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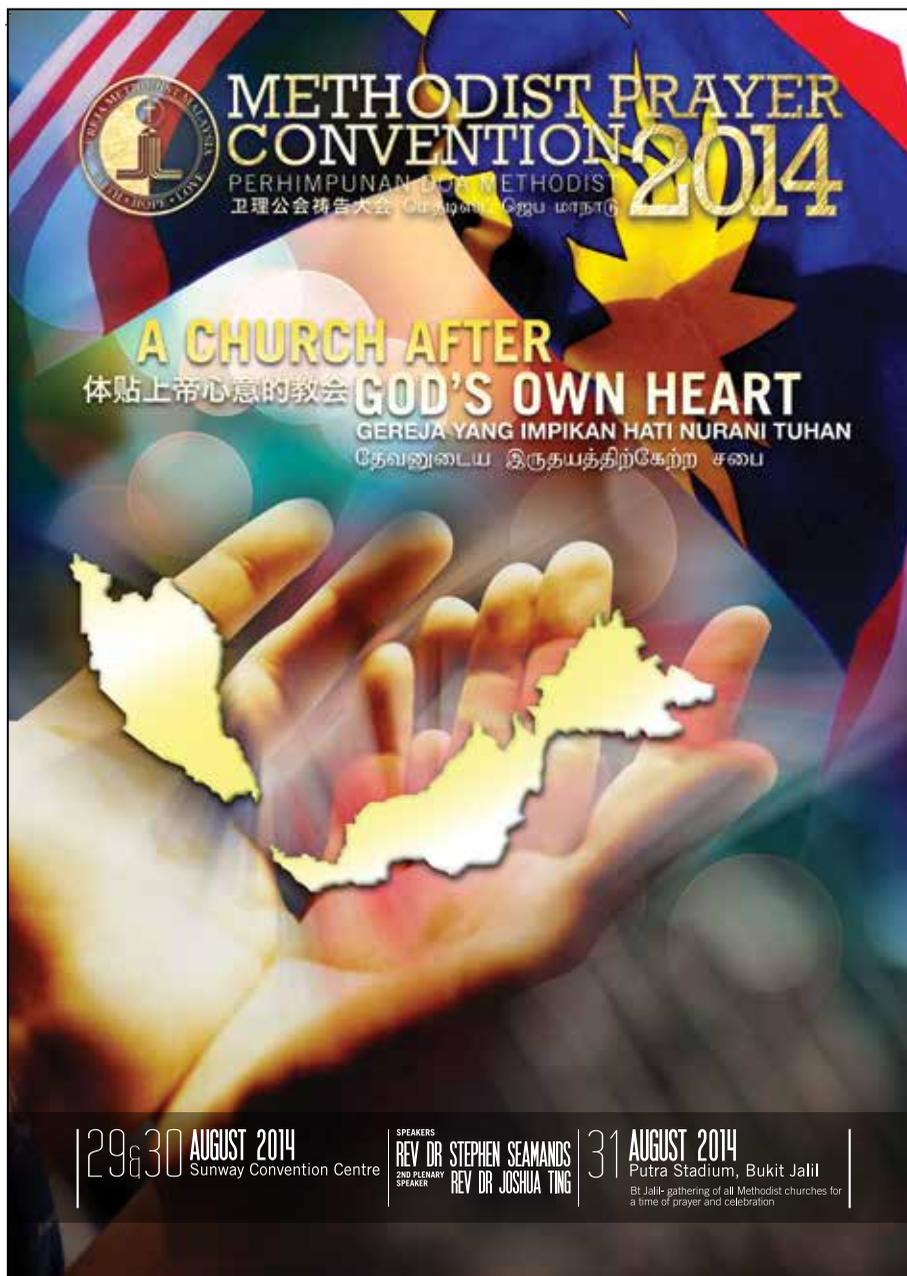


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"A Call to
Persist
in
Prayer
as we mourn

Together"

By
Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik



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MPC PRAYER LETTER 05/July2014

Prayer Points

1. Thank the Lord for placing us in Malaysia under the Methodist Family. Ask Him to anoint us that we may take our respective positions with courage and tenacity, by **faith** accomplishing the missions He has entrusted to each one of us.
2. Ask the Lord to bless the Methodist Church to obey Him fully in all the preparations required: **deep repentance, retuning to Him, getting into His Holy Word**, in order that His acts of Revival may descend upon our land. Pray that the Methodist Church will execute our function among the Malaysian churches (the Body of Christ) to accomplish the mission He has assigned us.
3. Ask the Lord to bless MPC 2014 that this Prayer Convention will be a **channel** used by the Lord to accomplish His will in the Methodist Church as well as in Malaysia. May His Kingdom come, may His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
4. Ask the Lord to touch the hearts of His people that there will be **enthusiasm in registering** for MPC. Pray for the Lord's provision. Ask the Lord to give strength & wisdom to all the organising teams, that all involved will accomplish their respective tasks with faithfulness and integrity.

Rev. Dr. Wong Tik Wah
GC Prayer Coordinator

“A Call to Persist in Prayer as we mourn Together”

The Methodist Family in Malaysia extends our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those who had perished on flight **MH 17** on the 17 July 2014. Our thoughts and prayers are very much with them.

