

PELITA METHODIST

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“Christmas-

Hope Beyond Optimism”

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

Joy to the World . . .

PSALM 98
ISAAC WATTS, 1644-1748

ANTIOCH CM
Arr. from GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL, 1685-1759
by LOWELL MASON, 1792-1872



1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
2. Joy to the world! the Sav - ior reigns:

. . . The Lord is come

Moment

How does the Methodist Church respond to queries about issues facing the church?

In recent times, more than at any other in the history of our nation, calls have been made by many individuals and organisations for the Church to state its stand on a number of issues confronting our nation. Those in the pews must have certainly wondered and asked themselves “how does the Church and especially the Methodist Church in Malaysia respond to these calls”. It is arising out of this that this article is written to provide some basic information as to the avenues through which the Methodist Church does indeed respond to such calls when deemed necessary.

There are three (possible) levels of engagement of response that the Methodist Church in Malaysia (MCM) is involved in when it comes to making public statements. The first level of involvement is at the level of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM). The CFM is a consultative body and its members are the Council of Churches in Malaysia (CCM), the National Evangelical Churches Fellowship (NECF) and the Catholic Church (CC). This body represents almost the whole of the Christian Community in Malaysia and speaks on behalf of the Malaysian Church on important issues. It is the body that seeks collectively to engage the Government on issues primarily pertaining to the Christian Community. The CFM makes public statements on behalf of the community and it has established “a code of understanding and practice” to especially ensure unity of stand and articulation.

When an issue concerning Christians, which is of national concern and affecting not only Christians but also all Malaysians is brought to its attention, then the process of discerning whether to make a public statement begins. The Executive Secretary is instrumental in initiating a formal process in arriving at an appropriate decision by the CFM Council. If the decision is that a statement is needed, then the necessary process and protocols will follow until a final document is crafted in addressing the issue at hand. The approved statement will then be released to the press, all member churches and other interested parties. The Methodist Church in Malaysia is involved in CFM by virtue of being a member of the Council of Churches of Malaysia. It is an agreed principle that the CFM represents the Christian Community in Malaysia and that it will speak on behalf of them. Generally speaking, the three component bodies (and affiliated denominations) do not make individual statements.

But there are times when the CFM Council may decide not to make a statement and leaves it to the individual component bodies to decide whether they want to make a statement on a particular issue. In this instance the Council of Churches in Malaysia (CCM) may decide it wants to make a statement on such an issue. Then the CCM General Secretary will initiate the process which will involve all the

Heads of Churches of the member churches. Once the General Secretary has consensus from the Heads of Churches, he would release the statement to the relevant bodies and to all member churches. The Methodist Church and all our Annual Conferences are members of the Council of Churches and the Bishop and Annual Conference Presidents are part of the body called “Heads of Churches”. It is also an observed practice that generally speaking, the component denominations will then not issue individual statements in preserving unity of stand and articulation on the said issue.

A third level is where the MCM may make a statement in its own capacity as prescribed by two provisions in the Methodist Book of Discipline (MBOD), namely para 511 and para 357.8 when a particular issue warrants it. Para 511 states that “No person, no paper, no organisation has the authority to speak officially for the Methodist Church, this right having been reserved exclusively to the General Conference under the Constitution.”.

Having stated thus, the MBOD also provides for para 357 – “Duties, powers and limitations of the Bishop(s) - 357.8 “To represent and speak on behalf of the Methodist Church in all matters related to other church bodies or government, in consultation with the Council of Presidents. However the Bishop(s) may not commit the Methodist Church to any action, stand or policy contrary to the Constitution and Discipline of the Methodist Church”. The latter provision does give room for the Episcopal Office to make statements when necessary, but this is done so with great care and in consultation with the college of Annual Conference Presidents and must be consonant with the provisions in the MBOD. Much wisdom, prayer and consultation is needed in such instances before a statement is released to the press, to relevant organisations, and to all Annual Conferences, its churches and members. The Bishop will also report the statement made in his report to the General Conference Executive Committee (GCEC) which is also made known to the Annual Conferences.

It is my sincere hope that our Sovereign God will continue to guide and empower the Church in Malaysia of which the MCM is a part - with wisdom, discernment and courage to be a united prophetic voice that will bless our nation at this historic point of time. Let us remember our Malaysian Church leadership in prayer as they shoulder this important but far from easy task.

ANTHONY ROW
General Secretary
The Methodist Church in Malaysia

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Malaysia National Prayer Nurturing

As the Lord leads.....

The Bible says that God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ's death so that we may be holy and blameless as we stand before him (Col 1:22). Paul's goal in ministry is based on this. In verses 28-29, we see how closely Paul links his vocation with God's purpose. In announcing Jesus as Lord, he seeks to admonish and teach everyone with all wisdom, with a definite goal: to present everyone complete in Christ. Paul knows clearly that God's desire is to bring Christians to maturity. For this purpose, he strives with great intensity and effort, as one who competes in games. He intends for everyone to become spiritually mature, conformed to the image of Christ. He himself first becomes an example of that maturity.

To achieve this high and holy calling, Paul relies on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray for our pastors and preachers:

LORD, our Father in heaven, may You empower our pastors, leaders and preachers to be examples of spiritual maturity, seeking to present to everyone Your word in its fullness!

Beloved [a disciple-making community with unwavering heart]

- Read Colossians 1-2

Nation [a changed nation for His glory]

O LORD, we pray for the affairs of our nation to be governed by fundamental principles that ensure the welfare of the weak and powerless; that the federal and state governments will commit to honesty and transparency in all their dealings

Issues:

- **rising cost of living** while majority of the people have yet to reach the level of high income group
 - **electricity tariff hikes** beginning Jan 1, 2014
 - [News]The government's move to increase electricity tariff starting next year is unjustified, when the high power reserve margin is never used, said Taiping MP Nga Kor Ming. Nga said the power reserve margin of 52% was much higher than the international standard of 5 to 10%. The power reserve margin is for emergencies but the electricity will be wasted if not used.
 - MP for Pandan Rafizi Ramli lambasted the Najib administration for protecting cronies including independent power producer firms controlled by tycoons Syed Mokhtar, Ananda Krishnan, Yeoh Tiong Lai, at the expense of the people.
 - Government has not shown to have wisely manage public funds and putting the money into good use.
 - **pray that Government will reexamine its decision**
- **Corruption is still an issue**
 - Malaysia scored 50 out of 100 points in the perception index (Number 0 very corrupt, 100 corrupt free). This is a miniscule improvement from 49 points
 - Cronysm continues, bribery is still rampant
 - Government has not demonstrated its political will to fight graft.
 - TI-M president Akhbar Satar said that the government should implement stricter measures to eradicate graft in order to prove to the public that Putrajaya was serious in dealing with corruption.

