

PELITA METHODIST

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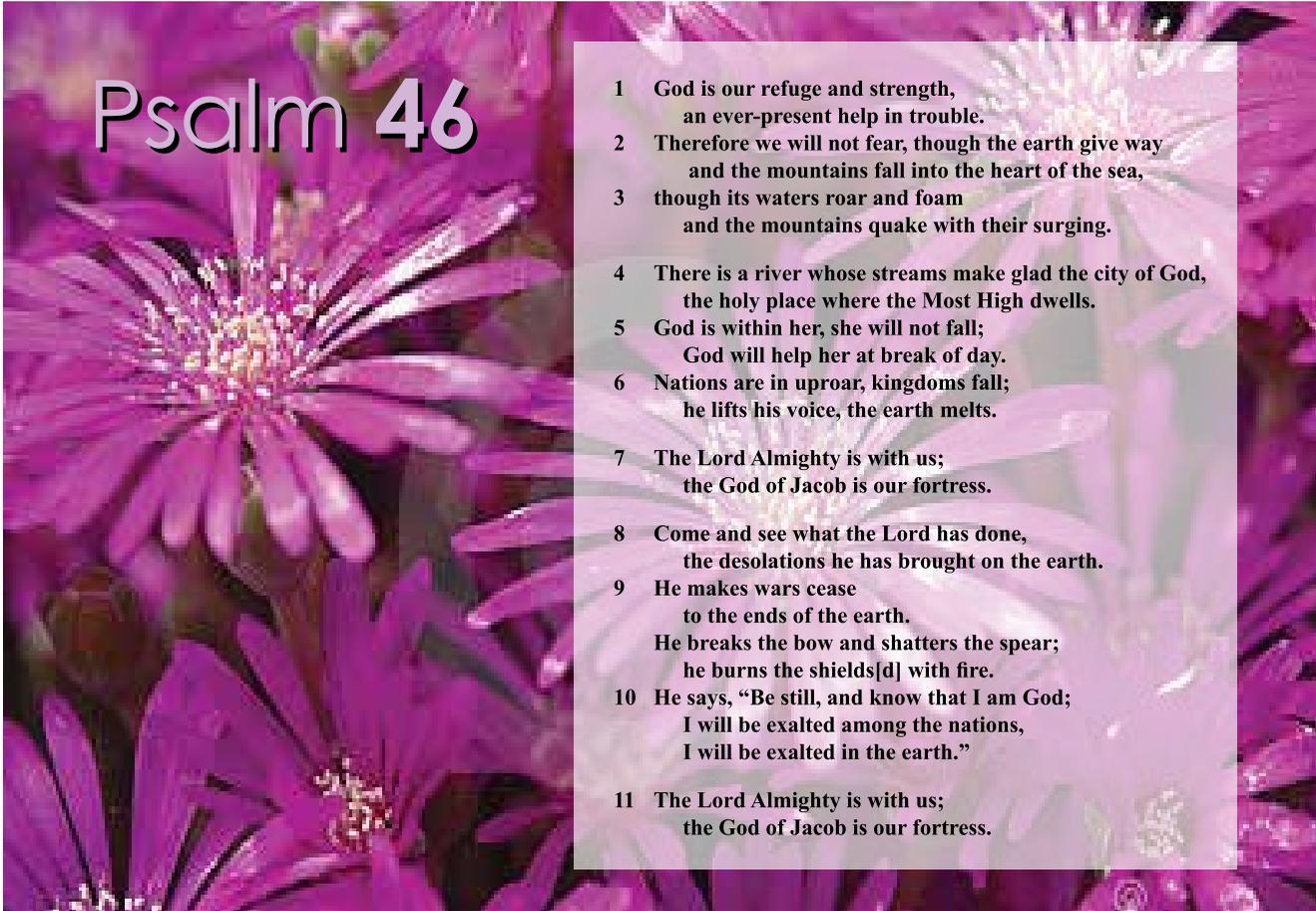


Easter -

The Breakthrough of the
"First Born from the Dead"
for Us

By
Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

Moment



Psalm 46

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
- 5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
- 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
- 7 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
- 8 Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
- 9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields[d] with fire.
- 10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."
- 11 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

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MPC PRAYER LETTER 02/Apr2014

1. Vision

- a. God would stir many hearts to pray for MPC III
- b. There would be a mighty move of God in our midst even before MPC III
- c. God would accomplish all of His plans and purposes for our churches as we seek Him in prayer.
- d. As we pray together, may He strengthen the bond of unity amongst us so that the Lord can "ordain His blessing of life forevermore" (Ps 133:3) – when we are united.

2. Preparation

- a. Pray for the team (MPC III committee) that as they meet and as plans are formulated and decisions are made, may God's special counsel be upon them.
- b. Let us pray that we would be able to garner the prayer support of all the members in our conferences.
- c. Pray for the organising/logistics team for effective mobilisation & recruitment in their effort to form the MPC III choir comprising 1,200 members.
- d. Uphold the publicity committee as they release the pamphlets for registration and other materials to inform and encourage members to sign up.
- e. Ask God to move many of our members to attend this Convention. Our target is 3,800 Methodists gathering together in prayer during the Convention on 29-30 August 2014 and with at least 10,000 attending the Combine Holy Communion Celebration in the Bukit Jalil Stadium on 31 August 2014.