We share in their anguish as well as their anger over this heartless act perpetrated by violent and depraved people who would kill the innocent, including some 80 children, in the name of their cause.

Let us pray

- for the comfort of God to be upon all those affected by those who had perished;
- for the relevant local authorities, parties and forces to permit, cooperate and facilitate the necessary arrangements and actions of recovering and repatriating the remains of the deceased so that proper and dignified closures can soon follow for the dead and their loved ones;
- for the international community in relation to the investigation of this crime so that the truth of culpability can be established and the necessary just course of action can be followed through;
- for the workers and management of MAS as it experiences a double colossal tragedy to date, with MH 370 still in our memory and prayer even though it is more than 4 months old and remain unsolved;
- for *what God Almighty may be saying to Malaysia*, as aptly expressed in the words of Ismail Merican [The STAR, 19 July 2014] which many soul-searching Malaysians can identify with when he wrote in his open letter:

“After recalling the series of tragedies, security breaches, diplomatic blunders coupled with our very own unsettling incidents and humbling experiences involving politicians, religious leaders and ordinary Malaysians, one cannot help wonder whether this is some form of reprisal and reminder from the Almighty.”

This is a wake-up call to our leaders and fellow Malaysians. There is just too much vitriol, insensitivities, arrogance, clowning, frivolities, apathy and grandstanding in our country right now. We must take stock of the situation and steer the country back to the right path.”

We as the people of God in His Church in Malaysia must all the more be principally watchful and persistently prayerful for this beloved nation of ours.

^{NLT} **Psalm 80:14** Come back, we beg you,
O God of Heaven’s Armies.

Look down from heaven and see our plight.
Take care of this grapevine

¹⁵ that you yourself have planted,

Revive us so we can call on your name once more.

¹⁹ Turn us again to yourself,

O LORD God of Heaven’s Armies.

Make your face shine down upon us.

Only then will we be saved.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord
Bishop Ong Hwai Teik



To Gethsemane With Jesus Again

“It’s Friday. But Sunday’s coming!”

Many of our brothers and sisters experience persecution because they live in failed states like Syria and Iraq, and they don’t have the option to leave. With your help, we’re providing food and other essentials just to help them survive. But these friends get wounded in the process. So we also provide trauma training to help them deal with the stress. It’s amazing how many of God’s people don’t sink under the weight of their suffering, but by leaning on Him, discover hope and healing - and become an instrument of God’s healing for others, too.

Jesus’ call to stay and keep watch with Him leads us to stand by with our brothers and sisters, who love their countries and want to stay. As Henri Nouwen says, “We need to be angels for each other, to give each other strength and consolation. Because only when we fully realize that the cup of life is not only a cup of sorrow but also a cup of joy, will we be able to drink it.

By Tony Compolo

(With permission from Open Doors Magazine May 2014)

Barely three months after journeying through Gethsemane with Jesus in April 2014, as a community of God’s family, it is time to go with Him again. Why is this appropriate?

Commonly, we carry on with our daily lives from moment to moment till some crisis hits our routine of home-office-church-society. Then we wake up and become more aware of who and where we are. For example, human ‘bananas’ (one who is genetically Chinese in DNA but reflexly practices more of a western way of functioning due to often unchosen circumstances) seldom consciously feel that they have become like bananas until they are in the midst of Mandarin speaking friends who refuse to speak English even when they can.

However, in our nation, now we have to pause to take stock of our faith, or rather, the One in whom we place our faith both now and for eternity. If not already, we need to ask ourselves these questions such as:

- What does it mean for me to be called or identified as a Christian?
- Is there a God and if so, who is He and who is He to me?

Since so many of the up and coming Y generation of all cultural groups are now openly identifying themselves as freethinkers/secularists (it seems to give them a sense of freedom from others, especially those who are authority figures at home, church or society) can they be right? Is there actually no one in charge on earth or in the unknown

hereafter? Are ideas like ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ words from the ideology of mere humanism, did such ideas come from ancient roots in God’s revelations throughout human history but became distorted, or did they come by chance as many would swear...by chance?

The Reason for our Faith

If there is a God, how do we give an answer to our faith in the God of the Bible, as different from other gods? And if the true and holy God exists and is actively involved in our current life and livelihood in a real and broken world, how do we give an answer for our faith in Him? (We have been enrolled as His ambassadors, like it or not. It is more edifying to take it as a privilege.)

Many believers’ usual reply is:

“Read the Bible, read books about our faith, attend more seminars, etc. etc. Then you will know the reason for your faith.”

But the critical problem for us is not that the Bible or other factors are not enough to give us the reason for our faith in Christ, it is because we do not read, meditate and memorise (or sing Scriptures in song) the biblical contents enough, bit by bit as commanded in Deuteronomy 6. Hence we do not live by His truth and grace in our conscious and subconscious life very much. We need to do so till we cannot live without Him, like a fish living in water which it needs in order to live. So we need to have His word in us till we automatically wake up and go to sleep with the thought of Je-

sus and His word in our conscious and subconscious minds. Then, when we have to give the reason for our faith, the words will come naturally tumbling out. In dementia or brainwashing what was recorded first in our minds would be lost last. That is why the aged at times recall their childhood days but cannot find their spectacles (Thanks to neurological research!).

