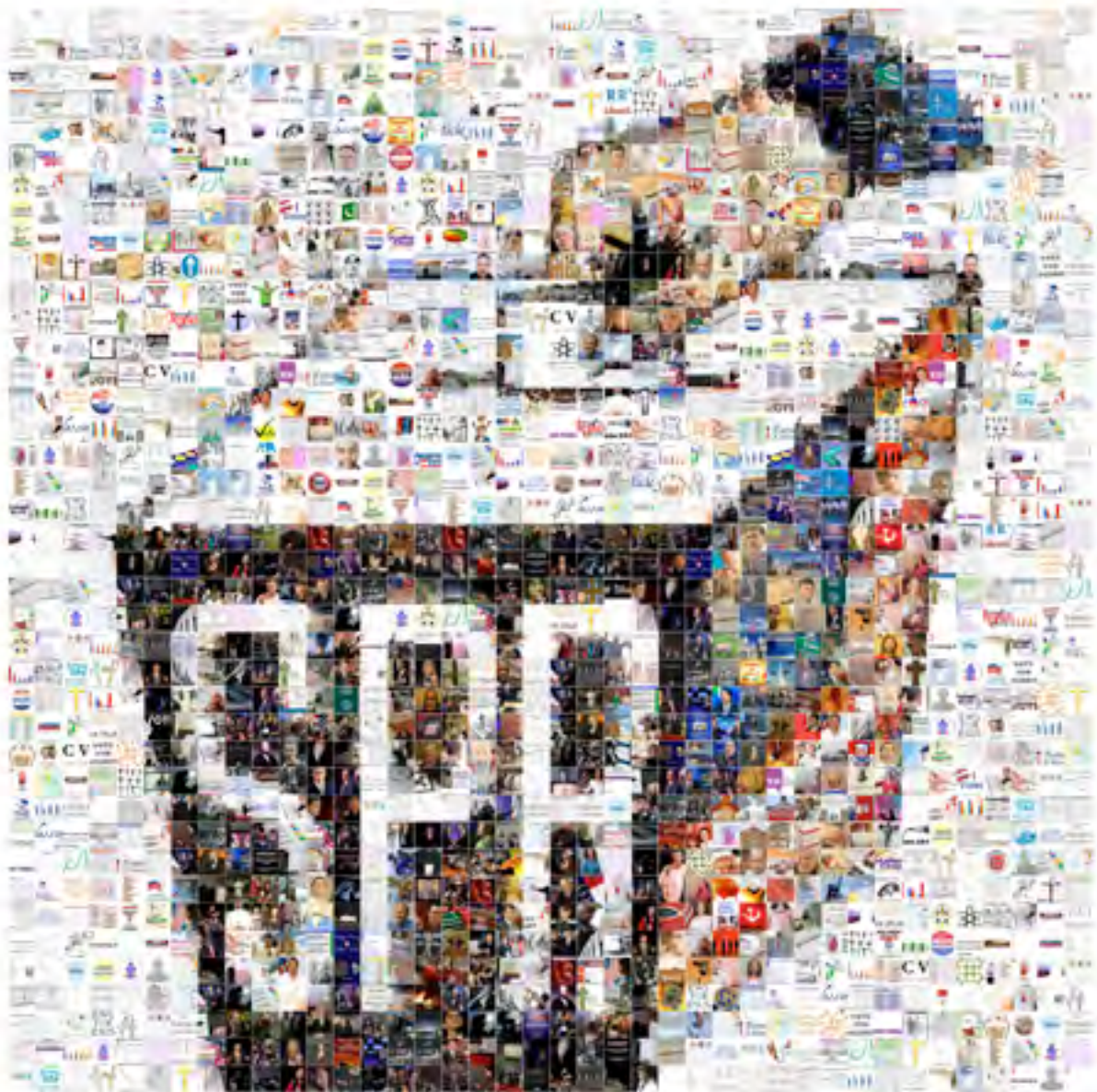


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Are you registered as a voter?
It is a Christian's responsibility to vote.

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG

Moment

By Michael William
 Have you heard about "The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church in Malaysia"? In this book, we have all the legislation and constitution of the Methodist Church in Malaysia. In October, delegates from all conferences met in Port Dickson to discuss changes to the Discipline. These changes would enable the church to be less bureaucratic and more 'user friendly'.



THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SPECIAL SESSION 12TH-15TH OCTOBER, 2011, PORT DICKSON.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ISSAC NG

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Malaysia National Prayer Network

Church

*Turn my eyes from worthless things,
 and give me life through your word.*
 Reassure me of your promise,
 made to those who fear you.
 Help me abandon my shameful ways;
 for your regulations are good.
 I long to obey your commandments!
 Renew my life with your goodness. (Ps 119, NLT)*

Pray for

| We pray for the Church that our eyes be open to see the reality of God's presence all around us, our ears be in tune to hear His still small voice, and our spirit be the lamp of the Lord.



| We pray for the pastors and leaders, that their preaching and message be a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that our faith will not rest on human wisdom, but on the power of God.

Continue to Pray Malaysia

| For fair and clean elections.
 | For all those who prepare themselves for elections: to focus on building up the nation and improving rakyat's wellbeing, instead of tearing down one another and involving in immature political bickering.
 | For the government to walk the talk: fulfill what has been promised to the rakyat, quick to examine its own integrity instead of blaming others for any alleged wrongdoing, consistent in implementing policies in all areas, without fear or favour.