3. Programme

- a. Pray for our plenary session speakers Dr. Stephen Seamands and Rev. Dr. Joshua Ting
- b. Let us also remember the workshop speakers. Pray that the total programme will be very meaningful and fruitful.
- c. Pray for the Sunday Celebration service on the 31st of August in Stadium Bukit Jalil. It must be an awesome time of praise to God Almighty.
- d. Pray that God's presence will be very present in our midst during the MPC III. We pray that many would encounter His manifest presence, experience freedom and joy in an immense way.
- e. We pray against the forces of darkness, that they be bound. Pray that there would be no hindrances or hurdles throughout the MPC III. Let us pray that the evil one would not succeed in any way in hindering our gathering.

President C. Jayaraj
Organizing Chairman
MPC 3, 2014

EASTER - The Breakthrough of the "First Born from the Dead" for Us

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

NIV 1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

We bless God for yet another opportunity in the Christian calendar to celebrate the risen Lord during Easter, a most important truth that is evergreen and central to our Christian faith, life and ministry.

This is a message of hope that tells us that the power of death is broken and Death's last desperate contention for lordship and absolute control. Dying is no longer a demonstration or manifestation of the seeming absolute conquering lordship of death. The former significance of death in which no one has ever yet defeated it by being resurrected from the dead – is now over. To be sure, people do die, including Christians, even after Easter; but dying is now only an expression of Death's last desperate contention for lordship. Death cannot overcome that great fact of its defeat, that there is One Who is risen from the dead – there is one risen Body.

This is a message of power in which the Holy Spirit has demonstrated, that the power of new creation is already effective by His repulsing death by healing the sick and raising the dead. Lazarus was brought victoriously from the dead; and another three others were recorded in the New Testament. They were the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), Jairus' daughter (Matt 8:28-43), Eutychus (Acts 20: 7-12) and Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42). Then there were the innumerable miracles of healing that testify to this power that repulsed the powers that "steal, kill and destroy" – such as the lame walking, the blind recovering their sight, the woman with a 12 year haemorrhaging ailment that was healed, even people healed "from a distance" such as the servant of the Centurion (Luke 7:2-10), people who were severely demonised like the Gadarene demoniac and Mary Magdalene who were powerfully set free.

This is a message of personal application for each of us because Jesus died so that He might taste death for everyone, and in that same light, the resurrection of Jesus our Lord is the guarantee or "firstfruits" of our future bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:20). Hebrews 2:9 says clearly - "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, **so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.**" Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for you and me, so that we do not have to taste spiritual death. And 1 Corinthians 15:20 declares that "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**". He is the "firstborn", the pioneer, the first, that had risen from the dead, guaranteeing that a full harvest of those who will be like Him in His resurrection body – will come in the fullness of time. Hence the startling words of the angels to the women - "**Why do you look for the living among the dead?**" - on that very first Easter

dawn (Luke 24:5).

We still die, for the mortality rate is one hundred percent. There is still sickness and sin for now. But today we can face and experience death with confidence, because the Power of new creation and eternal life – the Holy Spirit is already effective in our world. Paul undergirds this confidence in facing death by declaring in Ephesians 1:17-21: "*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,*¹⁸ *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*¹⁹ *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*²⁰ *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,*²¹ *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come...*"

This is a message of cosmic proportions that covers not only the human earthly dimension, but also the celestial dimension. This is because of the "harrowing of hell" experienced by Jesus when in the words of the Apostles' Creed - "He descended to the dead" (1 Peter 3:18-20). Satan and his fallen spiritual hosts had thought that he had achieved his greatest victory over God and His salvation plan by effecting the crucifixion of Jesus. It then dawned on Satan at the moment of Jesus' death and His descent to the dead that the death of Jesus was the plan of God. In Colossians 2:15, Paul elaborated on the cosmic expanse of this truth when he declared that at the death of Jesus, He "*disarmed the powers and authorities*" and "*made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross*".

As we live in this season in Malaysia, let us not forget that the Methodist Church in Malaysia is part of the universal Church of God that is more than just earthly witnesses; we are cosmic witnesses of the Lord Jesus "the first born from the dead". The power of our hope in Easter transcends earthly realities and time, although we are to never "cop out" from living in this present realm. The victory of the "first born from the dead" covers not only the "seen realm" – but also the unseen! We are cosmic witnesses to a sovereign cosmic God; let us never forget to "disentangle the eternal and cosmic from the temporal and earthly." Let us never forget that whatever happens to us as His people in the Church of Malaysia at this challenging time in the history of our nation – we will never lose hope or be distracted from our eternal destiny or the divine agenda.

As we live out our personal lives, let us therefore, never be overwhelmed by this ultimately defeated fearsome enemy called Death - the dark lord that seeks to cast each day a long dark shadow of

discouragement, fear and hopelessness over prevailing realities and experiences in our lives. Easter reminds us that this dark lord is no longer an all-conquering lord. The same Holy Spirit that raised “the first born from the dead” through His immeasurably great and conquering power, the Holy Spirit, is now at work in us who believe. We now live in an age between the resurrection of Christ and the total destruction of death, but nonetheless, one in which death has already been overcome.

