

PELITA METHODIST

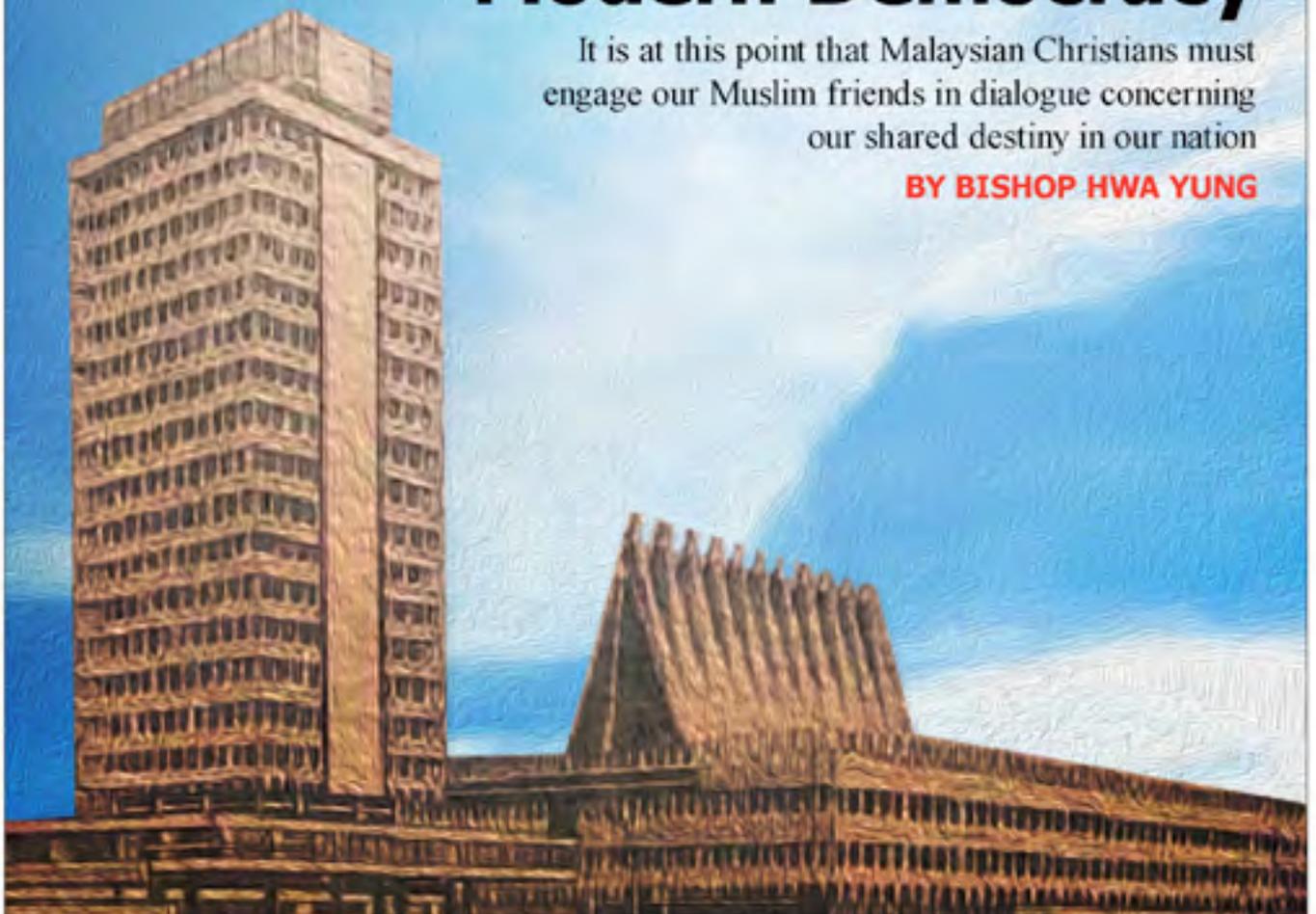
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Understanding the Christian Roots of Modern Democracy

It is at this point that Malaysian Christians must
engage our Muslim friends in dialogue concerning
our shared destiny in our nation

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG



Moment



General Conference Mission Consultation

Representatives from all Annual Conferences' (AC) Boards of Mission together with members of the Council of Mission gathered at Wisma Methodist from 12th-14th of April to discuss the coalition of mission work between the Annual Conferences. The framework of the consultation was derived from the Action Plan in Cross Cultural Mission which was written in the 20-Year Methodist Road Map. The consultation began with sharing from all the representatives. Most of the Conference Mission boards shared similar plans in mission work for example, commissioning missionaries overseas, short term mission trips for churches and to provide training.

"In those days, Moravian's ratio of missionaries per population was 60:1; whereas currently in SCAC, it is 800:1. Thus, we [SCAC] are targeting on commissioning at least one missionary from each church in 10 years time," Rev. Dr. Tie Kin Tai from

Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference (SCAC) emphasized on the board's vision.

The question that was asked most frequently was the one on finance. Rev. Dr. Tie mentioned that in SCAC, the board only provided financial support on software but rarely on hardware. Software provisions included salaries, allowances, claims and EPF while hardware included the setting up of churches and training centers. However, Sabah Provisional Annual Conference (SPAC) and Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) supported both software and hardware. An example cited was that CAC signed a memorandum of co-partnership with the Council of Churches in Thailand, and SPAC had just launched a Wesleyan Training Center in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Funds were collected from members of the church on Mission Sunday, through voluntary donations and through the adoption of mission-

aries by churches.

The formation of Malaysia Methodist Mission (MMM) was mooted at the conclusion of the conference. The budget on mission work is expected to be nearly 10 million ringgit per year. "A huge mission entrepreneurship," said Bishop when he touched on the formation of MMM. Since a huge amount of money is involved, proper guidelines concerning finance and property have to be drawn up. Besides that, Bishop Hwa Yung also emphasised the need for prayer so that God would raise up more men and women to work in the mission field, and that the congregations in our churches would understand the important role of prayer in mission. The blue print of the formation of MMM will be drawn by the Council of Mission. It will also deal with some outstanding issues such as partnership between Methodist churches locally and abroad, research centers for missions and preaching to indigenous people.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ISSAC NG

Contents

- PG. **Presidents' Corner**
04 **Chinese Annual Conference**
第卅六届华人年议会 | 会长演辞
with English translation
- PG. **Features**
07 **Chinese Annual Conference**
华人年议会第七届卫理少年大会 | 主题为《心
deep启航之学海无涯》
with English translation
- PG. **Cover**
08 **Christians & Nation-Building (5)**
Understanding the Christian Roots of Modern Democracy | It is at this point that Malaysian Christians must engage our Muslim friends in dialogue concerning our shared destiny in our nation
- PG. **Special**
12 **Rules Governing Marriage in the Methodist Church in Malaysia**
As approved by General Conference, 12-15 October 2011
- PG. **Arts**
14 **Books**
The Bible and the Ballot | In The Bible and the Ballot, six friends come together to wrestle with this question that is so paramount in living our lives as Malaysian Christians or Christian Malaysians.
- PG. **Petition**
15 **Petition Under Para. 507, Methodist Discipline**
10th Session of the General Conference of The Methodist Church in Malaysia