The Reality of Christ in Daily Life

There was once a new adult believer whose life had changed for good so much that his friends thought he had gone mad. They sent him to a psychiatrist who did his job by checking his background (P = psychiatrist; Z = new Christian)...

P: Who is your father?

Z: Which one do you mean?

P: You have two fathers?

Z: Yes, I have.

P: What are their names?

Z: Michael Bob and God.

(P wrote it down)

P: Where do you live?

Z: Which address do you want?

P: You mean you live in two places? Tell me where.

Z: I live in the heavenly kingdom and in this earthly one.

P: But how can you live in two places at the same time?

Z: Of course I can! The first is invisible

like the wind while the second one is visible...as visible as you are to me.

So it went on until the psychiatrist put his faith in Z's God who is so real to Z.

Question:

If someone should casually or otherwise ask us about our position and life in the God of truth and grace, are we able to simply state our relationship with this God, the Father of our Lord Jesus whom He has now shared with us? Are we able to do so without using academic theological terms which most do not know about but certainly are His children too?

Can our reply be as basic as replying to someone who asks, "Who is your father or grandfather?"

If we love our God, feeble though our love may be, we must be able to give an answer for our faith in Him from the cradle to the grave on this side of heaven.

We can no longer give the usual excuse: "Ask the pastor/theologian/small group leader/youth worker" or "I am not strong, old or learned enough."

With Jesus...Into the Slums of the Human Heart

Jesus journeyed into the slums of the human heart in order to die for us, His friends... "Greater love has no man than this, that he gave his life for his friends" (John 15). He gave His life for humanity in general and much loved person by person who believes in Him in particular. He wants to take us with Him into the slums of the yet to be redeemed human heart, in order to take the slums out of their hearts.

Will we do our homework, give a reason for our faith and go with Him through a second Gethsemane to love our neighbours as ourselves as He does? I write the above as much to remind myself to be faithful to God alone, as to walk with you through tribulation to good cheer for Christ has overcome the world. Tony Compolo is right... "It's Friday...But Sunday's coming!"

Reflect and Consider

1. Since Jesus has planted me here as a Malaysian, does He want me to follow Him into the slums of the Malaysian heart in such a time as ours?

If so, am I willing to submit to Him for His sake?

2. When Jesus shows me what I should do and how I should live as His disciple in my nation, am I willing to go through Gethsemane with Him, no matter the consequences?
3. How prepared am I to take Him seriously as my Master and my faithful Friend from today?

Hymn writer:

*"What will you do with Jesus
Neutral you cannot be
Some day your heart will be asking
What will He do with me?"*

Tune: ¾ C major (All Cs are 1 octave higher than middle C)
E-FGC-AG-E-
CBAB-CB-
CCCBBBA-C-
E-FEG-DE-

By Dr. Lee Bee Teik
A Listening Observer
July 2014

Devotion

DEVOTION

The Priority of Prayer

We need more Christians for whom prayer is the first resort, not the last.

(John Blanchard)

IN WORD:

We've all heard it before; many of us have even said it. It usually comes after all efforts have been tried and all ideas exhausted. It is almost a statement of despair, when hope is fading fast: "All we can do now is pray."

That's usually our expression of last resort. We don't mean to make God's assistance a backup plan, but that's what we often do in effect. Rather than calling Him into the situation up front, seeking His guidance and following His lead, we stress and strain over our own solutions. When they fail, we resort to God. We see if He can bail us out.

The early believers didn't do that. In Acts 4, we read that Peter and John had just come from the Sanhedrin where they were rebuked for teaching in the name of Jesus. The elders ignored the fact that a miraculous healing had taken place and unschooled men were preaching powerfully. The court commanded them to keep quiet and threatened punishment if they did not. Peter and

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

John affirmed their obligation to obey God rather than men, and they left. Still, the situation wasn't resolved. Persecution of the new faith was clearly on the rise. The first response of the new believers—their immediate reaction—was to pray.

IN DEED:

What's your immediate reaction in a difficult situation? What's the remedy of first resort in your heart? What's your last resort? Where does prayer fit in the spectrum between the two? If God is a means to bail us out when all else has failed, then we have tried to tap into the most powerful force in the universe as a secondary measure after our own efforts. We have made our solutions the priority. We have put God on the back shelf.

There's a better way, especially where the mission is involved. God is to be sought first, during, and after. If we don't have His direction and His backing in a crisis, then we are destined for futility. The God of miracles and compassion would rather hear us say up front: "All we can do now is pray."

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Acts 4:24

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Notice

PELITA METHODIST would be trying out something new in the next 6 months. We are checking out the feasibility of expanding our publication to the cyber world through providing e-copies of the Pelita Methodist. Our aim is always to be able to have every Methodist member to have a copy of our magazine. Thus far since its inception, we have only been using the print medium.

Therefore for the next 6 month, we would also make e-copies available for anyone who wants it. Please email us at pelitamethodist@gmail.com if you want us to send you an e-copy of our magazine. You could also give us feedback about this idea or comment on any matter regarding Pelita Methodist at the same email address.

Michael William
Acting Executive Editor
Pelita Methodist



Enrolment Sunday - Are we on The Lord's side or against Him?

May 25, Miri – It is not uncommon that Christians encounter many confrontations emotionally and spiritually in their daily living.

When that happens, it is important to make sure that they are on The Lord's side in their battles, emphasized Rev. Lisa Ting in opening her sermon during the 4th Miri Enrolment Sunday.

