos Research Centre, 2004



The full text of this legal handbook has been made available **online with free access** by Kairos Research Centre.

Sale of this book has been brisk and almost sold out. This is possibly because “of a growing concern in the mind of the public sparked off by recent trends in legislation that have led to the erosion of religious freedom, and by a series of disputes involving Shariah and Civil law ...” writes Dr Ng Kam Weng, the Research Director of Kairos.

The aim of this handbook is to help Christians and church leaders be well-informed about matters concerning law and religion in our society, and to have confidence to “exercise their Constitutional right to profess, practise

and propagate the Christian faith with wisdom and courage that comes from knowing that they have done the right thing in the eyes of the law.”

The book was put together with the help of several Christian lawyers. As laws go out of date and new ones are made, as well as new issues arise that must be addressed, this book needs to be up to date. So instead of reprinting this 2004 book Kairos has decided to offer it for free online.

The handbook can be downloaded from the following links.

<http://krisispraxis.ath.cx>
<http://www.kairos-malaysia.org> ❀



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士古来（皇后花园） 卫理公会赈灾记

This is a report about the efforts of the Chinese Methodist Church, Skudai to help the flood-affected in Kota Tinggi. About 52 people from churches in the Johor Baru area provided cooked food, canned food, candles and other provisions to flood victims. Over the few days they also helped to clean their houses and a primary school. This article is taken from Southern Bell, the CAC news magazine. Editor

2006年即将结束之际，南马连续几天下了联绵不断的豪雨，造成了让人始料不及的百年大水灾。无情的大水冲毁了许多人的家园、财物，也夺走一些宝贵的性命。

友人来电邀我参与重灾区之一的哥打丁宜 (Kota Tinggi) 的赈灾工作，并希望有更多弟兄姐妹一起去，因为当地需要更多人力资源。当晚我即在教会的祷告会中呼吁，想不到反应非常热烈，共有30几个人报名。

12月28日早上，我们在教会聚集祷告后，就带着清洁用具浩浩荡荡地出发了。难得的是万富奇牧师在百忙中也和我们一起去灾区服事，他的行动给了我们一帖强心剂。

到了哥打丁宜的伯大尼教会，我们得知有些地区水还未退，水位高及膝盖，所以有一定的危险性。我们依从该教会传道人的安排，弟兄们到灾区派送午饭（其中100份是本堂奉献的），姐妹们则到一间已经退水的五金店帮忙清洗。

第二天，我们一部分人留在伯大尼教会，对着堆积如山的旧衣服进行分类及整理的工作。另一部分的人则到附近住宅区分派食物及日用品。从屋子墙外所留下的水迹，可以看到之前几天的水位已经淹没了一层楼。当我们将食物送到灾民面前的时候，他们都非常饥饿，连友族同胞也不畏忌地吃我们的食物，幸好当地教会知道他们的需要，所预备的食物都是Halal的。

12月30日，是参与人数最多的一天，共有52人到灾区去服事。派完午饭后，大约15名弟兄到灾区分派了150包米，还有罐头、卫生纸、蜡烛等用品。另外30多人则到灾民的家帮助他们清洗家园。这天的工作很多，结果当弟兄姐妹回到伯大尼教会时已经夜深人静了。当地的同工们都赞赏本堂弟兄姐妹落力的帮忙，并表达深深的感谢。

接下来的一天是主日，因此我们没参与赈灾。

2007年的第一天，我们被分配到哥打丁宜培华小学去清洗。眼见美丽的校园已被摧毁得布满泥浆，花草都枯萎了，令人心痛不已。我们分别到三座大楼的课室，将里头的桌椅搬出来洗刷。这些桌椅都弥漫着泥浆的臭味，想到第二天这些莘莘学子们要忍受这些异味，我们都更加用力地擦洗，希望孩子们能有个舒适的环境来学习。经过整天的劳碌，总算让校园看起来更整洁，虽然还有很多地方我们无法及时将它弄干净。该校副校长很感激我们的帮忙，她对教会的印象也更好了，感谢主！

新山区许多教会不分宗派、不分种族地在哥打丁宜的服事，成为当地茶余饭后的话题，他们都赞赏教会的雪中送炭，愿一切荣耀都归给主！

这次的赈灾工作给了我们许多的学习。我们要谢谢本堂执事们的支持，出钱出力。谢谢参与的弟兄姐妹尽心尽力地服事，看到你们的热心，我被你们感动了。也要感谢伯大尼教会和盼望之家的配搭，还有默默在厨房为我们预备午餐晚餐的弟兄姐妹。在这里也希望那位在预备食物时被热锅油烫伤的姐妹早日出院，求主记念她的付出，并医治她。最后，要感谢全能的天父，是他的爱激动我们愿意去服事，愿灾区的每个人都从弟兄姐妹身上经历神的爱。✦



• Main street Kota Tinggi.



• View from a boat.



Hidup Yang Kelimpahan Kem Remaja 2006

Wesley Methodist Church, Segamat

As Soh Yi Zhern packed his belongings for the Kem Remaja 2006, he thought it would be a regular camping trip that he heard from friends. He had to remember to bring along a laundry list of items; from shampoo to fork and spoon.

It was a fair day on 29 November 2006 when he reported with some 35 campers at the Wesley Methodist Church to board a bus to take them to Pusat Rekreasi Felcra, Tebing Tinggi, located about 15km from Segamat. More than half of the campers were non-believers. It was a breezy ride along narrow asphalt roads surrounded by mostly rubber plantations as campers chatted with their own friends. Soh, 14, from a non-Christian family only wondered what was in store for him in this camp.