Malaysia National Prayer Network

BELOVED (mindful of God's will)

"For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:19-25 (ESV)



Pray that

| We may, in everything that happens, recognize the hand and will of God;
| We may be still, remember God and glorify Him in trying circumstances, even when we are humiliated, face injustice and our rights being violated;
| We "meet every offense that man commits against us with firm trust that God will watch over and care for us", that we may forgive and love
| We yield ourselves to be one with the suffering, crucified Christ, that we may understand what it is to be dead to sins, and to live unto righteousness;
| Our spiritual leaders to be filled with faith in the conquering power of suffering love, and fully comprehend the teaching of the Lamb of God; that the Holy Spirit and the light of His love and presence be their guide and strength
| We continue to lift up our brothers and sisters who face injustice and suffer for the name of Christ:

Continue to pray

| For our national, state and local leaders that they make laws and carry out their duties wisely, justly and courageously; that they desire to serve the rakyat rather than lord it over them; that humility may prompt them to be submissive.

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第卅六届华人年议会

会长演辞

回顾过去，献感恩！

经过一年，又到华人年议会检讨工作的时候。在众人同心合一下，我们有很多事工逐步开展：既有教师团契的成立，也有儿童事工“福儿院”的初步探讨。乐龄团契的元老营和青年领袖大会已告一段落，妇女会倾力支持的宣教事工在泰北设立华人教会，正如火如荼地展开。美门事工，巴生谷的青年崇拜（My Fellowship）等，全都在策划及进行中，真可谓是忙碌的一年。作诗的人说：“我的心哪，你要称颂耶和华！凡在我里面的，也要称颂他的圣名！我的心哪，你要称颂耶和华！不可忘记他的一切恩惠！”（诗篇103: 1-2）

兹将过去的一年工作简报如下：

A) 第二届全国卫理祷告会

4月30日至5月1日，第二届全国卫理祷告会于东马诗巫晶木酒店宴会厅顺利举行，共3400余教牧及会友出席。吾年议会则有343位代表，仅次于拥有2338位代表的砂拉越华人年议会。大会主题为：“宣扬圣经圣洁，更新转化国家”。讲员是南非卫理公会的信徒Mr. Graham Power，为世界祷告日的创办人，其祷告运动已传遍全世界每个国家。另一讲员则是台湾的夏忠坚牧师。

B) 世卫华联第六届青年领袖大会

7月15至18日，世界循道卫理宗华人教会联合会第六届青年领袖大会在吉隆坡马六甲皇冠酒店举行。主题为：“重燃壹百度”，由本人分享。东西马、香港、台湾、新加坡、澳洲等地约500位青年中，有58位回应上帝的呼召，包括吾会32位青年。

C) 宣教动态

1. 泰北华人事工的开展，设立第一间华人卫理教会。泰国华人卫理教会于2011年1月2日开始集会，当天主日崇拜者只有传道熊溢、林美英夫妇俩人。这几个月来，崇拜人数最多是32（包括小孩），平均为15-18人。由于是新教会，暂未决定要隶属泰国基督教总会哪个分区。

2. 历史的一刻→卫理公会与泰国

基督总会签署宣教伙伴备忘录。2月23日，本人与华勇会督、年议会文书黄约辉牧师、宣教部主席黄敬映传道代表卫理公会及华人年议会远赴泰国清迈与泰国基督教会（CCT）代表签署宣教伙伴谅解备忘录，签署仪式于当地时间下午6时进行。代表CCT的四人为总干事Rev. Sayam、主席Rev. Dr.Boonratna Boayen、副主席陈克仁博士、财政Chusak Wuthiwaropas 长老。出席观礼见证者约卅。

3. 华人年议会与CCT第二区签署福音伙伴备忘录。4月19日，本人与黄敬映传道再次前往泰国，主要是与泰国基督教总会第二区签署备忘录。这签署是必须的，我们设于泰国卫理公会阿作族宣教教区就隶属这区。签署地点位于清莱省CCT第二区总部，早上10时30分，代表本会签署者包括本人、黄敬映传道、泰北宣教区联络员王昆和牧师、庞忠昌传道，而CCT第二区代表则为区主席Rev. Sawang、区财政、区文书及另一位代表。

4. 探讨印度科钦宣教事工。印度科钦使徒教会（The Apostolic Ministries of India）的 T. S. Moses 牧师希望我们协助他们在印度的福音事工。9月20至23日，本人与宣教部文书郑建发牧师，赴此地考察，得到摩西牧师及其四位同工迎迓。此组织属下教会已由六个集会所增至八间教会，八位同工（皆无薪水），大小信徒500余，最大教会为200人。雪邦牧区已组15人宣教队，于明年5月间赴印度作宣教实地考察。目前，此教会已自行易名为“印度卫理使徒教会”（The Methodist Apostolic Ministries of India）。

D) 社会关怀部

1. 耶稣爱小孩→卫理儿童之家。未来三至五年内将建立首间儿童之家。经讨论后的地点有四：实兆远、雪州教区、怡保教区及檳城。“卫理儿童之家”将以年会社会关怀部事工方式进行，由年会统筹统办，统一名称、培训。由各教区成立“儿童之家管理委员会”管理，

建议教区长及教区社会关怀执行会主席为当然委员。

2. 鼓励各教区自行安排主办“圣诞欢乐满人间”庆典。

3. 美门残障事工。11月25至28日，无障碍旅游研讨与展览会，其活动宗旨为提升我国无障碍设施的重要性。

E) 产业部

年会、金宝牧区、金宝美门基金会获赠土地。4月23日，在吾会会友金宝区国会议员兼内政部副部长拿督李志亮弟兄穿针引线下，我们得到怡保Dasar Afdal (PK) Sdn.Bhd.赠送三块各一英亩的土地，皆位于离金宝市区5公里之遥的新发展区。

F) 基督教教育部

1. 青少年品格师资训练会。今年推动四场“青少年品格师资训练会”，日期、地点如下：3月14，南部/南中；3月16日，近打/曼绒；3月17日，中部/雪兰莪/东部；3月19日，北部。讲员是砂拉越青少年事工干事兼指导邱智祥牧师与洪佩文讲师，重点是以爱心培育青少年人，并用圣经教导塑造青少年的品格。

