

PELITA METHODIST

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**“Christmas -
Certainty in Uncertain Times”**

Moment

We thank God for the election of the Presidents of the Annual Conferences for the new quadrennium (2017-2020).

CAC - **Rev. Dr. Ezra Kok Hon Seng**

SCAC - **Rev. Dr. Tie King Tai**

SIAC - **Rev. Steward Damat**

SPAC - **Rev. Dr. Hii Kong Hock**

TAC - **Rev. Dennis Raj**

TRAC - **Rev. Dr. T. Jeyakumar**



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

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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.**

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PRAYER UNITED

Items for prayer this month:

1. Christmas season

- a. *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* – John 1:4-5 (ESV)
 - i. We are reminded that the Grace of God appeared through our Lord Jesus Christ, bringing salvation to all. Let us pray that we as Christians, will be the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, and will be a light to overcome the darkness of this nation.
 - ii. We pray for godly example this season to walk away from worldly passions and commercial pressures, to live out lives that are upright and godly before our neighbours, colleagues, families and friends.
 - iii. We pray that this season, we would find opportunities to reach out to the lost, the least, the last and the lame, as we are redeemed from all iniquity to be a people of His own created for righteousness, and zealous for good deeds.

- iv. Let this be a month of deep worship to the One who is the greatest gift of all, our Father's only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In God's generous justice, we now are no longer slaves, but adopted as His children, and heirs, through God.

2. Next Parliamentary Sitting in March 2017

Now that the Parliamentary Sitting has been adjourned to March 2017, let us continue to cover the highest law-making institution in our nation:

- a. Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, MPs, including those in government and opposition:
 - i. To take up the responsibilities of office diligently and with wisdom, given the difficulties of decision-making, and to make just and righteous laws and legislation;
- b. Speaker of the House
 - i. Pray for wisdom and integrity, as the Speaker and his deputy bear heavy responsibilities, to ensure major legislations are thought through clearly, well debated, and not about laying blame or settling scores.
 - ii. Pray that bills be debated fairly, and MPs given the proper amount of time to debate.
- c. Members of Parliament
 - i. For godly living, given that they are away from their homes during times they are in Parliament.
 - ii. For integrity of work, not just in their constituencies, but also in the management of their workload and resources.
 - iii. That they will invest in research and talent that will benefit the nation.
- d. Civil Servants in Parliament and Government
 - i. Uphold research staff, secretaries, managers, security officers, police who work or provide support in Parliament and government.
 - ii. Pray for civil servants and committees in charge of handling major legislations and development of policy and its implementation.
- e. Legislation and Policy Issues
 - i. RUU355 Hudud Amendments
 1. For deliberate, open and constructive consultation in good faith with all groups, including minorities, in the drafting of the amendments, so that it will not violate the Federal Constitution, and the rights of all Malaysians to religious freedom.
 2. For the continued upholding of the civil laws of the nation, that justice and righteousness be principles that are non-negotiable, to inspire and to serve all citizens.
 - ii. For development in programs for the education, health, security, social and welfare services of the people and that these will not to be negatively impacted from budget cuts.

December 2016

“Christmas - Certainty in Uncertain Times”

One of the most congregationally sung and choir presented piece of music during the Christmas Season is founded on one verse from the oracles of the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament.

In 1741, the maestro Frederic Handel collated a combination of prophecies in the Old Testament and the truths found in the New Testament to show how powerfully and dramatically Jesus the *Messiah* fulfilled the Scriptures. Handel’s famous oratorio, *Messiah*, in three parts, maps out Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection.

One of the most popular pieces located in the Christmas section of this oratorio is from **Isaiah 9:6** – *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

This prophecy was given in the 8th century BC, when God’s people faced a tumultuous and unsettling time. The Assyrian empire under powerful kings [TiglathPileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and then Sennacherib] were reasserting domination over the world.

God’s rebellious people under King Ahaz, were scurrying to find human alliances as they craved worldly securities. They had chosen not to trust in their God who beckoned them with these words found in **Isaiah 30:15** – *“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “Only in returning to me and resting in me*

will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it”.

