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COMMON GRACE

In An

Uncommon Moment



Moment

STM students from the CAC, TAC, TRAC and lecturer Ms Ho Gaik Kim at the Thanksgiving and Fellowship Lunch hosted by Bishop Ong Hwai Teik for them on the 4 September 2015.



**Kem Keluarga Pastor
PMSM - September
2015**



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Missionary 1963

By Trevor Hancock

PRAYER UNITED

1. OCTOBER 2016 PARLIAMENTARY SITTING

- a. Pray for the tabling of Budget 2016:
 - i. That the welfare of the poor and oppressed, and especially the welfare of the indigenous people in our nation will be taken care of. Pray that steps will also be taken to care for the migrants and refugees in our land.
 - ii. For proper accounting, allocating and distribution of budget that is inclusive and beneficial to all citizens in the country, that peace and prosperity will reign in our land. That the government will be good stewards of the wealth of our land, giving back to the people what is due.
- b. Pray for all Members of Parliament:
 - i. That they will debate, decide and vote with the welfare of the people in mind and heart. Pray for sober judgement, wise counsels, and alert minds.

- ii. Pray that parliamentary democracy will be upheld, and that Parliament proceedings will be run with fairness and that there will be the fear of God in the management of motions.

- c. Pray for righteousness to reign and the boldness to go against bills that will cause harm to the upholding of the rights of the people and the democracy of the country.

2. UNITY IN THE CHURCH

- a. Pray for personal holiness and a return to our First Love. For restoration and reconciliation as we forgive one another following the breakdown of relationship whether in our personal lives, families or church.

- b. Pray that in the church and in our relationships with one another, we will *'...have the same mindset as Christ Jesus' Phillipians 2:5* Pray for the removal of interdenominational barriers, and unity at all levels in the church. Ask God to help us to lay down our prejudices of one another and that we will humbly value our relationship.

3. THE NATION'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION

- a. As we see the nation's economic and political climate, let us realign our will and ways to that of our Heavenly Father. Let us be reminded that *'The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.'* Proverbs 21:1

- b. Let us pray for the hearts and minds of those holding positions of power in our nation, that God will turn their hearts away from wickedness and that they will steward with integrity, justice and the fear of the Lord. Pray for Christians in the political arena, that they will live lives of integrity. Pray that all will *'do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.'* Micah 6:8

- c. Pray that truth will come to light, and for evil plots to be extinguished.

- d. Pray that in view of the slowing economy of the nation and the sliding of the ringgit:

- i. We as Christians will take the opportunity to be ambassadors of Christ's love, being salt and light in a time of difficulty for all.

- ii. That businesses will not resort to unjust gain, that in the face of financial difficulties, groups will not turn against each other instead work together for the good of all.

Adapted from Prayer United
October 2015 edition

An Episcopal MISSIONAL CALL

A Methodist Church after God's Own Heart -
**Growing deep and strong inside,
Standing with Christ's Body nationwide,
Giving God glory from every side.**

Common Grace In An Uncommon Moment

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

It is interesting to note that the following quotation appears in the flyleaf of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* that is from Sir Francis Bacon's 1605 book, *The Advancement of Learning*:

“To conclude, therefore, let no man ... think or maintain that a man can search too far or be too well studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works; divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavor an endless progress or proficience in both.”

This is a classical statement that there are two ways of understanding and knowing God, through the Bible or Scripture, and through the world he has made, nature. The sovereign maker of heaven and earth has revealed His glory in the book of His works, and also revealed His grace of salvation through Jesus Christ in the book of His Word.

In the general sphere of God's work, to this day God's providential care continues to be mediated to the peoples of this world, including the nation of Malaysia. For example God has given and will continue to give to the world the common grace blessing of universally recognised personalities, who are inspiring moral beacons of hope such as Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela and others. They inspire hope, elicit altruism, fortify courage, stare down violence, craft order out of chaos, unselfishly foster social cohesion, restrain evil, fight corruption and pursue an inclusive non-ethnocentric political agenda that blesses all people regardless of race and religion.