2. 以赛亚事工培训学校。今年已步入第十三个年头，是届毕业生有21位。牧职部计划在2012年重组课程内容，于2013年推出全新课程。

3. 幼稚园老师与园长培训营。5月31日至6月3日假卫理大厦举办，主题讲员：康真娥老师，灵修讲员为杜奇贤牧师。出席：老师111人，园长20人。

G) 妇女会

1. 卫理妇女领袖训练会。3月4至5日假卫理大厦举行，讲员为陈心坚牧师，共有80人参与。

2. 卫理妇女会第卅六届常年代表大会。9月1至3日，于檳城五洲酒店举行，共有227位代表，主题为：“扎根主道，深化灵命”。主题讲员为黄约辉牧师，查经讲员则是黄雪凌牧师，专题“领袖恩赐”由张许志枫师母主讲。

H) 乐龄团契

在主席拿督张东发弟兄的带领



下，今年推动两项事工。

1. 乐龄团契上海、温州旅游兼探访教会之行，3月3至10日，共20人参与。

2. 第四届年会元老营7月6至8日，在实兆远红土坎“Marina Island Resort”举行，主题为“用我一生”。此次元老营出席人数为历届之最，达415。尚有少许人被拒。

I) 成年团契

1. 3月12至14日，于邦咯岛办单身营，共68人参与，主题为：“走出自己的天空——情归何处”

2. 5月28至30日，于马六甲皇冠酒店办家庭营，主题：“爱——我的家3”，讲员：陈朝强牧师与郑仁娇师母。

3. 举办政治讲座会、企业人上班族餐会、羽球比赛等。

4. 教师团契推介礼感恩礼拜于3月19日下午5时，在吉隆坡卫理公会举行。当晚主席是范素霞姐妹，出席者约200余。

J) 青年事工

2012年起，迈向五个事工发展：献身者跟进事工、宣教事工、培训事工、联办青年营会和加强各区青少年事工联系。

K) 布道部

年议会自2005年底提呈开设布道所计划以来，从2006年11月至2011年11月12日，共设立27间布道所。

L) 巴生谷卫理青年崇拜→My Fellowship青年崇拜。

至2020年，吉隆坡与巴生谷周边城市人口将从六百万增至一千万，华裔人口占百分之五十，即四百至五百万。据报导，我国每三人就有一人是青少年。据福音机构调查，青少年较容易接受福音，大约75%信徒是于25岁以前信主。面对这么庞大的青少年人口，这是开拓“青年教会”，宣教、牧养青少年的契机！

建议凝聚巴生谷众教会青年的群体力量，开设以青少年为主的卫理

青年崇拜，称为“My Fellowship青年崇拜”，为他们提供活动、侍奉的空间。

结语：展望未来 再出发

领导与团队，取得成功的三大要素。8月29日，《南洋商报》副刊〈开心职场〉第2至3页，刊载汽车业名人凯文·盖斯科尔的访谈录。〈谈领导和团队〉一文谈到企业领导与团队取得成功的三大要素，相信可作为教牧和领袖领导的提示。

a) 一旦下决定，就要付出时间、努力、资源等去落实，快去做。

b) 避免冷淡，要创造实质架构或方向：向员工描绘成功和愿景，帮助他们达到目的，让他们知道你对他们的期望。

c) 身为领导人，除了信任并授权下属之外，更重要的是打造一个平台/架构，让员工和下属也能够作出贡献，发挥所长，做好工作。

拥有梦想能让年议会锐化焦点、确定目标。20年后，巴生谷中城及城市一带的教会将倍增。届时，年议会将取得惊人进展，许多迁入此区域的弟兄姐妹在灵性上将得益不少，也能彼此守望、相互问责。让我们学像保罗，向神支取能力：“我靠着那加给我力量的，凡事都能做。”（腓4:13）

English Translation Giving Thanks For The Past

It is time for the Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) to review our ministries after a year. Together we have served and we have expanded a few ministries, like the establishment of Teachers Fellowship and the Methodist Children's Home. The CAC Methodist Women Fellowship is very supportive of our mission work in Northern Thailand, especially in the building of

Chinese Churches. Beautiful Gate ministry and My Fellowship in the Klang Valley are ongoing ministries. All in all it was a busy year. However, we acknowledge God's hand in all that we were able to accomplish and as the Psalmist proclaims: "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his Holy Name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (Psalms 103: 1-2).

Below are the reports of all ministries from previous year.

A) Second Methodist Prayer Conference. The Second Methodist Prayer Conference was held from 30th April to 1st May, 2011 and the venue was Kingwood Hotel, Sib. 3400 ministers and lay members attended. CAC was represented by 343 representatives and we were the second largest group after the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference's (SCAC) which had 2338 representatives attending. The theme of the Conference was "Spreading Scriptural Holiness, Transforming the Nation". There were two speakers. The first was Mr. Graham Power from South Africa Methodist Church, who was also the founder of the Global Day of Prayer that had impacted the prayer movement world wide. The other speaker was Rev. James Hsia from Taiwan.

B) 6th World Federation of Chinese Methodist Churches (WFCMC) Youth Leaders Conference

The conference was held on 15th-18th July, 2011 at Makhota Hotel, Melaka. The keynote address was delivered by the President of CAC. There were altogether 500 participants representing Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Australia. 58 of them responded to God's call, 32 of whom were from CAC.

C) Missionaries

1. Northern Thailand Chinese Ministry. The first Thai Chinese Methodist Church was launched on 2nd January, 2011. The

worshippers included Pastor Xiong Yi, Mr. and Mrs. Lim. After a few months, the highest number of worshippers recorded was 32, including children. The average number of worshippers ranges between 15 to 18 people. The church is new and it has yet to be decided to which district it should belong under the Council of Churches in Thailand.

2. Historical Moment: Methodist Church in Malaysia signed a memorandum of co-partnership with the Council of Churches in Thailand (CCT). On 23rd of February, Bishop Hwa Yung, Rev. Dr. Ng Geok Hooi (Secretary of CAC), Pastor Wong King Lion (Chairman of the Evangelistic Department) representing CAC to Chiang Rai and I signed the memorandum of co-partnership with CCT. The four representatives from CCT were Rev. Sayam, Rev. Dr. Boonratna Boayen (Chairman), Dr. Chen Ke Ren (Vice Chairman), Chusak Wuthiwaropas (Treasurer). 30 others who were present acted as witnesses.

3. The Second Memorandum Signed with CCT. On 19th April 2011, Pastor Wong King Lion and I went to Thailand to sign the second memorandum with CCT. This agreement is necessary because of our mission field, The Arka Tribe is located in the Second District of CCT. The signing of the second memorandum took place in the headquarters of CCT's Second District located in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Representatives of CAC include Pastor Wong King Lion, Northern Thailand Mission District Communicator Rev. Wong Kong Hoo, Pastor Pang Zhong Cang and I. Representatives from CCT's Second District were Rev. Sawang (Second District Leader), the Treasurer and the Secretary.