Hence, while death is a difficult and tabooed topic to broach for most people and cultures, the Christian is invited to constantly embrace this inheritance of resurrection life, so that Death is a defeated and diminished “lord”, and we can speak openly about it. The Roman Catholic Church has a good way of further broaching, facing and preparing the Christian for physical death with confidence and hope. Their sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, available to those whose health is in a critical state (that includes an opportunity for confession of sins) is intended to relieve the sick believer from fears. In some cases, healing takes place, but if not, the sick person

can realize in a deeper way that Christ Who experienced our fears and bore our pains is the Shepherd Who is with His sheep in the valley of the shadow of death, providing company and strength for all physical and spiritual battles on this final journey.

The empty tomb of the Lord Jesus and the piercing words of the angels, **“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”** (Luke 24:5) convey powerfully to all Christians that as Easter people of the “first born from the dead”, we can be confident in facing death. We are also given the assurance in God’s Word that one day we shall finally witness the “death of death”, **“then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire...”** (Revelation 20:14) and **“the last enemy to be destroyed is death”** (1 Corinthians 15:26).

“...I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.” (The Apostles’ Creed)
Amen and amen.

Hallelujah! The Lord is risen indeed!

METHODIST PRAYER CONVENTION 2014
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or
www.methodistchurch.org.my

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

RETIREMENT AT 60

In February and in March this year, I was invited to the Retirement Ceremony of two special ladies: Madam Phoon Yoke Meng who retired from Methodist Girls' Secondary School (MGSS) Kuala Lumpur and Madam Koh Tuat Guek of MGSS Melaka. What made these two ladies extra special was that both of them were old girls of the school from Standard 1 to Form 5/6, became teachers and later were promoted to be the Principals of their Alma Mater. Such true-blue MGSians understood the Ethos and Character of Mission Schools and were shining examples of dedication and selflessness, always thinking of their girls, school and how they can make things better, always giving glory to God.

PHOON YOKE MENG (of Sr MGS Kuala Lumpur)

Started teaching in 1978 and became Senior Assistant in Methodist Boys' School KL before she was promoted as Principal in SMK Convent Sentul, KL, after which she became Principal in Sr MGS KL from 16.08.10 – 21.02.14.

The PIBG Chairman, En Wan Zaizin Daud commends Phoon Yoke Meng : *"Sumbangan bakti Pn Phoon kepada kemajuan dan kecemerlangan pendidikan begitu terserlah apabila MGSKL telah mencapai dan meraih banyak kejayaan sepanjang beliau menerajui MGSKL. Inisiatif beliau dalam menceriakan keindahan bangunan dan persekitaran sekolah serta menaik taraf bilik darjah dan alat bantuan mengajar telah melahirkan suasana pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang selesa dan kondusif terus terserlah, dihormati dan menjadi kebanggaan warga MGSKL."*



KOH TUAT GUEK (of MGSS Melaka)

Started teaching in 1979 in MGS Melaka until 2003, before she became the Senior Assistant in SMJK Notre Dame Convent, Melaka after which she came back to MGS as Principal in 16.04.08. She was transferred to SMK Datuk Bendahara Melaka for 1.5 years and came back to MGS where she retired on 23.03.14, having served the school a total of 29 years.

A poem was written for Koh Tuat Guek:



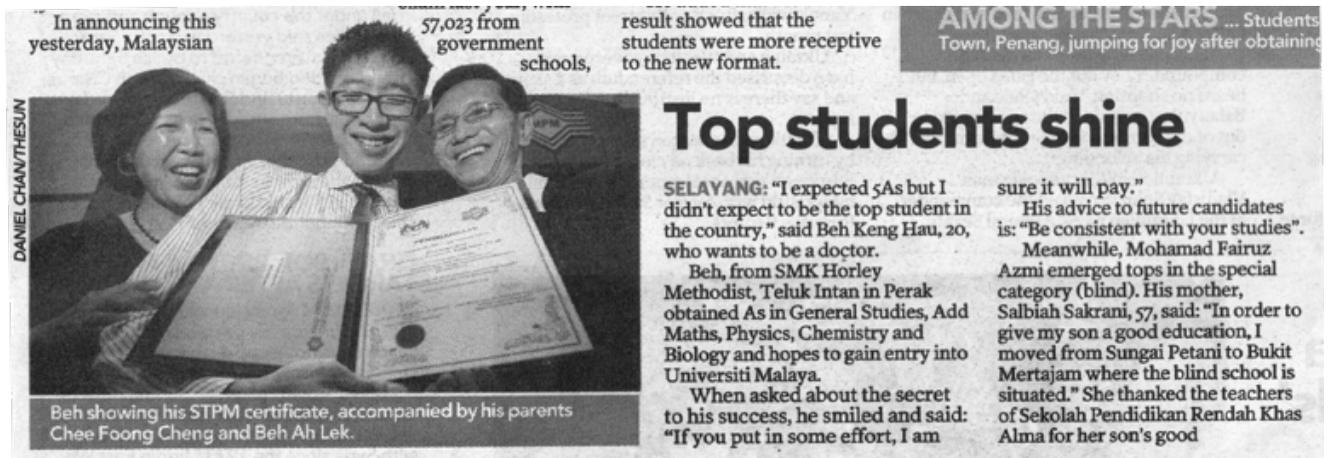
*You're an eagle, Again you fly,
It's time we sadly say goodbye,
Yet really, you deserve our cheers,
As we keep holding back our tears.*

*Like the eagle, you inspire,
You give courage to go higher,
You've given all, Your very best,
Now it's time for some well-earned rest.*

*When you're a principal no more,
Spread wide your wings, Feel free to soar,
'Ever onwards'! It's one of your best parts,
It's why we'll keep you in our hearts.*

This year 2014 marks the first year when government servants retire at 60 years of age. With this mandatory retirement age, our schools will see a number of teachers and school heads leaving and creating a void that is getting less and less easy to fill with Christian Heads for our Mission Schools. We pray that God will continue to bring forth dedicated men and women to head and lead our schools. In order to do this, our young people must come forth and be school teachers first.