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 | LEVEL OF WORK:
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 Should have experience in management and marketing in the private sector and/or educational administration, Possess a Degree in Education or equivalent, Well-informed on assessment and monitoring.
 Able to contribute to the professional development of colleagues through coaching and mentoring, demonstrating effective practice, and providing advice and feedback. Innovative and entrepreneurial.
 Superior written and verbal communication skills. Be a committed Christian.

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Christians & Nation-Building: The Electoral Process

Have you registered as a voter?

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG

Recently, one of our Annual Conference Presidents carried out a survey in his conference. It was found that only 40% of the members had registered as voters, and only 70% of those registered actually voted. This means that only 28% of all eligible voters in his conference voted at the last election!?

Without going into the details, what is clear is that the Bible teaches that Christians should live as responsible citizens. In saying, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Luke 20:25), Jesus tells us that it is right for us to pay our taxes. Paul reminds us that it is proper to obey the nation's laws and submit to the governing authorities of our day, 'for there is no authority except that which God has established' (Rom 13:1). Moreover, we are to pray for everyone, including 'for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Tim 2:2).

The New Testament teachings on responsible citizenship were given in a totalitarian setting, where the power of the Roman government was absolute. Today we live in a democracy, even though it is sometimes flawed. Within a democracy,

The New Testament teachings on responsible citizenship were given in a totalitarian setting, where the power of the Roman government was absolute

the same principle of responsible citizenship would demand that we participate meaningfully in the electoral process. We cannot take the view that politics is dirty and therefore we should stay clear of it completely. This cannot be a responsible Christian response. As the saying goes, 'Evil triumphs when good men do nothing!'

Unfortunately, this happens far too often.

(This is not the place for me to go into detail arguments for Christian involvement in politics. For those seeking more on this, I would recommend two books: John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed., [2006], especially pp. 23-94; and Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics* [2008].)

What does this mean for us? The first and simplest thing is to VOTE! In a later article I will discuss at length the origins of modern democracy. But here I merely wish to note that the modern idea of democracy, wherein every person has the right to vote, is deeply rooted in the Christian faith, and did not come from somewhere else. The idea that all human beings possess an inalienable dignity, irrespective of class, sex, race, education, belief, and even physical and mental wholeness or disability, is rooted in the biblical idea that all of us bear within us the sacred 'image of God' (Gen 1:26f). Because of this, all of us share a fundamental equality before God which transcends all other differences. Thus, more than anyone else from another religious faith, the Christian has an inherent responsibility to defend this principle. When we fail to vote in a modern democracy, we are actually denying a fundamental tenet of our faith. We are failing to live up to what the Bible teaches.

In some countries like Australia and Singapore voting is compulsory, but not ours. Nevertheless, it is a Christian responsibility to vote at every election. To do this one must first be registered as a voter. The SPR (*Suruhan Pilihan Raya* or Election Commission of Malaysia) has been urging all citizens to register. And since the next General Election is impending, there is a measure of urgency to do so.

How does one register as a voter? If you are doing it on your own, it can be done online. Alternatively, you can register at the State Election Office or a Post Office. You can also get your church to contact the SPR to come on a Sunday to carry out a registration exercise when everyone is around. I would therefore urge all pastors and LCECs of our churches to look into this matter and act on it quickly.

Further, after the registration exercise, it is important that everyone checks that their registration has been properly processed to ensure that they are now on the electoral roll in their respective constituencies. This is important as there have been innumerable cases when those who have registered suddenly find their names missing. This checking process can be easily done online

at: <http://daftarj.spr.gov.my/daftarj/daftarbi.aspx>. The final step in this process is that, having registered, we should make the actual effort to cast our votes on election-day.

The next question is how do we decide for whom to vote? It would not be proper for me to tell you who to support. The principle of democracy means that each of us must exercise our God-given right to vote thoughtfully and prayerfully, but freely without coercion from anybody. But here are four guidelines. First and foremost, as in all things in life, our decisions must be principled and not based on short-term gain for ourselves. Our vote at every election is a God-given privilege and responsibility, and never to be sold for money, 'datukships', or anything that smacks of personal gain!

Second, we must avoid basing our choice primarily on race or religion, although that is what many people do. Unfortunately, good and bad candidates come from all racial or religious backgrounds. I think we should first and foremost ask the question of which candidate has a track record of integrity in personal life, keeping promises made and willingness to work hard for the people.

As an example, I was visiting a certain part of Sarawak earlier this year before the State Elections. When I asked the locals who they would vote for, some commented that even though the present ADUN was their own relative, they would not vote for him because he had done nothing for the people. He had not even helped to improve the road that connected the constituency to the nearest large town! Thus even before the results were out, I already had a good idea of who would win in that place. So choose candidates with integrity and who have the people's interest at heart.

A third guideline is to ask what the party or coalition (whether BN or PR) stands for. Issues to which we need to pay special attention are corruption, abuse of power, racial chauvinism and religious intolerance. We need to read between the lines and go beyond the slogans. One may shout slogans about unity and mutual respect, but may still be continuing to push agendas which undermine the unity of the nation or promote religiously intolerant policies behind the scenes.