4. The Apostolic Ministries of India Exploration. Pastor T.S. Moses from The Apostolic Ministries of India hoped that we would help them in mission work in India. Rev. Tay Kian Huat (Secretary of the Evangelism Department) and I decided to pay a visit to that place. We were welcomed by Rev. Moses and his team members. The church planting ministry had seen growth from 6 chapels to 8 churches. There were 8 volunteers serving the congregation of 500 members. Sepang Chinese Methodist Church organized a short mission trip to India in May. That mission work in India is now called The Methodist Apostolic Ministries of India.

D) Social Concerns

1. Jesus Loves Children: Methodist Children's Home. We intend to build the first Methodist Children's Home in the coming 3 to 5 years. There are four places proposed: Setiawan, Selangor District, Kinta District and Penang. The running model of the Home will be drawn up by the Annual Conference's Social Concerns Board. The committee for the Home will

include the District Superintendent and Director of Social Concerns.

2. Encourage all districts to organize Christmas celebrations.

3. Beautiful Gate Ministry. International Conference on Accessible Tourism was held on 25-28 November 2011 to discuss the importance of upgrading facilities for the disabled in our country.

E) Trustees

CAC, Kampar Chinese Methodist Church and Kampar Beautiful Gate were awarded land. On 23rd April, with the support and assistance from Datuk Lee Chee Leong (Member of Parliament cum Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs), three pieces of land of one acre each were donated by Dasar Afdal (PK) Sdn. Bhd. The pieces of land are located in a new development district which is 5km away from Kampar.

F) Christian Education

1. Training for Teachers in Teenagers Character Building Camp. The details of 4 training sessions are listed below: [table] The speakers are from the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference and there will be Bible based teaching on issues relevant to teenagers today.

2. Isaiah School. It is the 13th anniversary of the ministry and the last batch comprised 21 students. The CAC Board of Ministry will redesign the syllabus in 2012, and will publish it in 2013.

3. Training Camp for Kindergarten School Teachers and Principals. An estimated number of 111 of teachers and 20 principals are expected to attend the training camp that will be held from 31st May to 3rd June at Wisma Methodist.

G) Methodist Women Fellowship

1. Visited churches in Shanghai, Wen Zhou on March. 20 members participated.

2. Senior Fellowship Conference last year had the biggest participation ever. There were 415 members who took part in the conference.

H) Senior Fellowship

1. Visited churches in Shanghai, Wen Zhou on March. 20 members participated.

2. Senior Fellowship Conference last year had the biggest participation ever. There were 415 members who took part in the conference.

I) Adult Fellowship

1. Organized a camp for singles on 12th-13th of March at Pulau Pangkor.

2. "Love My Home" family camp was held at Makhota Hotel, Melaka on 28th-30th May.

3. Seminar on politics was held. A Badminton Competition was also held.

4. Teachers Fellowship was held on 19th

March at the Kuala Lumpur Methodist Church. 200 attended.

J) Youth Ministry

2012 onwards, there will be follow-up of those young people who have offered themselves for mission work. There will be training, youth camps and strengthening of connections among youth ministries in all districts.

K) Evangelical

Since 2005, 27 preaching points have been set up.

L) Youth Service in the Klang Valley: My Fellowship Youth Service

The year 2020 will see the estimated population increase in Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley from 6 million to 10 million. 50 percent of the population is Chinese, which is nearly 5 million people. According to statistics, one out of three persons, is a youth. Youths are more reluctant to accept the gospel. However, it will be a good challenge for us to witness to the young people. The churches in the Klang Valley will intentionally look into this potential and set up youth services for Methodist youths which will be named MY Fellowship Youth Service. We will provide activities, spiritual nurture and a platform for serving.

Conclusion: Looking Forward and Begin

Three Elements to Success in Leadership and Teamwork. An interview with a renowned car maker was published in the Nan Yang Siang Pau on 29th of August. In that interview, the key elements of success in Leadership and Teamwork were highlighted. These may prove useful to our pastors and leaders.

a) Once a decision is made, give it your time, effort and resources to ensure that it is finished and completed as quickly as possible.

b) Avoid mere discussion. You have to create a proper structure or direction to lead your staff towards success and help them to achieve the goal. In that way, they will be focused and be goal orientated.

c) As a leader, you have to learn to trust your staff. More importantly, you have to create a platform for your staff to contribute and do their best.

Having dreams and vision will make CAC more focused. Twenty years from now, churches in the Klang Valley will be doubled. There will not only be physical growth but our brothers and sisters in the district will also grow spiritually. At the same time they will watch over each other, and be mutually accountable. Let's learn from Paul and draw our strength from God: "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength," (Phil 4:13).

Features

Chinese Annual Conference

华人年议会第七届卫理少年大会

主题为《心deep启航之学海无涯》

慧怡 报导

2012年6月5-8日是马来西亚华人年议会第七届卫理少年大会，地点在假曼绒教区南华独中。这一届的大会我们得到了台湾体验教育团队及卫理SEALS团队全力的协助下，打造了一场贴近及贴切青少年日常生活；并活力及合适少年人的“Live Camp”。本届卫理少年大会的主题为《心deep启航之学海无涯》，这个主题的产生是经过华人年议会属下八大教区，在牧者、少年团契导师及少年职员的配搭下，向约两百位的少年人发出及收集到调查问卷的结果。在这些调查问卷分析的结果下，我们发现约80%的少年人认为“学业”是他们最关心，但同时也深感压力的任务。因此这届卫理少年大会的宗旨是为了帮助少年人懂得如何管理时间及晓得如何承受学业压力，以致能在成绩上荣神益人。

在这五花八门的花花世界，最叫人担心的就是青少年。因为他们常常是媒体、商家、甚至撒旦要得着的群体，原因是他们是社会未来的主人翁。以目前的局势，教会及团契生活往往不会是这个群体的首选，他们更喜欢迷恋世界的潮流、新新文化、引诱等。因此年会少年团契注重对这个群体的牧养，也在此呼吁大家鼓励12至18岁的青少年人踊跃参加本届的少年大会。为此，于少年大会之前，台湾体验教育团队及卫理SEALS团队将于4月29日至5月1日假芙蓉马来西亚神学院举办少年大会导师及义工培训，让有意在少年大会中作导师或义工的弟兄姐妹，了解少年大会的整个流程及活动内容，并得以受足够的装备、做足够的准备。在此呼吁凡对少年事工有负担者，请委身报名



参加此次的导师及义工培训，并于少年大会中服事少年人。

English Translation

The Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) is holding their 7th Intermediate Youth Conference on the 5th to the 8th of June 2012. This conference would be held at the Nan Hwa High School which is situated at the Manjung District in Perak. This year, the CAC MIYF would be working together with the CAC SEALS team and the Expe-

riential Education team from Taiwan. The main thrust of the conference would be in the form of a Life Camp which would be suitable for the lifestyle of the teenagers.

