

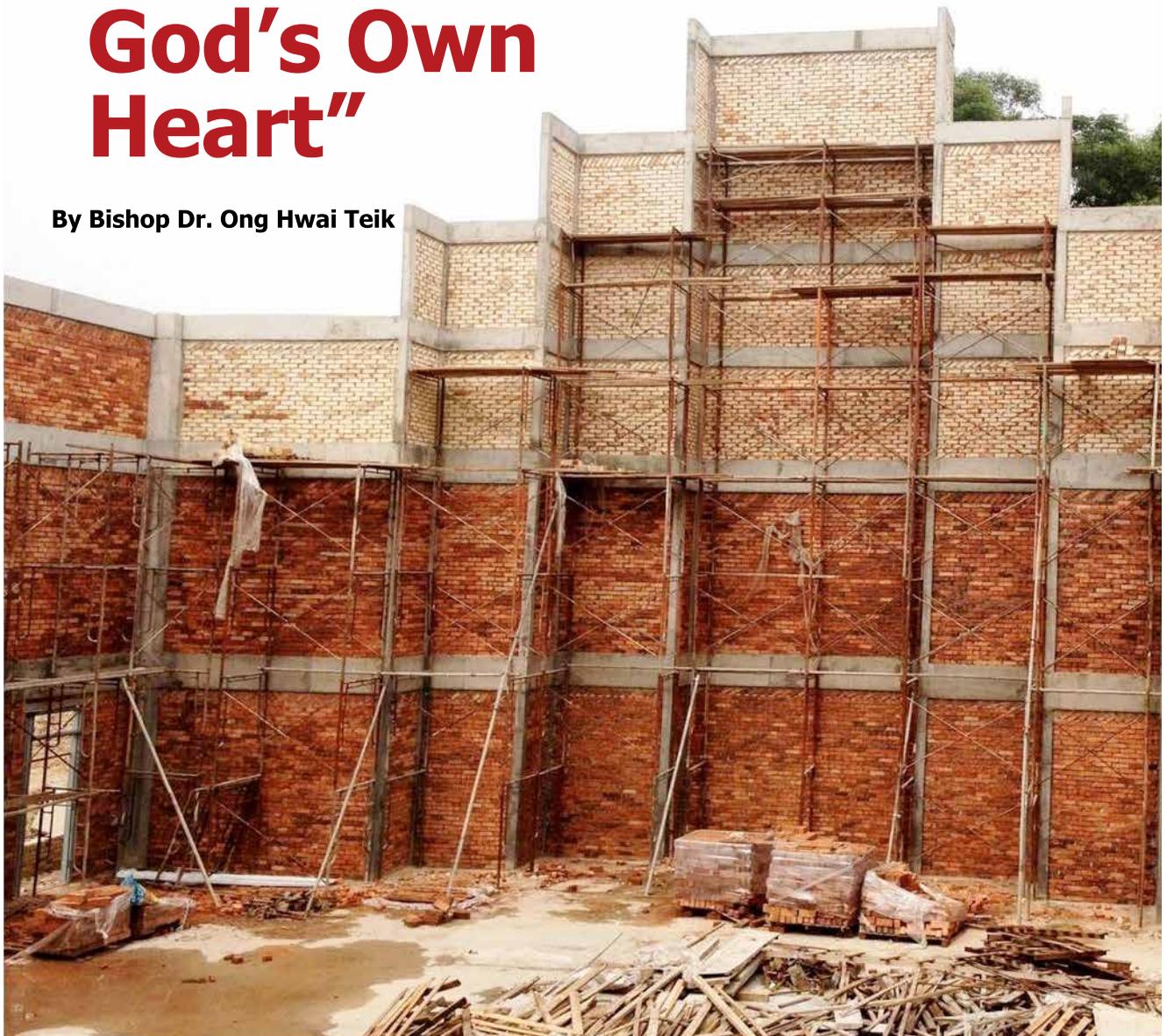
PELITA METHODIST

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“A Church After God’s Own Heart”

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik



Moment



Nadarajan Rajamanikam or 'Raja' as we call him has been the longest staff working in the Methodist Church in Malaysia headquarters. He has served the church for nearly 36 years under five different bishops beginning from Bishop of C.N.Fang till the present bishop, Bishop

Ong Hwai Teik. He joined the MCM on the 2nd June 1977 as the caretaker of the MCM office and the Bishop's residence. Currently Raja is the dispatch clerk for our office.

Raja is married to Uma Devi and has four children. All of their children spent their

early childhood in the staff quarters beside the office of the MCM. They literally grew up in the Methodist Church headquarters. Raja has fond memories of them growing up and also credited their wellbeing to the care and concern of the other staff of the MCM. One of the experiences he would never forget is how his colleagues attended to his son who had fallen into a drain while he was away doing his dispatch tasks for the church. He was grateful that though he was away for work, he had friends who helped in taking care of his children.

When asked why he has stayed so long in this office, his reply was simply he found it a peaceful, happy and comfortable place to work in. His desire to remain trustworthy and earnest in serving the church is an example for all of us who have come after him.

Though Raja has not come to the saving grace of our Lord and Savior, he has been a blessing to all of us in the church. And as the bible states in Genesis 12, we do believe that God continually blesses him as he strives to do his best for the church.

God bless you Raja for your service in this church. May your continued faithfulness to this job be a light for all of your younger colleagues serving here with you!

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By Michael William

Contents

PG.

04 **"A Church After God's Own Heart"**
by Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

PG.

06 **News from the Annual Conference**
Chinese Annual Conference

PG.