A fourth guideline is to work at building a genuine two-party system in the politics of our nation. One sees this repeatedly in the best examples of democracy in the world. Why is that important? Because the possibility of a genuine choice of two parties for voters keeps the party in power on



Check Your Status

Do take time to check your voting eligibility at <http://daftarj.spr.gov.my/daftarj/daftarbi.aspx>

its toes! Lord Acton, the famous British jurist once said, ‘Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely!’ The possibility that one can lose power in the next election acts as a powerful check against the abuse and corruption of power.

For example, our Prime Minister has in recent months taken some really significant initiatives in an attempt to bring serious reform to the nation. These include introducing the KPI’s for various Ministries and Government Departments, economic reforms, and the latest announcement about doing away with oppressive laws such as the ISA and Printing Presses Act. These are highly laudable and, if genuinely pursued, will benefit the citizens immensely. Let us therefore hope and pray that they would be diligently pursued by the present government. However, it is doubtful that the BN would have been willing to launch into such changes had it not been for the 8 March 2008 General Election! What that election showed was that, for the first time since Merdeka, the ruling coalition is in danger of losing power. Hence reform for them became imperative!

Beyond registering and voting thoughtfully, some Christians may find themselves led further into actual participation in party politics or even becoming candidates in elections. Not all of us are called to this kind of involvement. But we should not be afraid to get involved if we have the gifting and the calling. However, one should first check one’s motives. Is there a genuine desire to see real moral and socio-political transformation in our nation? Are we willing to pay the cost of truly serving the people? Or are we in it because of the hope of personal gain and advancement? To answer this honestly requires careful discernment with the help of a few really trusted friends who know us well and who will be ruthlessly honest with us. And much prayer is needed.

My final comments are for the pastors of our churches. You and I are called to be spiritual shepherds for all, both those in government and those in opposition. Therefore, unlike the laypeople, we should not be directly involved in party politics. The moment we become partisan in party politics, we cut off those on the ‘other side’. Once that happens, we lose our credibility as pastors! This does not mean that we cannot decide who or which party we should support in an election. But that is a private decision, as opposed to coming out publicly in support of one party or another. Personally, I have good Christian

friends on both sides, who I deeply respect for their faith, integrity and hard work for the people of our nation. And whenever necessary, I will do what I can to give them pastoral and moral support.

Sometimes, as pastors we are asked to go and pray for a candidate from our church. It gets even more complicated if both candidates from opposing parties come from our own church—as it has happen before! My suggestion is this. If we are to pray for a candidate, make sure that it is not at one of his party campaign functions. That would be taken as publicly supporting that party. Rather, insist that if the candidate wishes to be prayed for, it should be done in church or at his home.

How do we pray for him? Pray that his motives will be pure, and that God will guide and protect him through the election process. Pray that he will truly serve God and the people if elected and that he will be protected from the corruption of power. Assure him that, whether win or lose, he still has our love and our pastoral care. Give him all the prayer support and encouragement he needs. Commend and encourage him for any good work. But never be afraid to do what Nathan did to King David when the latter failed terribly in his duties as a political leader, which is to rebuke him fearlessly (2 Sam 12). Otherwise, we will be failing in our duties as pastors!

Special

World Methodist Council 2011



第20届世界卫理大会

南非Durban举行

苏慈安 会长

第二十届世界卫理大会今年于8月4日至8日假南非德班 (Durban) 举行, 约有3千代表从73个国家而来。这个5年一次的大会其目的乃是彼此了解和支助全球卫理公会的事工, 以及促进合一。马来西亚卫理公会共派出9位代表参加。

在大会未开始前, 世界卫理公会理事会于8月1-3日先召开会议, 报告及肯定过去5年各委员会的事工并且讨论和展望以下有关事工: 与各宗派合一和对话的成果与方向; 全球卫理公会高等教育的发展; 全球布道事工; 关注家庭生活的演变和挑战; 社区和国际的趋向及契机; 崇拜与礼仪的切实性以及青年领袖

的培训和领导。

另外, 我们也选出新一届的理事会: 主席为巴西卫理公会 Paulo Lockmann 会督; 总干事为南非卫理公会 Ivan Abrahams 会督。

8月4-8日卫理大会主要的节目是每天早上由美国杜克神学院教授 Joy Moore 博士带领查经会; 四位讲员主讲大会主题: 耶稣——万民的医治者; 另有23个工作坊。

大型布道会万人街头游行

卫理大会另外有3个特别事件: 8月5日晚上在德班境内8个地区举行大型布道大会, 千人蒙恩得救。8月6日颁赐“卫理公会世界和平

奖” (Methodist Peace Award) 给尼日利亚“和平村” (Amaudo - Village of Peace) 的创办人 Rosalind Colwill 姐妹。她专关怀那些精神痴呆, 学习障碍和犯有麻风病的人士, 让他们得到全人的照顾, 长达30年左右。

8月7日星期天下午大会发动万人街头福音游行, 由国际会议中心行走到德班市政局, 目的在于向市民和全国的人宣告耶稣和卫理教会的存在。对我们马来西亚卫理公会的代表来说, 参加这5年一次的世界卫理大会是有启发性 (inspirational), 教育性 (educational) 和联系性的 (fraternal), 使我们获益不浅。

World Methodist Council/Conference 2011

Jesus Christ: For the Healing of the Nations

BY ANTHONY ROW

The World Methodist Council and Conference met in Durban, South Africa from the 1st of August 2011 till 8th August 2011 under the banner of the above theme. The Council met from the 1st till the 3rd and the Conference from the 4th till the 8th. The Council was more a business session whereas the Conference was more a celebration of the larger body of Methodists coming together to worship, study God's Word, listen to renowned speakers, etc.