In the unpredictable and prolonged upheaval around us today, as we look for relief, peace and assurance, it is most timely that Christmas reminds us once again that ***in spite of the appearances of the situations around us*** – we have the *“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”* born to us. Our world today is tormented by an unprecedented number of troubles: terrorism, racial strife, religious intolerance, ethno-centric politics, the desperate plight of refugees and the rising cost of living. These are among the many insomniac concerns.

At Christmas, may God’s people called Methodists continue to choose to trust in our Emmanuel God Who is with us. He is the very personification of the angel’s declaration to an innocent, wide-eyed and shell shocked young virgin in **Luke 1:37** – *For nothing will be impossible with God.*

Our sovereign and omnipotent God of history is the *Wonderful Counselor* – He wants to guide our lives, teaching and directing us in the way to live. As our *Mighty God* Who has authority over all creation, He gives us the grace and the power to live according to “the way, the truth and the life”. He is our loving *Everlasting Father* Who caringly takes responsibility for us, who walks and encourages us all the way. He is the *Prince of Peace*, offering us His immeasurable consolation as we face an unsettling world and myriad challenges so

that we can find peace in and through Him in these unpredictable times.

When life causes you to ask *“how am I supposed to live in such a time and world like this”* – may you never forget the Emmanuel God Who “tabernacled” among us - being born in the manger. He experienced firsthand and personally knows many of our joys and hopes, challenges and disappointments, tests and distresses that we face.

May you choose during this Christmas and into the New Year, to be in the constant presence of this absolute Guide and Counsellor, to always hope in this omnipotent and sovereign God, to be embraced by the eternal love of the Father and Source of life. Then the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your heart and mind in and through the Prince of Peace!

Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

**CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA
PERSEKUTUAN KRISTIAN MALAYSIA**

Address : 26 Jalan Universiti, 46200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Telephone / Fax : + 60 3 7957 1457

Email: cfmsia@yahoo.co.uk

11 November 2016

CFM MEDIA STATEMENT

PRAY FOR A NATION IN CRISIS

The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) reminds the Church we are mandated to pray for our nation as we witness escalating tensions in our beloved land.

Guided by our ethos to “act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8), the CFM (as the umbrella organisation for Malaysian Christians) offers the following perspectives from our role guided by our conscience and responsibility to the nation:

- Threats of violence have been unabated for weeks, and protests and actual violence have occurred around the nation, with even more promised.

Peaceful rallies should be respected, albeit we may hold differing views. Perpetrators of violence should not be emboldened by the inaction of authorities who have been mandated to maintain peace in our nation.

- We Malaysians look to our government and its agents who serve to protect all citizens to take action to curtail this escalating and potentially incendiary situation where even ‘a blood bath’ has been part of the threats without restricting peaceful assemblies, rallies and gatherings.

Parliament should take steps to chide Members of Parliament who defend such threats to the peace and stability of our nation. And respective constituencies should be reminded of the position and conduct of these representatives at the next general election.

- There are individual Malaysians, civil society organisations and the media who are being harassed, some are receiving death threats and even investigated for mere allegations - to the extent that the non-partisan International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has called on our authorities to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into unlawful acts of intimidation against Malaysians and identifying and bringing to account those responsible.

The CFM

- urges all investigations into donations, funding and grants to be carried out thoroughly without fear or favour. Selective action not only serves to encourage further criminal activity but it brings further shame to our nation;
- calls upon all citizens, government officials and Members of Parliament to fiercely defend democracy and the fundamental freedoms guaranteed therein under the Federal Constitution;
- hopes that our media remains independent and unfettered in reporting. As a nation which seeks to attain developed nation status, this journey surely must include nurturing a mature and unencumbered press which can be a source for both those in authority and citizens, to articulate clarification, praise, concerns and grievances.

We call on all Malaysians to play their role in keeping the peace of our nation without curtailing our rights or jeopardising our safety and stability.

Most of all, the CFM calls upon all Malaysians to join us in praying for our beloved nation.



Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng,
Chairman and the Executive Committee,
The Christian Federation of Malaysia.



25TH TRAC MSF ANNUAL CAMP

By: Choy Yuet Moy, Kampar Wesley Methodist Church

The theme "Remember, Rejoice, Renew" was most apt for this TRAC MSF's 25th Anniversary Camp as we wanted to remember God's blessings on TRAC MSF, rejoice in all that we have become and renew our fellowship in the MSF with our shared commitment to Jesus Christ our Lord.