Government should grant more autonomy to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to probe allegations of graft, repeal Section 203A of the Penal Code and plug in loopholes in the Whistleblowers Protection Act, to allow more people to come forward on allegations of graft.

Currently, the Whistleblowers Protection Act only allows an informer to leak information of an alleged corrupt act to an enforcement agency. The media is not considered as a valid agency to report claims of graft.

Remembering Others

- **Concerning the Syrian refugee camps in Jordan facing harsh winter**
 - 120,000 residents, mostly women and children
 - the camps continue to receive new arrivals
- **Concerning Thai anti-government protests**

"CHRISTMAS - Hope Beyond Optimism"

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

I have just returned from the double joy of sharing in an event that celebrated the birth of the Saviour of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, and which is done in a truly "beyond mere sloganeering" 1 Malaysia reality.

I was privileged to deliver an opening speech at the Gaya Christmas Celebration 2013 as the Episcopal Head of the Methodist Church in Malaysia. This is in view of the fact that the main organiser from the Sabah Council of Churches event this year is our own Sabah Provisional Annual Conference. I was told that that was the 9th edition of the annual event. The whole of Lintasan Deasoka in the centre of Kota Kinabalu was cordoned off for the celebration of Christmas. The celebration held from 10th to 13th December 2013 in carnival like atmosphere, brought together Kadazans, Dusuns, Chinese, Malays, Indians and other bumiputras of the "land below the wind". This year the theme is Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

This fresh experience has again renewed hope for me in dreaming of a truly 1 Malaysia. Indeed it does not surprise us that the Christians in Sarawak and Malaysia have issued strong press statements that categorically remind those in authority and the public that Malaysia is a moderate country in which the freedom of religion is guaranteed and is to be practised freely and without restrictions as guaranteed by the Malaysian Constitution. It is one thing for our Prime Minister to proclaim to an international audience that Malaysia spearheads the global moderate movement where religion is concerned, but then the reality in his own backyard does not reflect what he professes. (See also the press statements from the Sarawak association of Churches, and Sabah Council of Churches and others in this edition).

As I connect with each of our 6 Annual Conferences and also our Persidangan Missi Sengoi at the Methodist annual conference sessions in the month of November this year, many in our Methodist Church in Malaysia family have expressed great concern and unhappiness with regards to the recent court ruling that prohibits The Herald of the Catholic Church from using the word "Allah". Some of our members, both young and old, from our Sarawak Iban Annual Conference said to me, "Bishop, how can the court say that the word "Allah" is not integral to our Christian faith and practice; we have always used "Allah Taalla" - even before Malaysia was formed."

As we continue to encounter such challenges to our faith as a Christian community in our beloved land, let us remember the One in whom we have placed our hope. I am reminded of ^{NRS} **Psalm 130:7** "O Israel, **hope in the LORD!** For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. ⁸ It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities."

To the believing Israelite of faith, the mercy of God remains an unexplained mystery. He personally discovered the reality of this truth by inference from the astonishing and inexplicable fact that such a sinful and continually disobedient nation had not been finally destroyed. For believers today, that mercy remains a mystery, but we can see much further into it than Israel of old, as we see the supreme expression of the being of the incomparably loving God in choosing to be born a man to die on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice for man's sins. Advent and Christmas bring this mystery into sharp focus once again.

When we re-visit the old proverb that says "While there is life there is hope" – we can see its truth because since God is the God of life, there is always hope. Hence it is not uncommon for us to read the refrain of "I cry, I wait" in the book of psalms. The Bible takes the clear and unchanging view that the last word is never with sin and death. There is always hope for restoration and renewal – especially when the people of God "humble themselves, seek His face and turn from their wicked ways."

In **Romans 15:13**, Paul declares "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." It is to be noted that Paul roots the source of hope in the "God of hope". As such, a distinction can be drawn that our hope as believers is not mere optimism which lives by evidence. Such optimism dies when hard data points to defeat.

Contrary to this, people of hope live by faith, so that their hope lives on even after the life-support system of tangible evidence has been cut off. The vital signs of reason are most welcome, but people of hope dig deep into their faith and drink from it when the vital signs of reason grow ever faint. Believers are a people of hope because they are a people of faith. In fact, to have hope we have to have faith – in the "God of hope". Because of faith in the God of hope, hope will have a greater staying power than mere optimism. Our hope powered by the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit will keep going – even after optimism gives up. Ours is a hope beyond optimism.

While there is little in our national landscape to be optimistic about, the Church in Malaysia during this Yule-tide season is reminded of our God of hope. It is timely that the life of Nelson Mandela (who died on the 5 December 2013) is celebrated in the season of Advent. His life had brought so much hope to a long suffering and oppressed people – caused by a white supremacist government which had ruled for a long time in South Africa. He embodied reconciliation and forgiveness – mirroring the Saviour of whom he had learnt about in his Methodist schooling and own spiritual journey.

This one man who was willing to lay down his life for the ideals of equality, freedom, justice and dignity for all in his long-suffering nation sacrificed 27 years of his life in imprisonment. Many of his generation openly admit that they never dreamt that South Africa would become a free democratic nation, and a reconciled rainbow nation at that – in their own life-time! He elicited from the world community acknowledgement of his great achievement of realizing hope, reminding a world that is skeptical and hardened that there is always hope, especially when one is connected to God. This one man who has been quoted as saying, “I am not an optimist, but a great believer of hope”, has been used by God to demonstrate that hope (rooted in Him) is greater than mere optimism – in transforming the course and history of a whole nation!

