

Pelita METHODIST



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Highlights Of The Year In Pictures

METHODIST PRAYER CONVENTION 2007
PERHIMPUNAN DOA METHODIST 2007

Theme: **"ONE IN CHRIST THROUGH PRAYER"**
"BERSATU DALAM KRISTUS MELALUI DOA"

31ST AUGUST - 2ND SEPTEMBER, 2007
31st OGOS - 2hb SEPTEMBER, 2007

Organized by / Organized by:
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN MALAYSIA



Peace on earth
and goodwill towards all peoples



**Christmas
Greetings**

From Bishop Hwa Yung
& Family and all the staff
at Methodist HQ

Target: To Reach 1000 Youths Each Year SCAC Methodist Youth Centre

The Methodist Youth Centre, Sibuluan, was officially declared opened by Bishop Hwa Yung and President Su Chii Ann on 13 Nov 2007. The Centre is meant for the youths of this generation. The aim is to touch more than 1000 young lives each year, with 30% from church youths and 70% non-church youths.



SCAC Youth Centre

The “Five F” Strategy

The Centre has set up five avenues by which to reach out to the youths – Fun, Food, Feel, Friends and Faith. Through these five ways it is hoped that young people will be channeled to engage in healthy activities in order to build a well-rounded personality.

The Centre cost RM3 million, built on a piece of land donated by a church member and his sons. It consists mainly of an indoor stadium and a storey building. There are many facilities including an indoor basketball court, a gym, classrooms, dancing room, multi-media room, library and others. These facilities are open to the public and anyone from 13-30 years old are welcome to register as members.

President Su in his speech during the dedication service said, “This Centre is only a tool to be used. It will remain only a building unless the youths, parents,



Bishop Hwa Yung at the opening ceremony of the Youth Centre

teachers, churches, organizations and the community are willing to use it. The Centre is not just for the Church, it is here to serve the community.”

Rev. Su continued, “Statistics in Malaysia show 1 in every 10 crimes was committed by young people. God has given the Church the youth ministry and we have to take up this mission to guide our young people with the truth.”

Adapted from Connection
(30 November 2007)

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Editorial

As we look back over the year and the news that Pelita Methodist has covered, some topics have caught our attention. Of course, these are by no means the only things that have happened in the Methodist Church, let alone the most important or significant. It only indicates those matters that have been received by our office or have come to our notice.

No doubt the most obvious event would be the Methodist Prayer Convention 2007. However, before this there have been prayer conferences at Annual Conference level that were part of the focus on prayer. We do not want to leave the MPC behind as another event come and gone, but continue to build on what it began, as the letter from Dr Chan Geok Oon in this issue of Pelita urges.

Another area is in the youth ministry. A youth conference at the GC level was organized, in recognition of the importance of developing our young people in the right direction. This is also seen in the programmes for youths across the Conferences.

Closely related to youths is the contribution our Methodist schools can make. In this regard efforts can be seen to help the Head Teachers and teachers build an education environment that reflects our Christian principles and ethos.

And finally, the involvement in missions has also featured prominently this past year. Missions beyond our borders but equally important missions to peoples within our country have been one of the goals of the Conferences for the year.

We are thankful for God's grace that has enabled these, among many other activities and ministries, to be carried out. And we trust that they will bear fruit in their time.

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• Bishop Hwa Yung

Thinking About Christmas

When asked about his ministry in Luke's Gospel, Jesus twice drew the listeners attention to his particular concern for the poor. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (4:18). Scholars are generally agreed that, in the Bible, God has always demonstrated a special concern for the poor: not just the spiritually poor, but also the materially poor!