Souvenir Publication.

A great deal of time, energy and effort had been expended on this publication and it was fitting to have it launched at the annual camp. Every participant was pleasantly surprised when gifted with a copy of the book. As the banquet progressed, we were entertained by a group of singers known as De Techie Band. This group was so good in working up the atmosphere that they got many of the seniors on their feet and dancing! The food was not too bad, the company was good and the entertainment was great.



The theme speaker was our TRAC President, Rev. Dr. T. Jeyakumar. He was not only inspiring but also humorous. His first message, entitled "Remember to be Grateful", based on Luke 17: 11-19, was about the ten lepers. He reminded us to cultivate a grateful heart, and to be thankful in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

His second message, "Rejoice in the Blessings", based on Luke 1:39-45, was about Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Mary and Elizabeth rejoiced in God's call and they were blessed to become blessings to others. To believe in God means we have a trust that leads to submission, followed by obedience. In this message, Rev. Jeyakumar also recounted how he struggled with his own call to full-time ministry. When he finally answered God's call, he had peace and contentment. The third message, "Renew through Fellowship", based on Acts 2: 42-47, was on the importance of fellowship. Fellowship is not putting up a show, not trying to impress but truly enjoying each other. There should be no pretence and nothing superficial.

No less inspiring were the messages of Rev. Elisha Satvinder who talked about outreach to the urban poor. With his wife Petrina, he started Dignity for Children Foundation, a charity-based educational facility for refugees and the poor in the area around Sentul to empower such children through quality education, positively transforming their lives and the lives of those around them. This work is so effective that it caught the attention of the White House and President Barack Obama paid them a visit in late 2015. Dignity for Children Foundation has also set up a café called Project B that is fully run by the older children of the Foundation. Project B aims to equip them with work experience and skills so that they can eventually break the cycle of poverty. As Rev. Satvinder recounted how God's hand was on him, I could not help but be impressed by his response to God's call to care for disadvantaged children.



Of course, the camp was not all about serious and challenging messages. As usual, the fellowship night was an opportunity to showcase the talents and creativity of the seniors. For me, the highlight of the night was the Hawaiian dance by EMC. The dancers not only entertained the audience, but I believe they had great fun performing the dance.



The Seremban chapter put up a creative performance complete with props. Their home-made "time machine" brought them back to the future with a group of dancing queens doing a line dance. Besides these, other MSF chapters sang oldies through the decades which got the audience singing along. All in all, it was a truly fun night.

There were two excursions but I could only go for one. I chose the city tour and had no regrets. The first stop was at the Esplanade and Fort Cornwallis. There was an exhibition called "United Buddy Bears" on the old town padang. A visit to Chew Jetty was most enlightening. According to our tour guide, Penang has been awarded the UNESCO World Heritage Site partly because of the clan jetties which are considered Penang's living heritage as they are still inhabited. Any half-day tour of Penang would not be complete without a visit to see the wall paintings,--street art in various parts of the old town. As our visit was on a weekday, there was only a short queue, making it much easier to take photos with the wall art as a backdrop. A visit to the Penang Peranakan Mansion brought the half-day tour to a fitting close. I was awe-struck by the opulence and grandeur of the mansion. The entrance fee of RM10.00 was definitely worth it.

The final event of the Camp was the Closing Service, in which President spoke from Deuteronomy 7:1-26 on the topic "Renewed People" and challenged us to live as a holy and redeemed people of a loving God. This was followed by the Installation of the new TRAC MSF Board (2017-18), and the Lord's Supper for all present. We must thank the combined MSF Choir for the special items during the worship service.