Top student in Malaysia for STPM



Congratulations to Beh Keng Han of Horley Methodist School Teluk Intan, Perak for being the Top Student for STPM exam in the whole country!

Submitted by
Tay Choon Neo

Devotion

DEVOTION

Enduring Love

Nothing great was ever done without much enduring.
(Catherine of Siena)

IN WORD:

Perhaps you haven't come face-to-face with the fact of suffering yet. A lot of Christians haven't, assuming that if all is well in their relationship with the Lord, all will be well in their circumstances. But a quick survey of Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, John, Stephen, and practically any other follower of the Lord will convince us that pain is part of discipleship. After all, Jesus had told His disciples to count the cost. That means there is one. Always.

The question for the believer is what that cost is going to do for us. For some, it destroys faith, pointing them only to a God who doesn't care. For others, it's a mystery that should never be probed and that can never be explained. But the biblical testimony about our trials is this: sometimes God delivers us miraculously, sometimes He doesn't, but He always comforts us with His promises and His presence. Regardless, trials have their fruit in our hearts. They can produce an eternal perspective, an

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

enduring character, and a stronger faith. If we let them, they can bring us closer to God.

IN DEED:

It's a mystery why some people let trials move them away from God while others let trials move them toward Him. The biblical ideal, however, is that they should always result in patient endurance. They are clear evidence that our world is still fallen and our race is still sinful, even though the Kingdom has been promised and has even begun to sprout up here and there. There is an "already" and a "not yet" in the gospel of redemption, and we live between them. Meanwhile, God works.

Let God work in your heart. Your trials aren't fun; everyone knows that, especially Him. But they are useful. They produce perseverance, and as James says, perseverance has a perfect result: our maturity (James 1:4). And while we are persevering, we can know this: God is there. He cares. And His comfort is always available.

If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

2 Corinthians 1:6

Pastoral
Leadership
in **Healing**
and
Building our
NATION
in
Turbulent
Times

Date:

24 June 2014 (Tuesday)

Time:

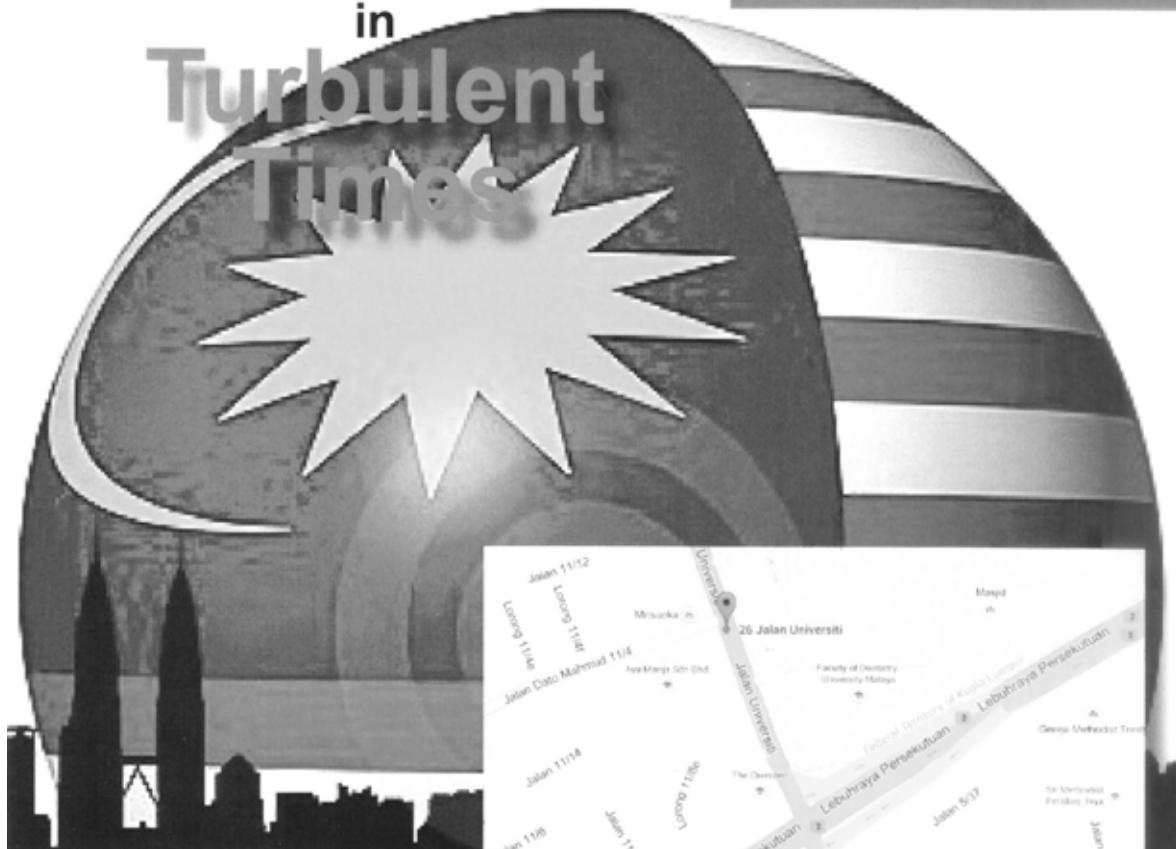
10 am - 3 pm

Venue:

CCM Ecumenical Centre
26 Jalan University
46200 Petaling Jaya
Selangor

Speakers:

Dr. Michael Cassidy &
other panelists



Organised by: CCM and PADERI
Register with:
Mr. Michael William
H/P: 016-2061425
E-mail: micwill001@gmail.com

METHODIST EDUCATION FOUNDATION

(127942 D)

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2014 - 2015

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2014/2015 年度

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期限

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如何申請

· 請預備一封寫好申請者地址及貼上八角錢郵票的信封 (25cm x 17cm) 寄到下列地址：

The Secretary

Methodist Education Foundation

67, Jalan 5/31, 46000 Petaling Jaya.

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கல்விக் கடனுதவி / உதவித்
தொகை 2014 & 2015**

மேலே குறிப்பிட்டுள்ள கல்விக் கடனுதவி உதவித் தொகைக்கான விண்ணப்ப மனுக்கள் மாணவர்களிடமிருந்து வரவேற்கப்படுகின்றன.

தகுதி

உயர்கல்வி பரில இடம் கிடைத்திருப்பவர்களும், மலேசிய உயர் கல்வி நிறுவனங்களில் பயின்று கொண்டிருக்கும் மலேசிய பிரஜைகளும் விண்ணப்பிக்கலாம்.

உதவிக் காலம்

இந்தக் கல்விக் கடனுதவி / உதவித் தொகையானது நீங்கள் தேர்வு செய்யப்பட்ட கல்விப் பாடத்திற்கென நிர்ணயிக்கப்பட்ட காலம் வரைக்கும் வழங்கப்படும். வருடாந்திர ஆய்வின் மூலம் திறன் மற்றும் தேவை அடிப்படையும் பரிசீலிக்கப்படும்.

விண்ணப்பீக்கும் முறை

விண்ணப்ப மனுவினைப் பெற 80 சென் அஞ்சல் தலை ஒட்டிய (25 செ.மீ. x 17 செ.மீ) அளவிலான அஞ்சல் உறையில் உங்கள் முகவரியைக் குறிப்பிட்டு கீழ்க்கண்ட முகவரிக்கு அனுப்பவும்.

**THE SECRETARY
METHODIST EDUCATION FOUNDATION
67, JALAN 5/31, 46000 PETALING JAYA**

அல்லது மேற்குறிப்பிட்ட முகவரிக்கு நேரடியாக வந்து விண்ணப்ப மனுக்களைப் பெற்றுக் கொள்ளலாம்.

பூர்த்தி செய்யப்பட்ட மனுக்கள் 20 மே 2014க்குள் வந்தடைய வேண்டும். தேர்வு செய்யப்பட்டவர்கள் மட்டுமே நேர்முகத் தேர்வுக்கு அழைக்கப்படுவார்கள்.

**METHODIST EDUCATION
FOUNDATION**

(127942 D)

**SCHOLARSHIP LOAN/GRANT
(2014/2015)**

Applications for the above scholarship loan/grant are now open to interested students.

ELIGIBILITY

Malaysian citizens who have gained admission to or are already studying in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

TENURE

The loan/grant is for the approved duration of the selected course of study, subject to annual review based on performance and need.

HOW TO APPLY

Please write for an application form and enclose a stamped (80 cents) self-addressed envelope (25 cm x 17 cm) to:-

**The Secretary
Methodist Education Foundation
67, Jalan 5/31, 46000 Petaling Jaya.**

* Or come personally to the above address to get the application form.

* Completed forms are to be returned by **20 May, 2014**. Only short-listed candidates will be notified for an interview.

**METHODIST EDUCATION
FOUNDATION**

(127942 D)

**PINJAMAN / BANTUAN BIASISWA
(2014/2015)**

Permohonan dipelawa untuk pinjaman/bantuan biasiswa daripada pelajar-pelajar yang berminat.

KELAYAKAN

Warganegara Malaysia yang telah diterima masuk atau yang sedang belajar di Institut-Institut Pendidikan Tinggi di Malaysia.

TEMPOH PEMEGANGAN

Pinjaman / bantuan biasiswa adalah untuk tempoh masa yang dibenarkan untuk kursus pengajian yang dipilih, tertakluk kepada pertimbangan setiap tahun, berdasarkan keperluan.

CARA MEMOHON

Pemohon boleh memohon dengan menghantar sampul surat (25sm x 17sm) beralamat sendiri dan bersetem 80 sen kepada:

**Setiausaha
Methodist Education Foundation
67, Jalan 5/31, 46000 Petaling Jaya.**

Atau datang sendiri ke alamat di atas untuk mendapat borang permohonan. Borang yang telah dilengkapkan mesti dikembalikan pada/sebelum **20 Mei 2014**. Hanya calon-calon yang disenaraipendek akan dihubungi untuk ditemuduga.