This God of nature, of creation, continues to exercise sovereign care over all His creatures, especially human beings, notwithstanding their moral or spiritual states. This God of Heaven and Earth, is not a village or tribal deity who will only bless Christians; for He is the Lord of creation Who cares for everyone in this world, as He exercises oversight over all that happens in the world.

This God of common grace to all is still in control of the world as the dispenser of “every good and perfect gift”. **James 1:17** reminds us that “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*” This includes the motivation and enablement of even unbelievers to pursue and practice virtues and noble undertakings, tasks and responsibilities that add to human welfare.

It comes as no surprise to us that this sovereign God of common grace used an antagonistic pagan king like Cyrus of Persia to bring about the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in the 6th century BC [Isa 44:28; 45:1-4; Ezra 1:1-2]. This sovereign God does use ungodly rulers to dispense good gifts by way of His providential taking up of their political plotting, maneuvering and machinations to effect His own intentions [Rom 12:4; 1 Pet 2:14].

As people who have received God's special grace of salvation in Christ in addition to His common grace, we must not forget that this

merciful sovereign God is still at work in covering this world with His common grace. He continues to exercise His caring governance over all creation and human beings, irrespective of their moral or spiritual states. This merciful sovereign God has categorically declared that He “gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike” [Matt 5:45].

As we continue to pray for a most challenging and uncommon moment in the life and history of our beloved nation, we do so with hope. Even as we face unprecedented number of issues of critical proportion that threaten us as a nation politically, economically, interracially and religiously – let God's Church never lose hope that we are praying to a merciful sovereign God of common grace Who providentially knows and cares for this unparalleled and uncommon moment of crisis in Malaysia.

Let us be unrelenting in our 24/7 Prayer for Malaysia as we seek Almighty God for His sovereign common grace for Malaysia. As Paul puts it – *It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy* [Romans 9:16]. Prayer wields the power of change as we call on the merciful sovereign God to intervene in common grace promised to His creation; we call on Him Who has the right and the power to save difficult situations and moments dominated by unbelieving, unrepentant and even hardened hearts. God has the right to intrude upon personal and communal rebellion – and overcome it with an effectual outcome. We believe that God dares utilize His resources and is able to exert Himself so powerfully that the resistance of hardened individuals and rebellious communities are overcome by His grace in the common realm.

We are therefore grateful to witness the curtailment of violence and anger at the recent public rallies, in KL and other parts of Malaysia, when God's people prayed alertly, faithfully and fervently obeying the injunction of Paul – “*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying...*” [Ephesians 6:18]. We thank God for the increasing number of new and fresh voices that mattered from past and present national leaders and various NGOs, for speaking up against racism and corruption that is asphyxiating and draining the life out of our beloved nation.

So let us, God's people, come boldly to the throne of grace – to ask for the help of common grace for an uncommon moment in the life of Malaysia; that the merciful sovereign God will change hearts of stone to ones of flesh, to open eyes and grant repentance both in and outside His Church.

Due to this fact of our God being the sovereign God of both the books of works [common grace in creation] and of His Word [special grace of salvation in Christ], we are “glocal” apostles of hope; so the Methodist Church in Malaysia continues to pursue engagement in missions and evangelism in foreign soil globally, as well as being a prophetic people of transformation and change locally.

As the people of God in Malaysia who have just jointly celebrated Malaysia Day with much prayer on the 16 September 2015, we would steadfastly work with, and pray for, those outside the church, whose noble intention and vision are akin to ours for this fractured and ailing land which is wrestling with more than one form of haze. In the words of the respected biblical scholar, Walter Brueggemann - "*The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a*

consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."

This we pledge to do because of the reality of the merciful sovereign God of common grace who offers us all that is "true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable" [Phil 4:8] as the alternative to the "dominant culture around us."