As the curtain falls on 2016, TRAC MSF looks forward to more opportunities to serve God under the able leadership of the new Management Board which was elected during the AGM on 5th October 2016. The members of the new board are as follows:

TRAC-MSF MANAGEMENT BOARD 2017 - 2018

President:	Mr. Daniel Chan Weng Kay	(Emmanuel MC, PJ)
Vice President:	Mr. Francis Choo Ann Lock	(Trinity MC, PJ)
Hon. Secretary:	Mr. Toa Kim Meng	(Ipoh Wesley MC)
Hon. Treasurer:	Mr. Jimmy Tan Kay Woo	(Melaka Wesley MC)
Board Members (4):	Mr. Tan Kok Huat	(Penang Trinity MC)
	Mr. Bernard Tan Hock Huat	(Sg Way-Subang MC, PJ)
	Mr. S. Verdamanickam	(Kampar WMC)
	Ms Nancy Tang Shweet Fun	(Melaka Wesley MC)
District Co-ordinators:	<i>-- to be appointed --</i>	
Hon. Auditors:	Mr. Lim Sow Mun	(Trinity MC, PJ)
	Ms Dora Dwihandajani	(Melaka Wesley MC)

Hope Methodist Vocation Centre Sitiawan Perak

The Goal

The Methodist Church Malaysia, by the grace of God is setting up **Hope Methodist Vocation Centre (HMVC)**, a school to train and equip the marginalized students of lesser academic inclination with basic living skills.

Such skills will empower the target group to make a living with dignity and hope without being enticed into undesirable lifestyles often associated with poverty and unemployment.

This project will also contribute to the deficit in the skilled labour force in Malaysia. The HMVC is a project that seeks to benefit young individuals as well as the country.

The Target Groups

There is a crying need to offer these vocational training opportunities to the poor and less educated, especially among ethnic groups with high school dropout incidences e.g. the Orang Asli, the Indian youths and any other race.

UNICEF Malaysia recently reported that “Despite Malaysia’s success in achieving 96 per cent net primary school ... The **dropout rate** is 16.7 per cent for rural schools compared to 10.1 per cent for urban ...”

The Mission of the Methodist Church in Malaysia

It is the Methodist Church’s continuing mission of 125 years to give hope to such youths by academic and vocational education - *missionally, excellently and compassionately*. It is an attested universal fact that education is a vital “game changer” in any society and country.

The HMVC Motto

“Giving hope in living by giving skills for earning”.

It is our aim to provide marketable vocational skills in the more “in demand” local industries.



Members of the HMVC Task Force on the site of HMVC [2016]

Location

HMVC is located in Sitiawan, Perak using the old Methodist High School building that will be specifically converted for this purpose with the necessary “make over” done.

Time Frame and Scheduling of the HMVC Project.

Renovation began in November 2016 at the initial cost of RM 500,000.00.

This would cover the following;

- Hostel for about 60 students, Classroom for learning and workshop for practical learning by training.
- Administrative Office & dining hall, current ground floor building and canteen area will be cleaned up and general toilets be restored.
- A place will be allocated for spiritual development such as regular worship and Chapel service.

The initial plan is to offer two courses viz Aluminum Works and Air-conditioners Services.

A separate sum is needed to be raised as working capital to run the HMVC as we begin to hire staff and recruit students to start the Centre.

We plan to take in the first batch of students in June 2017.

Future Expansion

Further expansion and development will be gradual as we make this Centre of Hope known to our Churches and community. We target to offer 5 courses in the near future and raise RM 3.0 million to operate and sustain this Centre.

Our Appeal

We invite corporations, institutions, individuals and well-wishers who share in this worthwhile vision of meeting such an urgent and strategic need to join us in this mission by your generous gifts, time, various types of contributions and prayers.

We thank you for giving due consideration of support to this Project.

We are grateful to God that renovation work has started as we continue to look to Him to guide us and bring this to a successful completion.

To God Be the Glory

Submitted by

Mr. Khor Hong Yin

Executive Director

Methodist Council of Education

On behalf of the HMVC Task Force

November 2016

The Malayan Christian Schools' Council (MCSC) Celebrates 60 Years

God's Faithfulness – Our Heritage

The year 2016 marks the 60th Anniversary of the Malayan Christian Schools' Council or MCSC, and it was celebrated with a Dinner and a Book Launch. Never before had MCSC done anything on this scale, and this was precisely the reason for making the public more aware of this low-profile NGO.