07 **Stage 1 - The Will for Change**
The "Responsibility of Choice" Motif
By Dr. Lee Bee Teik

PG.

09 **Current Affairs**
&10 A Report & Press Statement

PG.

13 **1st BB Asia Officers Fellowship**
By James TC Wong

PG.

14 **Essay**
Ms Sophia Blackmore's Journey to Perak

Prayer: A Call To Prayer For The Church & Our Nation Malaysia

Source from prayer4Malaysia.org

Prayer4

1. Humbling Ourselves to Seek God in Prayer

a. Pray that the Malaysian church will seek the face of God together earnestly and with perseverance, so that He will open the heavens, reveal His glory and pour His power upon our nation. Let us claim His promise that "if my people ... humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

2. Emphasising Holiness and Righteousness in the Church

a. Pray that pastors, church leaders and members will strive to live godly lives at home, in church, and in the market place and the public square.
b. Pray that every church will provide systematic teaching on

holy living from the pulpit, in our small groups, and at every level of church ministry.

3. Fostering Church Unity and the Ministry Of Reconciliation

a. Pray that Christians will make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, embracing reconciliation within the Christian community.
b. Pray that as Christian leaders, local churches and whole denominations learn to live in unity, through forgiveness and reconciliation, we will model ethnic reconciliation powerfully in our nation.

4. Teaching Christians the Cost of Discipleship

a. Pray that Christians will understand what true discipleship means, and be willing to take up their cross daily and suffer for Christ.
b. Pray that many Christian professionals and countless university students studying abroad will return with a clear vision to build both the church and nation.
c. Pray that Christian parents will encourage their children to come home or to remain in Malaysia to serve God here.

5. Developing Godly Leadership for Our Churches

a. Pray that church leaders, both pastoral and lay, will grow in depth and maturity as true shepherds of Christ. Pray that they will have a real hunger for God's Word, a firm commitment to God's truth and to live by it, and the courage to teach the same to their flocks.
b. Pray that the present generation of leaders will strive to lay strong foundations for churches and Christian organizations in our country, to model godly and humble servanthood, and to manage succession plans well, as they gradually hand over the baton of leadership to younger people.

6. Empowering Bumiputra Churches, Especially Those in East Malaysia

a. Pray for the increasing availability of both the Bible and discipleship materials in Bahasa Malaysia.
b. Pray for a growing and effective partnership in ministry and mission between the churches in West Malaysia and in East Malaysia.
c. Pray for the increasing emergence of strong churches among Bumiputra communities in our land, and the rising up of bold and God-fearing leaders among them.

7. Being "Salt and Light" in Our Nation

a. Pray that God will continue to bless our nation with strong and steady growth of the national economy so that all citizens will be blessed. Pray for the equitable sharing of the wealth of this nation among all races.
b. Pray against the twin problems of badly formulated policies and prevalent corruption, both of which combine to adversely affect national economic growth.
c. Pray that the smaller and economically weaker communities will not be marginalised. In particular, pray that the rights and means of livelihood of the native people of Sabah and Sarawak, and the Orang Asli in West Malaysia will be legally recognised and safe-guarded, especially their land rights.



“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain”

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

The cover photograph of this month’s Pelita shows one of our Methodist Churches under construction. It reminds us that the Church of God is continually “under construction” as the Lord Himself provides various gifts “for the building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).

In the last issue, I shared about the centrality of the Person, Presence and the Power of the **Holy Spirit** in birthing the first Gentile church at Antioch (Acts 11). That church was a “church after God’s own heart” that became the launch pad for the worldwide mission of the Gospel. As the life of the Church was wrapped around the centrality of the Person, Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit, “persecution could not finish them off – in fact, it made them shine” so that “a great number who believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21).

The second imperative of being “a church after God’s own heart” is the call from Psalm 127:1 – **“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.”** This calls us to take note that the primary and only Originator of the life and existence of all communities, including the home and Church, is none other than God. We must therefore be **fully dependent** on the Lord of the Old Testament temple and of His New Testament Church.

Flowing from this humble posture of actualised dependency on the sovereign God, we as God’s people are divinely called to play a vital supplementary, responsive and operational role in these communities. There is an important role for us in the building process of God’s Kingdom; otherwise the Christian faith in God becomes one of passive fatalism.

We are called to “humble ourselves” in **2 Chronicles 7:14** – *“if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face...”* This most famed,

enduring and endearing verse in the book of 2 Chronicles, explicitly expresses the necessary stipulation for a nation, a people of God, a community – **to experience God’s blessings.** This humbling of ourselves in seeking the face of God to be gracious to us, will include “words and deeds” of falling before the Almighty in **prayer**, ceasing to sin, intentionally discontinuing to frame our daily living by proud self-centredness, and collaborating perseveringly with the Holy Spirit in yielding our desires to the Lord’s Word and will.

- It was when a **desperate nation humbled** herself to observe *A Silent Moment of Prayer* to Almighty God that Britain was able to be blessed with endurance and victory in World War II in the famous 1940 Battle of Britain aerial warfare. Katherine P Carter (*The Mighty Hand of God*) shared how that this call to pray for the nation to all Britons when the Big Ben struck 9 pm, had a correlation to the witness of one of the captured German pilots. *“With the striking of your Big Ben clock each evening at nine,” the Nazi told the British Intelligence officers, “you used a secret weapon which we did not understand. It was very powerful and we could find no countermeasure against it...”* Katherine P Carter goes on to opine that “In fact, this very powerful weapon was heartfelt nation-wide prayer.” (Amongst other things, the German pilots saw more British planes in the air than there actually were!) Let us humble ourselves to pray for our church and our land especially in this season of the impending 13th General Election as we seek the Lord’s blessing of intervention for our nation.
- A group of 40 from the Methodist Church in Malaysia visited the **Bupyeong Methodist Church** in Korea in November 2012. This church is firmly grounded in prayer which lies at the very foundation of their church values for all ministries.