World Methodist Council (WMC)

The Methodist Church in Malaysia was allowed to send two delegates. Rev. Dr. Su Chii Ann, President of the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference and Mr. Anthony Row were selected by GCEC to represent the MCM at this meeting.

One hundred and thirty years ago the first Methodist Ecumenical Council was held at Wesley's Chapel Methodist Church, City Road in London England. Four hundred leaders from the Methodist/Wesleyan family from around the world gathered and formed what is now The World Methodist Council. Today the Council is composed of seventy-four member churches which have



Delegates of The Methodist Church in Malaysia in World Methodist Council.

ministries in more than 132 countries.

The Methodist/Wesleyan family of forty five million Church members and followers of Jesus Christ are engaged in ministries which reach over seventy five million people helping them to become reconciled to God and to each other through Jesus Christ.

The five-hundred member Council meets every five years. It is a self-governing body

which derives its advisory and administrative authority from the churches which constitute its membership.

This year the WMC elected a new General Secretary in the person of Rev. Ivan Abrahams. He is the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of South Africa. He succeeds Rev. Dr. George Freeman. The Council also, as part of its deliberations, elected other new staff, Officers, members

of the Presidium, Standing Committee Chairpersons and Operational Committee Chairpersons.

During this Council meeting, a significant amount of time was spent in approving a new Constitution to govern the affairs of the Council. As always, when dealing with Constitutions, it was a long drawn and tedious affair. At times tempers flared and at times there was a lot of jovial banter. Everyone wanted to have a say and the Chairperson had a very difficult time trying to balance time constraints and allowing everyone to speak. The whole proceeding reflected many of our Annual/General Conference sessions. It was not a place for the faint hearted. Some took the easy way out and skipped the sessions and went shopping or sight-seeing. The two of us took our task seriously and participated actively in all the sessions and did not give in to the temptation to do otherwise.

The WMC also received reports from various committees on Youth and Young Adults, Education, Social & International Affairs, etc. Most of the reports can be found at the WMC website (www.worldmethodistcouncil.org).



World Methodist Peace Award 2011

Rev. Dr. Su Chii Ann, President of the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference and Ros Colwill whom she opened Amaudo (Village of Peace) in Nigeria.

Our impression of the WMC is that it is very much driven by the Churches in the North as they were the main contributors of finance. As for Asia it is apparent that most have very little knowledge of what

the Methodists are doing or how we are faring. Their only knowledge was of the Korean and Singapore Churches. The rest of us don't seem to exist. We made our observations known at private and open sessions. No one responded to what we had to say, except to comment during tea-breaks that what we stated were valid points. We did have a talk with the new General Secretary and asked that this issue be addressed in future meetings.

World Methodist Conference

The purpose of the Conference is to help realise a wider awareness and support for the ministries in which the Methodist/Wesleyan family is involved, and to help establish unity within the Body of Christ. Its purpose is inspirational, educational and fraternal in nature. The Conference is composed of duly nominated members of the Council, as well as Delegates representing member Churches and Accredited visitors, etc.

The delegation from Malaysia increased from two to nine members with the arrival of Rev Boh Che Suan (President, CAC), Rev Ling Heu Uh (President SPAC), Rev. T. Jeyakumar, (TRAC), Rev. Dr. Ng Geok Hooi, (CAC) Mr. Hii Chi Chong, (SCAC), Mr. Wong Hai Yew (SPAC) and Mr. Wan Fook Chean (CAC).

The Conference sessions were more heart-warming. Led by different choirs everyday, the worship services were very enriching. Prayers, music and hymns from different parts of the world, readings, reflections made it a joy to be in South Africa, in the midst of other Methodists. Bible Studies were led by the Rev. Dr. Joy Moore an ordained Elder from UMC. She provoked us to think outside of the box as her preaching was not confined to the normal manner of doing bible study. She reminded us that we have become too familiar and know by heart, texts/verses without really knowing/understanding the story behind them. She also reminded us that God is not fooled by our slogans/bumper stickers and catch phrases on our t-shirts. We have to live our faith out in community and not just in isolation. Unless the Church really lives and witnesses as "community", the world will never take us or the Lord we profess seriously.

The address by Archbishop Elias Chacour of Nazareth, Galilee was absolutely inspiring. He kept us glued to our seats as he recounted story after story of happenings that were going on in Israel. He lamented that the world at large does not know the truth of happenings and sufferings of Arabs, Arab Christians, Palestinians

and Palestinian Christians in Israel. He invited us not to be just tourists to the Holy land but to come and visit them too and to listen to their "real" stories.