Traditionally, the Enrolment Sunday is an important event whereby all members of the Boys' and Girls' Brigade are formally enrolled and re-dedicated.

Held at 4th Miri's Sponsoring Church Grace Methodist, the solemn Colours March-In at 8:30 am was received by Rev. Lisa and witnessed by a standing congregation.

Among the congregation were invited parents of the Boys and Girls, SIB Rev. Stephen Upai and Rev. Loter Sakai, SIB Miri District Youth Workers Ervina Wong and Fiona Peter, the Boys' Brigade Sarawak State Commissioner Hon. Capt. Lo Hoi Fook and the Boys' Brigade Officers from 5th and 6th Miri.

Using *Joshua 5:13-6:21*, Rev. Lisa preached on Spiritual Victory with three key points: 1) The battle is won by remembering who is in charge, 2) God's methods are always right and 3) Victory is ours if we do not quit.



4th Miri GB Chaplain Rev. Lisa Ting receives the GB Colour



4th Miri Group Photo 2014 Enrolment Sunday

“Today as we learn about the principle of spiritual victory, we need to understand that all of us are in spiritual battle and no one can be exempted. And if we want to win the battle, we need to remember who is in charge,” said the pastor-in-charge and Chaplain of the 4th Miri GB.

Rev. Lisa pointed out that through his unwavering loyalty and faith in God, Joshua had successfully conquered the Land of Canaan.

Joshua had also faithfully followed God's strange instruction for the Battle of Jericho. “In this incident, it really shows us that God's methods are not man's methods but God's methods are always right,” explained Rev. Lisa.

“We may have been doing the right things, but simply stop. What about you? Do you just stop one round short in your conquest of your personal Jericho? Or have you walked many rounds? Do not quit or give up. The spiritual victory is coming,” encouraged the good Chaplain.

In conclusion, Rev. Lisa reminded the congregation to seek The Lord, serve Him and follow Him.

The service included reports from the respective BB and GB Captains.

Eunice Ho, in her capacity as the GB Captain, first thanked the Officers and Helpers for their dedication and service. While the GB school-based membership intake has remained stable, Capt. Eunice expressed her concern for the declining number of members joining the church-based parade. In this aspect, she appealed to the parents in the congregation to consider sending their daughters to enrol.

Capt. Roseline Lee presented her report by first thanking and praising God for the 12 years of BB in the church. Following that, she outlined the various activities carried out throughout the previous year. “The BB activity in SJK (C) Chung Hua is only held 18 times a year. To benefit more from BB, I would encourage those who are attending school-based activity to also join our Saturday Parade in church which is carried out at least 40 times in a year,” she said. In sum-



Re-dedication of BB GB Officers and Helpers

ming up, she thanked her fellow Officers and Helpers and appealed for more church members to come forward to serve. “We need more manpower – be it part-time or full-time because we need your area of expertise to train our Boys.”

Cpl. Christopher Tang received the Certificate of Full Attendance (2013) and Pte. Howard Chui was promoted to L/Cpl.

In saving a friend’s life, a special award ‘The Certificate of Heroism’ from The Boys’ Brigade In Malaysia was presented to Pte. Jonah Lau by the BB Sarawak State Commissioner Hon. Capt. Lo Hoi Fook in



Pte Jonah Lau receives the Certificate of Heroism from the BB

the presence of the applauding congregation.

The 14-year-old had performed an act of service deserving of national recognition when he pulled out his drowned friend from a pool and applied CPR on him at a local clubhouse in Miri on Nov 3, 2013.

Lau Buong Hoo and Wong Ngie Ping, proud parents of Pte. Jonah, were visibly humbled and elated with their son’s award. “We thank and glorify God for the BB. Years ago in Sibü, after we saw the amazing transformation of our mischievous nephew to becoming a church youth leader because he was a BB, we were fully convinced Jonah should join as soon as he was of eligible age,” said Wong. “I want to encourage all parents to send their children to BB without any hesitation or reservation.”

To Rev. Stephen Upai of SIB, the Enrolment Sunday Service was an eye-opener for the good shepherd. “I’m so glad to be here today. For the first time, I get a better overview of what the BB and GB ministries are about. The Boys and Girls have performed splendidly in their creative skits, bringing across good Christian messages.



WO Raymond Tie gives an inspiring testimony

The personal testimony on character-building by the BB Officer was so heart-warming and inspiring, thank God,” Rev. Stephen praised.

Other highlights included an inspirational testimony by WO Raymond Tie and skits by the BB and GB that were well-received by the congregation.

The service was completed with the Colours March-Out at 10:30 am followed by group photo-taking.

*Story By James TC Wong
Photographers: Aaron IH Wong,
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Psalm 54

A Psalm of David

- 1 Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.
- 3 Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
people without regard for God.
- 4 Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.
- 5 Let evil recoil on those who slander me;
in your faithfulness destroy them.
- 6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;
I will praise your name, Lord, for it is good.
- 7 You have delivered me from all my troubles,
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

Wesleyan Essentials of Christian Faith

THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS

The “people called Methodists” form a family of churches within the World Methodist Council...