Nelson Mandela had many connections to Methodism throughout his life; being a graduate of a Methodist boarding school, having a Methodist chaplain in prison and he was conferred the World Methodist Council peace award as a “symbol of freedom, justice and peace” in 2000. The South African Embassy has requested the Methodist Church in Malaysia to help organize a Vigil/Memorial Service in thanksgiving to God in memory of this great man on the evening of 13 December 2013. This will be held in the Trinity Methodist Church, PJ.

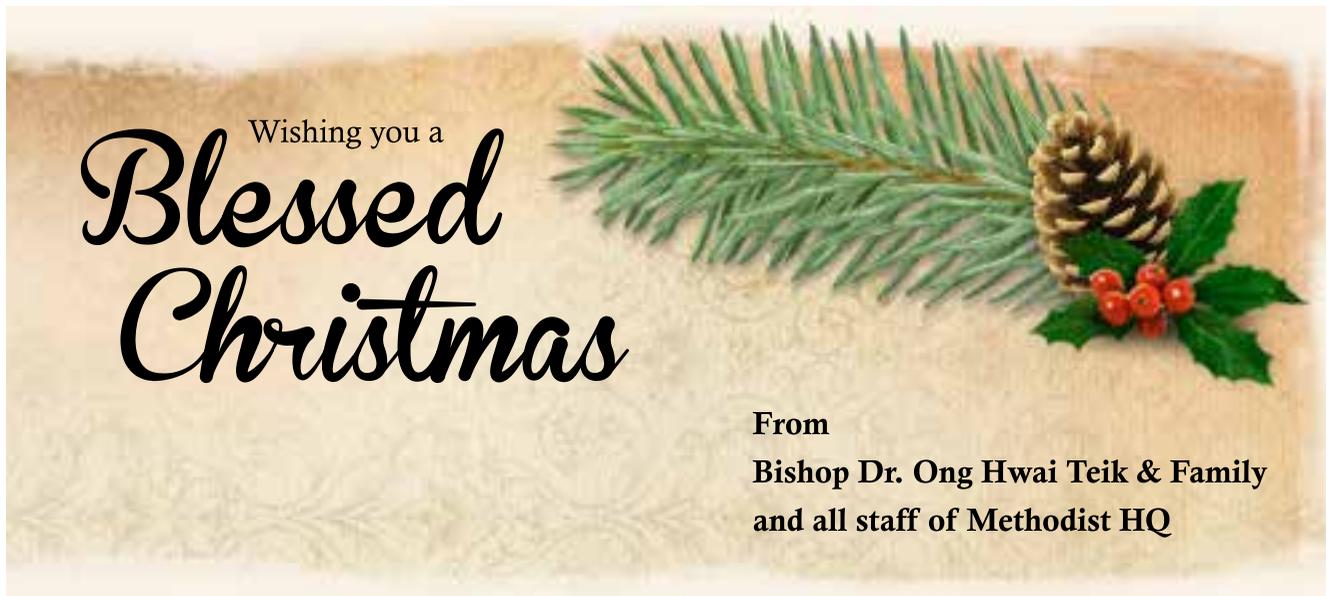
S Mapenzauswa and D Dolan of Reuters wrote poignantly of the 10 December 2013 Memorial celebration of Nelson Mandela’s life in Johannesburg, “World leaders from US President Barack Obama to Cuba’s Raul Castro joined thousands of South Africans to honour Nelson Mandela on Tuesday in a memorial that will celebrate his gift for uniting enemies across political and racial divides..... Obama and Castro, whose nations have been foes for more than half a century, are among the designated speakers at the stadium where 23 years earlier Mandela, newly freed from apartheid jail, was hailed by supporters as the hope of a new South Africa.”

In man, **created in the image of God**, we see the tangible proof of the ability of a human being able to reflect some of his or her Creator’s attributes. The General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, Rev Moss Ntsha aptly says: “Madiba is considered by many as the father of the nation. He modelled firm confrontation with evil and injustice, and magnanimity in his triumph over those who sought his destruction. His passing calls to mind the prophetic tradition of Micah that says: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).”

However, in this season of Christmas, let us remember that though “*A great light has gone out of the world*” [*the tribute to Nelson Mandela by British PM David Cameron*] **yet, THE LIGHT of lights**, the Light of the World that the stars and all of creation point to – is with us as we celebrate His BIRTH as many have done **over twenty centuries**.

May this God Who offers such undeserved love to sinners give a sense of **FRESH HOPE** to all who dwell in this beloved land of ours, especially His Church in Malaysia, so that we “overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”. In Christ Who is the Light of the world, may we be apostles of hope who say “this little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine”. Let us shine as lights of hope after that of Nelson Mandela - for this needy nation of ours is stricken with much darkness of racial and religious polarisation. Let us once again resolve with others as the Church in Malaysia, to be obedient to the injunction of our beloved Saviour, to “let your light so shine before men....and glorify your Father in heaven.”

My prayer for us all in Malaysia this Christmas and the New Year is “**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**”.





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MAJLIS GEREJA-GEREJA SABAH.

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SIARAN AKHBAR

PERDANA MENTERI HARUS BERTINDAK UNTUK MENGHALANG SIKAP TIDAK BERTOLERANSI TERHADAP AGAMA

Kami menyeru Perdana Menteri Datuk Sri Najib Tun Razak untuk segera mengekang faham pelampau di tengah-tengah kita kerana sikap tidak bertoleransi terhadap agama telah sampai ke tahap bahaya.

Kami diingatkan bahawa Perdana Menteri sendiri yang pertama-tama membangkitkan idea yang mulia untuk membina “Gerakan Moderat Global” daripada semua agama untuk memulihkan agenda keamanan dan pragmatisme, dan untuk mengetepikan pihak pelampau, dalam ucapan sulungnya di sesi ke-65 Perhimpunan Agung Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu di New York pada September 2010.