The Dinner was held on 30th October at the Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa with HE Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Ambassador to the Vatican, as the Guest of Honour. Present at the dinner were all the 13 Mission Authorities which included the Churches and Catholic Religious Teaching orders which own the schools, Alumni, Boards of Governors, friends and supporters of the Mission Schools.

Mr Yap Kok Keong, editor of the MCSC 60th Anniversary Commemorative Book, said in his editorial: "In the last 60 years, the MCSC has generally worked behind the scenes and hence its work is not known to many. This 60th Anniversary commemorative publication is intended to bring into wider awareness the work of MCSC and the contribution of the many dedicated volunteers past and present behind the organisation. It is also a timely reminder of the rich heritage and legacy passed on to us by those faithful missionary and education pioneers, a legacy which Mission authorities and MCSC have been called by God not only to preserve but also to be faithful in building upon for the children of the land today and in the years ahead..."

Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik who was present to represent the Methodist Mission Authority, said in his message: "... God has likewise used the MCSC to be a significant channel that helped the mission schools face and navigate the difficult seas of change, especially when official government policies pose great challenges to the ethos, operational values and management of our mission schools post



the Independence era..... The Church is grateful for the generations of stalwart educationists in the MCSC movement who are deeply convicted about the education cause, and passionately persevered in maintaining the Christian educational ethos in touching and transforming young lives."

Elder Wong Sai Weng of the Brethren Assemblies said "The challenge for MCSC ... is to recover the Vision and Mission of the church through education. Unless the presence of the Lord God Almighty is acknowledged in all our churches and Mission Authorities, there can be little to uplift the present dilemma facing our mission schools. Bold steps need to be taken in faith to get the mission schools back on track. This may mean a concerted effort to unite and pray for wisdom and guidance from the Lord to get back full control of our mission schools. Priority needs to be given to develop and enhance the school curriculum and assets to meet the challenges of a fast changing environment both globally and in our land."

And from Tan Sri Bernard Dompok: "Now is the time for the rebuilding of the "walls that have been broken down". Now is the time to take up the mantle of

education that was left for us as a heritage and show this nation how education should really be carried out without discrimination or indoctrination with fairness to all, focussed on developing character and become a beacon of hope.

"This legacy of high standards of education and the unifying force of compassion has been the heritage of the Mission Schools, and it would be folly to turn our backs on such clear opportunities to build on what has gone before."

n.b. If you would like a copy of the MCSC 60th Anniversary Commemorative Book, please email to Lynda, [contact.mcsc@gmail.com] and a donation for the book and postage would be most welcome.

Submitted by
Ms. Tay Choon Neo
Hon. Secretary, MCSC



基督徒布道團面對團員老化 湯啟光：修訂章程整編上陣

基督教卫理公会砂拉越华人年议会属下基督徒布道团于11月12日早上10时正，假诗巫爱莲街福源堂举行创团八十周年感恩纪念会；除了帮助会众回顾及缅怀布道团八十来的一段光辉历史，更引起大家对布道团团员老化的关注与巨大回响。

出生于1933年的汤启光是现届基督徒布道团文书，他加入布道团已经超过了半个世纪。年过八旬的他在叙述团史时说：“感谢上帝带领基督徒布道团走过八十年的事奉。1936年上帝差遣忠心的仆人，中国、东南亚最著名大布道家宋尚节博士，于9月21日至10月1日一连十天，在诗巫爱莲街福源堂举行轰轰烈烈的奋兴布道大会，引领逾一千五百人认罪悔改信耶稣。感恩，就在此时，灵火燃烧，卫理公会诗巫基督徒布道团遂于9月29日应运而生。

“蒙主的保守，历届指导、顾问、牧师、传道的关心，各届同道同心合一、同心同行，布道团过去八十年积极参与布道，为主作美好的见证；而

前辈们的委身与付出是值得大家学习的榜样。”

汤启光弟兄表示，适逢布道团八十周年团庆，有两件事值得大家纪念与参与。其一、2015年至2016年间，酝酿修改1936年砂拉越诗巫基督徒布道团规章，获得指导刘会先牧师和顾问萧武明弟兄的关心和帮助，以致最终促成修订新章程，从而为布道团铺设更加健全的组织架构。这对布道团来讲是一个新的转变或转折点，得以向前迈进。