An Episcopal Call to the Malaysian Methodist Family On our 58th Merdeka Day Celebration

1. As we once again come to the National Day Celebration, we do so with much prayer [an occasion that is also specially remembered and celebrated for decades on CCM Sunday], when our churches gather for worshipping Almighty God; we then specifically pray for our beloved nation, thanking the Lord for the provision of this cherished land that we call our home.
2. We also humbly and fervently intercede for freedom from the oppressive depth of religious, economic and political uncertainty, and the deadly penetration of gross moral deficiencies such as corruption that are clouding and enveloping Malaysia today.
3. We pray for the sovereign hand of God to grant common grace and protection to the different noble and sincere expressions by "awakened and changed people who are seeking change" for a just and righteous society in our community.
4. We pray for God's care and touch on those in authority and in charge of security, that they will discharge their duties and responsibilities with wisdom and integrity in safeguarding the welfare of all citizens and celebrants during this Merdeka weekend.
5. We pray for the leading and blessing of the Holy Spirit, as all believers, including His people called Methodists, follow their individual conscience, and exercise their personal right and love for this country in a peaceful way as citizens; to gather and express, within or outside of the church, their prayerful support and concern for the direly needed transformation and changes for this beloved nation of ours in this critical season.
6. We pray that by the power and authority of Christ - the spiritual powers and principalities behind "money, sex and power" will be dealt with from operating at the very heart of Malaysia.
7. We pray that our Father in Heaven will sovereignly watch over all the gatherings, celebrations, proceedings and people this weekend for a peaceful, meaningful and transforming 58th *Merdeka Day Celebration* that will lead to a better future for Malaysia.

Together we heed the words of the Bible with faith:

Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Mark 11:17 *And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?"*

Hebrews 4:16 *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

Psalms 126:2 *Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*

May God mercifully bless Malaysia!

Bishop Ong Hwai Teik
The Methodist Church in Malaysia
26th August 2015

Uphold constitution, interfaith council tells Putrajaya in Merdeka message

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MC-CBCHST) is urging the government to bring Malaysia forward by staying true to the Federal Constitution.

In its Merdeka Day message, the interfaith council said the constitution was the key to uniting all Malaysians, in the midst of “political uncertainty, a failing economy, short-changed promises and rising cost of living”.

MCCBCHST urged both the federal and state governments to be more aware of the political decisions they made and uphold the constitution.

“In our melting-pot of cultures, religions and principles, MC-CBCHST requests the government to harmonise and enhance all the various forces for the advancement of Malaysia.

“This can be done if we return to the document that started it all, that is, the Federal Constitution which is the supreme law of the nation.

“Any form of disrespect shown to the constitution and misreading or misapplication of its original spirit will only exacerbate the present disturbing situation that will not do justice to the theme ‘One Heart and One Spirit’,” said MCCBCHST in a statement.



At a time of political uncertainty, with Malaysians taking part in a mass rally urging the prime minister to step down, the federal and state governments should stay true to the spirit of the Federal Constitution. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Najjua Zulkefli, August 30, 2015.

It expressed hope that the Merdeka theme would not just be a catchy slogan, but one that all Malaysians could be proud of.

Devotion

DEVOTION

A Peaceful Purpose

Give peace in our time, O Lord.

– BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

IN WORD:

Many Christians pray for God's judgment on corrupt leaders and for the downfall of those whose policies they disagree with. And while God certainly hears our requests for righteous leadership and godly policies, the spirit in which we pray is often far from His heart. Perhaps He wants to hear prayers that leaders, even godless ones, would finally turn to Him for wisdom and seek His favor. He even allows unholy but otherwise effective kings and prime ministers and presidents to govern well so that His people can exercise their faith in peaceful times. The relationship between God, governments, and the societies and cultures of this world is hard to understand, but that's not the point. Regardless of whether we understand, we are told to pray for everyone, including those in authority. Why? So that we might “live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

Tranquility is a valuable condition, whether we're referring to the peace in society at large or the peace in our hearts. And the peace that Paul refers to in today's verse is more than the absence of turmoil; it's an ability to live without fear of punishment, without unreasonable restraints and pressure, without alarm about what might happen next. In an uncertain world, this kind of peace is a very precious commodity.