"It is so mind boggling to think that I have come to know the Lord Jesus as my personal savior," quipped Soh speaking to me in *Mandarin* a week after the camp. "My only concern then was how my parents were going to react and accept my decision. I struggled with such thoughts. But my heart is open to receive Him. I decided to go forward to accept Him and to experience abundant life in Jesus Christ," he added.

Abundant life (John 10:10) was the theme of the camp and in Bahasa Malaysia reads *Hidup Yang Berkelimpahan*. This blared loudly in large bold prints on all campers' T-shirts. Indeed, the Holy Spirit was moving in the hearts of the young people. Many learnt about God and His purpose for mankind for the first time through the various sessions of discussion and activities they engaged in.

Alan Seow, the field director of Scripture Union (SU) Camping Ministry and Runa Wan Eng, the camp speaker, a field staff of SU Youth Ministry, led the youths in the four days and three nights' camp. Runa's fluency in Bahasa Malaysia was phenomenal. From the Kayan tribe in Sarawak, her sharp and detailed illustrations on the discussion topics gave much insights to those who were curious to find out more about God.

The workshop and activities were gamely written by Seow and revolved around the study of God-Man-Sin-Redemption. All participants took turns to present their thoughts and opinions in the assignment, regardless of their fluency in the national language and everyone gave their listening ear.





In the afternoon, the campers played obstacle games and did many physical workouts with their camp commander, Foo Yuen Chow and an officer from the Pusat. To rekindle their sense of rural living, they were all divided into five groups bearing names from the indigenous groups in Malaysia namely, *Bajau, Iban, Kadazan, Penan and Semai*.

“God is good. We experienced good weather through out the four days,” said Foo with a deep sense of gratitude. “Although it drizzled a little on the first evening it did not disrupt the planned activities at all. Praise God!” he exclaimed.

“Many sacrificed their time and put in a lot of effort in organizing and preparing for this event,” said Jason Low, the chairman of this year’s camp.

In the midst of preparing for a mission trip to Myanmar, Rev. Christopher Rao (TRAC National Youth Director) and his wife, Rhema, came to Segamat a week before to conduct training for all facilitators. Thereafter, they joined as camp facilitators for two groups and ministered to the youths.

Ling Kay Teck, a pre-medical student, had to defer his university placement interview to a later date in order to sit in as a facilitator and play the role of a photographer. Ling also won the hearts of the youths with his hilarious rendition of action songs.

Elizabeth, another facilitator from an Anglican church in Segamat, gave her testimony. “It is a valuable experience to work together with so many young people,” she said happily.

“Bringing the gospel to the youth is always the motivating force behind the efforts in organizing the camp. We also want the Christian youths to grow in their walk with the Lord when their lives are touched” said Low.

“We will see you again next year!” affirmed Seow energetically before he rushed off to another camp in Tapah.

Ms. CASSIE FOO
Wesley Methodist Church,
Segamat ❀

Louise Leonard McGraw, 1915-2006

Louise McGraw passed away on 22 November 2006 in Centreville, Indiana at the age of 91. She had had leukemia and Alzheimer’s for some time. The wife of Rev. Eugene McGraw, they had been married 65 years and have two children, Bonnie and Paul. Below is an excerpt from the obituary prepared by Paul McGraw that was sent to *Pelita Methodist*.

In 1939, the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Church offered her a position teaching in Japan and she was eager to go, but her father persuaded her to go to British Malaya instead. She survived dengue fever in Kuala Lumpur and taught at Lady Treacher Girls’ School in Taiping. She was the organist at the Methodist Church in Taiping and

married the pastor, Eugene McGraw ... in 1941.

After World War II, the McGraws returned to Sarawak in Borneo and Malaya as missionaries in Sibu, Sitiawan, Malacca and Penang. Louise was an English teacher and librarian in several Methodist schools ... To this day the McGraw family receives letters from old students who remember Louise as a great teacher and remember the Shakespeare plays that she produced and directed. “When shall we meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?”

After retirement from mission work in 1971 Louise ... was active in the Methodist Church in Centreville until stricken by Alzheimer’s which took away almost all her memories of her wonderful life.

Louise was born in 1915 in Holbrook, Massachusetts ... [and] traced her ancestry back to the Pilgrims who landed in Plymouth in 1620. ❀