A survey was done by the CAC MIYF through the local church pastors, MIYF coordinators and committees from the 8 CAC districts. The survey showed that though nearly 80% of the teenagers had their studies as their top priority in life, it was also the main reason for stress in their lives. Thus, the Conference this year would be aimed in addressing this issue by giving them guidance in proper time management and ways of easing their pressured student lives.

One of the concerns of the CAC MIYF is the lack of participation of youth in the local church and local MIYF activities. This is due to the immense attraction of the world through media and commercials. Though they are the future leaders of the church, the current pressures of the teenage life are wearing them down. It is desired that this conference would be able to give them some pastoral guidance. Thus teenagers between the ages of 12 to 18 are strongly encouraged to join this conference.

Preparation for this conference would begin with a training seminar on the 29th of April to the 1st of May 2012. This seminar would be led by both the SEALS team and the Experiential Education team from Taiwan and is open for volunteers and MIYF Conductors. Thus volunteers and MIYF conductors are encouraged to join this seminar as they would be trained and equipped with the understanding of the flow of the conference. [Pastor Hwei Yee is the conductor of CAC Central District MIYF and pastoring in Kepong Chinese Methodist Church]

Christians & Nation-Building (5):
**Understanding
 the Christian
 Roots of Modern
 Democracy**

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG

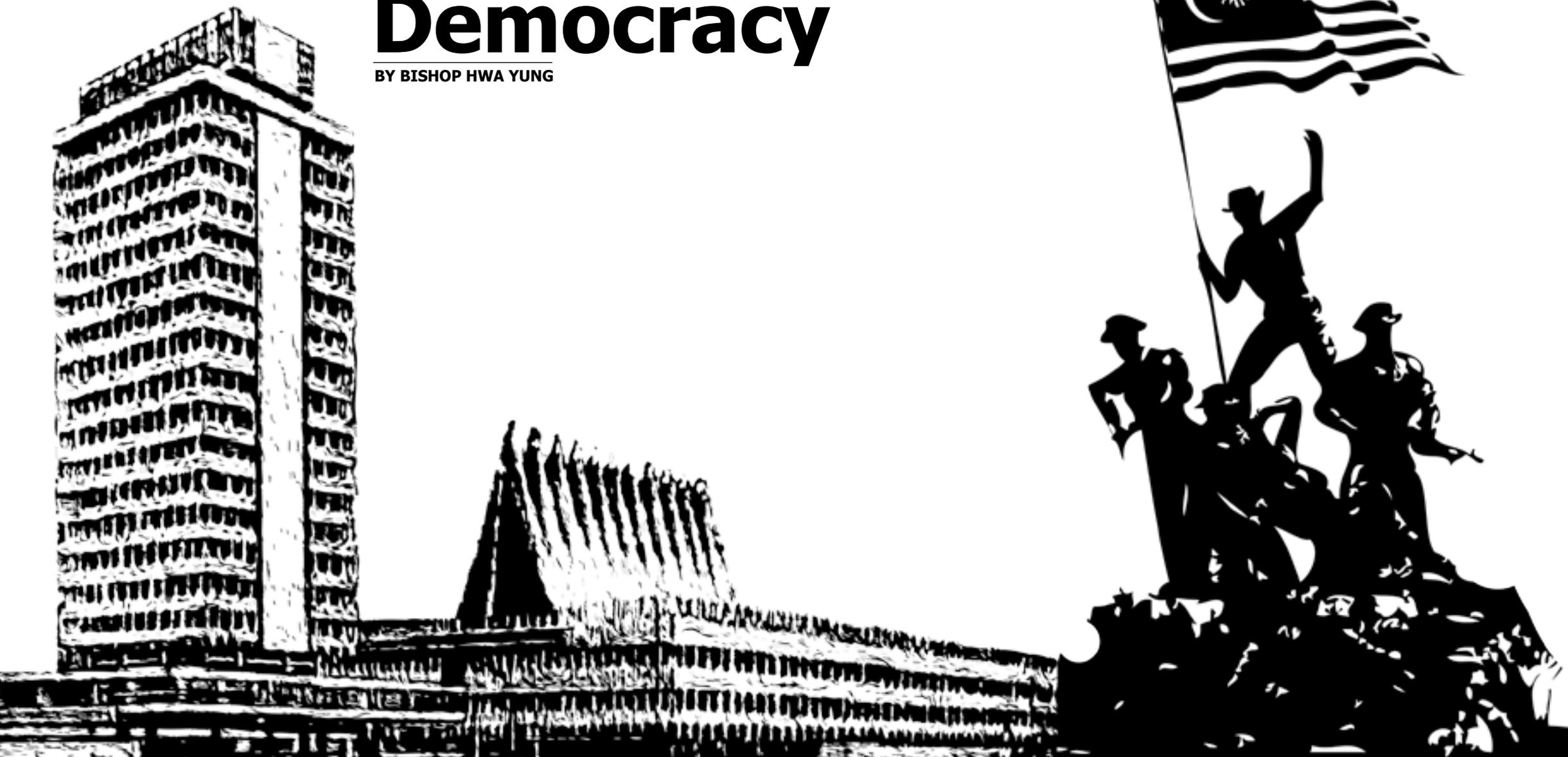


Illustration by Issac Ng

We live in a democratic country—or do we not? Well... for many, constitutionally this country may be a democracy but it is also one that is a deeply flawed! For example, many non-Muslims increasingly feel that their rights are being eroded away. The MCCBCHST, speaking on behalf of non-Muslims in the country, has often drawn attention to unresolved cases in law courts over the conversion of children to Islam, local authorities acting with disregard for non-Muslim sensitivities in dealing with their places of worship, and the like. Within the Christian church, similar feelings exist with respect to the still unresolved issues over the word ‘Allah’ and the Al-Kitab, amongst others. As many see it, basic freedoms have been denied, the rule of law sometimes set aside, built-in checks and balances in the Federal Constitution often prevented from functioning, and increasingly many are even questioning the integrity of the electoral process.

Many Christians are deeply concerned about the future of democracy in our country, and rightly so. But at the same time, it is likely that few Malaysian Christians today fully understand where the keys concepts underlying liberal democracy come from. Some will suggest that it originated in ancient Greece, without realizing that only a small minority had the right to vote then. For example, in 5th century Athens, only male citizens born of Athenian father and mother could vote. Women, huge numbers of slaves and all others of non-Athenian parentage were simply excluded.

Again, many today would assert that modern democracy came from the 18th century French and American Revolutions. There is no doubt that some key concepts underlying modern democracy like ‘lib-



Parliament of Malaysia* *Legislative power is divided between federal and state legislatures. The bicameral parliament consists of the lower house, the House of Representatives or Dewan Rakyat (literally the "Chamber of the People") and the upper house, the Senate or Dewan Negara (literally the "Chamber of the Nation"). All seventy Senate members sit for three-year terms (to a maximum of two terms); twenty-six are elected by the thirteen state assemblies, and forty-four are appointed by the king based on the advice of the Prime Minister. The 222 members of the Dewan Rakyat are elected from single-member districts by universal adult suffrage. Parliament has a maximum mandate of five years by law. The king may dissolve parliament at any time and usually does so upon the advice of the Prime Minister. General elections must be held within three months of the dissolution of parliament. In practice this has meant that elections have been held every three to five years at the discretion of the Prime Minister.*

erty, equality and fraternity' came to the fore during these revolutions. But did these ideas emerge out of the French and American revolutions, or did they come from elsewhere in history and drove those revolutions instead? I believe that the evidence shows the latter to be the case.