IN DEED:

That's what our prayers are meant to provide—or, rather, what God provides for us in response to our prayers. We lift up our requests in order to create a protective hedge around our ability to exercise our faith. We petition God, not only to help us be godly and holy, but also to give us an open arena in which to exercise our godliness and holiness freely. Whether that applies to your government's policies or your hectic schedule today—or anything in between—it's available. We are urged to pray for the opportunity to live in open devotion to our Lord.

. . . that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.
1 Timothy 2:2

Prayer as a Primary Concern and Emphasis in Ministry

'Pray Continually' | Thessalonians 5:17

The Tamil Methodist church Tamil Settlement has been in existence for more than 100 years. The early generation of believers came exclusively from the Southern state of Tamil Nadu in India. The church has since been privileged with a passion for prayer and has focussed on placing prayer as the primary emphasis of all ministries. Today the church has been blessed with more than 1,000 members of all ages.

Acknowledging the importance of prayer, the church extended its financial resources by employing a full time prayer coordinator, Ms Rachel Kovilpillai to give oversight to the overall prayer ministry of the church. She is also often invited for home prayer by those who have personal needs. The three pastors and the prayer coordinator meet for prayer every morning from 9.30am to 10.15am. It is a time when the needs of the people are brought to God as well as a time for raising our national level concerns to the Lord. Realizing the importance of leaders coming together in prayer, the three pastors, the lay leader, the two associate lay leaders, the LCEC chairman and the full time prayer coordinator meet once a month for a time of consultation and prayer.

Together with these efforts, Lay members have been called to come to the church to pray for one hour at the church altar from 10am to 2pm, every Monday to Friday. They are given a daily prayer list that is prepared in consultation with the pastors by the prayer coordinator. This prayer is mainly attended



by retirees and housewives who have a little extra time on their hands in the mornings. Those who do not have their own transport are fetched by the church van that brings them to church and takes them home.

The church prayer cell is held every Monday at 7.30pm. Around 20-30 people attend the prayer on a regular basis. The MYF youths gather after the Monday prayer cell to pray for their specific needs. Around 10-12 youths gather regularly each week. Early Morning Prayer is held at 6am every Saturday. Around 10 people attend this prayer. A small group also gathers for prayer after the Friday worship service. The Church school superintendent has a team of around 30 people in his Church School Prayer Network (CSPN) group. The Superintendent gives this group of friends a specific prayer list

each month which they remember in their daily prayers as they pray in their homes. In the absence of home prayer meetings, the Methodist Women meet for prayer sessions in the church once a week.

Apart from these prayer sessions, a weekly 'prayer drive' is carried out by driving past selected areas to pray for the salvation of the people in the area. This is led by Sis. Rachel who has a team that goes in the church van. Due to the interest in prayer, many people attend the TAC level Prayer Conventions as well as District Prayer Gatherings. Many of our members have also become part of the 24/7 prayer initiative for our nation.

By Rev. Dennis Raj

Thessalonians 5:17
**Pray
 Continually**

916 Prayer Gathering in Ipoh



On the 16th of September 2015, the various churches in Ipoh came together for a time of worship and intercession. This was done in line with several other prayer movements that were concurrently happening all over the nation the same day. The gathering was spearheaded by a committee that was organized under the leadership of the Ipoh Pastors fellowship (IPF). The theme was 'Let The Nation Pray'. It was held at the ballroom of the Tower Regency Hotel from 10 am to 12.30 pm. According to the organizers, there were more than 1,000 people who attended the event as almost all of the available 1,300 seats that were in the ballroom were taken up.



The program for the day began with the marching in of dancing Orang Asal believers who were dressed in their traditional 'pelilit kepala' head-dress. This was then followed by a time of worship in Bahasa Malaysia by Rev Eduan Bah Chimpok who is an Orang Asal pastor from Gopeng. It was a good time of heartfelt worship with several flag dancers coming onboard at strategic moments.

This year, four specific prayer needs were focussed upon. The first prayer was said for the struggles of the Orang Asal community in Malaysia. It was followed by a short pre-



sentation on the role of the Chinese in Malaysia and prayers were raised for the Chinese community in Malaysia. In a poignant unplanned moment which was not part of the scheduled agenda, four Chinese pastors came forward to confess the sins of the Chinese community that affected the nation. Subsequently, a short presentation on the plight of Indians in Malaysia was made, followed by prayers for the community. Next, there was a time of prayer for the economy in the country as it faced continuing pressures from the loss of value in the currency market.