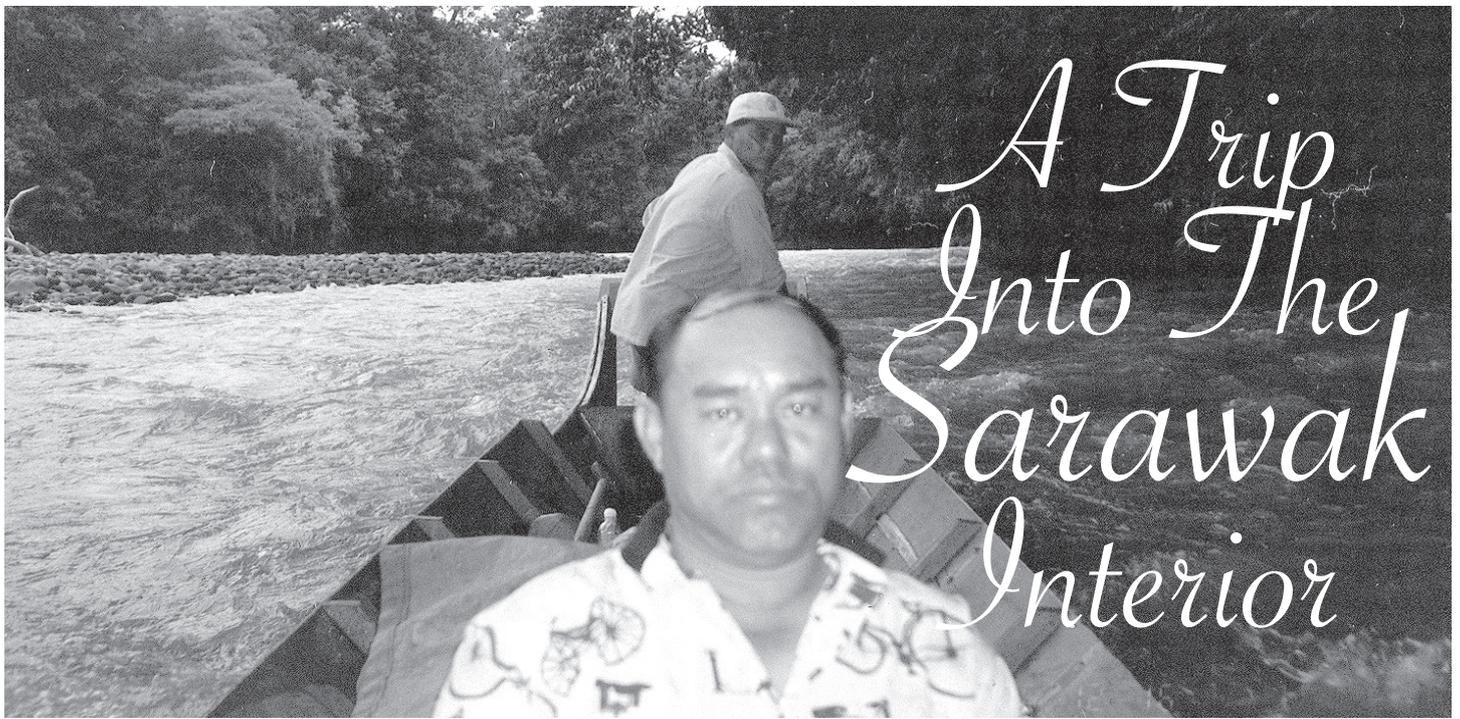
• Sitiawan, Perak, Malaysia, 1953.



• Melacca, Malaysia, 1963.



• Centreville, IN, 2005.



• Mr. Robert Jingga.

Bishop's Page



• Bishop Hwa Yung

For years I have heard of the work of the Sarawak Iban Annual Conference (SIAC) in the interior of Sarawak. I was told that many longhouses there have become Christian, but some of these communities were being visited by a pastor only once in several months because they were difficult to reach. I finally got the opportunity to see things for myself in December when for three days six of us traveled in a long boat up the Mujong and Balleh Rivers, which flow into the Rejang.

Rev Bangau Amping, the DS for Kapit District, led the party, together with two other pastors, Rev. Arthur Taboh and Rev. Edmund Jamboh. The others were Mr. Robert Jingga, the Chairman of the SIAC Board of Finance, my daughter, Xin Ping, and myself.

We left Kapit and went up the Rejang first, then the Balleh, before turning into

the Mujong. It took us six hours, sitting under the hot sun in an open boat, to get to Ulu Mujong, the last longhouse on the Mujong, which had twenty-five *bileks*, i.e. families. The next day we left at 8.30 a.m., stopped at two other longhouses along the way, before finally arriving at 6.30 p.m. at Entawau, which is up the Balleh near the Indonesian border. This was a much bigger community with three longhouses, with about 100 *bileks* altogether, with a primary school, clinic and electricity and water supply. It was also the place where the first Iban baptism by Methodist missionaries took place.

All through the journey we saw numerous longhouses along the river banks. Many were part of the Methodist Church, but there were some Roman Catholic and SIB ones, as well as others which are yet to be evangelized. The third day was rainy and wet. Fortunately, the journey down river was much faster and we got to Kapit town in three short hours. We were cold and wet, but that was quickly taken care of by a hot shower and hot coffee.

Altogether, it was a most delightful and eye-opening trip for the three of us first-timers, Robert, Ping and myself. The virgin jungles were a joy to behold, though so much had been sadly spoilt by the logging, which had also made the river murky with silt. Old-timers tell us that the rivers used to teem with fish but no more. Still, it is a beautiful stretch of God's creation to which I would happily return!

I am really glad that I made the trip because it opened my eyes to the real situation concerning the work in the Iban longhouses. There are over a hundred Methodist longhouses in the Kapit district. Every one has a *tuai sembayang*, a worship leader, who leads in weekly worship in the absence of the pastor. It is clear that there is still much that needs to be done in terms of teaching. For example, in the four communities we visited, we could still see some things belonging to the old spirit worship being practiced. Clearly the work of discipling still has some way to go.

Furthermore, I am told that there are still probably a few hundred longhouses in the whole area that have yet to be reached by the gospel. It is a field ripe for harvest. Many of our churches are going literally all over the world to do missions. But we appear to be overlooking a wide open door—and an urgent need—right in our back garden!