The team of 20 pastors lead the people of God at their daily 5 am Morning Prayers. As they humbled themselves, prayed and sought God’s face, they grew from a humble church birthed on 24 May 1940 of less than a hundred to the present membership of 3,200. That church overcame hardships and witnessed multiple miracles from the Person, Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit over their 72 year history.

- **Lent season (which began with Ash Wednesday on 13 Feb lasting till Easter),** is a most appropriate time to be reminded about deliberately humbling ourselves, praying and seeking the Lord’s face – like the humble penitent tax collector in Luke 18:13. It is to make some time each day to sincerely examine our inner self and life, so that we can have purified hearts and minds. That will lead to a fresh renewal in our personal as well as church life. It will lead us back to the days of our “first love” – a recommitment to our baptismal vows when we first eagerly came into relationship with our beloved Saviour. **Will you humble yourself before the Lord this Lent to recover, renew or grow deeper in your prayer or relational time with God each day, and within the community life of your church?**
- This posture of humble dependence on God is captured in our **Methodist Church in Malaysia Road Map** (launched on 2010), **Objective 2** (under A. Evangelism and Church Planting, p 16) – **To put prayer at the heart of the ministry of the church in order to seek God for revival and empowering for the advance of the Gospel.**

Action plans at General Conference level:

Establish an office to coordinate the ministry of prayer for the whole church by the following means:

- i) Set up prayer networks, including those with other denominations.
- ii) Disseminate prayer concerns regularly by various means including via the use of our websites.
- iii) Foster a prayer movement through seminars, training of intercessors and Methodist Prayer Conventions (the next MPC is scheduled for 2014).

At Annual Conference level:

- i) Ensure that every local church organises regular weekly prayer meet-

- ings.
- ii) Encourage regular prayer conferences at District and Conference levels.

At Local Conference/church level:

- i) Challenge every Methodist to pray for personal and corporate revival, and the specific needs of the church and its ministry.
- ii) Teach every member the meaning and power of prayer, and to exercise spiritual gifts such as deliverance and healing.

- iii) Urge each member to be regular at the church prayer meeting and/or in small prayer groups.

As God's people called Methodists in Malaysia, to be **"A Church After God's own Heart,"** we must **humble ourselves and pray** and seek God's face and turn from any wicked way, then God will hear from heaven and will forgive our sin and heal our land (**2 Chronicles 7:14**).

General Elections

The General Elections is around the corner. The Methodist Church in Malaysia would like to put a simple reminder to all its churches of a decision taken by the GCEC on the 25th of May 2010 on matter concerning the General Elections. This decision was made with Bishop Hwa Yung.

To:
All Presidents, Pastors and Members,
The Methodist Church in Malaysia

Dear Friends,

Per: Special Government Grants at Election Times in the Country

Warmest greetings to all in the Name of Christ! I trust that this finds you well!

Many of you are aware of the controversy that has been stirred up in the press concerning government grants handed out during recent by-elections, both in East and West Malaysia. The Council of Presidents, after its meeting of 25th May 2010, had issued a pastoral letter on the matter. The General Conference Executive Council (GCEC) at its meeting of 12-13 August deliberated further on the matter. We write to inform all pastors and members of the decision that was taken at the meeting.

The GCEC notes that the Federal and the various State governments, whether from BN or from the Opposition parties, regularly give out grants to citizens' groups of all kinds. To make such grants is a government's responsibility, and to receive such is a citizen's right. After all, the money given is actually taxpayers' money. However, the question of timing is crucial. It is important that the reception of such grants at any time does not compromise the moral stand of the church in the eyes of the public. We must not be perceived to be involved

in corrupt practices of any kind or appear to be manipulated by the party(s) in power.

The GCEC has therefore taken the following decision concerning special government grants in all future elections:

That the GCEC resolves that no Methodist church should apply for or receive government grants, irrespective of the party in power, in the period between the nomination date of any election to the polling date of the same. Given the present socio-political context, this will send a clear signal to everyone that the church is non-partisan. More importantly, it will make clear that the Methodist Church does not condone actions that are or can be perceived as being related to money politics.

This decision is not meant to refer to whatever may have happened in the past, but rather to serve as our guideline for all future elections. May God grant that through acting in such a manner, we will be able to achieve, by His all sufficient grace, our goal of 'Spreading Scriptural Holiness, Transforming the Nation'! The peace of God be with you always!

Yours sincerely in Christ,

(signed)
Bishop Hwa Yung
The Methodist Church in Malaysia

华人年议会第三十七届会议

报道：甘慧仪 / 摄影：王昌隆

2012年11月12至15日，马来西亚基督教卫理公会第三十七届华人年议会兼四年一次的选举大会于巴生首映酒店 (Premiere Hotel) 进行。年议会本年主题是“扎根主道 深化灵命”。来自华人年议会八个教区的牧者、会友领袖与代表，齐聚一堂，人数是357。

下午三时三十分，华勇会督主持年议会圣餐礼拜，由马来西亚印度年议会会长Rev. C. Jayaraj证道，分享的信息是“伯特利的异象”。五时三十分，莫泽川会长敦请马来西亚基督教卫理公会会督华勇博士主持大会开幕仪式。华勇会督敬奉圣父、圣子、圣灵之名，宣布马来西亚基督教卫理公会第三十七届华人年议会正式开始。