The day ended with another session of jubilant worship and thanksgiving for the many good things that God has been doing in the nation. It was also a time of giving offerings unto God's ministry through the ministry of IPF. Then the singing of our national anthem Negaraku took place as the pinnacle of the entire prayer event. It was truly a momentous occasion as the camaraderie among the churches was once again reinforced through coming together in a time of earnest and fervent prayer for the beloved nation.

By Rev. Dennis Raj



A Celebration of the Church

Malaysia Day was celebrated on 16 Sept in Miri. The Association of Churches, Sarawak chose the theme : Working Together As One Body taken 1 Cor 12:12 and this was used throughout the whole state.



The Methodist Church was the hosting church and the multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-colour service was held at the Mei Ann Methodist Church. That evening, all the Methodist pastors were in "uniform", shirts made from the beautiful blue batik material given in by the Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik at our National Pastors School in April this year.

The service started with the Captains of the Girls and Boys Brigade of the 1st Miri Companies bringing in the National and State flags and these were received by the Bishop Richard Ng from the Roman Catholic Church, who is also the Chairman of ACS Miri together with Bishop Solomon Cheong, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese Of Kuching of the Anglican Church. Together we then sang both the National and State anthems.



Then a team from Grace Methodist Church led us in a time of tri-lingual Praise and worship. There was so much exuberance in our worship as we sing "Soraklah, Haleluya". As we sang "Spirit, Touch your church", our hearts cried to our Heavenly Father to save this dying land.

Scripture was read in Kayan, Lun Bawang and Bahasa Malaysia and prayers were prayed in Kelabit, Iban, Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, English, Bidayuh, Kenyah by pastors and leaders from the member churches of the ACS. Although most of us did not understand what was read or prayed, it was very heart-warming to hear and know that God is being worshipped in so many different languages. Truly the church expressed all her cultural richness.



The youths from the Tudan Methodist Church sang the beautiful song Harapan Bangsa and two brothers : Jack and Jackie Bilun played Ku Mahu Cinta Yesus on the sape and guitar.

As the congregation sang "We are one in the bond of Love", we held hands across the aisles and together in one voice we sang, Ya Allah, Ya Bapa, ini aku anakmu".

The Miri District choir, wearing different cultural attire sang the song of hope that inspired all of us.



*"To believe in a day,
When hunger and war will pass away,
To have the hope amidst despair
That every sparrow's counted
That You hear their cries and listen to
each prayer
Hear each cry and listen to each prayer
Help us do Your will oh Father
In the name of all that's true
And we'll see in one another
The loving image of You*



The sermon based on the theme was delivered in Chinese by Rev Simon Ting Chu Yih, the District Superintendent of the Miri District of SCAC and it was translated into BM by Rev Ling Bui.

The service ended with the Bishop Solomon Cheong leading in the Benediction with the leaders from the different denominations standing behind him.

Indeed it was an evening of celebrating the church as one body with many different parts. All Glory be to God.

Rev Lenita Tiong
Grace Methodist Church, Miri



Malaysia Day Prayer: A Call to Unite in Prayer (M-CUP) 2015 Report



Prayer United gathered at various locations in prayer and worship as the body of Christ on Malaysia Day, 16TH September 2015. The Malaysia Day Pray theme this year was ‘M-CUP : Malaysia Day: a Call to Unite in Prayer’ and we saw Christians from different denominations and different languages coming together in prayer.

More than 10 combined prayer gatherings associated with prayer united were held throughout the nation on the 52nd year of Malaysia’s formation, in areas including Klang Valley, Sibul, Miri, Bintulu and Kuching.

Klang Valley saw a colourful gathering at

Trinity Methodist Church Petaling Jaya, as close to 600 gathered together in unity. The group that gathered came from all walks of life, including many youths and young adults, as well as people of various ethnicities.