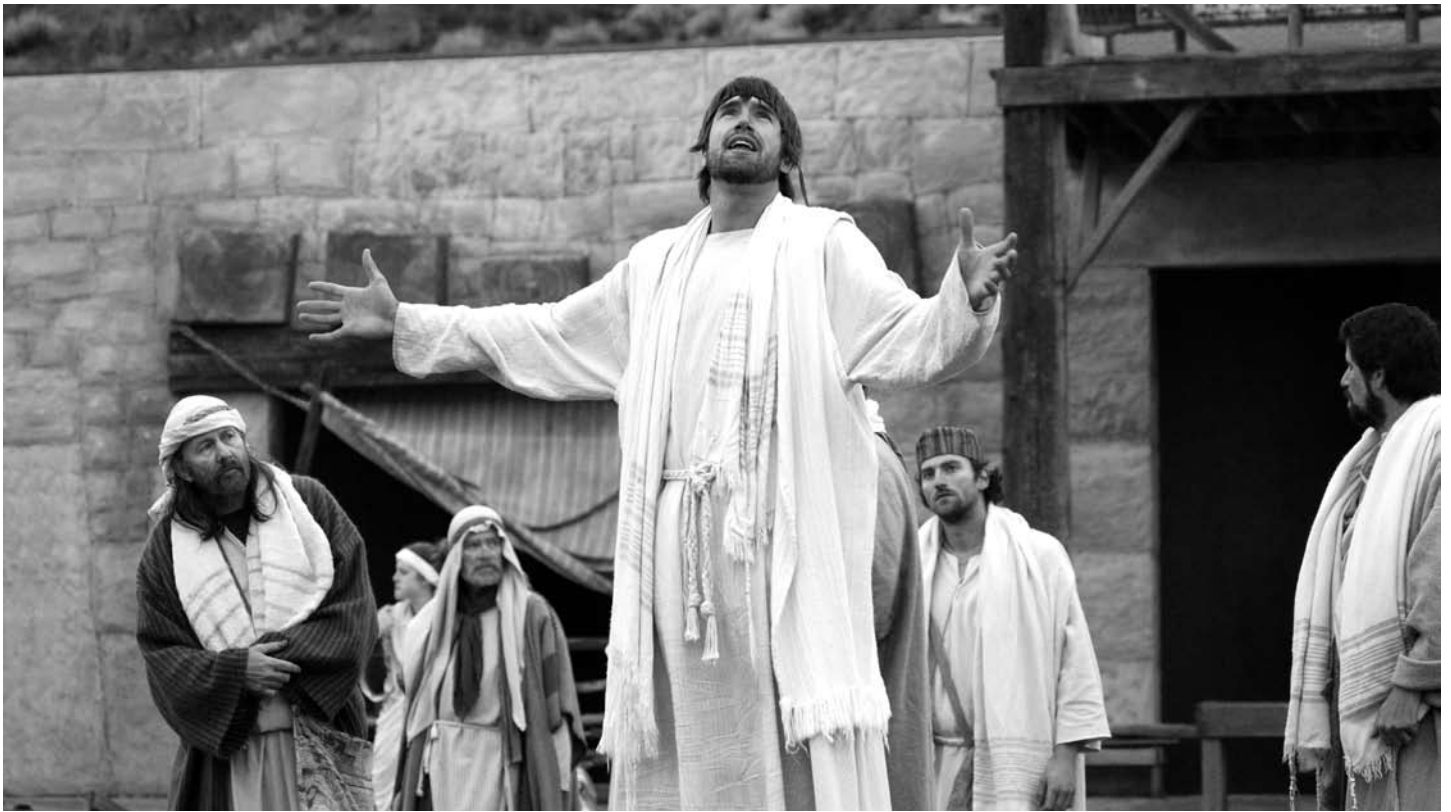


Anyone familiar with current national news will know that the hottest topic of the moment is the Hindraf rally in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, 25 November. Those who have seen foreign TV coverage or accessed YouTube would have also seen the tear gas and water cannon clips as well. Over the past two weeks, there have been numerous comments in the local press from all kinds of sources on the subject—almost all of which are critical and condemnatory. The action has now moved to the courts and it will be some time before this latest episode of Malaysian life is played out.

When all is said and done, we would probably feel that this is certainly not the most happy way for the Christmas season to be ushered in! Nevertheless, perhaps we should pause for a moment and ask ... Does Christmas have anything to do with the Hindraf rally? Maybe it has more than we realize! Hindraf (for 'Hindu Rights Action Force') is the front used by representatives of many poor Indians in Malaysia to voice their concerns over their continual state of material poverty and marginalization,

rooted in the realities of our colonial history. Even those who are tempted to criticize them most severely for their actions and methods will nevertheless admit that they do have a strong case to make about their being victimized and neglected. After all, there is no dispute about the fact that of the three major ethnic groups in West Malaysia, the Indians are the least privileged. (We need of course to remember that the Orang Asli are in an even worse position.)

When asked about his ministry in Luke's Gospel, Jesus twice drew the listeners' attention to his particular concern for the poor. 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news (i.e. the gospel, in Greek) to the poor' (4:18). In his response to John the Baptist's question about whether he was the Messiah, he replied in the same vein. Through his coming, 'the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor' (7:22). Scholars are generally agreed that, in the Bible, God has always demonstrated a special concern for the



poor—not just the spiritually poor, but also the materially poor!