Kami juga diingatkan bahawa beliau mengulangi seruan ini hampir dua tahun kemudian dalam pembukaan Persidangan Antarabangsa mengenai Gerakan Moderat Global yang dianjurkan oleh alumni Universiti Antarabangsa Islam Malaysia. Kami digalakkan oleh jaminan beliau pada waktu itu bahawa, “masanya sudah tiba untuk golongan moderat di semua negara, daripada semua agama untuk mengambil semula pendirian tengah, untuk memulihkan agenda untuk keamanan dan pragmatisme, dan untuk mengetepikan pihak pelampau.”

Dunia telah memperhatikan mesej daripada Malaysia yang mengambil semula pendirian tengah daripada golongan pelampau. Hanya bulan lalu Perdana Menteri Britain David Cameron telah memuji Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak kerana menyatupadukan golongan moderat dalam usaha melawan golongan pelampau di Forum Ekonomi Dunia Islam (WIEF) yang ke-9 di London dan untuk memberikan inspirasi kepada orang di seluruh dunia tentang penentangan terhadap faham pelampau.

Bagaimanapun, di tempat sendiri pula kita mengalami tindakan yang keterlaluan terhadap Gereja di Malaysia. Kami mendapati keputusan Mahkamah Rayuan baru-baru ini sangat tidak munasabah, tidak rasional dan amat tidak bersesuaian, oleh itu kami menolaknya. Pihak Mahkamah Persekutuan kini perlu melakukan perkara yang betul.

Kami bersetuju dengan saudara kami, gereja-gereja di Sarawak dalam kenyataan mereka baru-baru ini bahawa, “Kami berpandangan bahawa hakim-hakim telah melampaui batas ketika menentukan bahawa penggunaan perkataan ‘Allah’ bukan perkara yang perlu dan penting dalam iman Kristian. Dengan membuat keputusan demikian, hakim-hakim telah mengambil sendiri hak yang tidak dimiliki oleh mana-mana mahkamah undang-undang manusia – hak untuk

menentukan agama.”

Artikel 11 (1) Perlembagaan Persekutuan memberikan jaminan perlembagaan bahawa setiap orang mempunyai hak untuk menganut dan mengamalkan agamanya dan untuk menyebarkan agamanya, dan antara lain, hak untuk mengurus hal-ehwal keagamaannya sendiri.

Hak tersebut merangkumi hak orang Kristian untuk menentukan sendiri perkara-perkara berkaitan dengan terjemahan Alkitab termasuk menterjemah perkataan ‘God’ sebagai ‘Allah’ di dalam Alkitab, Kitab Suci kami dalam bahasa Melayu. Tiada kekuasaan negeri atau persekutuan yang mempunyai kuasa atau hak atas kuasa eksklusif gereja yang hanya dimiliki oleh Gereja di Malaysia sebagaimana yang dijamin oleh Perlembagaan Persekutuan dan dimandatkan oleh Kitab Suci.

Dengan segala hormatnya, kenyataan daripada setiausaha Dewan Di-rajah Selangor, Hanafisah Jais, bahawa penggunaan perkataan ‘Allah’ dalam Alkitab dan dalam edisi Bahasa Malaysia Katolik Herald dihentikan dengan serta-merta, memerlukan penjelasan segera kerana perkara ini menimbulkan kebimbangan terhadap jaminan perlembagaan terhadap kebebasan beragama.

Hendaklah diingat bahawa penggunaan Alkitab dan perkataan ‘Allah’ adalah perkara di bawah perlembagaan dan undang-undang persekutuan sedangkan Islam adalah perkara di bawah negeri dan sultan masing-masing.

Undang-undang negeri dan perintah yang diwartakan oleh Majlis Agama Islam negeri hanya berlaku untuk orang Muslim di negeri-negeri berkenaan dan bukan pada undang-undang persekutuan atau orang bukan Muslim.

Sabah tidak sama dengan sembilan negeri Melayu. Kami telah berulang kali menyatakan bahawa di bawah terma 20-perkara dalam Perjanjian Malaysia, Sabah hendaklah terus-menerus menikmati kebebasan beragama selepas pembentukan Malaysia pada 1963. Gereja di Malaysia Timur telah wujud jauh lebih lama daripada Malaysia sendiri.

Oleh yang demikian, kami mengharapkan pihak lain supaya menghormati hak asasi kami dalam kebebasan beragama tanpa sebarang sekatan dalam hal amalan dan pernyataan iman kami dan pelaksanaan sakramen asas agama kami termasuk liturgi, ibadah dan pengajaran Kitab Suci kami kepada anak-anak kami.

Kami akhiri dengan memberikan jaminan bahawa kami bertekad kuat untuk bersama-sama Perdana Menteri dalam usaha beliau untuk membina Gerakan Moderat Global. Kami juga menolak faham pelampau dalam agama. Oleh itu, kami menyeru beliau untuk memulihkan pendirian tengah bagi toleransi keagamaan dan untuk menghormati hak-hak perlembagaan orang bukan Muslim dalam kebebasan beragama dan hak untuk mengurus hal-ehwal mereka sendiri. SEKIAN.

BISHOP DATUK DR THOMAS TSEN

President, Sabah Council of Churches

Tarikh: 26 Nov 2013 Kota Kinabalu.

This statement is issued in conjunction with the "Mamangkis" celebration and the Public Forum on the 'Allah' issue jointly organised by the Sabah Council of Churches, Pastors' Fellowship Kota Kinabalu.

balu and NECF COSA (National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Commission on Sabah Affairs) held at the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia in Likas, Kota Kinabalu.