Perhaps some will ask why can't the Iban pastors themselves do more? I use to ask the same question myself. But now I have come to realize that the question is not so simple because the cost of river travel is so high. To give us an idea of what is involved, for the three-day trip that we made the cost of petrol alone was about RM300. This does not include the cost of the boat and engine, and their maintenance. Then I found out that these same pastors receive a monthly allowance of only RM90 for petrol, and they are

expected to buy the boat and engine at their own expense!?! That is far worse than giving a pastor of a large church in one of our cities RM90 for traveling allowance, with a car maintained entirely at his own expense, and expect him to carry out his work effectively. Yet none of city churches would treat their pastors so niggardly.

Clearly the Methodist Church in Malaysia as a whole must rethink how we may find a solution together with our brothers and sisters in SIAC. This problem cannot be solved by merely giving more money to the SIAC. Rather it will require us to sit down with them side by side to develop a coherent plan of evangelization of the longhouses up the Rejang and its tributaries, and work together to release the necessary manpower and finances to do the job.

But one thing did give me much encouragement during the trip: I saw that there are pastors who have a real commitment to their calling. For example, to see our three weather-beaten Iban pastors navigating the rivers over the three days reminded me of the early Methodist 'circuit riders' in the American wild west, who went on horse back at great personal cost to preach the gospel from settlement to settlement. Such people need our prayer and support in every way possible. Let me therefore end with the personal story of Rev Bangau, the DS. He started

training at MTS, Sibiu, in 1969. After three years, he was sent out for three years of practical training in 1972. Being paid a RM60 allowance monthly, he lasted exactly one month. Off he went to work in a timber camp which was paying three times more. One night, around 3 a.m., he was woken by a voice which said: 'Go to work!' So naturally he asked the Chinese *mandor*, his supervisor, whether it is time for work. The *mandor* roundly scolded him in the foulest of language for disturbing his sleep! A few nights later, around 4.30 a.m., the same thing happened, and he got another shelling from the *mandor*!



Puzzled by what happened, Rev Bangau talked to another Iban, a nominal Christian, about the matter. His friend, Luta, told him in good Iban fashion that clearly God was calling him to go back to work as a pastor! Rev. Bangau quickly

went back to see his DS, the Rev. Charles Chundy, who welcomed him back with the words, 'I have not shown the Board of Ministry your resignation yet, so you can resume your posting!' Rev. Bangau told me that when he finally started as a full-fledged pastor in 1976, his salary was RM180 a month. Of the seven who started training with him in 1969, he alone has remained in the ministry. All the others left along the way for better paying jobs!

Many of us from the outside have expressed concern over the years for the Iban Conference. But when I think of my good friend, Rev. Bangau, I know that God has not forgotten them. In fact, I can see Him actively at work in their midst, calling forth a people who, in spite of their weaknesses, limitations and failures, are on their way to becoming a church that will wonderfully glorify God and be an effective instrument for His work of redemption in Malaysia. Will you join me to pray that the wind of the Spirit will quickly speed this process along?

(Editor's note: Rev. Bangau and his colleagues need a new boat for their ministry. The cost is about RM1500. If you would like to make a contribution, please send a cheque made out to 'The Methodist Church in Malaysia' to the Editor, designating it for the Iban boat fund.) ♣



• Mr. Robert Jingga and some members from the longhouses.

Dr. John Sung Sang Chieh, The Great Chinese Evangelist



John Sung was probably the greatest preacher and evangelist that China produced. He was instrumental in the revival of the church in China during the period 1931 to 1939. This extended even to the Chinese communities in South-East Asia. He combined fervent prayer with powerful preaching that brought tens of thousands of converts to Jesus Christ.

Dato Sri Yao Ping Hua remembers his one and only visit to Sibul, Sarawak and attributes the revitalization of the Methodist Church in Sarawak at that time to Dr. Sung. Dato Yao shares this story with us. (Editor)

In the middle of 1936, some Foochow and Henghua Methodist church leaders in Sibul received word from friends and relatives in China that Dr. Sung Sang Chieh, a prominent Chinese evangelist, would like to visit Sibul to hold a big evangelistic rally. Those leaders were keen to receive Dr. Sung.

Before giving their response they consulted Rev. G.V. Summers, who was appointed to fill the position of Resident Missionary left vacant by the death of Rev. James M. Hoover from malaria in 1935. But Rev. Summers was not keen as he felt it was not necessary to hold any evangelistic rally in Sibul. However, the church leaders ignored his objection and proceeded to invite Dr. Sung and made preparations for his visit.

Dr. Sung arrived in Sibul on 20 September 1936 and the next day conducted the

evangelistic rally in Masland Methodist Church, Island Road. It was held over ten days till 1 October. Every day Dr. Sung preached for three sessions viz.: morning, afternoon and night. The whole church was packed with participants from Sarikei, Binatang, Kanowit, Kapit and Mukah.

He set aside one session to preach at the Henghua settlement, four miles away from Sibul town; one session to pray for the sick people; and another session purely to pray for those who came forward to repent their sins.

The large audience did not feel tired listening to him. He preached so loudly and yet still managed to speak in a good voice. Dr. Sung prayed for one hour before and after each session in his room. No wonder he showed no signs of tiredness because God had bestowed upon him strength and courage.

Dr. Sung's message dwelt mainly on repentance, redemption, salvation, resurrection, living in holiness, the sacrificial love of our Lord Jesus Christ, preaching the everlasting gospel to the world and the second coming of the Lord. These subjects were pertinent to the spiritual life of the church members, but they seldom heard these sermons from the local preachers or catechists.

He led the audience to understand his sermons gradually from the simple to the deeper meaning. When he described the parable of the prodigal son, he touched the hearts of the audience and moved them to feel regret and sadness; the story about the rich man and Lazarus startled the audience. When he related the crucifixion of Jesus and the blood shed, it aroused the audience to feel deep sympathy with Jesus' afflictions.