Much of the church in Malaysia is middle-class and comfortable. Few of us know what hunger, poverty and lack of opportunities mean. That makes it easy for us to ignore crucial facts. But what about these? Half of the world lives on less than US\$2 (RM6.60) a day; and more than a billion lives on less than US\$1 (RM3.30) a day. One in seven people in this world go to bed hungry each day. Every 5 seconds one child dies because of lack of food; every 15 seconds, another two die because of preventable diseases; and every 60 seconds, a mother dies due to complications in pregnancy or childbirth. The list can easily go on.

It is against this background that we can begin to understand better Paul's statement about the coming of Jesus into the world. 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich' (2 Cor 8:9). It is true that the riches and poverty that Paul speaks about here is first and foremost spiritual. But the very fact that Paul used this to challenge the Corinthian Christians to give generously to help those afflicted by famine in Jerusalem clearly means that the passage is also directly relevant to those who are materially poor.

We may not have agreed with the methods used by the Hindraf leaders, especially their threat of violence. But the demonstration of their grievances should be a poignant reminder to us that the message of Christmas is also relevant to how we respond to the poor and needy of this world. Christmas is a challenge to us to learn to feel the heartbeat of God in His compassion for the needy, the neglected, the outcast, the hopeless and the lost.

Recently I finally got hold of a book that I have been wanting to read for some time, *In the Likeness of God* (2004), co-authored by the well-known author, Philip Yancey, and the world famous leprosy surgeon, Dr Paul Brand. It was Yancey's description of Paul Brand that caught my eyes. Paul Brand has spent some 20 years of his life working amongst lepers in India—to some, the most dreaded of diseases—while his wife exercised at the same time a parallel ministry among the rural poor in India as an ophthalmologist. Yancey's own life had been deeply touched through his contact with Dr Brand.

Yancey describes Paul Brand in the following words: 'He knew presidents, kings, and celebrities, yet he rarely mentioned them. He talked openly about his failures and always tried to deflect credit for his successes to his associates.

Most impressive to me, the wisest and most brilliant man I have ever met devoted much of his life to some of the lowest people on the planet: members of the Untouchable caste in India afflicted with leprosy.'

Yancey goes on to speak of Dr Brand's impact on himself: 'As much as anyone, he has helped set my course in outlook, spirit, and ideals ... From him I also have gained assurance that the Christian life I had heard in theory can actually work out in practice. It is indeed possible to live in modern society, achieve success without forfeiting humility, serve others sacrificially, and yet emerge with joy and contentment I know no one who better illustrates Jesus' most-quoted statement, that "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."'

A most brilliant surgeon, wasting away his career on some of the poorest and most oppressed people of this world—when he could be making millions elsewhere! That is not the way of this world... Perhaps we should not need to wonder why most people miss out of the real meaning and true joy of Christmas all their lives! But I do wonder about you though? May you, through the grace of God, be blessed with knowing the true joy of Christmas!

Watch & Pray for Breakthroughs in Malaysia

Dear AC Prayer Coordinators, Pastors, Leaders, Brothers and Sisters,

Many people in Malaysia today are feeling a deep sense of insecurity. The escalating immorality and crime rate in every sector and every level of society is unprecedented. A friend said: "When I read the daily news, and see the rapid downward trend in our society I feel a sense of hopelessness and despair".

My friends, we need not have to feel this way if we can focus our eyes on our Almighty God who holds the future of Malaysia. All things are possible with Him. He has the answer. If only we would take 2 Chron.7:14 seriously and act upon it He will heal our land. He is waiting for us to get on our knees, so that He may act in response to our pleas. Our travail will bring to birth God's Kingdom purposes for Malaysia. His good purposes and strategies are waiting to be unfolded as leaders and grassroots believers learn to stand in the gap, to travail, to listen and act upon what He tells us.

Dr Chan was the Prayer Coordinator for the Methodist Prayer Convention 2007.

Below is a letter of exhortation to continue in prayer.

It is my prayer that the Methodist Church will arise and be counted amongst God's co-workers in this crucial moment of our nation's history. This is God's kairos time for Malaysia and for the Church. He is waiting to pour out His blessings upon His Body and the nation. However, the Jubilee breakthroughs must take place first before we can enter into the new season of blessings. Within the Church there have to be breakthroughs in unity, holiness, worship, intercession and spiritual warfare.