Mamangkis is associated with the traditional Sumazau dance of the Kadazan, Dusun and Murut (KDM) indigenous people groups in Sabah. The pangkis is a shrill shout by the dance leader as a cue for dancers to change the dance pattern. KDM Christians have contextualised this popular dance as their expression of faith in their praise and worship with singing, dancing and joyous shouting using words in Psalms or Biblical songs, hymns, and poetry like in Psalm 20:5 "May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory and raise a victory banner in the name of our God. May the LORD answer all your prayers." (Kami mau bersorak-sorai tentang kemenanganmu dan mengangkat panji-panji demi nama Allah kita; kiranya TUHAN memenuhi segala permintaanmu).

Current Affairs

Chinese version of the above statement

STATEMENT

我国首相必须极力抵制宗教极端份子

我们在此要求首相纳吉尽速抵制我国已达到危险边缘的极端份子的行为。

我们清楚记得首相于2010年九月在纽约举办的第65届联合国会议首次演说，发表高尚的目标，要施行“全球性温和派和平交流运动”让各个宗教和睦相处，排斥极端份子。

我们要提醒各界，首相是如此重复地宣传了将近2年，在首届国际会议，由马来西亚国际回教大学主办的全球性温和派和平交流运动。他如此再次的确认鼓舞了我们，“现在是每个国家开始和谐相处的时候了，所有宗教找到平衡点，取回和谐并排斥极端份子。

马来西亚现已成为全球都关注的极端分子活跃的中心。就上个月，英国首相戴维·卡梅伦在第九届世界回教经济讲座会（WIFE）盛赞纳吉首相与全球联合抵制极端份子。

可惜，回顾我们自己的家园马来西亚却正面对极端分子攻击教会。

我们认为法庭最近所作出的判断极为不合理，不理性也让人反感。因此，我们坚决否定这次裁决。联邦法院该起来作出正确的修正。

我们完全赞同于我们砂撈越教会最近发表的文告，“我们认为禁止基督徒使用“阿拉”称谓的法官已经超出了他们权限范围的裁决。没有任何世间的法律有权对这件事下判决，就是为宗教下定义的权限。”

联邦宪法第11章第一条，阐明了宪法保证每个人都有信奉和实行自己的宗教和宣扬以及管理其宗教事宜的权利。

这个权力包括基督徒可自由决定如何翻译圣经，也包括自由使用在alkitab，我们的国文圣经中以“阿拉”的称谓”。没有任何州属或联邦的权威有权力裁决马来西亚的教会，因为联邦宪法如此保障我们拥有自由使用的权益。

雪兰莪州皇家事务秘书哈娜菲莎 在丝 (Hanafisah Jais) 最近的发言，表示立即禁止Alkitab国文圣经和天主教先驱报使用‘阿拉’的称谓，此事需要立即澄清，因为它已违反了宪

法所保障我们的宗教自由。

必须提醒的是，在Alkitab国文圣经里使用‘阿拉’称谓是联邦宪法给予的权限，然而穆斯林的权限仅是受各州属的苏丹所保障的权限。

回教宗教协会所设定的州属法令和公报法令应该只运用在州属的穆斯林身上，而非在联邦法律或非穆斯林身上。

沙巴不同于其他的九个马来州属。我们已经在成立马来西亚协议的20条款中屡次表示，1963年成立马来西亚后，沙巴持续享有宗教自由的权利。东马的教会的历史远远比马来西亚本身成立的历史更悠久。

因此，我们期望他人会尊重我们履行我们在信仰的实践与表达，完全的宗教自由的基本权利。我们可以自由地进行我们的宗教仪式和礼仪，敬拜方法和对下一代传授我们的圣经。

我们总结并保证，坚决响应首相全力推动的全球温和派和平运动。我们也极力反对宗教的极端份子。因此，我们恳请首相重建宗教的平衡点以及尊重非穆斯林在联邦宪法保障下的宗教自由和管理其宗教事宜的权利。

会督Datuk Dr Thomas Tsen 敬函

沙巴教会协会

日期：2013年11月26日

以上发表乃配合“Mamangkis”的庆祝活动和由沙巴教会协会（SCC），沙巴事务委员（NECF COSA）及亚庇牧者团契会合办的‘阿拉’课题公开座谈会。该活动地点位于里卡士区的亚庇巴色会。

Mamangkis是沙巴原住民卡达山，杜顺和Murut（KDM）的传统Sumazau舞蹈。pangkis是尖锐的呼喊声，透过舞蹈的带领者，作为一个传统跳舞变动时的呼叫声。原住民呈现这闻名的舞蹈，以表达他们的信仰。他们在欢乐中用歌唱和呼喊声，用歌舞，用诗词编制的歌曲来敬拜、赞美和宣告。如同诗篇20：5 — 我们要因神的救恩夸胜，要奉我们神的名竖立旌旗，愿耶和華成就你一切所求的。

Issue a betrayal of Malaysia Agreements - ACS



Prof Dr Jayum Jawan



HUGE TURN-OUT: A section of the forum participants at the Christian Ecumenical Worship Centre Kuching.



UNITED WE STAND: (From left) John Ha, Bolly, Steward, Dr Su, Lawrence, Ng and Ambrose.

KUCHING: Churches in Sarawak yesterday affirmed in front of about 1,500 forum participants their stand on the recent ban of the word 'Allah' in the Catholic weekly bulletin 'The Herald'.

Association of Churches (ACS) in Sarawak chairman Archbishop Datuk Bolly Lapok said the Bumiputera Church would continue to use the word 'Allah' as it is fundamental to all aspects of their profession and practice of the Christian faith.

"Any attempt to forbid the use of the word 'Allah' by non-Muslims would be most regrettable and wholly unacceptable as it is a flagrant disregard and betrayal of the Malaysia Agreements that guarantee the inalienable rights of non-Muslims in Sarawak and Sabah to complete religious freedom."

Bolly, who is also Archbishop of the Province of South East Asia, Council of Churches Malaysia acting president and Christian Federation of Malaysia deputy chairman, said these rights must be given its rightful place and that religious bigotry, racism and extremism must be contained.

Accompanying Bolly on stage at the Christian Ecumenical Worship Centre here were Catholic Archbishop Datuk John Ha, Iban Methodists of Sarawak president Rev Steward Damat, Chinese Methodists president Datuk Dr Su Chii Ann, Seventh Day Adventist Mission chief Lawrence Banyie, Salvation Army chief Major Francis Ng and ACS secretary-general Ambrose Linang.