The prayer day gathering in Klang Valley began with a flag parade and dance, led by our East Malaysian friends. All were dressed in costumes representing the diversity of cultures in our land, coming in to the rhythm of the song Harapan Bangsa, declaring the hope of our nation.

Representatives from various networks, churches and denominations were present that day, leading different segments of the

program including the keynote address and intercessions. Matthew Punnose from the Mar Thoma Church said the opening prayer before we continued into a time of praise and worship. Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik, the Chairman of this year’s Malaysia Day Prayer in his welcome address, commended those present on their commitment to gather on that significant day.

As one of the organisers of the Malaysia Day Prayer – MCUP 2016, Prayer United, represented by chairman Bishop Emeritus Dr Hwa Yung gave an exhortation. Explaining the heart and purpose behind Prayer United, namely to ‘...Light up Malaysia with prayer’. We were all encouraged to persevere in prayer, as we reach the one-





year mark of our two year commitment to unbroken prayer for the nation.

Following on from that, Archbishop Elect Ng Moon Heng of the Anglican Diocese of South East Asia, focussed on the way forward as we see the many happenings in our country. Speaking from the book of Jeremiah, he exhorted us not to react in fear, despair, anger, distrust and hopelessness. Instead we are to ***'seek the welfare of the city ... and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.'*** **Jeremiah 29:7**, thus letting His light shine!

Appropriately following the message, we entered a time of confession and repentance, asking God to *'Forgive us... whose love is better than life... whose grace extends to all...and enable us to be the people*



we could be that His name may be on the lips of all the people in this world.'

Intercessory prayer was held in different languages by various leaders. Dr Hermen Shastri, General Secretary – Council of Churches of Malaysia and Sandra Tagal of Hadassah ministry led the congregation in prayer in Bahasa Malaysia for the leaders of the country, the many races, the wealth of the nation and the future of the youths. The congregation then joined hearts in prayer - for the different areas of church ministry, family and government. They were covered in different languages by leaders of different denominations. There was a clear picture of unity in diversity and people gathered in groups of three's or four's to cover the various topics in praying, honouring each other's prayer styles and expressions.

This year, we focussed also on the topic of Women, Children and Refugees. Althea Desonny Tuzan led us in prayer for the children, along with Abigail Peters. As the Spirit led, we prayed for the women in our midst as well as the youths in the meeting. The leaders of the church took turns to bless the younger generation in the meeting, and vice versa.

The meeting ended with a declaration based on Jeremiah 30, while we lamented on the state of the land, we declared God's *'...justice righteousness, peace and harmony...'* over the nation, an end to *'...racial discrimination and racial strife...'* and confessed and repented of our wrongs towards the migrants and foreigners.

As we sang 'Yesuslah Tuhan' over the nation, there was much rejoicing and a clear sense of God's presence. We were challenged to answer the call to seek God's face to fill the cup of our nation with His blessing.

We believed all who gathered were blessed as we interceded in unity for the nation. God was truly present during the prayer gathering and we were left hungry for more moments of corporate prayer. We were challenged to renew our commitment to pray, knowing that as His people ***'humble themselves, and pray and seek My (God's) face and turn from their wicked ways,'*** God ***'will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.'*** **2 Chronicles 7:14**

By Eunice Khoo



BM Fellowship at Boulevard Shopping Mall



Faith Methodist Church (FMC) started the BM Fellowship at Boulevard Shopping Mall on 7 March 2015 to give the Boulevard employees the opportunity to worship God together on a weekly basis. Many of them who are Christians have to work on Sundays because of the shift system, and so they are unable to attend regular Sunday service.

The off days of these employees are not weekends because weekends are the busiest times at the mall. Those with diploma and degree qualifications are more fortunate in that they stop work on Saturday evening, and so they can go to their home church for Saturday night events and Sunday worship services.

We started this outreach activity with anticipation and some trepidation because we did not know what reception to expect from the Boulevard employees. But we had the support of the Boulevard management who provided us a meeting room to use and even supplied refreshment for the gathering. They even provided us free parking. Some of their senior management staff also join our gathering regularly, and serve their employees milo, tea and coffee.