Christians often are unaware or forget that the foundational ideas upon which modern forms of democracy and civil society are built have their roots firmly embedded in western civilization's Christian history. Scholars like the late legal scholar Harold Berman have drawn attention to the clear relationship between concepts of freedom of conscience, human rights, universal franchise, the rule of law and other foundational concepts in western liberal democracy to their roots in Christianity.

In his book, *The Interaction of Law and Religion* (1974, pp. 66f), Berman argues that it was people like the Calvinistic Puritans of the seventeenth century, who carried forward the Lutheran concept of the sanctity of the individual conscience and thereby helped lay the foundations of the English and American laws of civil rights and liberties. In the history of the evolution and life of western society, law and religion were simply inseparable. He further argues that the great principles of the Western legal tradition were largely created by the impact of western civilization's Christian history. He writes: "These principles may appear to some to be self-evident truths, and to others they may appear to be utilitarian policies, but for Western man as a whole they are, above all, historical achievements created mainly out of the experience of the Christian church in the various stages of its life ... These successive ages of the church have created the psychological basis, and many of the values, upon which the legal systems of democracy and socialism rest" (p.72f).

Consider the simple idea of the equality

of all human beings, irrespective of race, religion, social class, caste, wealth, education, sex, physical prowess, health, and so forth. Where did this concept derive from? It clearly goes back to the Christian teaching that all are created in the 'image of God' (Gen 1: 26f). It is this 'image of God' imprinted on every human being that makes them equal in the world, that gives their lives dignity and value even if they are poor, sick or deformed! And it is this concept that underlies the foundational principle of modern democracy: One person, one vote! The point is that, whatever else may have contributed to the emergence of liberal democracy in the modern west, Christianity played an indispensable and fundamental role.

More recently, the sociologist Rodney Stark has reiterated Berman's argument and taken it further. In his book, *The Victory of Reason—How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (2005), he asked the question of what was it that led to Europe's great leap forward in modernization. His answer is that 'the truly fundamental basis not only for capitalism but also for the rise of the West was an extraordinary faith in *reason* ... Christianity alone embraced reason and logic as the primary guide to religious truth... (F)rom early days, the church fathers taught that reason was the supreme gift from God and the means to *progressively increase* their understanding of scripture and revelation' (p.x). This paved the way for the victory of reason over ignorance, leading to the development of a rational theology, cultural, scientific and technical innovations beginning in medieval monastic communities, and the emergence of political freedom and modern capitalism.

Specifically, with respect to freedom, Stark argued that it began with the rise of individualism within the Christian tradition. Individualism and human rights

emerged out of the New Testament emphasis on moral responsibility and sin. Indeed, Augustine's emphasis on free will fully anticipated Descartes' famous phrase, 'I think, therefore I am' (pp.24-26). Similarly, the New Testament teaching on the equality of all humankind in the eyes of God, regardless of social background and status, ethnicity or gender laid the foundation for the moral equality of all before the law. This in turn led to property rights and limitations on the powers of kings and the state. From these came the democratic state with its safeguards of freedom, equality, and rights, without which capitalism could not have emerged.

If Berman and Stark are right, then it has to be accepted that freedom, human rights and democracy in their modern forms are ultimately rooted in Christian teaching. This may be one reason why some Muslims find these concepts incompatible with Islam.

Islam has traditionally struggled with the issues of civil liberties and the equality of minorities, including Muslim minorities. For example, according to the *Shari'ah*, women do not have the same rights as men in family and inheritance matters. Moreo-

It is at this point that Malaysian Christians must engage our Muslim friends in dialogue concerning our shared destiny in our nation

ver in a court of law, a woman's testimony is equal only to half that of a man. The treatment of non-Muslims in history as *dhimmi* (protected peoples) without full civil rights has been carefully and thoroughly documented by scholars. (Just google the word '*dhimmi*'!) Even today, in no Muslim-majority nation are non-Muslims accorded full religious freedom, with the possible exception of Indonesia.

Yet the world of Islam is experiencing great ferment today. Whilst large numbers of Muslims still insist on treating non-Muslims in their midst as *dhimmi*, as less than equal citizens in Muslim-majority nations, many others are arguing that in the modern world such outmoded ideas must go. Many like those involved in the so-called Arab Spring of 2011 are seeking to accommodate Islamic values to the modern world. But even among the latter, there are differences of opinion.

For example, Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the Ennahda party which won the elections in Tunisia a few months ago, accepts that the rule of law, freedom and human rights are essential for modern societies, and that all are equal regardless of race, religion or creed. Yet he wants to maintain the traditional Islamic notion of non-Muslims as 'protected' people, and to provide for two classes of citizenship (John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, 2001, pp.114f).

But there are others like the leading Iranian scholar, Abdolkarim Soroush, who insist that all citizens must have equal rights, irrespective of whether they are Muslims or not (Esposito and Voll, pp.162f). Similarly, Anwar Ibrahim, has asserted the same within our multi-ethnic and multi-religious context: 'We should be modern; we should be democratic. We should not condone ...oppression of any form, or deny basic rights ...But don't tell

me that democracy and freedom can only be preached by some countries and political leaders in the West' (cited in Esposito and Voll, p.197).

What would the future of democracy be in Malaysia in the coming years? Will we see a 'Malaysian spring' with the full flowering of democratic principles, or will we see a growing restriction of freedom in our nation? To some extent this is a debate that has to be resolved by those within Islam itself, and not by outsiders. Yet non-Muslims must be allowed to have a say to the extent it affects them directly. Muslim minorities in many countries, especially in Europe, are constantly asking to be respected and treated with full equality. This surely is right. But such requests will always lack credibility and moral integrity unless Muslims themselves are prepared to treat other minorities in Muslim-dominant lands as full citizens, with equal rights in every respect.

It is at this point that Malaysian Christians must engage our Muslim friends in dialogue concerning our shared destiny in our nation, within the globalised world of the 21st century. Many Muslim thinkers, both within and outside our country are wrestling with the immense challenges faced by Islam in the modern world. We need to encourage Muslims at large to look seriously at concepts within their own religious and cultural tradition on which the best practices of democracy can be built.