The forum featured three speakers, comprising constitutional lawyer Lim Heng Seng, Dr Ng

Kam Weng – an authority on theology and historical perspectives over the use of the word 'Allah', and Universiti Putra Malaysia political science lecturer Prof Dr Jayum Jawan.

Bolly said the word 'Allah' had been in use long before the birth of Malaysia and it is used in all aspects of the Christian faith and practised by Bahasa Malaysia-speaking Christians in services, prayers, praise and worship liturgy and religious education.

"As such, it is reasonable to expect that the word also be used in our Christian publications and multi-media resources."

There are 1.6 million Bumiputra Christians in Sarawak and Sabah, and they use Bahasa Malaysia and their native languages in their worship.

Bolly said it made no sense that only Christians in Sarawak and Sabah may use the word 'Allah' because Christians from both states worked or live all over the country and carry with them their Alkitab and other Christian materials in the Bahasa Malaysia language.

Even non-natives from the peninsula own and read the Alkitab as Bahasa Malaysia is the national language, he said.

Bolly said: "It is our view that the (appellate court) judges had overstepped their boundaries when they ruled that using the word 'Allah' was not 'integral to the Christian faith'".

"It is the fundamental right of every religion to determine its expression and practice of its own faith. As such, the 'Allah' controversy is about unreasonable government policies and

laws that infringed on the rights of non-Muslim Malaysians to practise their religion of choice.

"In the face of such unreasonableness we cannot and should not remain silent."

ACS, he said, viewed with grave concern the re-interpretation of Article 3 of the Federal Constitution by the Court of Appeal to mean that non-Muslim religions may only be practised in peace and harmony subject to Islam.

"We do not believe this was ever the original meaning of Article 3, which simply states that other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation."

Bolly said there was a need for a tangible commitment from the authorities concerned to respect and uphold the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.

He thanked Chief Minister Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud for recently stating that Allah is a non-issue in Sarawak.

ACS, he added, was also most encouraged to know that many members of the State Legislative Assembly had expressed their dismay and deep disappointment over how the Allah issue was handled.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church has filed for leave to appeal to the Federal Court against the Court of Appeal's decision. The church has raised 26 questions of law in the leave application.

Source from Mr Churchill Edward of the Borneo Post.



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Bt Jalil- gathering of all Methodist churches for a time of prayer and celebration

Rise Up Young Methodist

By Michael William



“Rise Up Young Methodist” or “Bangkitlah Pemuda-pemudi Methodist” was organized by the General Conference Youth Council this year. This long overdue conference was a gathering of youth from all the Annual Conferences in Malaysia. A total of 315 participants ranging from various ethnicities and languages met from the 2nd to the 5th of November 2013 at the Port Dickson Methodist Centre. We had the Tamils, the Ibans, the Sengoi, the Chinese, the English speaking, the Mandarin speaking, the Iban speaking, the Tamil speaking, the Sengoi speaking, teenagers and young adults congregating and worshipping our Lord together for the first time in many years. The variety was truly indeed the richness of the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

The theme – Rise Up Young Methodist was a call that the GCYC put across all our MYF members to rise above themselves, to grow in the Lord and be a blessing in our country, Malaysia. We also wanted our young Methodist to know each other from all the conferences. In knowing, we hope that fellowships and friendships could be built and thus, together we could be a light for our church and nation.



Program

We had various series of talks and activities throughout the conference. In the early mornings, Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik and Rev. Herbert John shared on the theme talks. Bishop Ong called on the MYFs to follow the example of Daniel in making wise and difficult decisions for the Lord in the midst of being a minority in this country. Rev. Herbert focused on the New Testament - on Jesus and the Holy Spirit in bringing out the message for our youth to rise up.

We also had two plenary sessions at nights focusing on the call to “Spread Scripture Holiness, Transforming the Nation”. These sessions were led by Rev. Philip Siew. His passion and energy for the young people were well received.

The theme talks and the plenary sessions were the only formal sessions at the conference conducted by the traditional speaker/audience method. The rest of the activities were led by the youth themselves. In the later part of the mornings, the participants joined together in different small groups discussing issues of our country and our church. One highlight of the conference was the Methodist Youth Congress - a round table meeting where youth from all the Annual Conferences were given the opportunity to share their dreams for our church and their plans to fulfil these dreams. The Methodist Youth are really passionate for the Lord, church and country. Michael William, the Executive Youth Director of the General Conference then made the plea for the Annual Conference Youth to be initiated, to



be willing to live radically for the Lord, to be informative and also to be innovative in ministering amongst the new generation of youth.

We also had organized theme building games and combined prayer meetings. These were led by the youth from various Annual conferences. It was very exciting to see that the youth led these meetings without much supervision from the organizing committees.

One of the encouraging features was the participation of the Sengoi youth. There were 20 youth from 3 districts. Many of our youth have never interacted and heard the heart and cries of this group of people. It was really a joy to hear them voicing up their heart for the gospel and also seeing them pray and worship the Lord.

Each Annual Conference also had separate group meetings. Being in their own AC groups, they were given opportunities to share with their own members about lessons learnt and suggested follow up from this conference.

Looking to the Future

It is exciting to see the potential that this conference has given to all the participants. New friendships have been formed and everyone has had the opportunity to hear the cries and dreams of all the participants for our fellowships and churches. For once the call for a unified voice can now be realized as the participants have had to rise up together. Hopefully these young Methodists would grow to love each other and work together in strengthening and expanding the kingdom of God in Malaysia.

BBGB Camp

By James TC Wong



MIRI - 4th Miri recently organized a camp to mark the end of its many character-building activities carried out in the past eleven months.

More than 30 members from the Boys' and Girls' Brigade participated in the 2D/1N camp from Nov 15-16 at Grace Methodist, their sponsoring church.

By 7:00 pm, the campers had completed their registration. BB Captain Roseline Lee led in the opening prayer followed by the announcement of ground rules and sing-spiration.