其二、基于基督徒布道团面对团员老化的问题，而发起的招纳百名精兵的行动，正在如火如荼地进行，是另一件值得大家代祷与参与的大事。目前已有50多位新、旧团员接受“三福布道”课程装备，并正式入团。这项行动将会持续，至达到“1年之内招收100位新团员”目标为止。上帝是要地上的众儿女与祂同工，完成主托付给教会的大使命。盼望更多对布道有负担的兄弟姐妹愿意加入布道团，也常常在祷告中纪念。

“基督徒布道团有一个梦，希望重新得力；明年投入诗巫南、北、西教区的布道事工。尤其是帮助有需要的堂会培训更多布道队员，作主的精兵，一齐兴旺福音。随着时代的变迁，布道队员有必要掌握新的传福音方法与技巧，以便为主赢得更多的灵魂。”汤启光弟兄吐露布道团的雄心壮志。(忠) ●



Christmas - A Celebration of Christ

By Anthony Rao
TMC Kuala Lumpur

Christmas — the mention of the word itself brings to one's mind scenes of laughter, fun, enjoyment. It is that time of the year once again. The shops are out to woo people to spend, housewives are busy cleaning their homes and making cakes, the young are busy preparing to look their best, churches preparing various programmes, others wondering how to make ends meet having lost their jobs. The concerns are varied and many. But the main concern for everyone is the question: How do we celebrate? The question of why do we celebrate is often given secondary importance or just a brief thought. We believe that when we have a proper perspective of why we celebrate then the how we celebrate will fall into place. Christmas is a celebration of Christ!

We celebrate by rejoicing

Christ is God's way of saving men. In Christ, salvation becomes a reality. It is a reality because God can and does bring it about. Christ is God's action in dealing with sin. Jesus shows that salvation comes from what God does and not from any human effort whatsoever. Men worn by hard labour and bowed under the burdens of life and sin are in no position to effect their own salvation. They are helpless in the face of ultimate issues. It was at this point of hopelessness that God in Christ breaks into human history to deliver man from his bondage. (Rom. 5:6). When God was born in human flesh, he did not come to tidy up a little, correct a few errors here, getting rid of some bad habits there and the like. He knew for a fact the man's evil is deep-rooted. The whole set of life must be altered. Man was in no position to do anything. The

remedy must be drastic — Jesus Christ, his own son. So we celebrate by rejoicing at these tremendous facts. We rejoice not because of what we achieved but because of what He did. We focus our attention on Him. Let us not make statements that we should not be merry, cook a nice meal, or invite our friends or when we do we must preach the gospel to them or wear nice clothes. These are small issues. Let us celebrate and rejoice because of what God has done and if we need the tinsel and the coloured lights to add colour to our celebrations let us do so. (Col. 2:16-23).

We celebrate by reflecting

Christmas portrays to us the character of God. The birth of Christ was no mere accident. The hand of God was in it. Jesus is the fulfillment of the purpose and promises of God. God is one whose words are true and He will fulfill what He has promised. Looking at Jesus tells us that our God in no mere tribal God but one who must be taken seriously. The birth of Jesus also portrays to us God's gracious purpose declared as long ago as the days of the great patriarch and father of the people, Abraham, was now coming to its climax. Another aspect of God that is revealed to us is His tremendous constraining love. It was fundamental to Paul that God is the 'God of love and peace' (2 Cor. 13:11). And nothing is more basic for his thought on salvation than the idea that God's love and not man's merit is the root cause. Salvation rests on what God is and does and not on the activity of what man does. For Paul it was very clear that God was in Christ and that the cross shows us the love of God. God indeed cares. He cares as much as that.

His love is poured out freely on His people not because they are worthy of that love but because He is a loving God. He loves because it is His nature to love and not because He finds in sinful man something that is attractive to Him. One may wonder how indeed are we to see His love and purposes in a world filled with sin and darkness. But it is in such a situation that we indeed see His love, power, purposes, etc. It is through all these that we learn the true character of God. For that is what the Scripture tells. In Romans 11:32 we read that God has bound all men over to disobedience so that we may have mercy on them all. Through all evil, will come forth His tremendous character. And the birth of Jesus confirms to us this tremendous character of our God. Let us think therefore of this God that we belong to and celebrate and acknowledge Him for who He is. Reflect and celebrate!