Will God find his Church willing in the day of His visitation? May we be like Queen Esther who knew she was "called for such a time as this"! You and I have an important role to play in this critical moment. Ask God for guidance: "Lord is there something more You want me to do to effect change in my community and nation?"

Will all AC churches hold day and night watches once a month; establish prayer groups like the Lighthouse Watchmen groups in different 'tamans' to pray weekly for Malaysia and their respective community? In addition can we ask God for creative ideas to raise youth and children intercessors in all Methodist churches?

May I encourage our members to attend any combined churches prayer meeting for our nation held in our city. Interchurch corporate prayer brings corporate anointing, it helps to forge unity in the Body, and we are able to encourage and learn from one another.

Let us make sacrifices, and play our part well to please our Maker and Saviour. There is hope for Malaysia when God acts as all His people intercede fervently! The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dr Chan Geok Oon

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights' 60th anniversary makes 2008 an opportunity for passionate church advocacy

As 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it will be a "fantastic opportunity" for churches to re-connect with the endeavour of protecting and promoting human dignity, participants at an international ecumenical consultation were told.

"Next year will be a 'kairos' - an appropriate time - for the ecumenical movement to re-connect with the cause of human rights. Churches

can make of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration an opportunity for human rights evangelism, as if were", said Peter Prove, assistant to the general secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights at the Lutheran World Federation.

According to Prove, churches have moral authority, broad reach, capacity for education and ability to build bridges with other faiths and civil society. All that puts them in a unique position to make an impact on international mechanisms for the protection of human rights.



An illustration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations building in New York.

Prove was speaking at a panel on "ecumenical strategy" during the 5-7 December international consultation "Towards protection of human rights and human dignity amidst conflicts". Called by the World Council of Churches, the consultation gathered in Geneva some 40 participants: church leaders, human rights advocates, social and political activists, policy-makers and human rights experts from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Middle East, North America and the Pacific.

Also speaking at the "ecumenical strategy panel", the Rev. Dr Jochen Motte, from the United Evangelical Mission (Germany), proposed a number of recommendations for ecumenical human rights advocacy. Amongst them, the need for ecumenical organizations to give relevant input to the UN Human Rights Council also on those cases when "churches on the ground are not in a position to do it by themselves" was affirmed.

The role of linking UN human rights agencies with human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations was also stressed. Facilitating the presence of the latter at sessions of Geneva-based UN human rights bodies has been one of the features of the ecumenical role in this field that must continue, Motte said.



Newly ordained Deacons with their spouses



President Su putting the stole for Rev Mercy Ling

32nd Session Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference 13-16 November 2007, Sibü

The SCAC Conference was held at Wei Kok Hall, Sibü. The SCAC has adopted the theme “Disciples in Missions” for two years, 2007 and 2008. In this vein President Su Chii Ann, in his speech concentrated on the direction of spiritual formation.

He emphasized on life-long learning by training the pastors, lay preachers, teachers and group leaders, and by providing different levels of training and teaching materials and seminars.

The Conference started a Disciples Academy that runs programmes over two to five days at different levels for the training of church members. Topics on Prayer and Bible, Life-Focus Seminar, Emmaus Walk cater to the diverse aspects of maturity for disciples of Christ. Three year programmes, online correspondence courses, leadership training courses are being promoted at Conference, District and local church level.

There are also longer term training programmes that members are encouraged to take – the Disciple 1, 2 & 3, lay preacher course, Short Term Missions School, and others. Each church was encouraged to start a programme to build mature disciples, beginning with converts right through to maturity, by running programmes in the church itself or making use of programmes offered on the Conference level.

In the area of missions too there have been advance and development. 2008 is Missions Year planned by the Board of Missions. 32 short term missions trips to

15 different countries have been planned. Church members were encouraged to seek the opportunities to experience missions. A special course on missions will be made available for the youth and adult Sunday schools. Each church was also encouraged to raise at least one missionary by 2020.

On the local scene 16 short term missions trips have been planned to reach the indigenous peoples. These will go out to mostly unreached areas. The Chinese churches are encouraged to reach out to the smaller towns and villagers identified by the Board of Evangelism.

Ordination Service

The Conference saw the ordination of eight Elders and six Deacons. This was

conducted by Bishop Hwa Yung. It was a night of reverence and joy as these 14 pastors pledged their lives to God in front of their family, friends and church members.