For example, Bernard Lewis in his book, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (2003, p.145) has drawn attention to a whole list of things found within the Islamic tradition that can act as meaningful foundations for democratic forms of government. These include, 'the rejection by the traditional jurists of despotic and arbitrary rule in favor of contract in the formation and consensus in the conduct of gov-

ernment; their insistence that the mightiest rulers, no less than the humblest of his servants, is bound by law. Another is the acceptance, indeed the requirement of tolerance, embodied in such dicta as the Qu'ranic verse "there is no compulsion in religion," and the early tradition: "diversity in my community is God's mercy." This is carried a step further in the Sufi ideal of dialogue between faiths in a common search for the fulfillment of shared aspirations.'

Similarly, the Malaysian Muslim scholar and President of IDEAS, Tunku 'Abidin Muhriz, has recently argued in a recent article, 'History of Checks and Balance' (*The Star*, 17 Feb 2012, p.38), that we owe the checks and balances in our Constitution only in part to the Reid Commission. In other words, the idea of checks and balances is not a merely western or Christian one. He argues that there are clear antecedents of the same historically in the Malay culture and history. Here then is another source of ideas on which that Christians can meaningfully and fruitfully engage with our Muslim Malay friends.

The task of nation-building in Malaysia requires us to enter into such intellectual and political engagements with love and respect with Muslims in our country. The goal of such dialogue for Christians and Muslims is to enter into better mutual understandings of each other's traditions and concerns, and thereby be enabled to work together for the common good of all citizens in our country. But for us to do this effectively, we need first to understand more fully local history, the Malay mind and, most of all, the religion of Islam itself. More than that, we also need to have a proper and comprehensive grasp of the Christian roots of modern democracy, and thereby know how they can be defended and advanced for the welfare of all Malaysians!

Rules Governing Marriage in the Methodist Church in Malaysia

As approved by General Conference, 12-15 October 2011

1. Preamble

1.1 The Scriptures remind us that the gift of marriage is by divine institution and design (Genesis 2: 18-24). When entered into with faith and obedience, marriage is a model of Christ's relationship with His Church (Ephesians 5: 21-33) and provides the context wherein we find deepening wholeness and where children can be raised in a context of love and godly parenthood (Malachi 2:15).

1.2 Marriage in the Church is a solemn covenant before God between two people of the opposite sex who know and love the Lord (1 Corinthians 7: 39; cf. Malachi 2: 10-12). To this the Church gives its blessings. It is a relationship of fidelity which provides the opportunity for giving sacrificially one to the other thus reflecting Christ's love for us. We seek therefore as a Church to ensure that all marriages taking place in our Church are in accordance with Scriptures and follow strictly the provisions of the law of the country.

1.3 To enable our ministers to fulfil their task responsibly a set procedure has been formulated. In any marriage or remarriage, careful study and deliberation must be undertaken by the officiating minister. In all cases, nothing shall be done which will contradict the laws of the land or the rules of our Church.

1.4 No rule contained herein shall contradict any law or ordinance passed by the Government of Malaysia or which may be issued from time to time.

2. Persons Authorized to Perform Marriages

2.1 Any Methodist elder or deacon who has an appointment to a charge, and any unordained pastor appointed over a charge, shall be authorized to perform marriages

according to the rules of our church.

2.2 Retired ministers not appointed to a charge may assist in such marriages.

2.3 All ministers so authorized shall be obliged to know the law of the country governing marriages, i.e. the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce Act) Act 1976 which came into effect on March 1, 1982. There shall be no concession given to anyone who claims ignorance of the law and the conditions outlined herein.

2.4 A minister who has transgressed or ignored the laws of the country and/or the rules of the Methodist Church shall be referred to the respective Board of Ministry. If he is found guilty, he shall be suspended immediately from performing marriages by the President. Such suspension shall be reported in the official organ of the Methodist Church, the Pelita Methodist.

2.5 A minister may reserve the right to refuse to perform a marriage out of conscience after a period of pre-marital counselling.

3. Persons Who Are Eligible to be Married in our Church

3.1 Persons who are members of the Methodist Church are to be married in our churches. Anyone seeking marriage in another Methodist Church must furnish the officiating minister with a letter from his own minister certifying his membership and consenting to the service being conducted in the other church.

3.2 Notwithstanding Rule 3.1, where only one party is a Methodist and the other a member of another Christian church, the latter must furnish the officiating minister from his own minister certifying his membership and consenting to the service being conducted in the other church.

3.3 Where both parties are Christians from

other Christian Churches, the parties must furnish the officiating minister with a letter(s) from their minister(s) certifying their membership and requesting the service to be conducted. All provisions of the marriage laws and our rules shall apply.

3.4 Where both parties are Methodists and temporary residents in this country, the officiating minister shall require of the parties to produce written proof of their membership in a Methodist Church in another country. Here again all provisions of the marriage laws and our rules must be fulfilled.

3.5 Where the parties are Christians from another country and request a Methodist minister to officiate their marriage, the minister concerned shall ask for adequate proof of their membership in a Christian Church and ensure that the laws of the country and our rules are not contravened.

3.6. Persons who are widowed may also seek remarriage in the Methodist Church.

3.7 For the minimum age and relationships, please refer to Malaysian legal requirements.

4. Notice of Marriage

4.1 Notice of all marriages undertaken by authorized Methodist ministers shall be no less than that required by law. Such notice must be made on approved forms provided by the Government.

4.2 Although a minimum period is stipulated by law, each officiating minister must ensure that a sufficient period is allowed (between the time the notice is posted and the actual time of the marriage) for the purpose of counselling, adequate explanation of the ritual and rehearsal of the marriage.

5. The Marriage Register and

Other Documents

5.1 A marriage register is provided by the Registrar of Marriages. This must be kept in a safe place.

5.2 A marriage certificate of the Methodist Church may also be issued with a copy filed with the local church if the marriage has been registered with the Registrar of Marriages.

5.3 All particulars as required by the law shall be carefully and meticulously solicited from the parties concerned. The officiating minister shall be responsible to ensure that all information provided is accurate.

5.4 A full wedding service is permitted within 28 days of a civil registry marriage.¹ However, ministers are to instruct such couples that they should not live together before the church wedding. Beyond this stipulated period only a thanksgiving service is allowed.

5.5 The only exception permitted beyond the 28-day stipulation, stated in 5.4 above, is when the couple's marriage is registered overseas, i.e. outside Malaysia and Singapore. In such cases, the period within which a full wedding service may be carried out shall not exceed 3 months from the 28th day of the date of the civil registry marriage. Again, such couples are to be reminded that they should not be cohabiting before the church wedding. In all other cases, only a thanksgiving service may be performed.

6. The Venue For Marriage

6.1 The wedding shall be performed in a church/chapel which is recognized and/or registered by an Annual Conference.

6.2 Under special circumstances, the wedding may also be performed in places where Christian worship can be appropri-

ately and reverently conducted. In this case, the prior permission of the President of the Annual Conference shall first be obtained.