We celebrate by renewing

The birth of Jesus demands from us a people whose whole lifestyle is completely different from the world around it. For Jesus also came to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. His demands are frightening. 'Love thy enemies'. The lustful look breaks the command on adultery. The angry word breaks that on murder. Men are called to go the second mile. The reality of a man's faith is shown by the way he lives. I am not prepared to see in good works the evidence of merely a human striving. Men could never do good works other than in the strength that God provides. 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another' said Jesus. He called for the emphasis of the quality of life within the

body of believers. But alas we have forgotten Him and the teaching of the New Testament and emphasised the wrong things. We challenge and rebuke people for not preaching the Gospel, for not being involved in evangelism, and what not. But what about the quality of life of the body of believers. It is a shame and in a terrible state. We exist as individuals and not as members of a body. Let us celebrate by renewing our fellowship to one another and to see ourselves as a body each responsible for the other. Let us not be people who exist for ourselves but like Jesus who came for others, let us be people for others. Renew and celebrate!

We celebrate by responding

‘Men of Galilee’, they said ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky.

This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back...’ Indeed Jesus will return. But till he returns what do we do? Do we sit back and await his return.’Come let us walk in the light of the Lord’ says the prophet Isaiah. Let us rejoice and sing. Let us celebrate for He returns and comes in all His splendour. No matter what the situation we are in, we stand tall for we are His and He is coming for us. His people need not fear his coming but rather look forward with tremendous anticipation. Liberated from this world and this body we will be transformed and will be taken to be with Him to worship and adore Him. But till that day we live not defeated, dull, with sackcloth and ashes, mortifying our bodies but rather with joy and peace and love and

hope and with a smile on our faces, so that the world around us wants to know of the hope that is within. Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus, this same Jesus whose birthday we celebrate, is Lord. Not just by our lips, but also by our total life-style as individuals and as a body of believers.

Celebrate we should, celebrate we do, celebrate we must for Christmas is God’s doing and to Him belongs all praise and adoration. Let us not quarrel about the tinsel and the coloured lights and what we wear — all these have their place. But let us celebrate for Christmas is a celebration of Christ!

*Pelita Methodist
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Devotion

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

DEVOTION

Joyful Generosity

You can give without loving,
but you cannot love without giving.
(Amy Carmichael)

IN WORD: In the Kingdom, it isn’t enough just to give. A life of sacrifice given grudgingly isn’t nearly the precious offering that a willing sacrifice is. No, God cares deeply about our motive for giving and serving. It must cost us something, but the desire needs to outweigh the cost. Our gifts can’t be meant as a payoff to ensure God’s blessing or as a burdensome obligation that we wish we didn’t have to fulfill. God wants us to give like He does: cheerfully.

We certainly see this principle in the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus wept and prayed desperately for another way. Why did He finally accept His Father’s will? “For the joy set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). It was a difficult sacrifice, but ultimately not a reluctant one. There was joy in it. Jesus gave us the perfect example of what it means to give gladly.

There are at least two vital truths to learn from God’s example. One is that He doesn’t pour out His blessings on us hesitantly. We don’t have to twist His arm to answer the prayers of miserable sinners like us. He really does enjoy giving out of His abundance; He takes pleasure in His own goodness. The other vital truth is that if we are being conformed to His image, this is how we will give too. Our generosity will look extravagant just as His does. We will be cheerful givers because He is a cheerful giver.

IN DEED: Real giving in God’s Kingdom isn’t done under compulsion. It’s motivated by love—love for God, for His purposes, and for His people. That’s a noble generosity, perfectly befitting the character of the King we serve. He gave to us out of love, we give to others out of love. The principle of sowing and reaping bears the purest and best fruit when love and joy are its sources.

Whatever you give, give it gladly. However you serve, do it joyfully. Be motivated by nothing but gratitude to the one who gave Himself to you first.

God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Looking Backward

Learning the Language

By Sophia Blackmore

One of the first tasks of a new missionary is that of learning the language. Malay is not supposed to be difficult, and some say that they can pick it up easily. But these rarely attempt to preach or pray in Malay.