Another high point of the Conference was the awarding of the World Methodist Peace Award 2011 to Ros Colwill and the work of the Amaudo Itumbauzo Methodist Church Nigeria. Her testimony during the presentation was indeed inspiring. She recounted how she used to, pass by people who were mentally ill or having learning difficulties and one day the Lord moved her heart and inspired her to do something about it. In collaboration with the local communities and under the auspices of the Methodist Church Nigeria, she opened Amaudo (Village of Peace). Her work has led to hope for people with mental problems in Nigeria.

On Sunday morning we worshipped in different Methodist Churches in Durban. And in the afternoon it was time for "Jabulani"(joyous abundance)- celebrating jabulani by marching through the streets of Durban culminating with a worship service on the footsteps of the City Council building. It was quite amazing to be part of this and to see the peoples of Durban come out in great numbers to greet all of us.

The Conference closed on the final day with the installation of new officers and Holy Communion.

It was time to leave Durban, South Africa and we left with many lingering memories. The rich "ubuntu"(fellowship), making new friends, a reminder that we are "ubunye"(one), to enjoy and experience "amandla"(power, energy, life force) of the music and dancing of Africa, which brought life to the worship services and every time we congregated. It was also a time to celebrate with the peoples of Africa, a continent ravaged by famines, wars, killings, oppression, and who now are providing new leadership and meaning to Christian life through their "liberated" singing, dancing, praying, preaching, and theology. It was refreshing to be part of such experiences.

We further enjoyed the fellowship amongst ourselves. We bonded, shared about our churches, our Conferences, we looked out for one another and felt responsible to ensure that everything was alright with us. We are grateful to God for giving us this opportunity through the General Conference to be part of all that happened in Durban. In many ways we were blessed and our lives were enriched. [Mr. Anthony Row, member of the Tamil Annual Conference and the Secretary of the General Conference.]

Selangor District Kairos Youth Camp



BY REV. JEREMIAH THOMAS

Greetings in Jesus' Name. We had our district youth camp on 01st – 03rd April, 2011 at Malaysian Bible Seminary, Kundang. The theme was “**Declare His Glory Among The Nations, His Wonders Among All Peoples**” (Psalms 96:3). 124 youths attended this camp and this year the camp was based on practical ministry. We focused at three areas of ministry such as Social Concerns, Missions and Evangelism. The entire program was arranged in line with these three areas of ministry.

On the second day of the camp we had workshops on Social Concerns, Missions and Evangelism. After the lunch, the youths went out for practical ministry. We have divided them into three groups according to the ministries. The details of the ministry are as below:

Group 1 (Social Concerns)

This group visited Anne's Cottage Chil-

dren Home in Country Home, Rawang. There the youths helped them painting the home (rooms), draw some pictures on the wall, had games and did some art and craft work with the children at the home.

Group 2 (Missions)

This group visited an Orang Asli Kampung (Kampung Sungai Kelubi) in Rawang. Here the youths painted the church in the village, clean the village and had played few games with the children.

Group 3 (Evangelism)

This group cleaned Rajawali Apartment in Country Home, Rawang and distributed tracks, and conducted a survey to find out those do not have birth certificate and identity card in Palma Apartment in Country Home, Rawang. Here, some of the youths had the opportunity to pray for the few families lived in the flats.

On the last day of the camp, God called and anointed many youths for His ministry.

The youths had a wonderful and meaningful camp this year. The practical ministry time enabled youths to gain a little experience on going out and doing God's work.

I believe that many servants of the God will be raised from the Selangor District MYF. Here I would like to thank my Almighty God for blessing the Selangor District MYF to have a meaningful and wonderful camp.

I also would like to thank the co-workers or Christ (Selangor District Superintendent, Rev. P. Tevaraji, Selangor District Pastors, Selangor District MYF EXCO & Counsellors, Selangor District Churches, Local MYF, Camp Speakers, Rev. Kunabalan and MYF Rawang) for their support and co-operations. Kindly continue to uphold this youth group in your prayers, so that they will be able to shine for the Lord. [Rev. Jeremiah Thomas is Associate Youth Director, Selangor District, Tamil Annual Conference.]

சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண “கைரோஸ்” வாலிப முகாம்

இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவின் நாமத்தில் வாழ்த்துக்கள். கடந்த 01-03.04.2011-ல் சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண வாலிப முகாம் மலேசிய வேதாகம பள்ளியில் நடைபெற்றது. இம்முகாமின் கருப்பொருள் ஜாதிகளுக்குள் அவருடைய மகிமையையும், சகல ஜனங்களுக்குள்ளும் அவருடைய அதிசயங்களையும் விவரித்துச் சொல்லுங்கள் (சங்கீதம் 96:3). இம்முகாமில் 124 வாலிபர்கள் கலந்துக் கொண்டனர். இவ்வாண்டு வாலிப முகாம் சமூகச் சேவை, அருட்பணி மற்றும் சுவிலேசம் ஊழியங்களில் அடங்கிய நடத்தப்பட்டது.