Formation of Tamil Methodist Church Bahau as a Local Conference



Tamil Methodist Church Bahau was formed as the 51st church of the Tamil Annual Conference, Methodist Church in Malaysia on Sunday 23rd February 2014 by our president Rev. C. Jayaraj.

The work started in Serting, Jempol, just outside Bahau, in 1990 with four families meeting together for fellowship and prayer. This grew into regular weekly services, where they continued to meet in the home of one of the members.

Soon the homes could not contain the growing congregation and in 2000 we rented and moved to our first shop house in Mahsan, Bahau.

At the 38th session of the TAC in November 2013, the formation of Tamil Methodist Church, Bahau as a local conference was officially accepted.

The church has 62 members with a strong leadership and an active congregation who participate in all church activities. Other than the Sunday services, the members are actively involved in the weekly small group meetings in their respective areas and weekly prayer in church, together with fellowships of the MYF, MW and MYAF. The church school also meets weekly.

The formation service was officiated by our President, Rev. C. Jayaraj, and District

Superintendent, Rev. A. James Ravindran with senior pastor of TMC Seremban Rev. Raymond Raj Ponnuthurai. It was well attended by members of the EXCO of TAC, pastors and members of our sister churches as well as members of other denominations in Bahau.

We had a very meaningful and blessed service with our president sharing God's word, "Geared for Growth" based on the passage from Ephesians 4:14-16.

We take this opportunity to thank all the faithful servants of God who have tirelessly labored in this soil. We thank our mother church Tamil Methodist Church, Seremban for being our beacon of light and guiding us on and leading us until our foundation has been firmly put in place.

Above all we wish to thank our Lord Jesus who has chosen us as His people and placed us here in Bahau. We will continue to honour our Lord by sowing the seeds of the gospel in this area.

Together we shall move: "Forward in Faith"

To God be the Glory

Members TMC Bahau



CONFESSION OF FAITH

PART 1

FOR THE LORD WE LOVE

The Cape Town Confession of Faith

7 WE LOVE GOD'S WORLD

*We share God's passion for his world, loving all that God has made, rejoicing in God's providence and justice throughout his creation, proclaiming the good news to all creation and all nations, and longing for the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.*²²

A We love the world of God's creation. This love is not mere sentimental affection for nature (which the Bible nowhere commands), still less is it pantheistic worship of nature (which the Bible expressly forbids). Rather it is the logical outworking of our love for God by caring for what belongs to him. 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.' The earth is the property of the God we claim to love and obey. We care for the earth, most simply, because it belongs to the one whom we call Lord.²³

The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ.²⁴ We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.

Such love for God's creation demands that we repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism. Instead, we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility. We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfilment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship. The Bible declares God's redemptive purpose for creation itself. Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Je-

sus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.

B We love the world of nations and cultures. 'From one man, God made all nations of humanity, to live on the whole face of the earth.' Ethnic diversity is the gift of God in creation and will be preserved in the new creation, when it will be liberated from our fallen divisions and rivalry. Our love for all peoples reflects God's promise to bless all nations on earth and God's mission to create for himself a people drawn from every tribe, language, nation and people. We must love all that God has chosen to bless, which includes all cultures. Historically, Christian mission, though flawed by destructive failures, has been instrumental in protecting and preserving indigenous cultures and their languages. Godly love, however, also includes critical discernment, for all cultures show not only positive evidence of the image of God in human lives, but also the negative fingerprints of Satan and sin. We long to see the gospel embodied and embedded in all cultures, redeeming them from within so that they may display the glory of God and the radiant fullness of Christ. We look forward to the wealth, glory and splendour of all cultures being brought into the city of God - redeemed and purged of all sin, enriching the new creation.²⁵

Such love for all peoples demands that we reject the evils of racism and ethnocentrism, and treat every ethnic and cultural group with dignity and respect, on the grounds of their value to God in creation and redemption.²⁶

Such love also demands that we seek to make the gospel known among every people and culture everywhere. No nation, Jew or Gentile, is exempt from the scope of the great commission. Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him. We confess with shame that there are still very many peoples in the world who have never yet heard the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. We renew the commitment that has inspired The Lausanne Movement from its beginning, to use every means possible to reach all peoples with the gospel.

C We love the world's poor and suffering. The Bible tells us that the Lord is loving toward all he has made, upholds the cause of the oppressed, loves the foreigner, feeds the hungry, sustains the fatherless and the widow.²⁷ The Bible also shows that God wills to do these things through human beings committed to such action. God holds responsible especially those who are appointed to political or judicial leadership in society,²⁸ but all God's people are commanded - by the law and prophets, Psalms and Wisdom, Jesus and Paul, James and John - to reflect the love and justice of God in practical love and justice for the needy.²⁹

Such love for the poor demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor. 'We must not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.'³⁰ We confess with shame that on this matter we fail to share God's passion, fail to embody God's love, fail to reflect God's character and fail to do God's will. We give ourselves afresh to the promotion of justice, including solidarity and advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed. We recognize such struggle against evil as a dimension of spiritual warfare that can only be waged through the victory of the cross and resurrection, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with constant prayer.