My own difficulty was that I read and studied High Malay with a very fine teacher, Inchi Ismael, who used classical Malay and would not descend to anything else. But when, with my little interpreter, I visited a Chinese home, where a woman, sitting on a handsome ebony couch, with her betel box beside her, would spread her *serai* leaf with prepared lime, put in a good sized pinch of tobacco and some betel nut, and place the wad in the corner of her mouth as she started to talk, her Malay did not at all sound like the dulcet-toned syllables of Inchi Ismael. However, after a time, I began to recognize what I called my "catechism," for it was the same in nearly every house. At first my interpreter would answer for me; then I began to make my own responses. The first question was always "Where did she come from?" Next, "Is she married?" followed by "How old is she?" Then, with surprise, "If she is as old as that, why didn't her mother get her married?"

A further difficulty arose out of the different methods of Romanizing Malay in those days. There were Mr. Keasbury's books, including his version of the New Testament which we used. There was the Government spelling, used in the hymn-book of Mr. Phillips, out of which we sang. Then some of the books used for examination were in the Dutch spelling. Now that the Mission has adopted a style of its own, and our books conform to its rules, it is easier to become a good speller in Romanized Malay.

In our little day school in the shop house in Short Street, we soon organized a Sun-

day School, which met on Sunday afternoon. Our dear little girls were just as ready to come to this as to the day school. Miss Hagerdorn, too, was most faithful in attendance. The children had a short Bible story, and learned to sing hymns and to say simple prayers. Their teacher was my interpreter, but one Sunday afternoon she could not come. I tried to prepare the lesson myself and had some blackboard diagrams ready, but my limited knowledge of Malay made me rather fearful of results. However, I had to do the best I could. The lesson was on "The broad way and the narrow way." The pupils wanted to understand, and they helped all they could by their careful attention and sympathetic interest. The next day they told their teacher what I had taught them, and said, "We would like to follow what *Missi* taught us, but how can we come to school if we cannot walk in the street, for it is broad?"

At another time I spoke at a meeting in a private house on a Wednesday morning. I had walked up and down my room, learning my little talk and looking up in the vocabulary words I did not know. It was a very simple little talk, and in due time I fired it off at the patient half a dozen women who had gathered to listen to me in respectful silence, but something I said was such a dreadful mistake that one woman broke the tension by bursting out into a merry laugh.

In the early days I found many kinds helpers, – women who left their household duties to come out with me in the mornings to act as my interpreters. To them I owe more than I realized then. They gave me their time without reward. One little woman, Mrs. Jansen, whose husband came to our English services and was in charge of the Sailors' Rest that Miss Cook superintended, was always ready to come with me.

She was a shy little body, and I am sure it was not easy for her. Then there was a Christian Chinese *nonya*, whose husband also came to our services. Her little son, three or four years of age, a lad with head partly shaved and two little plats sticking up straight on each side with scarlet wool braided into them, had to come along too. At other times I was accompanied by the mother of a large family, whose daughter has been my friend and the matron in Nind Home for years.

One day I went to Miss Ryan, of the Church of England Chinese Girls' School, and told her some of the difficulties which I encountered in my visiting. Being such an experienced missionary and visitor, she could and did help me. I remember telling her I would like to pray in Malay, but did not know how. She kindly wrote out a simple prayer in Malay, which I used to read until I learned to say it without the paper. Afterwards I extended it by adding some petitions of my own.

How many missionaries have spoken of the difficulties of their first year on the field! I remember that I felt like a child sewing without a knot in her thread, pulling it futilely in and out. I wondered if the time would ever come when something would be accomplished. We should not forget the helplessness of our own early days, and be ready to sympathize with new workers and help those who, in their first year, are undergoing the difficulties that arise from new surroundings, a trying climate, and the intricacies of a strange language.

I have before me some old letters, that I wrote thirty years ago, and which my mother preserved. In one of them I have written: "I am so glad that I am getting to know my way about Singapore. It is not an easy thing to come to a strange place to open up new work in a strange language. I heartily sympathize with myself; nevertheless, the Lord has truly been my helper, and I can raise my Ebenezer for the first three months of help and blessing."

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