7. The Time at which a Marriage May be Performed

7.1 Marriages shall only take place between the hours of 6.00 a.m. in the morning and 7.00 p.m. in the evening.

7.2 No marriage shall take place on a Sunday, during Holy Week² or on any other day which a local church or an Annual Conference may, for special reasons, rule as unsuitable.

8. Remarried and Divorced Persons

8.1 No marriages of divorced persons shall be conducted by the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

8.2 A thanksgiving service, however, may be conducted for any marriages involving one or more divorced persons.

9. Specifications and Conditions for Wedding

9.1 Wedding Service In Church

a. The service must be conducted by an authorized minister of the Church.
b. There shall be exchange of marriage vows and rings (or equivalent).
c. The service shall be conducted within the following time stipulations:

- On the day the marriage is registered by the Assistant Registrar of Marriage appointed for the Church; OR
- Within 28 days from the date of registration at a civil registry for marriage in Malaysia or Singapore; OR
- Within three months from the 28th day from the date of registration at a

civil registry of marriages outside Malaysia and Singapore.

d. Both the man and woman must be Christians.

e. One of the couple must be a member of the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

9.2 Thanksgiving Service In Church

a. The terms 'Thanksgiving Service' and 'Service of Blessing' are to be used synonymously.

b. The service must be conducted by an authorized minister of the Church.

c. There shall be no exchange of marriage vows and rings (or equivalent).

d. A Thanksgiving Service may be conducted under the following conditions:

i. In cases of marriages registered with civil registries where the time stipulations in 5.4 and 5.5 have lapsed. For all such cases, the service must be conducted within 12 months of the civil registration of a marriage.

ii. For marriages involving at least one party who is divorced.

e. Both the man and woman must be Christians.

f. One of the couple must be a member of the Methodist Church of Malaysia.

9.3 Thanksgiving Service Outside the Church. An authorized minister, after consulting the District Superintendent, may agree to hold a Thanksgiving Service outside church premises. The pastor shall at all times however ensure that the sanctity of marriage is observed and not compromised in any way whatsoever.

[¹ The reason for the stipulation of a 28-day period is to safeguard the sanctity of marriage. ² Some Annual Conferences like the Tamil Annual Conference do not allow for weddings during Lent.]

Arts

“The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” (Deut 7:6)

Books | Movies | Music | Architecture



The Bible and the Ballot
Publisher: Friends in Conversation and Graceworks

BY TIEN LI

“How do we relate Christianity with political engagement in Malaysia today?” - Joshua Woo, “Introduction”

In *The Bible and the Ballot*, six friends come together to wrestle with this question that is so paramount in living our lives as Malaysian Christians or Christian Malaysians. The book is aimed at encouraging Malaysian Christians to seriously think through the political situation of the country and our Christian duty as citizens.

Revolving around the themes of democracy and citizenry, prayer and righteousness, the seven reflections contained in the book are perfect for a week of musings. The contributors address various concerns that affect our lives and how we can respond in a Christ-like manner. Issues such as religious freedom, illegal candlelight vigils, the Official Secrets Act, corruption and race-based politics are highlighted in the discussions.

Besides articulating their thoughts, the contributors include practical steps which we can take, for instance, voting wisely and praying for our country. To that end, *The Bible and the Ballot* has eight pages of prayer pointers – a comprehensive guide to praying for the church, the economy, politics and the government of Malaysia. The call to prayer contained in *The Bible and the Ballot* has been endorsed by 34 national and senior Christian leaders.

With a Foreword by Rt Rev Datuk Ng Moon Hing, Anglican Bishop of West Malaysia, *The Bible and the Ballot* is a

timely publication that challenges us to be courageous and act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8).

“How can Christians be a blessing to Malaysia?” - Rev. Sivin Kit, “Afterword”

The Bible and the Ballot seeks to answer this question by reflecting on the themes of democracy and citizenry, prayer and righteousness. The seven articles in the book address various concerns that affect our lives. Be it religious freedom, illegal candlelight vigils, the Official Secrets Act, corruption or race-based politics, the contributors discuss how we can respond to such issues in a Christ-like manner.

The contributors are indeed no armchair theologians or critics. These thought-provoking reflections were borne out of action – an illegal candlelight vigil, an Islamic forum, the recent Bersih 2.0 rally. Readers are challenged to take simple, practical steps, such as voting and praying.

To that end, *The Bible and the Ballot* has eight pages of prayer pointers – a valuable guide to praying for the church, the economy, politics and the government of Malaysia. That God listens to the cries of His people ought to propel us to pray for righteousness and justice, and against wickedness and evil.

With a Foreword by Rt Rev Datuk Ng Moon Hing, Anglican Bishop of West Malaysia, *The Bible and the Ballot* is a timely publication that compels us to be consider how we who are blessed can in turn bless others (Genesis 12:2).

POSTER ADAPTED FROM THE VENICE COMPANY



10th SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN MALAYSIA
17TH - 22ND SEPTEMBER 2012

PETITION UNDER PARA. 507, METHODIST DISCIPLINE

To : Members of General Conference

Title / Paragraph Number To Be Revised :

Proposed Revision :

Rationale :

I am a Pastor of / a member of _____
 (state name of Organisation / Church)

(Tick whichever is applicable)

This petition is submitted in my personal capacity
 on behalf of the organization stated above
 on behalf of the church as stated above

Date : Signature :

Name of Petitioner :

All petitions are to be made in **triplicate** and submitted to the General Conference Secretary not later than 17 July 2012 (60 days before the opening day of the General Conference session)

Please address to : **General Conference Secretary**
69 Jalan 5/31,
Petaling Jaya,
Selangor Darul Ehsan.

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Joshua Ong Chao Hong
Commerce
University of Melbourne
(on Scholarship)



Abdul Haq Shamul Kamar
Liberal Arts
New York University
(on New York University Scholarship)



Andrew Tan Hui Joo
Engineering
Ulster University
(on Scholarship)



Serene Chua
Liberal Arts
Culby-Sawyer College (on
Culby-Sawyer College Scholarship)



Ooi Qi Wei
Civil Engineering
University of Sheffield (on
University of Sheffield Scholarship)



Wickram Rajaguru
Accounting & Criminology
Keele University (on Securities
Commission Malaysia Scholarship)



Lee Zheng Ern
Law
University of Southampton (on
University of Southampton Scholarship)



Kimberly Hong Gin Mei
Accounting
University of Bristol (on Securities
Commission Malaysia Scholarship)



Timothy Ong Tze Wei
Architecture
Kent State University
(on Kent State University Scholarship)



Nigel Ngiam Kee Kit
Chemical Engineering
University of Edinburgh
(2nd Year Entry)



Kish Ann Kooen
Politics & International Relations
Maastricht University



Julius Chan Jun-Chang
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Yogi K. Nadarajan
Electrical & Electronic Engineering
Hong Kong University of
Science & Technology



David Chew Wei Shon
Dentistry
International Medical University

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