முகாமின் இரண்டாம் நாளில், வாலிபர்கள் சமூகச் சேவை, அருட்பணி மற்றும் சுவிலேசம் என்ற தலைப்புகளில் நடத்தப்பட்ட பட்டறைகளில் கலந்துக் கொண்டனர். அதன் பிறகு, வாலிபர்கள் மூன்று குழுவாகப் பிரிந்து ஊழிய அனுபவத்திற்காக வெவ்வேறு இடத்திற்குச் சென்றனர். அவ்ஊழியங்களின் விவரங்கள் கீழ்வருமாறு:

குழு 1 (சமூகச் சேவை)

இந்த குழு “கன்றி ஒம்”, ரவாங்கிலுள்ள “என்ஸ் கோட்டேஜ்” என்ற சிறுவர் இல்லத்திற்கு சென்றனர். வாலிபர்கள் அங்குள்ள இல்ல அறைகளுக்கு சாயம் பூசுதல், சுவரில் படங்கள் வரைதல், சிறுவர்களுக்கு விளையாட்டுகள் மற்றும் சிறுவர்களுடன் கைவினைப் பொருட்கள் செய்தல் போன்ற ஊழியங்கள் செய்தனர்.

குழு 2 (அருட்பணி)

இந்த குழு ரவாங்கிலுள்ள சங்கை கெழுபி பூர்விக குடியினர் கிராமத்திற்கு சென்றனர். அங்கு வாலிபர்கள் அங்குள்ள திருச்சபைக்கு சாயம் பூசுதல், கிராமத்தை சுத்தம் செய்தல் மற்றும்



அங்குள்ள சிறுவர்களுக்கு விளையாட்டுகளை நடத்துதல் போன்ற ஊழியங்களைச் செய்தனர்.

குழு 3 (சுவிலேசம்)

இந்தக் குழு “கன்றி ஒம்”, ரவாங்கிலுள்ள இராஜாவலி அருக்குமாயைச் சுத்தம் செய்தல் மற்றும் “பால்மா” அருக்குமாயில் கைபிரதிகள் கொடுத்தல் மற்றும் பிறப்பு பத்திரம் மற்றும் அடையாள அட்டை ஆய்வு செய்தனர். இந்த இரண்டு அருக்குமாயிலுள்ள ஒரு சில குடும்பங்களுக்காக வாலிபர்கள்

ஜெபம் செய்ய வாய்ப்புகள் கிடைத்தது. இந்த முகாமின் இறுதி நாளன்று, அநேக வாலிபர்கள் ஆண்டவருடைய அபிலேகத்தைப் பெற்று, அவர்களுடைய ஊழிய அழைப்பையும் தெரிந்துக்கொண்டனர். இவ்வாண்டின் வாலிப முகாம் ஓர் அதிசயமான மற்றும் ஆசீர்வாதமான முகாமாக காணப்பட்டது. விசுவாசமாக, இரண்டாம் நாளில் நடைபெற்ற பயிற்சி, வாலிபர்களுக்கு ஊழியத்தில் ஈடுபட ஓர் அனுபவமாக காணப்பட்டது.

சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண வாலிப ஐக்கியத்திலிருந்து அநேக தேவனுடைய ஊழியர்கள் எழும்புவார்கள் என்று விசுவாசிக்கின்றேன். இவ்வேளையில் கூட, இந்த ஆண்டில் இப்படிப்பட்ட ஓர் ஆசீர்வாதமான வாலிப முகாமை நடத்திக் கொடுத்த வல்லமையுள்ள தேவனுக்கு கோடான கோடி நன்றி. அதோடு, எல்லா ஒத்துழைப்பு மற்றும் உதவி கரும் கொடுத்த எல்லா உடன் ஊழியர்களுக்கும் (சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண கண்காணிப்பாளர், அருட்திரு. பொ. தேவராஜி, சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண போதகர்கள், சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண வாலிப “எஸ்கோ”-வும் ஆலோசகர்களும், சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண திருச்சபைகள், சிலாங்கூர் மாகாண ஸ்தல திருச்சபை வாலிப ஐக்கியம், முகாம் பேச்சாளர்கள், அருட்திரு. குணபாலன் மற்றும் ரவாங்கிலுள்ள வாலிப ஐக்கியம்) எனது மனமார்ந்த நன்றி. இந்த வாலிபர்கள் அனைவரும் தொடர்ந்து ஆண்டவருக்காக எழுப்பி பிரகாசிக்க, அவர்களுக்காக ஜெபியுங்கள். (அருட்திரு எரேமியா தோமா, உதவி வாலிப இயக்குனர், சிலாங்கூர் மாகாணம், தமிழ் வருடாந்திர மாநாடு.)

Living

And Jesus answered him saying, "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4)

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The Wisdom of Men and the Power of God. Basing ministry on the true foundation of faith

BY JOHN PIPER

"In coming to you brothers and sisters, I come proclaiming to you the testimony of God, not according to excellence of word or of wisdom. For I decided not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and this one crucified. I come to you in weakness and in much fear and trembling. My word and proclamation are not in persuasive words of human wisdom but by the demonstration of the Spirit and power, so that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God!" (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

Under the authority of the Word

W. A. Criswell, the pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, was asked one time by a man who had a business across the street: "Dr. Criswell, I thought you were the pastor of a Baptist church. How come all your people carry prayer books to church on Sunday?" Criswell smiled and

said, "Sir, we are Baptists and those are Bibles, not prayer books."