One particular incident showed the way Dr. Sung preached. One afternoon a Chinese doctor came to the church while he was preaching. As he was being helped to find a seat Dr. Sung stretched out his right hand, as was his usual style,

pointed his finger at the audience and cried out loudly, "Repent you sinners, for the kingdom of heaven is near!"

When the doctor heard that outburst he thought Dr. Sung was rebuking him. He immediately rushed to the sanctuary and shouted at Dr. Sung, "How dare you call me a sinner, I must teach you a lesson for defaming me."

This doctor was very popular, a physician as well as a cardiologist. He was arrogant and full of conceit. He became very wealthy through his practice but he was also a great gambler. He lost much of his wealth through gambling debts.

[John Sung, in his diaries, mentions this doctor. He brought some drunks and with other means tried to disrupt the meetings. He offered to pay \$500 to anyone who was healed after John Sung had prayed for him or her.

During a testimony meeting many healings were publicized. A lunatic was cured. A deaf person received hearing. An epileptic and a terminally diagnosed patient were healed by the Lord. Many such testimonies of actual healings rendered the doctor speechless. Editor]

Many years later this doctor returned to Singapore, where he lost all his money, deserted by his family and died a pauper. Some Christians in Sibul observed that had he sat down to hear Dr. Sung that afternoon, and took his advice to accept the Lord Jesus Christ he might have had an entirely different life.

[John Sung noted in his diaries that when he left Sibü on 2 October 500 people sent him off at the dock "with tears, songs, and firecrackers." Editor]

The results of the ten day rally were as follows:

- ⊙ 1583 persons writing letters admitting their sins;
- ⊙ 500 copies of the Bible were bought and signed by Dr. Sung;
- ⊙ More than 60 sick persons were cured after Dr. Sung offered prayers;
- ⊙ A sum of \$1,054.05 was collected as donation to the Church;
- ⊙ 114 evangelistic teams were formed to spread the gospel in the suburban and rural areas. Each team went out every Sunday afternoon, carrying a cross and a small triangular flag, singing short songs praising the Lord and were not ashamed of the gospel Jesus Christ;
- ⊙ The rally revived the spirituality of the believers and as a result the Sarawak Methodist Church became more lively than hitherto;

its members more zealous in their faith and having a longing for deeper insight into the inner aspects of Christianity.

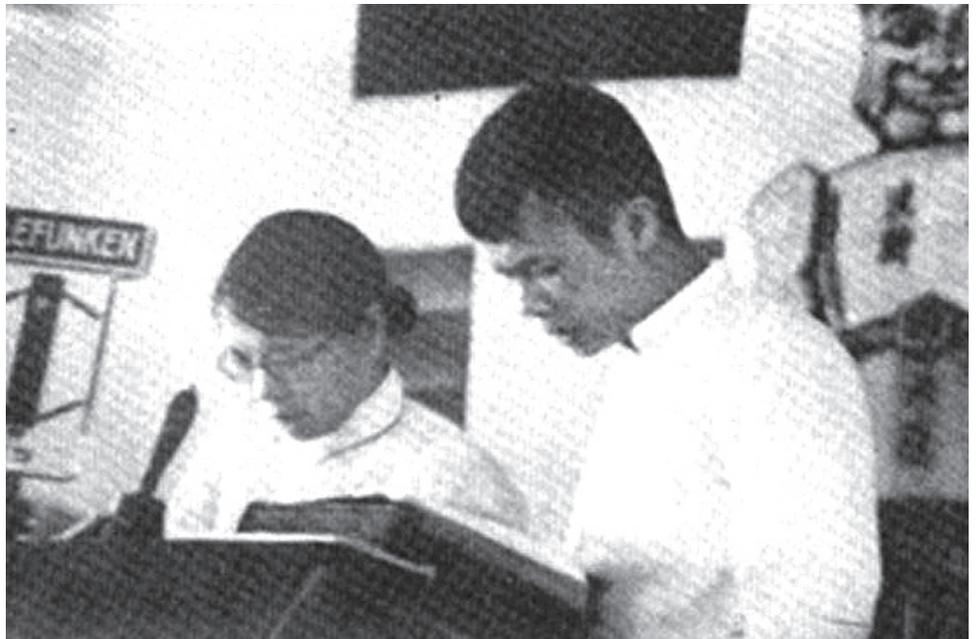
Dr. Sung's visit to Sibü was timely whilst the Methodist Church members were still in mourning over the death of Rev. James Hoover, their great leader who loved, helped and guided them for 32 years.

I was born and bred in a Christian family. Both my parents were devout Christians. My father was an ordained pastor of the Sarawak Methodist Church. He enrolled me and my younger brothers and sisters to study in the Sunday Schools where we were taught about God the Creator, Jesus

Christ the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit the Comforter.

During Dr. Sung's visit, I was thirteen years old, studying in the English Department of the Chung Hwa High School, Sibü. I was only able to attend the afternoon and evening sessions of the rally. Dr. Sung's messages convincingly touched my heart and urged me to go forward to the altar to repent my sins. It was Dr. Sung who brought me to our Lord Jesus Christ and I accepted Him as my personal saviour.

Dato Sri Yao Ping Hua
Chin Fu Methodist Church
Kuching, Sarawak. ✚



Farewell and Welcome

The Methodist HQ said farewell to Patricia Lim at the end of January this year after five years serving in the Trustees Office. She has this to say of her time with us, "As I look back, my stay here has been full of wonderful memories. Friendships that have developed are precious, especially friends who have worked together with me."