当晚经过一系列的议事会后，讲员叶源成弟兄在接下来的会友事工交流会上主讲“回教化对我国社会带来的冲击”；年议会会长则在会议室召开长牧大会。

翌日，由刚卸任的沙巴临时年议会会长林厚武牧师在早祷会中分享他侍奉的旅程，述说神垂听他祷告的见证，也勉励会众积极到主前求告。

莫会长发表演辞后，众所瞩目的会长选举就此展开。经过二轮选举，莫泽川牧师皆以高票当选，续任为马来西亚华人年议会会长，为期四年。正副会友领袖、年会文书和财政/经济部主席等选举活动，也一一进行，直至傍晚六时许。所有选举过程由神学生和传道组成的两组监票团队负责点算投票者的人数和回收投票，维持秩序。

下午，议事会同时进行。根据经济部主席颜保罗弟兄的书面报告，2011年的年会经常费总收入为RM2,076,004，经常费总支出是RM1,609,854，余款为RM466,150。

截至2012年12月31日，年会总资产为RM10,044,595 (包括年会存放于银行的教牧医药金定期存款 RM900,000)，比2010年结存的RM9,887,123增加了RM1,057,472。今年，领取退牧恩俸金者是刘成来牧师，获RM 40,000。截至2012年9月30日，退牧恩俸金的预备金存款户口已从1986年12月31日的RM172,573增至RM688,095.42 (已扣除赠送恩俸金给退牧后)。

当晚，会督述及总议会会议决的事项，如下所示：

一、卫理宗信徒不得把教会的事带到法

庭，凡行此事者将自动失去会友籍。任何申诉可呈交给司法理事会；



二、儿童与圣餐：
目前的做法：凡已受洗、十二岁或以上者可领受圣餐。
小组研究的总结是：

- A. 从神学与历史传统的角度而言，圣礼不能把洗礼和圣餐分开，因此，已接受洗礼的儿童不受年龄所限，可领受圣餐。
 - B. 各年议会有权决定儿童领圣餐之年龄 (莫会长补充，吾会十二岁以下者领圣餐的事已于总议会通过，可于2013年1月开始执行，教会必须负责教导他们)；
- 三、会督感激华人年议会鼎力支持，奉献建筑金给伊班年议会；总议会也呼吁六个年议会资助沙巴SIB神学院的建筑事工；
- 四、总议会决定将《法规》翻译成中文版，预计明年完成与出版。

第三天早祷，即将卸任的教区长余自力牧师以经文<传道书>12章13至14节和<马太福音>5章13至16节，带出主题“身份与本份”的信息。接着是各部门的选举活动。

议事会同时进行。鉴于我国民情所需，宣教部鼓励各牧区及布道所成立国语崇拜，照顾来到城市求学或就业的东西马土著弟兄姐妹，勤传福音。布道部也颁发奖励盾给所有是届年会年成立新布道所之代表和会友增加十巴仙的堂会代表，以示鼓励。

下午三时四十五分，年会为已安息的周永德牧师举办追思礼拜，主席饶家发牧师邀请傅仲尤牧师述说周牧师的生平事迹。四时零五分，莫会长宣布，提前休会；这比预定的时间表提前五个小时完成当天活动，相信已创年会记录，会众皆以热烈的掌声回应。

会长就职礼/按立牧职典礼

年会于第四天 (11月15日) 进行按立牧职典礼。华勇会督以“认识基督为至宝”，与会众分享信息，即：一、保罗必须让上帝改变他；二、保罗停止依赖外在的成就；三、什么是我们人生最终的目标。

行会长就职礼后，莫会长主持按立副牧典礼和长牧典礼。根据仪式，牧职部主席饶家发牧师先后引领叶秀莘、黄珮琳、陈明添、苏晶祥和郭进兴；徐恩杰、罗艾琳、韩玉冬、林福仁和朱传文到会督面前，请会督按《法规》条文按立他们为年会副牧、长牧。会督皆授权会长考问他们。会督按《法规》条文按立以上十人为年会副牧、长牧，并授权他们在上帝的教会中可以宣读和传讲圣道。完成仪式后，会督邀请牧职部主席饶家发牧师及会友领袖林志强弟兄代表年议会欢迎他们。

莫会长经咨询执行部同意后，委派下列教区长，即北部教区：黄约辉牧师；曼绒教区：廖克民牧师；近打教区：郑建发牧师；雪兰莪教区：方既志牧师；中部教区：陈观凤牧师；南中教区：周隆捷牧师；南部教区：陈金发牧师；东部教区：王祖兴牧师，并授权他们宣读委任表。

卸任教区长余自力牧师在本会服侍已四十一年，按《法规》已达退休年龄，正式荣休，获得荣休纪念盾和一枚价值五百令吉的金十字架留念。最后，莫会长敬奉圣父、圣子、圣灵三位一体上帝的圣名，接纳各教区长宣读的委任表，并授权各教区长召开教区及牧区议会。

莫会长主持第三十七届年议会闭幕礼时，向会众宣布，2013年11月13至15日，假波德申卫理站举行第三十八届年议会，并为会众祝福。他也透露，本届年议会尚未办完之事及所通过之议决案均交与执行部处理。为期四天三夜的年议会，顺利结束。

Biblical Motifs for the Three Repetitive Stages of a Pilgrim's Progress

(This is the first of three articles in a series.)