Baptists the world over have a reputation of urging every man and woman to read the Bible for themselves, and I want to preserve that great tradition. If I could choose a symbolic sound that Bethlehem Baptist Church would come to be known for, you know what it would be? The swish of the pages of 500 Bibles turning simultaneously to the morning and evening texts.

The reason is this: the source of my authority in this pulpit is not my wisdom, nor is it a private revelation granted to me beyond the revelation of Scripture. My words have authority only insofar as they are the repetition, unfolding, and proper application of the words of Scripture. I have authority only when I stand under authority. And our corporate symbol of that truth is the sound of your Bibles opening to the text. My deep conviction about preaching is that a pastor must show people that what he is saying was already said or im-

plied in the Bible. If that cannot be shown, it has no special authority. My heart aches for the pastor who increases his own burden by trying to come up with ideas to preach to his people. As for me, I have nothing of abiding worth to say to you. But God does, and of that word I hope and pray that I never tire of speaking. The life of the church depends on it. Dr. Criswell gives an admonition to pastors which I think is right on the money, and I take it as a great challenge. He says: "When a man goes to church he often hears a preacher in the pulpit rehash everything that he has read in the editorials, the newspapers, and the magazines. On the TV commentaries he hears that same stuff over again, yawns, and goes out and plays golf on Sunday. When a man comes to church, actually what he is saying to you is this, 'Preacher, I know what the TV commentator has to say; I hear him every day. I know what the editorial writer has to say; I read it every day. I know what the magazines have to say; I

read them every week. Preacher, what I want to know is, does God have anything to say? If God has anything to say, tell us what it is.'"

If you try to base saving faith on the "wisdom of men," it ceases to be saving faith.

The aim of Paul's ministry: faith in the power of God

So let's look at 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. Paul had spent about 18 months in Corinth on his first visit there. Now he writes his first letter to warn the believers against basing their faith on the wisdom of men instead of on God's power. One of the ways he does this is to remind them of what his aim was in first coming to them and how he came. First we'll talk about the aim of Paul's (and our) ministry. Verse 5: Paul's aim—his purpose—was that "your faith might not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Paul stated it again and again: "I was given the grace of apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations" (Rom. 1:5). The aim of Paul's life is the aim of mine. And it should be the aim of every pastor, every seminary intern, every Sunday School teacher, and every believer who speaks to another person: to beget and build faith.

But it was possible in Paul's day and I believe it is rampant in our day—in churches and TV and radio—to try to build faith by calling attention to the wrong things. This has a devastating effect on the mission of Christ and the church, as I think we can see by looking more closely at verse 5. Why is it so crucial that our faith not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God? Does it really matter what our faith is based on as long as Christ is the object of our faith? For Paul it made a great difference what a preacher offers as the basis of faith. Why?

The reason can be found in chapter 1: if you try to base saving faith on the "wisdom of men," it ceases to be saving faith, because the content of that faith is regarded as foolishness by the world's wisdom. The genuineness of faith, and with it eternal life, is at stake in the basis we offer for faith. It is possible to offer a basis for faith which ruins faith. There is a kind of foundation which will destroy the superstructure of faith. That's why it is so crucial for

our faith not to rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God—because if it rests in the wisdom of men it is a mirage, a bogus faith.

The wisdom of men

What is it about the wisdom of men which makes it destructive to faith? In verses 1 and 2 there is a contrast between trying to deliver a testimony of God with superior words of wisdom on the one hand, and preaching Jesus Christ as crucified on the other. Would it not be right, then, to say that for Paul, the "wisdom of men" is, at least, a use of the human mind which comes up with ideas contrary to the meaning of Christ's death? To put it another way, if we are following the dictates of merely human wisdom, the claim that the King and Creator of the world was executed like a criminal because we are such horrible sinners will simply be regarded as intolerable foolishness.

First Corinthians 1:18 offers a confirmation of this. What is it about the wisdom of men that makes it so destructive when we try to make it a basis for faith? Verse 18 says: "The word of the Cross is folly (or foolishness) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" The way God made foolish the "wisdom of the world" (which is the same as the "wisdom of men" in 1 Corinthians 2:5) is by planning a way of salvation which would be offensive to the wisdom of the world: namely, salvation through the ignominious execution of a lowly Jewish carpenter's son turned preacher, who happened to be the Son of God. The word of the Cross is foolishness to the wisdom of this world. That's why the wisdom of men is destructive to faith and why Paul was, and we should be, very eager that no one turn to the wisdom of men as the basis of faith but that all turn to the power of God.

So the wisdom of men is destructive to faith because it regards the word of the Cross as foolishness. But why does it? What is there about human wisdom which causes it to regard Christ crucified as folly? Paul gives us the answer, I think, in chapter 1, verses 26 and following: "Consider your call brothers: not many of you were wise according to the flesh (i.e., worldly standards), not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise."

Now drop down to his purpose in verse 29: "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." God has set himself against the wisdom of the world so that no one might boast before God. The clear implication is that at the root and core of what Paul calls the "wisdom of men" is pride. From all these verses, then, I suggest this definition of the "wisdom of the world": it is the use of the human mind to achieve and maintain a ground for boasting before God and man. Now it begins to become really clear why merely human wisdom regards the Cross of Christ as foolishness. The death of Christ on the cross is such a radical indictment of the hideousness of our sinfulness that human wisdom has to mount all its biggest guns to destroy the Cross, lest it lose its ground for boasting.