Four teams were formed consisting of Pre-Juniors, Juniors and Seniors. The campers were quick to settle down to name their own team leaders.

For the ice-breaker, BB Helper Abel Wong introduced "Cups", the latest percussion beat popularized by the movie, Pitch Perfect.

The game contains the elements of team-building and unity with the intention to teach the participants to perform an

unique rhythm by hitting plastic cups on the floor in a synchronized pattern.

To everyone's delight, the campers performed "Cups" splendidly during the camp closing.

A video testimony on how God has transformed ex-drug addict Singaporean Kelvin Soh was shown to the campers, followed by an active open floor discussion led by the BB Captain.

In the following morning, the first session for the Seniors started at 8:30 with a talk by GMC Sunday School Superintendent Vivien Lim.

Entitled "Friends", the one-hour talk essentially covers the aspects of friendship experienced by teenagers.

The Seniors were also invited to play a rope game to demonstrate the power of a team's ability to solve complex problems when they collaborated.

"When you are in a tight spot and don't know what to do, you should seek help from people whom you can trust," said Lim as

she explained the lesson learned from the game played.

Abel Tan was the coach in the second session, "Overcoming the fear of Public Speaking".

"Public speaking or communication is feared by many people," said the 32-year-old MNC Petroleum Engineer and member of the Toastmasters Club Miri.

Drawing examples from the Bible, Tan reiterated that Moses too struggled when God wanted him to confront the Pharaoh.

"Moses gave the excuse that he did not have the gift of the gab. But God rebuked him because Moses was focusing on his ability rather than focusing on what God can do," he said.

Tan encouraged the Seniors to trust God in the area of public speaking and communication. "Even if we are poor in communication and have bad experiences in public speaking, we can become better if we trust God to help us in this area," he added.

While the Seniors were busy with their morning sessions, the Juniors were given a hands-on learning bakery lesson by the BB Captain who was assisted by GB Captain Eunice Ho and other Officers.

After three hours, the Juniors were all smiles as their carrot cup cakes turned out to be satisfactory.

Other highlights of the camp included a Bible "Word Search" and a Station Game organized by the Seniors.

Before the camp closed, the BB Captain presented a Commendation Letter to Pte Jonah Lau Li Xuan who had saved his friend from a drowning incident on Nov 3, 2013.

"We commend Pte Lau for his initiative and quick action in responding to a life-threatening situation. His bravery and civic-mindedness are exemplary to every Boy in our Company, hence making us very proud of him. May Pte Lau continue to glorify God in his future endeavours for the advancement of His Kingdom," said Lee before presenting the letter to him.

With the announcement that Team C emerging as champions, food packets were distributed to every participating team.

The camp drew to an end with the singing of the BB Vesper.



Pte Jonah Lau receiving the Commendation Letter



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One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

A Reconciling View

His love enables me to call every country my country, and every man my brother.
(Daniel Wheeler)

IN WORD:

You size people up. We all do. We make snap judgments about people's attitudes and personalities based on what they wear, the expression on their faces, the look in their eyes, the social groups they come from, or any other criteria we can get a handle on.

Most of our efforts are aimed at putting people in categories we can easily understand. There's no shame in that; it's how our minds work. The problem is that our categories are not God's. When we use our own judgments, we end up associating with people who are a lot like us in terms of skin colour, economic status, political opinions, religious views, etc. We are most comfortable with similar people because we are most familiar with their characteristics. We have a lot in common with them – at least on the surface.

But such associations don't spring exclusively from the love of Christ. They don't take us on an adventure of reconciliation. They don't always lead us to where God

wants us to go. They see people in terms of the kingdom of this world, not in terms of the Kingdom of God.

According to God, there are two kinds of people in the world; those who are in Christ and those who are not. Those who are in Christ are one with us – no distinctions of language, economy, race, gender, or heritage. We are united in a common Saviour. Those who are not in Christ are sought by God. And if they are sought by God, they ought to be sought by God's ministers of reconciliation.

IN DEED:

If you are a Christian, then you are a minister of reconciliation. It is your calling to go to the people God seeks. There are no biblical distinctions between them. Jew, Greek, black, white, male, female, rich, poor – all are sought by God. You may be more effective among some, but all are potential believers. God wants reconciliation with everyone. And God's point of view is to be ours.

"From now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view."

2 Corinthians 5:16

Biography Of Rev Wong Dong Sing

Preacher without a "Dog Collar"

The death of **Rev Wong Dong Sing**, on 26th July 1971 marked the close of a chapter in the history of the Methodist mission among the early Chinese settlers who had migrated to Malaysia from Fukien province, China at the beginning of this century. His forty-five years of ministry stretched from days when snakes glided from the rafters of the attap huts of the rice farmers newly turned to rubber tappers, to the present day when the descendants of these settlers use modern tractors and disc plows to do the work which would otherwise have taken them many backbreaking days to complete with a changkul.

Father was born in the home of an Anglican priest, **Wong Jing Sing**, some 76 years ago. Left a widow, when father was 5 years old, grandmother Chiew Sook Ting struggled to bring up her only son and two daughters on her meagre income. Determined that her son should serve God as her husband had done, grandmother made tremendous sacrifices to send father to the Methodist Anglo-Chinese College in Foochow city and later to Shih Ho Theological College to prepare him for the Christian ministry.

IMPRESSION

The beginning of the 20th Century saw great suffering in southern China particularly in the Fukien province. There along the Min River the farmers eked out a bare existence from crowded farms which were subdivided far too small to benefit from economies of scale.

The suffering and poverty in his own home and that of his neighbours must have made an indelible impression on father so that during his high school days in Foochow he took an exceptional interest in science and engineering to find ways and means to lessen his peoples' burdens.