Patricia will help her husband in his itinerant teaching ministry after a much needed rest.

And a warm welcome to Amelia Tan who will take over Patricia's role at the Trustees Office. Having worked here on a short stint two years ago she writes, "I want to thank everyone for giving me another opportunity to serve the Lord. CHEERS!" ✚



• Amelia.



• Patricia.

11. Ascension and Session

*he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*

While much has been written on the resurrection of Christ, the literature on his ascension is very slight. Yet, the New Testament unequivocally testifies to the ascension of Christ into heaven where he is seated with God the Father. During his earthly ministry, Jesus alluded to his ascension and return to the Father more than once (John 6:62; 14:2, 12; 16:5, 10, 28; 20:17). Among the writers of the Gospels Luke presented the most detailed account of the ascension of Christ into heaven. In Luke 24:50-51 we read this description of the ascension: 'When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven' (Cf. Acts 1:6-11).

Other authors of the New Testament also referred to the ascension of Christ. Writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul alluded to the ascension when he spoke of Christ's resurrection and session in heaven. 'That power is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms' (Eph 1:19b-20; 4:8-10; 1 Tim 3:16).

Some modern theologians have argued that the concept of the ascension is based on an outmoded cosmology and therefore the ascension should not be taken literally but should be interpreted as either a myth or a symbol. These theologians maintain that it is impossible for the modern scientific mind to take a physical ascension of Christ into outer space seriously. But to mythologise the ascension in whatever way is to introduce a radical revision to the way in which the Church has always understood the event.

The Church has always maintained that Jesus' ascension is to be understood literally as his physical departure to glory, his return to his Father.

The ascension, like the resurrection, signals a new beginning, the coming into being of a new reality, and as such it cannot be fully described or contained within our space-time framework. The ascension is an event that is real: it is not a myth or a mere symbol that points to something else . . .

The ascension is Christ's entrance into the freedom of the exalted life.

But even those who wish to take the literal interpretation of the ascension seriously find it difficult to understand or envision the event. If we think of the ascension purely in the categories of space and time, then the ascended Jesus must be envisioned as floating somewhere in outer space. According to this interpretation, 'heaven' itself must be interpreted as a 'location', a 'place' in terms of our space-time categories.

Like the incarnation, the virgin birth and the resurrection, the ascension must be treated as a paradox. Because of the

incarnation, because the Son of God really took upon himself human flesh, the ascension cannot be simply spiritualised. In similar vein, since the resurrection of Christ was a *bodily* resurrection, his ascension is also bodily in nature. This means that the ascension must be taken literally: the resurrected Jesus did ascend into the skies.

But the ascension is more than just a reality that takes place within our space and time. The ascension, like the resurrection, signals a new beginning, the coming into being of a new reality, and as such it cannot be fully described or contained within our space-time framework. The ascension is an event that is real: it is not a myth or a mere symbol that points to something else. But the ascension is at the same time an event that is totally unique and as such it cannot be entirely contained within the categories of space and time as we know them. The ascension is Christ's entrance into the freedom of the exalted life.

The second statement also presents the same difficulties when we bring to it questions that are shaped by our understanding of space, that is, when we ask, Where is the Father at whose right hand the ascended Christ is seated? This statement is presented in a picture language that comes from a practice commonly found in oriental courts where the chief minister would stand or sit at the king's right hand where he will exercise the authority that is delegated to him.

The writers of the New Testament also use this image to denote the authority and power of Christ (Colossians 3:1). This image can be traced to the Old Testament, especially the psalms where it is applied



to the king of Israel: 'The Lord says to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"' (110:1). When used to describe the risen and ascended Christ, this image is meant to signal the fact that the victorious Christ is exalted and now reigns from heaven.

We must remember that this High Priest is not a stranger to temptations, having experienced them himself. Because he is one 'who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin', he is able to identify with us and sympathise with our weaknesses. At the right hand of God, Christ is the compassionate intercessor who brings our grief, our pains and our struggles to the Father.

But ascension and session also point to the fact that at the right hand of the Father, the exalted Christ rules as king. If the first aspect of this statement points to the mercy of Christ, the second points to his authority and kingship.

The theological significance of this statement should not be marginalised and

under-estimated. The New Testament, especially Hebrews, describes Christ as our High Priest, who has obtained God's forgiveness for us so that we may approach the holy God with faith and confidence. In the Old Testament, the Jewish high priest enters the holy of holies of the Temple bringing with him the blood of an animal sacrifice to sprinkle on the mercy seat as a symbol of the atonement. Christ, the High Priest of our Confession, has done the same for us; but his sacrifice is far greater than the sacrifices brought by the high priests of Israel.

Christ, who is alone without sin, has offered up his life on the cross on behalf of the world, for the atonement of the sins of humanity. Unlike the high priests of Israel who had to offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as for the sins of the people, Christ, being sinless, had no need to do this. Unlike the high priests who had to repeat this ritual every year, Christ's offering and sacrifice is definitive, made 'once and for all' (Heb 9:12; cf. 9:25f., 28). It is a perfect and sufficient sacrifice that need never be repeated again. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer offers a succinct and lucid description of the sacrifice on the cross when it describes it as 'a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world'.