D We love our neighbours as ourselves. Jesus called his disciples to obey this commandment as the second greatest in the law, but then he radically deepened the demand (from the same chapter), 'love the foreigner as yourself' into 'love your enemies'.³¹

Such love for our neighbours demands that we respond to all people out of the heart of the gospel, in obedience to Christ's command and following Christ's example. This love for our neighbours embraces people of other faiths, and extends to those who hate us, slander and persecute us, and even kill us. Jesus taught us to respond to lies with truth, to those doing evil with acts of kindness, mercy and forgiveness, to violence and murder against his disciples with self-sacrifice, in order to draw people to him and to break the chain of evil. We emphatically reject the way of violence in the spread of the gospel, and renounce the temptation to retaliate with revenge against those who do us wrong. Such disobedience is incompatible with the example and teaching of Christ and the New Testament.³² At the same time, our loving duty towards our suffering neighbours requires us to seek justice on their behalf through proper appeal to legal and state authorities who function as God's servants in punishing wrongdoers.³³

E The world we do not love. The world of

God's good creation has become the world of human and satanic rebellion against God. We are commanded not to love that world of sinful desire, greed, and human pride. We confess with sorrow that exactly those marks of worldliness so often disfigure our Christian presence and deny our gospel witness.³⁴

We commit ourselves afresh not to flirt with the fallen world and its transient passions, but to love the whole world as God loves it. So we love the world in holy longing for the redemption and renewal of all creation and all cultures in Christ, the ingathering of God's people from all nations to the ends of the earth, and the ending of all destruction, poverty, and enmity.

8 WE LOVE THE GOSPEL OF GOD

As disciples of Jesus, we are gospel people. The core of our identity is our passion for the biblical good news of the saving work of God through Jesus Christ. We are united by our experience of the grace of God in the gospel and by our motivation to make that gospel of grace known to the ends of the earth by every possible means.

A We love the good news in a world of bad news. The gospel addresses the dire effects of human sin, failure and need. Human beings rebelled against God, rejected God's authority and disobeyed God's Word. In this sinful state, we are alienated from God, from one another and from the created order. Sin deserves God's condemnation. Those who refuse to repent and 'do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be punished with eternal destruction and shut out from the presence of God.'³⁵ The effects of sin and the power of evil have corrupted every dimension of human personhood (spiritual, physical, intellectual and relational). They have permeated cultural, economic, social, political and religious life through all cultures and all generations of history. They have caused incalculable misery to the human race and damage to God's creation. Against this bleak background, the biblical gospel is indeed very good news.

B We love the story the gospel tells. The gospel announces as good news the historical events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As the son of David, the promised Messiah King, Jesus is the one through whom alone God established his kingdom and acted for the salvation of the world, enabling all nations on earth to be blessed, as he promised Abraham. Paul defines the gospel in stating that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.' The gospel declares that, on the cross of Christ, God took upon himself, in the person of his Son and in our place, the judgment our sin deserves. In the same great saving act,

completed, vindicated and declared through the resurrection, God won the decisive victory over Satan, death and all evil powers, liberated us from their power and fear, and ensured their eventual destruction. God accomplished the reconciliation of believers with himself and with one another across all boundaries and enmities. God also accomplished his purpose of the ultimate reconciliation of all creation, and in the bodily resurrection of Jesus has given us the first fruits of the new creation. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.'³⁶ How we love the gospel story!

C We love the assurance the gospel brings. Solely through trusting in Christ alone, we are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit and are counted righteous in Christ before God. Being justified by faith we have peace with God and no longer face condemnation. We receive the forgiveness of our sins. We are born again into a living hope by sharing Christ's risen life. We are adopted as fellow heirs with Christ. We become citizens of God's covenant people, members of God's family and the place of God's dwelling. So by trusting in Christ, we have full assurance of salvation and eternal life, for our salvation ultimately depends, not on ourselves, but on the work of Christ and the promise of God. 'Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'³⁷ How we love the gospel's promise!

D We love the transformation the gospel produces. The gospel is God's life-transforming power at work in the world. 'It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.'³⁸ Faith alone is the means by which the blessings and assurance of the gospel are received. Saving faith however never remains alone, but necessarily shows itself in obedience. Christian obedience is 'faith expressing itself through love.'³⁹ We are not saved by good works, but having been saved by grace alone we are 'created in Christ Jesus to do good works.'⁴⁰ 'Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'⁴¹ Paul saw the ethical transformation that the gospel produces as the work of God's grace - grace which achieved our salvation at Christ's first coming, and grace that teaches us to live ethically in the light of his second coming.⁴² For Paul, 'obeying the gospel' meant both trusting in grace, and then being taught by grace.⁴³ Paul's missional goal was to bring about 'the obedience of faith' among all nations.⁴⁴ This strongly covenantal language recalls Abraham. Abraham believed God's promise, which was credited to him as righteousness, and then obeyed God's command in demonstration of his faith. 'By faith Abraham...obeyed.'⁴⁵ Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are the first acts of obedience the gospel calls for; ongoing obedience to God's commands is the way of life that gospel faith enables, through the sanctifying Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ Obedience is thus the living

proof of saving faith and the living fruit of it. Obedience is also the test of our love for Jesus. 'Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.'⁴⁷ 'We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.'⁴⁸ How we love the gospel's power!