Rev. Dr. Tie King Tie preached on humility from 1 Peter 5:5. He said, “Humility is a lesson to learn for life. We need to put on humility and subject to one another ... As an Elder, your stole is a symbol of servanthood. God has ordained you to serve the flocks with a humble and submissive heart.”

The Conference also commissioned one new missionary, Ms Emily Ho, to serve in East Asia.

Compiled from reports in Connection
30 November 2007



Rev Dr. Su Chii Ann

32nd Session Sarawak Iban Annual Conference

9-11 November 2007, Sibü



The 32nd Session of the SIAC was held at Iban Methodist Church, Sibü with the theme “Let Us Be One In Christ.”

The delegates, who numbered over 100, gave time to take a retrospective view and thought on the events of the past year. However, the matters that the Conference resolved to give attention to were forward looking. Two of these were among the most important.

To strengthen the financial position of the Conference.

The main focus of the conference agenda was on administration and financial management. A new Board of Finance Chairman, Mr Douglas Lon, a retired government servant (formerly a District Officer) was appointed to head the Board.

To evangelize and expand the work among the Ibans in Johor.

The Iban Methodist Church is to focus on evangelizing the 40,000 Ibans currently residing in Johor. It is one of its main objectives for next year.

According to the agenda, the ministry would try to expand outward in their

evangelizing efforts because it is the mission of the church. “We’ll try to extend our work to Peninsular Malaysia, especially to Johor,”

Three new deacons, Rev Albert Allan, Rev Jatan Badi and Rev Lucius Ak Bangau were ordained at the Conference. Rev Joseph Jaie was ordained as elder. Bishop Dr. Hwa Yung officiated at the ordination service, together with Rev. James Puang, President of SIAC.

Rev Steward Damat
Conference Secretary



Newly ordained Deacons



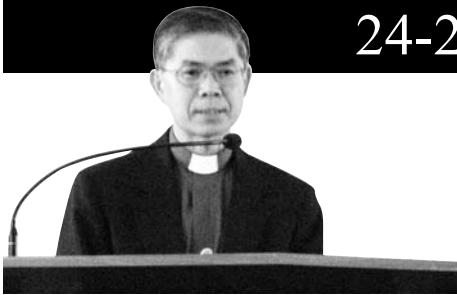
32nd Session SIAC



32nd Session TRAC

32nd Session Trinity Annual Conference

24-27 November 2007, Penang



Bishop Hwa Yung addressing the Conference.

In his address to the Conference, President Ong Hwai Teik gave a snapshot overview of the past year according to the mission and vision framework of TRAC. The past two years its mission statement - Open Heavens, Global Missions – encapsulates the dual need for receiving the abundance of God’s blessings to the church and going out as God’s people into all the world. Its vision is to be a Transforming, Redeeming, Abiding, Community (TRAC) in Christ.

In its on-going task to realize the vision this is focused on five essential areas, namely Leadership Development, Building Community, Missions and Outreach, Discipleship and Spirituality, Family: Children, Youth and Seniors Ministries.

There were many things to be thankful for in the achievements and progress made. There were also newly started projects and on-going plans that need commitment,

diligence and perseverance to see them through. But there were challenges as well that members and the church need to respond to.

Some of these were important issues in our nation. Accordingly, this year’s Conference theme was “The Church and Society”, a topic that raised the awareness of the church’s responsibility, indeed, mission in society.

This topic was addressed by Bishop Hwa Yung in three teaching sessions. They were challenging, inspiring, insightful and thought provoking. As spiritual descendants of Abraham, we are blessed by God but we must not forget that we are also called to be a blessing to the nation. To be a blessing to the nation, we ourselves have to strive for exemplary Christ-like living, demonstrating the highest level of holiness and integrity, ridding ourselves of bitterness and extending forgiveness.

The church is responsible for nation building as she is called to be “salt of the earth” and “light of the world.” Nation building is our responsibility and we have to believe that the gospel is the answer to many of the nation’s problems. We have



Forum on the theme “Church and Society.” From left, Rev Ong Hwai Teik, YB Datuk Tan Kee Kwong, Dr K.J. John (forum speakers), Dr Samuel Ong (Conference Lay Leader)

to do our part to help shape her moral and social vision. However, this cannot happen if the church is unengaged, comfortable, middle class, focused on itself and unwilling to pay the cost of commitment.