Having made available the forgiveness of God and having dealt with the guilt and shame of our sin, Christ has now 'to appear for us in God's presence' (Hebrews 9:24). At the right hand of God, Christ continues to be our advocate to the Father (1 John 2:1), pleading our case and defending us. Also at God's right hand, Christ continues to intercede

for us (Roman 8:34) just as he has done so during his earthly life and ministry (John 17:6-26).

We must remember that this High Priest is not a stranger to temptations, having experienced them himself. Because he is one 'who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin', he is able to identify with us and sympathise with our weaknesses. At the right hand of God, Christ is the compassionate intercessor who brings our grief, our pains and our struggles to the Father.

But ascension and session also point to the fact that at the right hand of the Father, the exalted Christ rules as king. If the first aspect of this statement points to the mercy of Christ, the second points to his authority and kingship. His kingship, to be sure, is presently not acknowledged by all. But although the kingdom of God is currently hidden, Christ's kingship is irrevocable, and his reign will one day be revealed to and acknowledged by all.

Thus Paul, writing to the Christians at Corinth, could assert that Christ 'must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet'. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul emphasised that this will indeed be the case at the end of time. God, Paul maintains, has placed 'all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way' (Eph 1:22-23).

This prepares us for the next statement of the creed which announces that the one who is risen, ascended and seated at God's right hand will return as Judge to bring God's justice and kingdom to earth.

Devotional Reading

“But I trust you LORD.”

Meditations for the Lent season

DAY [1]
KEEPING CLOSE TO GOD
21/2/07
READ: Psalm 1: 1 – 6
Ash Wednesday

When there is joy in our hearts usually we have songs on our lips. But what happens when there is heaviness in our hearts? When God’s servants rejoiced, they praised God and when they struggled, they did not struggle alone but went to God with their struggles. Today is **Ash Wednesday**, the beginning of another Lent Season; God desires that we are in contact with Him always. We need to look to Him with praises when we rejoice and come to Him with our petitions when we struggle.

By God’s grace we have come into a relationship with Him. To continue in this relationship, the psalmist in today’s text mentions that we ought to **refrain** from certain places and people. We need to keep away from the company and the counsel of the wicked (v.1). This means that though we can relate with all people, and this we should, but we are not to be influenced by those who have no relationship with God.

The psalmist then goes on to emphasize the importance of attending to the Word of God. This is not just a casual reading of the Word but we are to ‘*meditate day and night*’ (v.2). The psalmist assures that if we obey, then we would **reflect** in our lives God’s blessings. He says that such a life would be fruitful and prosperous. He further adds that these blessings would not be short term but continue even when circumstances around us change (v.3). Such a person is truly ‘blessed’ or happy.

The psalmist specifies the blessings that the God fearing person would **receive**. He plainly states that “*the LORD watches*

over” such a righteous person. This would mean receiving both God’s protection as well as provision. There is assurance of gain even when there is pain. This is in contrast to what happens to the wicked, for they “*will not stand in the judgment*” (v.5). The psalmist adds that “*the way of the wicked would perish*” (v.6). The prosperity of the wicked without God will not last.

As we begin another Lent Season, we are reminded that it is good for us to keep close to God and His Word. We are warned not to be influenced by those who have no relationship with God and who are not guided by His Word. As we seek to live as God desires, with our minds transformed by God’s Word (Rom. 12: 1 – 3), there will be blessings and struggles. For the blessings we thank God and for the struggles we trust Him.

Verse to reflect: “For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” (Psalm 1:6)

PRAYER: Father, help me keep close to you and your Word so that I may walk on the right path and trust you for my needs. Amen.



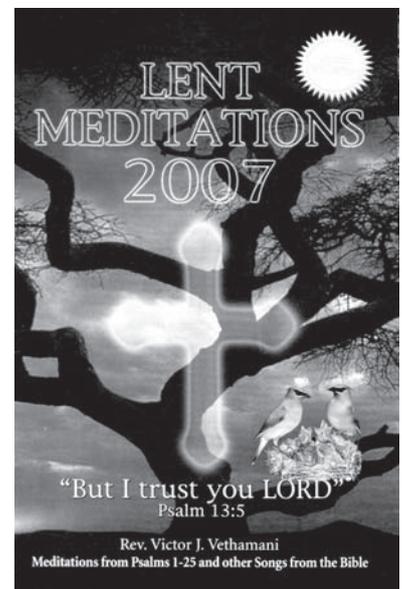
• The writer, Rev. Victor Vethamani is the District Superintendent of the Central District of the Tamil Annual Conference.

Rev. Victor Vethamani has been writing the Lent Meditations for the past ten years. This is the tenth book and he says, “perhaps the hardest to write.” These meditations are based on Psalms 1-25 and the “Hallelujah Psalms” (113-118)

and other songs in the Bible. Here is the first meditation for Ash Wednesday.

From the Foreword

Salvation experience brings the Christian into a relationship with Jesus Christ, but unless this relationship is rooted in God’s Word, the individual cannot grow into maturity. The joy of knowing our sins are forgiven is not enough; we must have the faith and strength to meet the daily challenges that come our way. The psalmists portray well their struggles in life and how by God’s grace they were able to face those challenges. Lent Meditations 2007 draws lessons from them with the theme “But I trust you LORD” (Psalm 13:5).



The book is published by PUSTAKA SUFES and cost RM6.00.

It is available at PUSTAKA SUFES, 354, Jalan 5/57, 46000 Petaling Jaya.