Father's first appointment after graduation was to a little village called Ou Chien near Foochow city. Here at the age of 27, he married mother, **Lee Sook Ging**, a graduate of Hwa Nan College who helped him with the ministry to the women-folk. Father and mother realized at the very beginning that to convey effectively the Christian gospel to those poor, farmers, they must first set an example of true Christian love and concern. Apart from the pulpit, father fought against deep-seated prejudices and fears and sought to introduce modern methods to improve the farmer's lot. Until he introduced the first engine-driven rice milling machines in the villages, the farmers' wives had to carry rice slung at the ends of bamboo poles to a town several miles away to get their rice dehusked!

SUFFERING

As near famine conditions continued in Southern China, the call of **Rev James Hoover** for Christian Foochow settlers in the fertile valley along the Rejang River in Sarawak met with good response. Sibu, the chief town along the Rejang River was populated by so many Foochow migrants that it was soon known as the New Foochow. As more and more of his friends and church members moved southwards to "Nanyang" father decided to follow. Through the assistance of two of his very good friends **Mr Ling Siu Hua** and **Mr Ling Siu Pi**, father brought mother and grandmother to Sitiawan, Perak—another district where large numbers of Foochows had migrated in 1926.

The Great Depression of 1929 brought intense suffering and hardship to the new Foochow immigrants in Sitiawan as to the people of other parts of Malaya. Many who left China to seek a better life in Ma-

laya, found the land strange and cruel during those dark days and returned to China with bitter disappointment. Father, who was serving as a pastor in a small village, Simpang Tiga (now called Pekan Gurney) stayed on with those who remained to share their hunger and sufferings.

Problems were plentiful and as a pastor, father did his best to solve them for his church members. Helping trap and shoot tigers which had been marauding isolated rubber estates, settling quarrels between one Foochow migrant and another was part of his daily routine. Being one of those few people in Simpang Tiga who could speak some English in those days, he was looked to by the members to help them overcome government red tape in applying for new land, planting grants and even getting admissions into hospitals. It was not until better times returned that father was able to muster sufficient funds to build the first church and parsonage in Simpang Tiga.

ENTHUSIASM

In 1935 father was transferred to Seremban—a predominantly Hokkien-speaking area—and he had to learn a new dialect. Despite his Foochow accented Hokkien he soon won the hearts of the Seremban people. His forte was his enthusiasm and self-sacrificial love for his flock. Preaching in Seremban on Sunday mornings he conducted as well worship services in nearby Mantin, Jelebu and Kuala Pilah on Sunday afternoons in rotation. The parsonage which father helped to build in 1937 was as busy as a lodging house. All were welcome there and weary members were urged to have a bath and a cup of tea or a hot meal before changing buses to return to homes in outlying districts. Those who were late for the last bus stayed overnight. Then there

were the not too infrequent visitors who stayed for days at the parsonage whilst their relatives were at the hospital. Each morning and evening they would take food prepared at the parsonage to the hospitals for the sick. To us young children these visitors were somewhat a nuisance, as we had to surrender our beds and sleep on the floor in the hall or verandah. But father truly welcomed them and thanked God for the opportunity of being of service to his fellowmen.

Father was appointed by **Bishop Edwin F. Lee** in 1941 as District Superintendent in Sibul. He was stranded in Malaya however during the Japanese War when bombs fell just as he reached Singapore in December 1941 for the Annual Conference.

HIS FORTE

Immediately after the end of the War in 1945 father returned to serve as District Superintendent for the Lower Rejang District. It was in these years that father displayed his organising skill. With the help of **Rev Ling Kai Cheng** and others he made significant changes in the Church organisation. Modern audio-visual aid methods were introduced. Finances were centrally pooled and pastors were paid according to a fixed salary scheme rather than on the financial strength of the church to which he was attached. Another fascinating event in his time, was the annual pastors' school or retreat. Experienced church leaders like **Dr H.B. Amstutz**, who later became bishop, were invited to conduct refresher courses, including family planning! At these meet-

ings the pastors got to know each other better and often changes in appointments were openly discussed and subsequently implemented with minimum inconvenience and heartache.

Father and mother were dearly loved by the people in Sarawak. When he and mother left to return to Malaya after his retirement in 1960, the farewell functions held in his honour were well attended.

Despite his age, father simply could not stop working for God. Appointed as a supply pastor to Ayer Tawar, Sitiawan father put in his final great spurt as life drew to a close. Although nearing 70 years he pushed himself very hard, dashing about on his 50 cc motorcycle visiting members and reviving the church. He had a few acres of rubber plantation belonging to the church replanted to produce a steady income for the Church. Unlike the depression years. Ayer Tawar was in the 1960's fairly well off, with rubber maintaining a fair price. Father was at last in a position to realize his cherished dream—to build the first air-conditioned church in Malaysia. This he fulfilled despite much opposition. His critics pointed out that it was absurd and a waste of money to build an air-conditioned church in a little town like Ayer Tawar, when even none of the large churches in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were air-conditioned. But father insisted that there must be progress and that was the reason why the Ayer Tawar Church should have air-conditioning to cut off the traffic noises on the main road nearby.

His last church was built and his life work was done. Father finally retired some five years ago and lived with mother in a little plank house built by the sea at Teluk Muroh near Lumut. Father stayed by himself with mother as he did not want to be burden to his children. He also loved the sea. As a young man in China he had enjoyed hunting and fishing in his native hills and streams. After the long years of interruption caused by his work, he had hoped to pick up again the joys of youth. But it was not to be. He suffered from a stroke soon after retirement and was partially paralysed on the right side. Active outdoor life was out. He could no longer go dashing about on his tiny motor bike visiting sick or needy members. It was their turn to visit him.

RETIREMENT

To this little hut by the sea therefore came a constant stream of visitors. They came to cheer up their old pastor, now bedridden and brought him little gifts to express their gratitude for his past kindnesses. Some still came with their problems—work, marriage money—to seek advice from one whom they had long trusted and respected, and to find a Christian solution. Thus to the end of his days, father was able to be with is people to share with them their joys and sorrows and to help them in what little way he could. God in his mercy granted him this, his last wish.

*By the Rev. Wong Hoon Hee
Methodist Message
October 1971*



I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on my
lips.

Psalm 34:1

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