As TRAC grows according to its vision it will become the kind of church able to fulfill its mission in society. Therefore, the continuing need remains for prayerful and deep transformations, disciplined and caring small groups, Christ-like authentic pastors, lay leaders and members.

Based on the President’s speech and report from Ms Lily Ch’ng

Merry Christmas! God's Blessings!

The Bell

I KNOW WHO I AM

I am God's child (John 1:12)
I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
I am united with the Lord(1 Cor. 6:17)
I am bought with a price(1 Cor. 6:19-20)
I am a saint (set apart for God). (Eph. 1:1)
I am a personal witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)
I am the salt & light of the earth (Matt.5:13-14)
I am a member of the body of Christ(1 Cor 12:27)
I am free forever from condemnation (Rom. 8: 1-2)
I am a citizen of Heaven. I am significant (Phil.3:20)
I am free from any charge against me (Rom. 8:31-34)
I am a minister of reconciliation for God(2 Cor.5:17-21)
I have access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18)
I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6)
I cannot be separated from the love of God(Rom.8:35- 39)
I am established, anointed, sealed by God (2 Cor.1:21-22)
I am assured all things work together for good (Rom. 8: 28)
I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)
I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph. 3: 12)
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)
I am the branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15: 1-5)
I am God's temple (1 Cor. 3: 16). I am complete in Christ (Col. 2: 10)
I am hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). I have been justified (Romans 5:1)
I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor 6:1). I am God's workmanship(Eph. 2:10)
I am confident that the good works God has begun in me will be perfected (Phil 1: 5)
I have been redeemed and forgiven (Col. 1:14). I have been adopted as God's child(Eph 1:5)

I belong to God

Do you know
who you
are!?

'The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make His face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn His face toward you
and give you peace.'

Numbers 6:24-26

Foster Family Care Of MCKL Students

The story of one couple's ministry of love

When I went to Miss Moey Yoke Lai, CEO of Methodist College Kuala Lumpur, to offer my home and family to host students from out-of-town, I thought of this ministry as a means of blessing others for the blessings I had received. Instead, in God's wonderful ways, I found myself more blest by the encounters with these students and their families than anything else.

I still remember the anxiety and fear that gripped me back in 2002 when my daughter announced to my husband and me that she has chosen to study in Los Angeles, California. Like any parent, I was worried. I imagined the countless scenarios of things that might happen when I released my little girl to that big, big, world out there and so, so far away from home.

Nevertheless, children, as much as we would love to keep them in our nest forever, have to grow up and face this world on their own. With a heavy heart but united in prayer, we committed our daughter into the sole care of our Heavenly Father, trusting that while we, as her mortal parents can only do so much, her Heavenly Father would hold her close in His everlasting care.

And He did.

From the moment she touched down in January 2003 till she left in October 2006, my daughter was blest with wonderful friends and families who took her into their homes, introduced her to their families and culture, and welcomed her into their lives as if she were their own child. They took my daughter out for meals, included her on trips and celebrations with their family and friends, lent her a helping hand whenever she needed it, and opened their homes freely to her whenever she wanted to have a family around.

It was the love that these strangers 7000 miles away showed to my family and me, and the great provision of our Heavenly Father, that inspired me to give something back to the students who come to the big



Left to Right: Mr. & Mrs. Loh with Methodist College students from Sibul, Sarawak - Adrian Kong, Jed Tin, Yung Sing, Tin Yee and Michael Lee

city of Kuala Lumpur and to their families who must feel like I did those years back.

That was how this ministry of hosting outstation students came about for my husband and me. Well, I wouldn't exactly call it a ministry but more like an extension of the love we have received.

Fostering Methodist College Students

Since early this year, Miss Moey has placed seven Methodist College students under my care. Most of them are from Sibul, and all of them lovely bright young people.

Each week, my husband and I would take them to Church and lunch after that. In addition, we also welcome them to join us for dinner and meals whenever they long for home-cooked food. We are also more than happy for them to join our family for any festive celebrations if they happen to not return to their hometowns. In short, we hope to be their family for them.

However, in our experience as a host family for the past year, we find we have been more blest than we are being a blessing to the students.

It is such a joy to see these bright young people turning from being shy and anxious when they first arrive, to being people

who are outgoing, ambitious and full of potential months later.

It is also such a joy and blessing to receive love and gratefulness in return, from the students and their families. It was a very, very rewarding experience for us when we met the students' parents, to see the look of relief and gratefulness in their faces — the very same feelings we felt for everyone who had taken care of my daughter when she was so far away.