- We claim and cherish our true place in the one holy, catholic and apostolic church.
- Our origins lie in the work of John and Charles Wesley in 18th century England which quickly spread to every corner of the world.
- The purpose of this work and ministry was, and is, to renew the Church and spread scriptural holiness which includes social righteousness throughout the whole earth, to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- We confess that often we have failed to live up to this high calling, and we repent of the times when our witness has distorted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Trusting in the grace of God, we engage ourselves anew in God’s service.

OUR BELIEFS

We affirm a vision of the Christian faith, truly evangelical, catholic and reformed, rooted in grace and active in the world.

- Methodists affirm the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary rule of faith and practice and the center of theological reflection.
- Methodists profess the ancient ecumenical creeds, the Apostles’ and Nicene Creed.
- Methodists seek to confess, to interpret and to live the apostolic faith, the faith once delivered to the saints. Methodists acknowledge that scriptural reflection is influenced by the processes of reason, tradition and experience, while aware that Scripture is the primary source and criteria of Christian doctrine.
- Methodists rejoice in the loving purpose of God in creation, redemption and consummation offered through grace to the whole world.
- Methodists believe in the centrality of grace; prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying.
- Methodists believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of His atoning work for all humankind. Methodists believe that we “are the friends of all and the enemies of none.”

OUR WORSHIP

We worship and give allegiance to the Triune God.

- In worship, we respond in gratitude and praise for God’s mighty acts in creation, in history, in our communities, and in our personal lives.
- In worship, we confess our sin against God and one another and receive God’s gracious forgiveness.
- In prayer, we wait in God’s presence, offer the searchings and longings of our own hearts, for ourselves and in intercession for others, and open ourselves to God’s Spirit to comfort, lead, and guide.
- In the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, we participate in the mystery of God’s presence, redemption and reconciliation.
- In reading, proclaiming and receiving the Gospel, we affirm God’s creating and saving power.
- From worship we go into the world to love and serve others and to be instruments of justice and peace in the establishment of God’s reign on earth.
- The language and form of worship emerge from the community through obedience to Jesus Christ and the creative power of the Holy Spirit.
- We inherit the treasury of the Wesley’s hymns, with a hymnody now enriched from many other sources.

OUR WITNESS

- We proclaim Jesus Christ to the world through word, deed and sign.
- We seek the realization of God’s will for the salvation of humankind.
- We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be signs of Christ’s presence in our communities and in the world through our preaching, teaching, and in deeds of justice, peace, mercy, and healing as the outworking of faith.
- We witness to God’s reign among us now, as proclaimed by Jesus, and look forward to the full realization of the coming Kingdom when every form of evil will be destroyed.
- We seek to understand and respond to the contexts and situations in which we live, so that our witness will have integrity.

OUR SERVICE

We serve the world in the name of God, believing that our commitment comes to life in our actions, through the power of the Holy

Spirit.

- As followers of Jesus of Nazareth, who came to serve rather than be served, we go into the world as people of God in Christ Jesus, to serve people, regardless of their economic and social status, race, gender, age, physical and mental ability, sexuality, religion or cultural origin.
- Being “filled with the energy of love,” we anchor our service and our life and work in love for our neighbors, including those we perceive as our enemies.
- Since all forms of Christian service are influenced by a given context of community and culture, we seek to express our love in appropriate ways.
- The life of holiness holds together conversion and justice, works of piety and works of mercy.
- Empowered by God, authentic Christian service is based on Scripture, tested in community, affirms life and seeks the shalom of God’s reign.
- Recalling the story of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25), we express and claim compassion for all people and accept the call in Christ to “suffer with” the least of these in humility and love.

OUR COMMON UFE

We share a commitment to Jesus Christ that manifests itself in a common heart and life, binding believers together in a common fellowship and anticipating solidarity within the human family.

- Having experienced the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a liberating power from all oppression, we stand in solidarity with all people who seek freedom, peace and justice.
- Knowing that the love we share in Christ is stronger than our conflicts, broader than our opinions, and deeper than the wounds we inflict on one another, we commit ourselves to participation in our congregations, denominations and the whole Christian family for the purpose of nurture, outreach and witness.
- Remembering our Gospel commitment to “love our neighbors,” we will, through dialogue and partnerships for service to the world, endeavor to establish relationships with believers of other religious traditions.

*Adopted by the World Methodist Council
Rio de Janeiro, August 13, 1996.*

CALL TO ACTION

PART II

FOR THE WORLD WE SERVE

The Cape Town Call to Action

III BUILDING THE PEACE OF CHRIST IN OUR DIVIDED AND BROKEN WORLD

1 THE PEACE THAT CHRIST MADE

Reconciliation to God is inseparable from reconciliation to one another. Christ, who *is* our peace, *made* peace through the cross, and *preached* peace to the divided world of Jew and Gentile. The unity of the people of God is both a fact ('he made the two one'), and a mandate ('make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'). God's plan for the integration of the whole creation in Christ is modelled in the ethnic reconciliation of God's new humanity. Such is the power of the gospel as promised to Abraham.⁶⁰

We affirm that whereas the Jewish people were not strangers to the covenants and promises of God, in the way that Paul describes the Gentiles, they still stand in need of reconciliation to God through the Messiah Jesus. There is no difference, said Paul, between Jew and Gentile in sin; neither is there any difference in salvation. Only in and through the cross can both have access to God the Father through the one Spirit.⁶¹

A We continue, therefore, strongly to affirm the need for the whole Church to share the good news of Jesus as Messiah, Lord and Saviour with Jewish people. And in the spirit of Romans 14-15, we urge Gentile believers to accept, encourage and pray for Messianic Jewish believers, in their witness among their own people.