Adapted from Lee Bee Teik's book "The Heart of Pastoral Counselling" available at www.reconre.org

Biblical motifs are like landmarks which give us an indication of where we are when we are confused in life. They are to be used only as a means of grace, a simple tool to help us assess our lives when in spiritual-mental-emotional-social vertigo. They are like landmarks on geographical maps which help us to discover our physical location when lost or on the way to visit a place. This and the next two articles form part of another type of map. However, it is not meant to provide a rigid methodical programme whereby we may say "I've arrived" even if we have read the relevant Bible passages and followed the reflections. May the Holy Spirit be our Guide as we journey on earth, on the way to our heavenly Father God through His Son, Jesus.

However, why do we need such landmarks? As a friend of many fellow pilgrims, I have discovered that we need to recognise the progressive stages of our pilgrimage so that we will not stand in the way of our own and others' freedom to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. We need to have a larger picture so that we may wait for the right time to intervene on the one hand, and not be too slow and miss the opportune time to help others or ourselves, on the other hand. In my own pilgrimage, I have learned much through others' sermons, lectures and life experiences. Let me share these precious landmarks with you. Please lend me your eyes...

Stage 1 - The Will for Change

The "Responsibility of Choice" Motif



Read John 5:1-14

Q. Who was the man described in the passage above?

The man, at the pool with the five arches, had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus asked him a seemingly hard hearted question,

"Do you want to get well?"
(Who wouldn't after suffering for so long??)

The man evaded His question. How? He did it by:

- blaming others for not helping him... "They don't care for me. It's their fault-lah!" (easy way out?)
- appealing to the of lack of time... "I can't

get there on time by myself!"
(sounds familiar?)

- self-pity... "Poor me!"
(watch out... as this may spiral one into real depression)

But Jesus loved him enough and wasted no time in alerting him to his masks of excuses. He needed to make an effort to use his



will power. Without explanation, the Rabbi commanded him to make a decision in order to change his current dilapidated condition.

“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

The man never dreamt that he could do it... but he obeyed and was healed!

Q. What was the diagnosis for him? Was it His weakness or his/others’ sin that prevented him from being healed?

Diagnosis:

Jesus’ latter words to him gives us a clue. His had committed the sin of neglecting to take responsibility for his own life.

Q. What then are some implications of this motif?

** God holds us *accountable* for our abilities to do what we can do.

The man’s sin was that he did not even ask for help enough and settled into life as an invalid. 38 years was a long time for no one to attempt to answer his call if he had called like the importunate widow in Jesus’ parable (Luke 18:1-8). He might have got used to living on charity indeed.

** God holds us *responsible for admitting that we are helpless* in a situation where we cannot help ourselves, *and for seeking help when necessary*. We cannot afford to be too proud, too dignified or too lazy to do that.

For example, in Mark 9:14-27, the father

of the suffering demon possessed child was encouraged to ask Jesus to help him believe Him when he realised how little he actually trusted Him.

“If you are able...” became *“I believe, help my unbelief!”*

Reflection:

1. What may the Lord be saying to me?
2. Am I currently at Stage I of my pilgrimage?
3. If so, be comforted that change is a constant factor for sinners such as us who are on the mend... till we see Him face to face!
4. What then shall I do about this of my stage of life with Christ?

Since we are into the annual Lent period of meditation and reflection, let us ponder, listen and watch our Saviour in Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42; Luke:39-46 and John 18:1-11.

5. Read Hebrews 12:1-13 and watch the Master again.
6. May a hymn writer speak to us once more....

O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer,

This is my constant longing and

prayer;
Gladly I’ll forfeit all of earth’s treasures,
Jesus thy perfect likeness to wear.

Chorus:

O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art!
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

O to be like thee! While I am pleading
Pour out thy spirit, fill with Thy love;
Make me a temple meet for thy dwelling,
Fit me for life and heaven above.

O to be like Thee! Full of compassion,
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind;
Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting,
Seeking the wand’ring sinner to find.

7. Journal your findings and talk things over with Him by your side.

A Call to Unity, Holiness and Prayer

1. What happened

- a. It was a defining moment for the nation.
 - i. We held a 3-day fast and prayer retreat, where 9 major prayer networks came together, with 170 people attending, made up of intercessors and church leaders from both the CCM and NECF-related churches.
 - ii. It was a very moving time where we saw reconciliation and seeking forgiveness between churches, church ministry organisations and networks.

2. What we discerned

- a. God desires for us to know His heart.
- b. We need grace to accept God's sovereignty over the future of the nation, and the faith to believe that God's way is best.
- c. We are to love the nation as God has placed us here to fulfill His purposes for this country.
- d. God desires His Church - who is His bride - to be holy. He is most concerned with the current condition of the Church, as well as the nation.
 - i. **Unity** - Unity must be based on the right motives, that is, not because of self-preservation, but that we come together because of who we are in Christ.
 - ii. **Humility** - We need to serve others as greater than ourselves, as seen by the exemplary act that we saw during the prayer retreat, of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation between churches, church ministry organisations and networks.
 - iii. **Holiness** - The holiness of His church is key to transforming the nation. The church has backslidden and is being "built on sand." If we are to seek revival, we must return to holy living in our personal and corporate lives.
 - iv. **Compassion** - To seek the prosperity and care for the poor and oppressed. We are to love and embrace neglected groups focusing on breaking down the following walls:
 - Wall of fear
 - Wall of unbelief
 - Wall of racial prejudice
 - v. **Sacrificial** - We are to return to counting the absolute cost of discipleship and be prepared to take up our cross and follow Jesus.
 - vi. **Prayerful** - God desires His church to be prayerful if she hopes to see revival. The church is presently suffering

from prayerlessness and we need to build up more intensity in prayer.