We meet at 5.15 p.m. on Saturdays for an hour. We have the usual singspiration, preaching and prayer. We end the gathering with a fellowship meal which is the time when we can get to know our brothers and sisters in Christ who work in Boulevard.

FMC members take turns to order food from coffee shops, and bring the packaged food to the gathering.

God calls the most unlikely of his people to this ministry! It is the senior citizens in our midst who feel that this is an area in which they can help out and they have been faithfully doing this. Of course, there are also some young people who help to buy food for the fellowship meal. We have experienced panic times when the food was kind of late. We operate within very strict time constraints because many of the Boulevard employees have only one hour dinner break and have to clock in for the 6.30 – 10.30 p.m. shift.

It turned out that the BM Fellowship is not only meeting the needs of Boulevard employees. We do not expect that there are BM-educated Christians in the FMC congregation who feel comfortable attending

services in BM. To my surprise, I find myself touched by the BM songs more than English hymns and praise songs that I have been singing all these years.

FMC did not set up fellowship gatherings specifically for the Indonesian household helpers but the BM Fellowship at Boulevard is meeting this need – unintentionally. Maria is a regular worshipper at FMC. She lives in the neighbourhood and walks to FMC to follow the church van to go to Boulevard. She comes from Florens, Indonesia and works for Auntie Alice and Uncle Liew. She has told a few of us how she encouraged a friend to read the Bible and shared various experiences of her encounter with God. I feel that the BM Fellowship offers her an avenue for her to relate to fellow BM speaking Christians on a weekly basis. Another church member recently brought her helper to the fellowship.

On June 20, we started the Alpha Workplace in the BM Fellowship, and the discussions have been an eye-opener because the Boulevard employees face challenges that we are not aware of and do not think about. It makes us realise that we take for granted our freedom to choose Christ as our Saviour. Our concerted prayer is that all who attend the BM Fellowship may be strengthened in their faith and others may come to know the Lord through this Fellowship.

By Su Hie
Faith Methodist Church, Kuching



World Methodist Council Issues Statement on Mass-Shootings

The World Methodist Council notes with sadness and regret the fatal mass-shooting which occurred at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, USA, on October 1, killing 10 and injuring seven. Echoing the words of U.S. President Barack Obama, we are frustrated by how “routine” these shootings have become. According to the crowd-sourced ShootingTracker.com, this is the 295th mass-shooting in the United States this year (the site reports another mass-shooting occurred the same day in Florida), and the 45th shooting to have taken place at a school according to Everytown for Gun Safety website.

General Secretary Ivan Abrahams responded to the news by saying **“I grieve with the families of those who have lost their loved ones in yet another senseless slaying at the hands of a gunman. It is unconscionable that there have been 45 shootings at schools in the U.S. alone and yet the government and media seem to be ambivalent.”** Bishop Grant Hagiya who oversees the Oregon-Idaho Conference of The United Methodist Church stated, “My heart aches, and my prayers go out to all of those who were killed or injured. Let us call upon the power of God to heal and comfort during this challenging time.”

The World Methodist Council has historically stood for measures to curb gun violence including a resolution passed in 2009 calling for governments around the world to commit to global human security for nuclear and small arms and light weapons disarmament, through negotiations of treaties, international conventions and national public policies. In 2013, a resolution was passed to urge member churches to support and encourage organizations work to promote peace and dialogue and to divest from any holdings involved in the arms trade. Just last month, the Social and International Affairs Committee chair called for an end to gun violence in the First Friday Newsletter.

Yet more still need to be done, not just in the United States, but around the world. Gun violence is an epidemic that must be cured. Action must be taken, and it can begin at the grassroots level. Contact your local government representative to share with them the statistics which have been compiled by independent news agencies and organization and challenge them to work toward reducing the number of deaths by gun violence.

Dated 3 October 2015

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Missionary 1963

By Trevor Hancock

In October Anne and I, together with our baby daughter, set sail for Sarawak before going to work amongst the Iban people who live upriver in the “Longhouses”, and people said to us “Why do you want to go?” or “Why are you leaving England? Don’t you like it?” Others seem to think that we are deserting them. “Why do you have to go overseas to do Missionary work?”