Reconciliation to God and to one another is also the foundation and motivation for seeking the justice that God requires, without which, God says, there can be no peace. True and lasting reconciliation requires acknowledgment of past and present sin, repentance before God, confession to the injured one, and the seeking and receiving of forgiveness. It also includes commitment by the Church to seeking justice or repara-

tion, where appropriate, for those who have been harmed by violence and oppression.

B We long to see the worldwide Church of Christ, those who have been reconciled to God, living out our reconciliation with one another and committed to the task and struggle of biblical peace-making in the name of Christ.

2 CHRIST'S PEACE IN ETHNIC CONFLICT

Ethnic diversity is the gift and plan of God in creation.⁶² It has been spoiled by human sin and pride, resulting in confusion, strife, violence and war among nations. However, ethnic diversity will be preserved in the new creation, when people from every nation, tribe, people and language will gather as the redeemed people of God.⁶³ We confess that we often fail to take ethnic identity seriously and to value it as the Bible does, in creation and redemption. We fail to respect the ethnic identity of others and ignore the deep wounds that such long-term disrespect causes.

A We urge church pastors and leaders to teach biblical truth on ethnic diversity. We must positively affirm the ethnic identity of all church members. But we must also show how our ethnic loyalties are flawed by sin and teach believers that all our ethnic identities are subordinate to our redeemed identity as the new humanity in Christ through the cross.

We acknowledge with grief and shame the complicity of Christians in some of the most destructive contexts of ethnic violence and oppression, and the lamentable silence of large parts of the Church when such conflicts take place. Such contexts include the history and legacy of racism and black slavery; the holocaust against Jews; apartheid; 'ethnic cleansing'; inter-Christian sectarian violence; decimation of indigenous populations; inter-religious, political and ethnic violence; Palestinian suffering; caste

oppression; and tribal genocide. Christians who, by their action or inaction, add to the brokenness of the world, seriously undermine our witness to the gospel of peace. Therefore:

B For the sake of the gospel, we lament, and call for repentance where Christians have participated in ethnic violence, injustice or oppression. We also call for repentance for the many times Christians have been complicit in such evils by silence, apathy or presumed neutrality, or by providing defective theological justification for these.

If the gospel is not deeply rooted in the context, challenging and transforming underlying worldviews and systems of injustice, then, when the evil days comes, Christian allegiance is discarded like an unwanted cloak and people revert to unregenerate loyalties and actions. Evangelizing without discipling, or revival without radical obedience to the commands of Christ, are not just deficient; they are dangerous.

We long for the day when the Church will be the world's most visibly shining model of ethnic reconciliation and its most active advocate for conflict resolution.

Such aspiration, rooted in the gospel, calls us to:

C Embrace the fullness of the reconciling power of the gospel and teach it accordingly. This includes a full biblical understanding of the atonement: that Jesus not only bore our sin on the cross to reconcile us to God, but destroyed our enmity, to reconcile us to one another.

D Adopt the lifestyle of reconciliation. In practical terms this is demonstrated when Christians:

1. forgive persecutors, while having courage to challenge injustice on behalf of others;
2. give aid and offer hospitality to neighbour's 'on the other side' of a conflict,

taking initiatives to cross barriers to seek reconciliation;

3. continue to witness to Christ in violent contexts; and are willing to suffer, and even to die, rather than take part in acts of destruction or revenge;
4. engage in the long-term healing of wounds after conflict, making the Church a safe place of refuge and healing for all, including former enemies.

E Be a beacon and bearer of hope. We bear witness to God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It is solely in the name of Christ, and in the victory of his cross and resurrection, that we have authority to confront the demonic powers of evil that aggravate human conflict, and have power to minister his reconciling love and peace.

3 CHRIST'S PEACE FOR THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

The biblical foundation for our commitment to seeking justice and *shalom* for the oppressed and the poor, is summarized in *The Cape Town Confession of Faith* section 7(C). On that basis, we long for more effective Christian action on:

Slavery and Human Trafficking

There are more people all around the world in slavery today (an estimated 27 million) than 200 years ago when Wilberforce fought to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. In India alone there are an estimated 15 million bonded children. The caste system oppresses low caste groups and excludes Dalits. But sadly the Christian Church itself is infected in many places with the same forms of discrimination. The concerted voice of the global Church must be raised in protest against what is in effect one of the world's oldest systems of slavery. But if such global advocacy is to have any authenticity, the Church must reject all inequality and discrimination within itself.

Migration on an unprecedented scale in today's world, for a variety of reasons, has led to human trafficking on every continent, the widespread enslavement of women and children in the sex trade, and the abuse of children through enforced labour of military conscription.

A Let us rise up as the Church worldwide to fight the evil of human trafficking, and to speak and act prophetically to 'set the prisoners free'. This must include addressing

the social, economic and political factors that feed the trade. The world's slaves call out to the global Church of Christ, 'Free our children. Free our women. Be our voice. Show us the new society that Jesus promised.'