This ministry is still relatively unknown. As city dwellers, we often forget about the thousands of out-of-town people who come into our city for jobs, education, for better opportunities. We often don't realize or even notice their need.

My husband and I don't consider this as a host family ministry as much as a ministry of love. What started out as wanting to return the blessing we had received has instead become a circle of love that began with the families in America, to my family here in Kuala Lumpur, and hopefully to the families of our host children, as we are all enveloped in one family in the everlasting arms of our Heavenly Father.

(Mr. and Mrs. Loh Kiat Loon worship at the Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur)

China to open world's largest Bible production plant

Michelle Vu, Christian Today US Correspondent • Tuesday, December 11, 2007

China will open the largest Bible production factory in the world early next year, according to *The Times*.

Amity Printing, China's only authorised Christian publisher, plans to open the new plant on the edge of the eastern city of Nanjing to meet the country's heavy demands for Bibles.

The new factory will be the world's single-biggest producer of Bibles with the capacity to print 1 million Bibles a month – increasing the current output by a third.

"This platform has been built as a blessing to the nation," said New Zealander Peter Dean of the United Bible Societies, according to *The Times*. The United Bible Societies, a Protestant organization, works with Chinese Christian charities to print Bibles under Amity Printing.

"It will print Bibles for China for as long as it takes to do it," added Dean, who has been at Amity in China since 1991.

Last year, Amity printed 3.5 million Bibles and expects the number to rise for 2007. In total, China's Amity Printing has produced over 50 million Bibles since 1986.

Demand for Bibles is increasing in officially-atheist China and some contend the high demand is tied to the country's recent economic boom.

"Rising wealth means that more and more people have been able to meet their material needs, the need for food and clothing," said Li Baiguang, a prominent human rights lawyer and Christian activist.

Li was one of three Chinese house church leaders who were invited for the first time to the White House and met President George W Bush last year.

"Then they are finding that they need to satisfy their spiritual needs, to look for happiness for the soul," he said. "In addition, they are seeing a breakdown in the moral order as money takes over. Thus, more and more people are turning to Christianity."

Authorities in China say the official number of Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, is about 30 million. But the figure does not include house churches or the so-called "underground" churches that function outside of government jurisdiction. The number of Christians worshipping in unregistered churches is as high as 100 million in some estimates.

Many Chinese Christians choose to worship in unregistered churches – an act which is illegal – because they argue that Jesus Christ, and not the government, is the head of the church.

Registered churches are under close supervision by the communist government, which regularly intervenes in church affairs such as appointing bishops not approved by the Vatican to head registered Roman Catholic churches.

The Chinese Government also strictly regulates the sales and distribution of Bibles in China. Bibles are sold through certain vendors managed by the official church. Mainstream Chinese bookshops are not allowed to carry Bibles.

Chinese Christians have been arrested and imprisoned for printing Bibles and religious literature. Prominent house church pastor Cai Zhuohua was released in September after serving a three-year prison sentence for printing religious materials.

Authorities confiscated more than 200,000 copies of Christian literatures, including Bibles, from his house in

2004. The Chinese court also gave a prison sentence to his wife and his brother for helping Cai print the Christian materials.

Cai was reportedly ordered by government officials upon his release to not speak about his ordeal, according to China Aid Association (CAA), a Chinese Christian rights group.

While Cai was freed in September, another house church leader, Zhou Heng, was arrested in the same month in the southwest autonomous region of Xinjiang for receiving three tons of Bibles, which were printed in another Chinese city, according to CAA.

Overseas evangelical groups have often pointed out that access to religious material remains difficult in China despite the Chinese Government's claim that it prints a sufficient number of Bibles. Government regulated Bibles are distributed only at a limited number of authorised bookstores and state-owned churches, making it difficult for rural Christians to attain a copy.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan body responsible for monitoring religious freedom in the world, recommended that China be included in the list of Countries of Particular Concern (CPC). The list, compiled by the US Secretary of State, identifies the world's worst religious freedom violators.

By Christian Today
www.christiantoday.com.my

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47 Graduates

from Methodist Theological School, Sibu

Methodist Theological School (MTS), Sibü, held its 9th graduation service on 27 Oct 2007 at Hwai Ang Church. A total of 47 students graduated this year – a new record for MTS. The graduating class included 4 Theological extension education students, 1 diploma of Christian Studies, 4 Iban students with the Licentiate of Theology, 20 Bachelor of Theology, 3 Bachelor of Divinity, 3 Master of Divinity and 12 Master of Ministry.