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New addition to Xiao En Group
(Estimated Date of Completion, Mid 2007)

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Xiao En Centre provides facilities for memorial services and funeral rites as well as counseling services for the grieving and bereaved. The Centre's design combines modern sensibilities & traditional values with an appraisal of human values, and represents our unflinching strength & commitment towards life services. The Centre is complemented with facilities and activities for the aging people, including art exhibitions and cultural events.

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詩 巫懷安堂與宣道堂于12月25日晚上在民眾會堂聯合舉行了聖誕晚會“和氏璧”。此舞台劇“和氏璧”講述了《韓非子》書中記載的一個感人故事.....

春秋時，楚國有一個名叫卞和的人，在荊山東麓的一個山上得到一塊玉璞（即是內部包含著玉的石頭），他的一生從此起了極大的轉變。原本有一個快樂的家庭和一個即將出生的孩子，但他知道他的使命就是將玉璞獻給國王，讓全天下的人都知道世界上有這麼一塊至寶。

他不理會妻子、師弟和村民們的反對，執意要將這塊玉璞獻給楚厲王。厲王心存疑慮，便叫玉匠進行鑑別。豈知玉匠看了之後說這只是一塊普通的石頭。厲王認為卞和欺君，砍斷了卞和的左腳。

厲王死后，楚武王繼位，卞和又捧著這塊玉璞去獻給武王。玉匠看了看還是說不過是普通的石頭。武王同樣認為卞和欺君，讓人砍了他的右腳。

蘇牧師說，在聖誕節觀賞“和氏璧”后，基督徒應該學習3個功課：

一) 要確信基督為至寶：我們得著基督后，就要傳揚祂。雖然在傳福音的工作上會面對許多的攔阻和困難，但是我們要堅持，因為唯有基督耶穌為引到永生的至寶。

二) 要相信三位一體的上帝必保守：保羅在傳福音的路上雖然被囚禁，但他仍然相信上帝會保守他。這信念讓他可以在最糟糕的情況下依然保持喜樂，持續傳福音的熱誠。

三) 要堅守健全的福音：主耶穌被差派到世上救贖世人，給我們有永生的盼望，這是聖誕節的意義。基督徒當確認這個信仰，以致成為忠心的福音使者。

在傳福音的工作上，許多客觀環境可能不容許我們，但有基督的愛在我們身上，我們就能為主做見證。基督是我們的至寶，因此我們要繼續信靠祂，繼續傳揚祂。（輝曉）

This play is about a man named Ho who discovered a beautiful, world class jade in a stone that changed his life. He decided to give this precious stone to the Emperor but he did not believe Ho and amputated his left leg. When another emperor came to power Ho again offered him the jade. But again the Emperor did not believe him and amputated his right leg. Ho mourned not for the loss of his legs but that the beautiful and precious jade was not recognized. But finally the third Emperor recognized this treasure and in memory of his faithfulness the king named the jade "Jade Ho".

President Su Chii Ann of SCAC drew three exhortations from this:

- *Truly believe that Jesus is our precious treasure.*
- *Our God will keep us no matter what circumstances we face.*
- *Hold fast to the complete Gospel and never compromise.*

和氏璧舞台劇慶聖誕

蘇慈安：基督是我們的至寶

武王死后文王繼位，卞和仍想去獻玉，可是他雙足俱廢，再也無法行走了，只好把玉璞抱在懷里，爬到荊山腳下哭了三天三夜。文王聽到有關卞和哭玉的消息，派人詢問他痛哭的原因。卞和回答說，他並非因為被砍斷了雙腳而悲傷，也不是為了女兒喪命、妻子失望、村民的離棄而傷心，他痛心的是珍貴的玉石被看成普通的石頭。

文王得知后，令玉匠仔細鑒定。這次，玉匠告訴文王石頭里面確實有一塊美玉。卞和的冤案被平反昭雪，文王將玉璧命名為“和氏璧”，紀念卞和的忠貞。

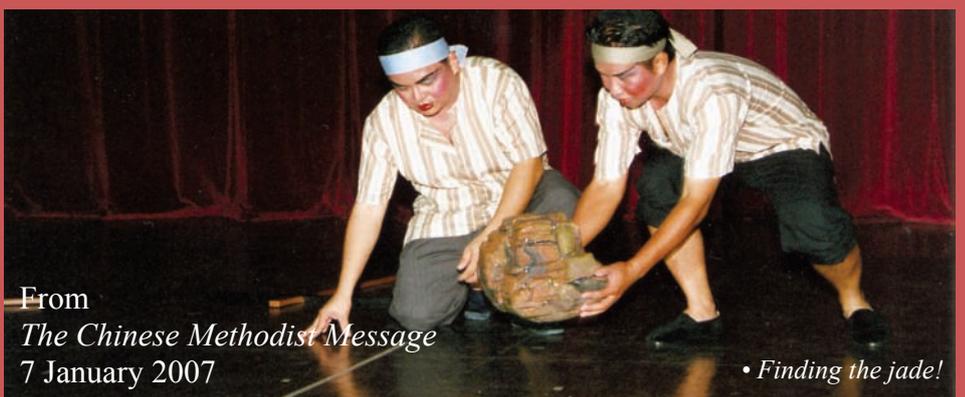
砂拉越華人年議會會長蘇慈安牧師在舞台劇過后分享信息時指出，卞和之所以如此堅持，是因為他相信世界上有真玉。今天，基督徒們也有一個至寶，就是主耶穌基督，而基督徒們也像卞和一樣有使命，就是讓全世界認識主耶穌。



• The 3rd King recognizes the precious jade.



• The main cast.



From
The Chinese Methodist Message
7 January 2007

• Finding the jade!