Poverty

We embrace the witness of the whole Bible, as it shows us God's desire both for systemic economic justice and for personal compassion, respect and generosity towards the poor and needy. We rejoice that this extensive biblical teaching has become more integrated into our mission strategy and practice, as it was for the early Church and the Apostle Paul.⁶⁴

Accordingly, let us:

B Recognize the great opportunity that the Millennium Development Goals presented for the local and global Church. We call on churches to advocate for them before governments, and to participate in efforts to achieve them, such as the Micah Challenge.

C Have courage to declare that the world cannot address, let alone solve, the problem of poverty without also challenging excessive wealth and greed. The gospel challenges the idolatry of rampant consumerism. We are called, as those who serve God and not mammon, to recognize that greed perpetuates poverty, and to renounce it. At the same time, we rejoice that the gospel includes the rich and its call to repentance, and invites them to join the fellowship of those transformed by forgiving grace.

4 CHRIST'S PEACE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities form one of the largest minority groups in the world, estimated to exceed 600 million. The majority live in the least developed countries, and are among the poorest of the poor. Although physical or mental impairment is a part of their daily experience, most are also disabled by social attitudes, injustice and lack of access to resources. Serving people with disabilities does not stop with medical care or social provision; it involves fighting alongside them, those who care for them and their families, for inclusion and equality, both in society and in the Church. God calls us to mutual friendship, respect, love, and justice.

A Let us rise up as Christians worldwide to reject cultural stereotypes, for as the

Apostle Paul commented, 'we no longer regard anyone from a human point of view.'⁶⁵ Made in the image of God, we all have gifts God can use in his service. We commit both to minister to people with disabilities, and to receive the ministry they have to give.

B We encourage church and mission leaders to think not only of mission among those with a disability, but to recognize, affirm and facilitate the missional calling of believers with disabilities themselves as part of the Body of Christ.

C We are grieved that so many people with disabilities are told that their impairment is due to personal sin, lack of faith or unwillingness to be healed. We deny that the Bible teaches this as a universal truth.⁶⁶ Such false teaching is pastorally insensitive and spiritually disabling; it adds the burden of guilt and frustrated hopes to the other barriers that people with disabilities face.

D We commit ourselves to make our churches places of inclusion and equality for people with disabilities and to stand alongside them in resisting prejudice and in advocating for their needs in wider society.

5 CHRIST'S PEACE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

HIV and AIDS constitute a major crisis in many nations. Millions are infected with HIV, including many in our churches, and millions of children are orphaned by AIDS. God is calling us to show his deep love and compassion to all those infected and affected and to make every effort to save lives. We believe that the teachings and example of Jesus, as well as the transforming power of his cross and resurrection, are central to the holistic gospel response to HIV and AIDS that our world so urgently needs.

A We reject and denounce all condemnation, hostility, stigma, and discrimination against those living with HIV and AIDS. Such things are a sin and a disgrace within the body of Christ. All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory; we have been saved only by grace, and we should be slow to judge, quick to restore and forgive. We also recognize with grief and compassion that very many people become infected with HIV through no fault of their own, and often through caring for others.

B We long that all pastors should set an example of sexual chastity and faithfulness, as Paul commanded, and teach clearly and often that marriage is the exclusive place

for sexual union. This is needed not only because it is the clear teaching of the Bible, but also because the prevalence of concurrent sexual partnerships outside marriage is a major factor in the rapid spread of HIV in the most affected countries.

C Let us, as the Church worldwide, rise to this challenge in the name of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us stand together with our brothers and sisters in areas hardest hit by HIV and AIDS, through practical support, compassionate care (including care of widows and orphans), social and political advocacy, education programmes (particularly those that empower women), and effective prevention strategies appropriate to the local context. We commit ourselves to such urgent and prophetic action as part of the integral mission of the Church.

6 CHRIST'S PEACE FOR HIS SUFFERING CREATION

Our biblical mandate in relation to God's creation is provided in *The Cape Town Confession of Faith* section 7(A). All human beings are to be stewards of the rich abundance of God's good creation. We are authorized to exercise godly dominion

in using it for the sake of human welfare and needs, for example in farming, fishing, mining, energy generation, engineering, construction, trade, medicine. As we do so, we are also commanded to care for the earth and all its creatures, because the earth belongs to God, not to us. We do this for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Creator, Owner, Sustainer, Redeemer and Heir of all creation.

We lament over the widespread abuse and destruction of the earth's resources, including its biodiversity. Probably the most serious and urgent challenge faced by the physical world now is the threat of climate change. This will disproportionately affect those in poorer countries, for it is there that climate extremes will be most severe and where there is little capability to adapt to them. World poverty and climate change need to be addressed together and with equal urgency.

We encourage Christians worldwide to:

A Adopt lifestyles that renounce habits of consumption that are destructive or polluting;

B Exert legitimate means to persuade governments to put moral imperatives above

political expediency on issues of environmental destruction and potential climate change;

C Recognize and encourage the missional calling both of (i) Christians who engage in the proper use of the earth's resources for human need and welfare through agriculture, industry and medicine, and (ii) Christians who engage in the protection and restoration of the earth's habitats and species through conservation and advocacy. Both share the same goal for both serve the same Creator, Provider and Redeemer.