The reason is a simple one. National Service sent me to Singapore when I was eighteen. We went by air, stopping in several different countries. We stayed overnight in Calcutta and were housed in the Great Eastern Hotel. We ate our chicken dinner to soothing music. Attentive India waiters hovered in the background ready to do whatever they were asked. “This”, I thought, “is the way to live”, and Miss Eartha Kitt’s song about wanting to be a millionaire, which was high in the Top Twenty scale at the time, seemed to be very appropriate.

After dinner some of us decided to take a walk and enjoy the sights of the city. Outside the Hotel we found lots and lots of little boys — the sort of boys we send to Junior Schools here. These were the shoe shine boys and they are waiting for us.

As soon as a foot was set down upon the pavement, it was pounced upon by these same boys who proceeded to cover it with polish. A mad scramble developed between these Cherry Blossom agents to find a vacant piece of foot. We fled whilst our shoes remained intact.

But there was no escape. As I turned a corner I was waylaid by a little girl who could have been no more than eleven or twelve. She was carrying a baby which she waved in front of me. It looked like a dirty bundle of rags, but it was alive. She said the baby was hers and that neither of them had had anything to eat all day.

The currency regulations and my A.C.2’s pay between them had left me almost as destitute as the girl. Seeing that her story

was having no effect upon me, she then tried to sell me the baby. I moved on quickly only to be halted by another of the hungry little boys who asked me politely if I would like him to take me to his sister, who he assured me was very clean.

By now it was dark, and as we retreated we found that the road was the only place to walk on. The pavements were all occupied by sleeping people. These people have no homes, no money, no possessions. The only thing that belongs to them is life itself, and very often that expires during the night.

Next morning we saw a Corporation Dust Cart stop. The driver dismounted — went over to one of the sleeping bodies. With hardly any effort he picked it up and dumped it unceremoniously on his cart and drove away. It was the last long sleep of another miserable beggar.

This experience left its mark on me. Never before had I realised that life could be so cruel. I tried to discuss what I had seen with some of the older men on the flight, but the only answer I got was, “Don’t you worry about these people, Son, they’re only wags — they’re used to that kind of thing — they’ve never known anything better. It’s their own fault for not being born British.” I suppose this kind of answer would satisfy some, but it left me cold.

In Singapore a Church group invited me to go with them to the local leper colony. I was warned before I went that it was not a pleasant experience. The people we had most to do with there were the children, but first I was introduced to some of the adult members of the community.

One of the first men I met was “Bertie”. He was a cheerful Chinese who helped to run the Sunday School. To meet him for the first time was not exactly a delight. His face was distorted and scarred. His hands were twisted and buckled, and some of his toes were missing. He was an advanced case of leprosy. We shook hands and I had to brace

Rev. and Mrs. Trevor Hancock, who have just been assigned to work with the Iban Provisional Annual Conference in Sarawak



myself to do it. Later on I was to realise what a strong Christian faith he had. Never once did I hear him complain. His scarred face was beautified by an ever ready smile for the children he so lovingly rounded up each Sunday.

He was helped by another Chinese known to us as “Bessie”. She was cast in the same mould, and between them they did a great deal for me. They showed me that Faith is not a luxury that you can afford to indulge in if things go right, but that it is in fact the whole of life — in whatever state you find yourself.

How different were these people from the pathetic beggars I had seen in Calcutta. I realised then what a difference the Christian faith makes.

A mild interest in a different way of life was turned into a passion for compassion. The work in the leper colony was followed up by regular visits to a Mental Hospital and a Childrens’ Orthopaedic Hospital. As I met and worked with other Christians of varying nationalities and colours I developed a sense of call to the Ministry.

That was a long time ago, but the vision remains, and as the time drew near to leave home shores it became clearer and clearer, and I longed by the grace of God to serve Him. That is why I was joyful as the boat sailed.

Methodist Message
January 1964
Vol. 58 No. 1

TEACHING CHILDREN *to go* ABOVE *and* BEYOND *Their Capabilities*



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