Rev. Ling Heu Uh, President of Sabah Provisional Annual Conference, was invited to give the address. Among those present were Rev. Dr. Su Chii Ann, President of Sarawak Chinese Annual

Conference, John Ling, Chairman of the MTS Board, board members, lay leaders, pastors, church members, and family members and friends who brought gifts and flowers to celebrate the happy occasion.

Rev Ling addressed the graduands with a passage from 2 Cor. 3:1-3 – **Be the Letter of Christ**. “Christians are like letters of recommendation. People read the letter and understand what Christianity is all about. Our life should be a living testimony.” How are we to be a “letter of Christ”? Rev. Ling pointed out five things.

- Living our theology – in every little thing in life, in the small things, let our life be readable.

“Graduation is a beginning for me, a start of another chapter of my life.” Ting Ee Ling, MTS fresh graduate.

“I treasure everyday because tomorrow might not come. I am eager to serve. I want to share the gospel to people who have not heard Christ’s name,” Wong Siew Ung, a former timber camp manager.

- Be an example of the message – let our lives be walking sermons.
- Maintain proper relationship – a close walk with God is our number one priority.
- Leave room for God – be open to God and let him come into our lives.
- Be a blessing to others – to those around us especially our non-Christian friends, family and relatives.

Winnie
From Connection
15 November 2007



The graduates with lecturers and board members of MTS.



MTS Chaplain Rev. Tiong Chiu Ing praying for all the graduates.

Seminari Theoloji Malaysia

STM Graduation 2007 was celebrated with much rejoicing, especially by the graduands and their family and friends. The Graduation Service was preceded by a dinner the night before where the atmosphere was relaxed and food, fun and fellowship was in abundance. Bishop Philip Lok, bishop of the Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore, gave the graduation address entitled “Forging Ahead”. It is a reminder that the journey is not over and there is a need to strive forward, looking to Christ always.

Bishop Philip Lok



Getting ready for the procession.



Faculty members of STM



Graduates from the Methodist Church



A traditional item by the students

CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA (PERSEKUTUAN KRISTIAN MALAYSIA)

PRESS STATEMENT

Statement for Christian Federation of Malaysia on Extremist/insensitive Remarks in Parliament about Christian Mission Schools' Crosses and Religious Images

The Christian Federation of Malaysia is appreciative of the recognition of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia of the tradition to have crosses and religious images in mission schools and of the affirmation that there is no reason to remove them. These crosses and religious images are part of the ethos and culture of mission schools which the Ministry of Education, Malaysia has repeatedly assured us will remain.

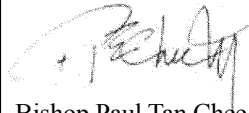
Our mission schools have been founded with so much love and sacrifice consistent with Christian values and principles with a view to providing quality education to all students, regardless of race, religion and culture. The traditions and practices of the mission schools reflect the first principle of our national ideology, the Rukunegara, of "belief in God". Therefore the Christian Federation of Malaysia calls upon the

leadership of this beloved country of ours and the people of Malaysia to continue to support and encourage our mission schools in their thus far excellent contribution towards nation building through the provision of quality and caring education.

The insensitive, unsubstantiated and baseless comments and accusations of 2 honourable members of the August Dewan Rakyat of Malaysia in relation to the management and operation of the mission schools are most appalling and hurtful and do nothing except cause misunderstanding and erosion of trust and respect among our ethnic and religious groups in this beloved country of ours. The reason for having brought up the comments and accusations "based on grouses from the ground" is not acceptable as in the first place, there is no compulsion for any one to study in a mission school if one does not

wish to. Moreover, one would expect that before any accusation or comment is made, one should verify the facts, especially with the management of the mission schools.

The Christian Federation of Malaysia applauds our mission schools for their continuing contribution to the betterment of our students and teachers and reminds them of the important role they play in producing responsible citizens who will love their country and contribute to nation building and unity.



Bishop Paul Tan Chee Ing, SJ
Chairman, Executive Committee
of Christian Federation of Malaysia
7 December 2007



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CCM Temporary Relocation

CCM Office will be officially operating from its temporary premises with effect from **2nd January 2008**

**10 Jalan 11/9
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The moving process will start from mid-December and will maintain the same contact numbers.

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