NOTES (Part II)

60. Ephesians 1:10; 2:1-16; 3:6; Galatians 3:6-8. (See also Section VI on the issue of unity and partnership within the Church.)
61. Ephesians 2:11-22; Romans 3:23; Romans 10:12-13
62. Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26
63. Revelation 7:9; 21:3, where the text reads, 'they will be his peoples' (plural)
64. Acts 4:32-37; Galatians 2:9-10; Romans 15:23-29; 2 Corinthians 8-9
65. 2 Corinthians 5:16
66. John 9:1-3



“*J* the Lord search the heart
and examine the mind,
to reward each person according to their conduct,
according to what their deeds deserve.”

¹¹ Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay
are those who gain riches by unjust means.
When their lives are half gone, their riches will desert
them,
and in the end they will prove to be fools.

Jeremiah 17:10-11

Missionary Possibilities

The present seems to me, more and more, an era of wonderful possibilities to the Christian missionary. At no period during the past hundred years have there been so many doors set wide open before him, and at no time have there been so many willing and even eager inquirers calling to him for guidance and help. In Central Africa, in Sumatra and Java, in Northern India and South-eastern China, converts from heathenism and Islamism are now counted by thousands, and even tens of thousands, annually. The present measure of success achieved in these fields is such that the home churches seem unable to realise the rapid march of events. In fact a painful amount of incredulity seems to prevail, even in missionary circles, and very often this incredulity finds expression in questions which startle the missionaries who are rejoicing over the rich harvests which they are reaping.

It would seem that a latent unbelief throughout the Christian world has long stood in the way of immediate success on a large scale in the mission field. In this as in all departments of work God bestows his blessings "according to (your) faith," and when a Church becomes enfeebled by its want of

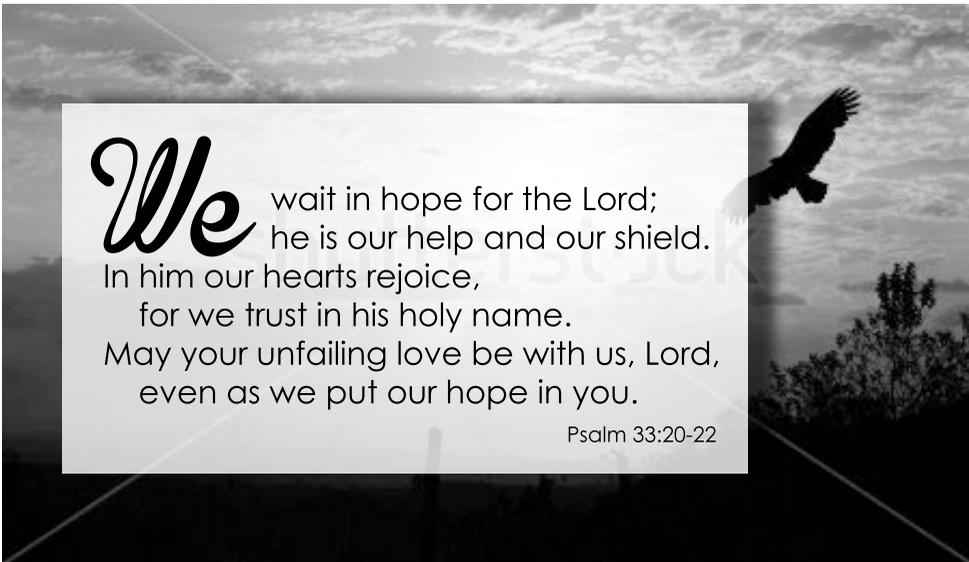
faith, the effect will surely be felt in connection with every enterprise in which the Church is engaged. The missionary work must suffer with other interests, and, indeed, the paralysing effect of such unbelief may usually be seen to some extent among missionaries themselves. Amazing as it may seem, Christian missionaries may be found even in our own day who do not believe that success on a large scale is possible in the present era, and who, as might be expected, look with extreme distrust upon the increasing number of movements in different parts of the world, which indicate the approach of an era of wide-spread conversion to the Christian faith.

Those who wish to realise a large measure of success in any mission field should carefully avoid two or three mistakes into which many fall. First, they must not try to choose their converts. We very naturally turn to the class which attracts us most, God's choice and ours are not always, perhaps not often, the same. Second, we must put *any* human beings beyond the sphere of our effort. If we decide not to baptise sweepers, or pariahs, or any other despised people, we may as well cease our efforts at once. The Christian missionary dare not, even for an hour,

forget that God is no respecter of persons. Third, we must not let our own opinions, or preferences, or prejudices get in the way of the work. In a score of matters pertaining to food, dress, social customs and personal habits, we must learn that we have no right to trouble the simple convert. Lastly, we must nourish and cherish the new converts with all possible fidelity and care. In no case have I ever known converts to do well without such instruction, or to turn out badly after having received it.

It is quite possible that success on a large scale cannot be realised in some fields, owing, if to nothing else, to the sparseness of the population, but while it is true enough, it does not change the fact that a *relative* measure of success ought to be looked for in every field. If we cannot have a flowing river, we can at least pray for and expect the sparkling rill. If we cannot number our converts by the thousand, we should at least try to gather them by the score if not the hundred. God's set time to favour His missionary Zion seems certainly to have come.

By Bishop J.M. Thoburn
The Malaysia Message
March 1897



We wait in hope for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, Lord,
even as we put our hope in you.

Psalms 33:20-22

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