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NOTES (Part 1)

22. Psalm 145:9; 13, 17; Psalm 104:27-30; Psalm 50:6; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23; Matthew 28:17-20; Habakkuk 2:14
23. Psalm 24:1; Deuteronomy 10:14
24. Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2-3
25. Acts 17:26; Deuteronomy 32:8; Genesis 10:31-32; 12:3; Revelation 7:9-10; Revelation 21:24-27
26. Acts 10:35; 14:17; 17:27
27. Psalm 145:9; 13, 17; 147:7-9; Deuteronomy 10:17-18
28. Genesis 18:19; Exodus 23:6-9; Deuteronomy 16:18-20; Job 29:7-17; Psalm 72:4, 12-14; Psalm 82; Proverbs 31:4-5, 8-9; Jeremiah 22:1-3; Daniel 4:27
29. Exodus 22:21-27; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 15:7-11; Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:6-9; Amos 5:11-15, 21-24; Psalm 112; Job 31:13-23; Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; 29:7; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 14:12-14; Galatians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18
30. *The Lausanne Covenant* Paragraph 5
31. Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 5:43-4
32. Matthew 5:38-39; Luke 6:27-29; 23:34; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 3:17-22; 4:12-16
33. Romans 13:4
34. 1 John 2:15-17
35. Genesis 3; 2 Thessalonians 1:9
36. Mark 1:1, 14-15; Romans 1:1-4; Romans 4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 1 Peter 2:24; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; Ephesians 2:14-18; Colossians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 5:19
37. Romans 4; Philippians 3:1-11; Romans 5:1-2; 8:1-4; Ephesians 1:3-14; Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3; Galatians 3:26-4:7; Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:12-13; Romans 8:31-39
38. Romans 1:16
39. Galatians 5:6
40. Ephesians 2:10
41. James 2:17
42. Titus 2:11-14
43. Romans 15: 18-19; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 9:13
44. Romans 1:5; 16:26
45. Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11:8; Genesis 22:15-18; James 2:20-24
46. Romans 8:4
47. John 14:21
48. 1 John 2:3

Essay

Hari Ini Dalam Sejarah Methodist

Pelita is beginning a new series of rediscovering some of our Methodist roots and history.

Bishop's Message: Youth

We often encourage our young people with the words spoken by Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12) But we often forget that Paul could speak these words only because he had such confidence in Timothy. This confidence grew out of a relationship that had grown out of their close partnership in the Gospel. Paul felt that Timothy was so trustworthy that he could fully represent him and his own love and concern for the Church. To the Philippians he wrote, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served me in the Gospel." (Phil. 2:19-22) The point is that the mutual confidence required for partnership between the young and their elders is a two-sided coin. Timothy had proved himself trustworthy, so Paul could in all confidence, entrust him with great responsibility. The relationship was a father-son relationship. Timothy served his spiritual father in the Gospel. Paul assumed a father's responsibility in training and encouraging Timothy. The whole Church benefitted because Timothy learned a genuine concern for the

welfare of the Church. This is a pattern for the work relationship between our young and their elders today.

Many adults like to criticise our youth, to point out their faults, and sometimes, to pass judgement on all because of the irresponsible conduct of the few. The young people in our Church today are badly in need of a vote of confidence. If we open our eyes to what is happening in Christian circles today, we will discover that our young people are intensely interested in a vital and meaningful faith. In the Church, in the schools, in homes, in the place where they work, Bible Study groups, prayer groups or other forms of spiritual quest have sprung up. In many Churches, it is the young who are in the vanguard for spiritual renewal. They need our confidence. There is no way to measure the positive effects of being trusted. So, when we use Paul's words "Let no one despise your youth," we have to remind ourselves of the other side, "Let us not despise our youth."

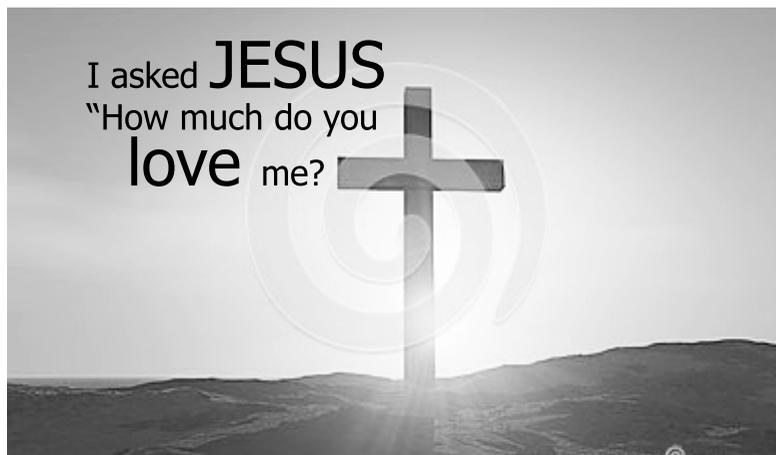
Our need for today is not that we can formulate new ways to voice our condemnation of youth; what we need is more and more dedicated adults Christians who are willing and able to help our youth to channel their enthusiasm and bounding energy into more constructive endeavours. We need to build a trust-relationship based on our intimate partnership in the Gospel. We need to re-



member that no portion of the scripture is written by the young man, Timothy, yet no other person in all Paul's letters is so well known. Indeed, we know about Timothy today only because his spiritual father had such confidence in him, because he loved and admired him. I challenge our young people to present themselves to God a workman who has no need to be ashamed. (II Tim. 2:15). I challenge our older generations to uphold our youth, to guide them, and - above all - to show your confidence in them.

Bishop C.N. Fang
Gereja Methodist Malaysia

Pelita Methodist
July 1979



"This Much."
He answered and he stretched out his arms and died.

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4 APRIL**



Remember: LOVE is the key to success!



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