- vii. **Loving our neighbours** - to intentionally build relationships across cultures and races.
- e. General Elections
 - i. God reminds us that He is the chessmaster for the nation. We are to pray for righteous men and women to be voted in to govern the nation, to be protected from evil men plotting mischief, to pray against alliances that promote extremism and oppression, and against any parties capable of causing further polarization.
- f. We affirm today that God is working in His world and in Asia, both in the seen and unseen Church, claiming the verse, John 5:17 - "*Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too, am working."*"
- g. We recognise that the Malaysian Church is two-thirds Bumi-putra, and we want to affirm the significance of raising the stature of the indigenous church, and its leadership.
- h. We affirm that the Church is called to dual roles as the prophetic voice and peacemaker in nation building.
- i. We continue to uphold the current generation for strength to continue running the race, setting the pace and leading the way, and to journey together with the next generation to bring His kingdom to come.

3. Action plans

- a. To issue a Prayer Booklet for the General Elections to prepare the church to cover the nation in prayer before, during and after the elections.
- b. To circulate this statement which is to be shared to all churches as an encouragement and a call to unity, holiness and prayer.

Issued on behalf of Prayer United,
JOINT SECRETARIES

(signed)
 Chrisanne Chin (CCM)
 Rev. Andy Chi (NECF)

Dated this January 31, 2013

MCCBCHST: MAIS Statement

Unprecedented and Unconstitutional

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) is of the will that Article 11 of the Federal Constitution sufficiently provides for and safeguards the right of each person to profess and practice one's religion of choice. Further, Article 11(3) expressly provides that every religious group has the right to manage its own religious affairs.

Accordingly, any attempt by any party to dilute the rights expressly provided for by the Federal Constitution would be tantamount to denigrating the supreme law of the country.

Recently, the Selangor Islamic Council (MAIS) issued a statement to the effect that the use of the word "Allah" by non-Muslims is prohibited. The statement by MAIS also gave the impression that its ruling would be binding on non-Muslims. This is a tantamount to imposition of restrictions by an Islamic Council or body against non-Muslims. It could also be seen as an attempt to control the religious practice of a non-Muslim religion by an Islamic body or organisation.

Any attempt to govern non-Muslims or interfere with non-Muslims' practice of their religion by any Muslim body must be stopped immediately. It would be against the Federal Constitution. This unhealthy practice could also lead to unwanted social repercussions and raising of tensions between communities.

The Federal Constitution clearly provides and guarantees religious freedom and the right for each religious body to regulate their own affairs. The Federal Constitution under Article 11(4) allows the States to enact laws to restrict propagation of other religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam.

However, there are no laws whether Federal or State that enables any Muslim body or organisation to impose rulings or "fatwas" on non-Muslims. In any event, any laws that are inconsistent with the Federal Constitution would be void pursuant to Article 4 of the Federal Constitution.

The only restriction imposed on non-Muslims in the Federal Constitution, pursuant to Article 11(4), would be pertaining to "*propagation of religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam.*" However, there are no restrictions imposed on the practice or propagation of a religion among persons who do not profess or practice Islam. In other words, if you do not profess or practice Islam then no restrictions may be placed on you as to how you practice your religion. Every

religious group has the right to manage its own religious affairs.

In this regard, the "**Herald's**" case the High Court had held." ... (i) The Rulers and YDPA have no prerogative powers to govern the affairs of other religions and the fact that the affairs of other religions are governed not by the Rulers and YDPA but by their own religious group is clearly enshrined in Article 11(3) of the Federal Constitution. If any action is taken by Rulers and YDPA which affect affairs of *non-Islamic* religions, such action would be construed as unconstitutional. Further, if any laws other than those set out in Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution are passed, such laws would also be construed as unconstitutional.

We further view with concern the statement by *the* former **Chief Justice Tun Ahmad Fairuz Sheik Abdul Halim** that "non-Muslims cannot use the word "ALLAH" as it is enshrined in the constitution of 10 states that restricts its usage to Muslims only".

We fail to understand how the former Chief Justice could overlook the fact that all the enactments of the 10 states are made under **Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution, and that Article 11(4) only provides for the "control or propagation of any religious doctrine or belief amongst persons professing the religion of Islam". This article does not forbid other religions from propagating to their adherents.**

Therefore, the provisions in the State Enactments, forbidding the use of certain words by non-Muslims is clearly unconstitutional and was therefore rightly held so by the High Court in December 2009.

The fact that "Islam is the religion of the Federation" in Article 3 of the Federal Constitution is not disputed by anyone. However, we must point out that it is balanced by the word "and" and the second limb of Article 3 need to be read together with the first limb that is "other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation".

The provisions of Article 3(4) that is "Nothing in this Article derogates from any other provision of this constitution, means that Article 3 stands independently and does not affect other provisions of the Federal Constitution.

Lord President Salleh Abas in **Che Omar bin Che Soh V PP (1988) 2 MLJ 55 (SC)** stated

"...the intention in making Islam the official religion of the

Federation was primarily for ceremonial purposes for instance to enable prayers to be offered in the Islamic way on official occasions such as the installation of the Yang diPertuan Agong, Merdeka Day and similar occasions. This explanation was accepted by the Rulers and accordingly Article 3 enacts that "Islam is the religion of the Federation". The Supreme court went on to say that the law in the country today is secular law"

Accordingly the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) supports the decision of our respective member organisations to continue the use of the word "ALLAH" as found in their Holy Scriptures. To otherwise impose any restrictions on any religious group on the practice of its own religion would be unconstitutional.