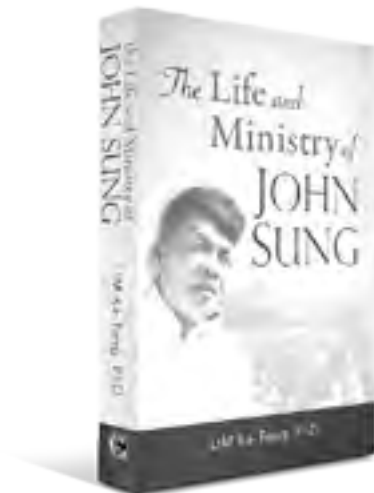
There are two possible responses to the death of Christ for our sin: we can regard it as foolish and so maintain our self-sufficiency and pride, or we can regard it as wisdom and so die with Christ. There is only one way that leads to life. Here's how Paul expresses it in Galatians 6:14: "Far be it from me to boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." If we put our trust in the crucified Christ for salvation, we die to the world, which means we give up every ground for boasting that the world, including our own minds, can offer. But since the "wisdom of men" is devoted 100 percent to maintaining its ground for boasting, it will always reject Christ crucified and attempt to defuse his power by calling him foolish.

So, here is what we've seen so far: First, the goal of Paul's ministry and mine and, I hope, yours is to win and to strengthen faith. But, secondly, it is possible to try to win faith by calling attention to the wrong things and giving a faulty basis, in this case the wisdom of men rather than the power of God. It's destructive to faith if we try to base it on merely human wisdom. The reason that this is so, thirdly, is that the wisdom of the world regards the word of the Cross as foolishness and so leads men away from the Cross. Fourthly, the reason the wisdom of men regards the Cross as folly is that human wisdom is the use of the mind to achieve and maintain pride, but faith in the crucified Christ is death to pride and the giving up of all grounds for boasting, except one: Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord! [To be continued on next issue. On July 13, 1980, John Piper preached the following installation sermon at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis.]

Arts

“The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” (Deut 7:6)

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John Sung: A Central Figure of Twentieth-Century Asian Christianity

The Life and Ministry of John Sung

Author: Lim Ka-Tong, PhD
Publisher: ARMOUR Publishing Pte Ltd

BY WOON TIEN LI

The Life and Ministry of John Sung is a thorough biographical study of John Sung (1901–1944). Sung was “a Chinese scientist turned preacher whose public ministry lasted a mere 12 years.” Yet his impact and influence grew beyond China and has lasted till today.

What shaped John Sung? What contributed to the prominence of his ministry and lasting influence? How did he make such a great impact in so brief a time of ministry?

These are some questions addressed in the book which examines factors that made Sung a central figure of twentieth-century Asian Christianity. Based on archival and library research as well as personal interviews, significant aspects in Sung’s formative years are uncovered, including his

childhood in China and early adult years in America.

Bishop Dr Hwa Yung has praised The Life and Ministry of John Sung for being “the first properly researched work” on John Sung in 50 years. He notes that the book is “especially important and helpful in setting Sung’s work against the background of the Chinese church and society in the first half of the twentieth century, and in tracing his impact to the present day.”

[Lim Ka-Tong is a graduate of Singapore Bible College, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Asbury Theological Seminary. Ka-Tong also lectured at Singapore Bible College from 2000 to 2003. Currently serving as a pastor, he resides in Allen, Texas, USA with his wife, Bee Ling, and three teenage children, Samantha, Jeremy, and Steven.]

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METHODIST RESORTS



The Nest Maxwell Hill

Bukit Larut, Taiping Perak (formerly known as Maxwell Hill) is Malaysia’s oldest hill resort and enjoys cool climate all year-long. Located 1,250m above sea level and 13km from foot of the hills, Bukit Larut receives the highest rainfall in Malaysia, about 198 inches a year. This allows for a lush growth of flora and fauna.

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Methodist Centennial Chefoo Centre

The Chefoo Centre, Cameron Highlands Pahang as it is commonly known was closed for almost 9 months for it to undergo a massive facelift to offer better facilities and comfort to campers and for those in pursuit of retreat in the hills. The fully renovated and refurbished Methodist Centennial Chefoo Centre was opened mid-November 2009.

A popular choice for Christians in Malaysia and Singapore, the 210-bedded resort is located 1,542 meters above sea level and enjoys cool climate with temperature no higher than 20°C and rarely falling below 10°C.

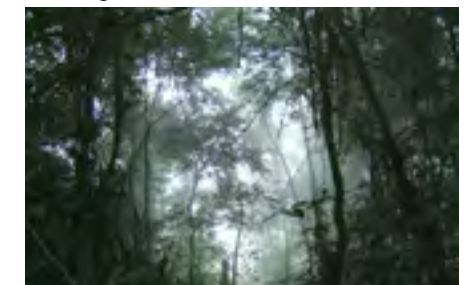
Cameron Highlands is home to Malaysia’s tea, vegetable and flower growing industry. The Chefoo Centre is sited on six acres of land amidst surrounding hills and greenery forest with complete privacy of its own, just outside Brinchang town and 5 km from Tanah Rata.



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