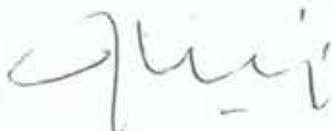
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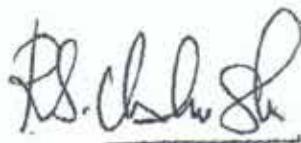
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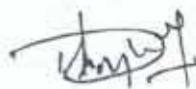
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Vice President
MCCBCHST



Mr. Prematilaka KD. Serisena
Hon. Secretary General
MCCBCHST

Prayer of Faith

Master of sweet and loving lore,
Give us the open mind
To know religion means no more,
No less, than being kind.

Give us the comprehensive sight
That sees another's need;
And let our aim to set things right
Prove God inspired our creed.

Give us the soul to know our kin
That dwell in flock and herd,
The voice to fight man's shameful sin
Against the beast and bird.

Give us a heart with love so fraught
For all created things,
That even our unspoken thought
Bears healing on its wings.

Give us religion that will cope
With life's colossal woes,
And turn a radiant face of hope
On troops of pigmy foes.

Give us the mastery of our fate
In thoughts so warm and white,
They stamp upon the brows of hate
Love's glorious seal of light.

Give us the strong, courageous faith
That makes of pain a friend,
And calls the secret word of death
'Beginning,' and not 'end.'

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox

News from the World Methodist Council

February 20, World Day of Social Justice

February 20 is the United Nations recognizes World Day of Social Justice. In observance of this Reverend Kimberly Reisman, head of the World Methodist Council's Social Justice Committee, has shared this statement:

When God desires to touch a human being's life, or meet a need, or bless a person, God looks for another person to use for God's purposes. In other words, when a person has a need and asks God to intervene in their life, God begins looking for an available person, someone God can work through to meet that need. In many respects, Christian faith is about availability – being available to be used by God to touch the life of another person.

Today is World Social Justice Day, a day created to promote the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all. Clearly our world is not as it should be to require such a day. Yet as Christians our response is not to simply to acknowledge the day, but to become *available*. The need is great, and God is looking for people to work through to meet those

needs. As we mark this global observance, let us recommit ourselves to being available to be used by God to meet needs, heal brokenness, touch lives.

Methodism was founded as a social justice movement. From its infancy, John Wesley and his early followers fought for prison reform and for the abolition of slavery. The actions of these early leaders of our church family continue to enlighten and inspire us today. The World Methodist Council continues to be a tireless advocate for Social Justice.

One day a year will never solve the ills in the world, but our sincere hope is that making people aware of the injustices still facing humanity will inspire others to get involved and stay involved in the cause for Social Justice.

Reactions to Pope Benedict XVI's Resignation

For the first time in six centuries, a pope has resigned. Citing advanced age and frailty and after examining his conscience before God, Pope Benedict XVI said in a statement, "I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise" of his position as head of the world's one billion Roman Catholics.

"In today's world," the pope said, "subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of St. Peter and proclaim the gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."

"For this reason," he continued, "and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom, I declare that I renounce the ministry of bishop of Rome, successor of St. Peter."

Upon learning of the news of Pope Benedict's resignation, General Secretary Ivan Abrahams recalled time spent in the company of the Pope at various ecumenical and interfaith conferences attended by both him and the prior General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. George Freeman. Most recently the Vice President of the World Methodist Council, Bishop Sarah Davis, was a guest of the 13th Ordinary Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

"It takes courage, particularly for those of us in religious vocations, to realize that while your spirit may be willing to carry out a task, your body is unable," noted Abrahams.

Pope Benedict XVI will continue to carry out his duties until February 28.

The World Methodist Council would like to extend our prayers towards our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters throughout the world during this time of transition. Our prayers are also with both Pope Benedict and those involved with choosing his successor.

Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams is the fourth person and first South African to serve as General Secretary of the World Methodist Council. He began his tenure in 2012 after a period of transition commencing at the close of the World Methodist Conference in Durban, South Africa.

1st BB Asia Officers Fellowship

By James TC Wong



HONG KONG – The 1st Boys’ Brigade Asia Officers Fellowship was held at YMCA Wu Kwai Sha recently from Dec 28-31.

Organized by the Boys’ Brigade Asia (BBA) and hosted by the Boys’ Brigade Hong Kong (BB HK), the event drew more than 70 participants from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom, Macau and Hong Kong.

BB Asia was formed when BB representatives from Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand signed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2004.

Its objective is to unite all the BB by providing an international structure and organization to address on issues, problems and development pertaining to BB work in Asia.

In his welcoming address, BB Asia Executive Secretary Francis Chiong praised BB Hong Kong for doing a fine job in hosting the inaugural event.

“As the theme for this event is to encourage and to fellowship with one another, we will certainly seize this opportunity to do so

over the next few days. We really thank God for your good response to participate,” he added.

A forum was held on Dec 29 whereby the Bishop of the Diocese of Western Kowloon, Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Soo delivered an exhortation on “Spiritual Leadership” to encourage the Officers.

Among the highlights was a community service initiated by the BB Hong Kong with the assistance from the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department.

Representatives from the participating countries formed small teams with the members from the various Hong Kong BB Companies to visit senior citizens at their homes for a “Sharity Experience”. The word “Sharity” is aptly coined from “share” and “charity”.

Representing Grace Methodist Church Malaysia, participant Captain Roseline Lee from 4th Miri was visibly elated with the “Sharity Experience”.

“It’s an eye-opener for us to appreciate what the Hong Kong government has done much for its senior citizens and we thank BB

Hong Kong for organizing such a memorable visit,” she commented.

The Fellowship and Cultural Night was another exciting highlight when representatives from each country presented a performance relating to each national unique culture.

“This Fellowship is timely. It gathers the Officers from all over Asia for friendship and we have become support groups to each other through new bonding. I’m more encouraged to move forward in expanding Christ’s Kingdom through the BB ministry,” said Paul Tiu, the President of BB Philippines.

Rev. Richard Tok, the Associate Chaplain of BB Asia and also the National Chaplain of BB Malaysia was the preacher for the Sunday Worship service.

Following the closing ceremony, the 7th General Council Meeting was held at the Hong Kong Baptist Church.

Ong Teong Hoon from Singapore was elected as the new BB Asia President.

James TC Wong is a member of the Grace Methodist Church, Miri.

Ms Sophia Blackmore's Journey to Perak

It was Dr. and Mrs. West and little Irene with whom I visited Ipoh last month. A very heavy storm of rain came on just before we left Penang, and we had a rough passage across to the Peninsula. At midnight we passed through the Dinding Islands, which are at the entrance of the Perak river. We steamed quite close to these islands; they looked very beautiful. We wished for daylight that we might see them more distinctly. Forty miles up the river is Teluk Anson. We arrived at 6.30 a.m., and had to wait till eight o'clock for the train. The journey of sixty miles to Ipoh was through cut-down jungle, which is always interesting for variety of colour and new growth.

It is surprising how quickly roads have been made in Perak. Not many years ago travelling was all done by the water ways; the only land paths were elephant tracks. Now there are several railways and very good cart roads connecting all the principal towns. It must mean much labour to make roads through the thick virgin jungle and over all the water springs, rivers, etc. Amongst the minor difficulties must be coming in contact with different kinds of insects, that are so numerous. I realized this one day, when I put my hand through some bushes to get at some flowers. I was instantly covered with karinga ants, which nipped very hard and were not easy to get rid of.

As the country is being opened up by these roads new towns are springing up like mushrooms.

One of the first places we visited was the land that has been given by the Government to our mission on which to build a school-church. The land is high, on the railway line, and in every way a desirable situation. The jungle has been cut down, but there was still much clearing to be done. A road had to be made to the land. This was begun when we were in Ipoh. The building is to be commenced when \$1500 has been collected. It is hoped that not many months will elapse before the first Methodist Church in the Malay Peninsula is completed. It rained every day that we were in Ipoh. All our outings had to be arranged for the morning, for we were sure of heavy rain in the evening. On the Sunday it rained, and rained,

and rained. This interfered with the congregations. The Chinese service was held first, then the Tamil. In the afternoon three Chinese were baptised. At six p.m. English service was held. Mr. Horley's sitting room was nicely filled, although it was so wet.

In Ipoh and the surrounding towns there are many calls for Christian work. The Chinese pre-dominate. It is they who do most of the tin mining. The Malays keep to their villages on the river banks. When will the time come when the preacher of the Gospel is found in all these towns in the beautiful Kinta Valley?

One morning we went to visit some caves in white cliffs, about a mile from Ipoh. The cliffs are of beautiful white stone – they say marble. The caves are very interesting; several of them are quite large. In the best one a heathen temple is built, which seems such a pity. But all over the lovely valley are signs of heathenism and superstition. The caves are written over in Tamil and Chinese in rude charcoal characters – this disfigures the white wall. Truly man spoils the beautiful works of God.

Another morning we had a drive along Gopeng road. There are miles of white cliffs along this road, their summits and crevices covered with tropical foliage. There are caves in these cliffs too, but we could not drive far enough to see them.

Tin mining in Perak has developed in late years. Europeans with expensive ideas for machinery have not been able to make it easy. The Malay, if he has enough to eat and drink, thinks he has no need to work; so the industrious Chinaman mines for tin with success. We visited some tin mines. The sand which is mixed with tin is dug out of the hillside, and undergoes frequent washing. The arrangements for the water to run from one trough to another are very ingenious. We also saw bags and bags of the black tin ore in small grains. This ore was ready for the smelting, which is done elsewhere.

We heard from various reports of what the rain had done by washing away the railroad but no information was very definite. How-

ever, when we came to get our tickets for the return journey we found we were issued to Kampar only. When we reached that place we could only get within half a mile of the station. The carriages were soon emptied. The men climbed up the embarkment and were soon to the road. We were following but were advised to walk through the train and after some delay were taken in a van to the station. Dr. West then went to hunt for a horse conveyance, but found to his dismay that the other passengers had taken them. After waiting a long time a bullock 'bus put in an appearance'. We and our boxes were crowded in; we were shaken and jolted at a great rate. The driver did his best by calling out and urging on his beasts but they had been the journey before that day, and were tired out.

We hope to reach Tapak (Tapah), a distance of twelve miles, by this bullock' bus and then take a shandey-dan to Tapak, road station, six miles further on, reaching there in time for the afternoon train. But the bullocks moved on so slowly through the hot sun that we reached Tapak, at the time we should have been at the station. We were grateful for a Rest house to spend the night in, and found it very comfortable. I was tired but Dr. and Mrs. West went round to see the town and decided that more Malays were there than we had yet seen in our travels. Next morning we had a very pleasant drive in a shandey-dan to the station. At Teluk Anson we had again to wait. We found friends who kindly entertained us. Dr. West baptised a Tamil boy and found some other work to do.

Sophia Blackmore was an Australian missionary. She founded the Methodist Girls' School on 15 August 1887, and also Fairfield Methodist School (Primary) in Singapore. She was the first woman missionary sent by the Methodist Women's Foreign Missionary Society to Singapore. She also set up a boarding home for girls, supported the early Methodist Straits Chinese Christian work and published a Christian periodical in Baba Malay.

This article was reprinted from the 'Malaysia Message, January 1896'



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