



The Minister of Youth and Sports Visits the Methodist HQ



On 20 September the Minister of Youth and Sports, YB Dato' Seri Azalina Dato' Othman Said paid a visit to the Methodist HQ. This was part of her programme to dialogue with youth organizations, including the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade at a later date.

Bishop Hwa Yung and the General Conference Youth Council (GCYC) members were at hand to welcome them. Bishop Hwa Yung welcomed the 15-20 members of top senior officers from the Ministry who accompanied Dato' Seri Azalina, and offered a prayer for the country.

Rev. Chan Thiam Hee, Chairman of the GCYC, expressed on behalf of the Council members their delight and thanks for the time and effort taken to visit the organization. He welcomed

the opportunity for dialogue with the Ministry. A short slide presentation was given on the structure and programmes of the youth in the Methodist Church.

YB Dato' Seri Azalina shared about her desire to see a greater synergy and interaction with the various youth organizations in the country, hence her visits to them. She voiced her concern at the lack of studies and research on youths in the country, for example, the impact of globalization and Information & Computer Technology (ICT) on them.

Dato' Seri Azalina also encouraged our youths to participate more in the programmes of the Ministry, and expressed her willingness to attend Methodist youth events if invited. In this way, besides just providing funding, a greater synergy

can be forged between the goals of the Ministry and the Methodist youth programmes, for example, environmental issues, national unity & integration, and the like.

It was an encouragement to see the Minister of Youth take an interest in the youth organizations of the Methodist Church. This can be one avenue through which Methodist youths can contribute to the wider task of nation building.



Dato' Seri Azalina making a point.



Rev. Harold Good, recipient of the 2007 World Methodist Peace Award

**WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL
CHAIRPERSON DELIVERS
INTERNATIONAL LECTURES**

Dr. John Barrett, Chairperson of the World Methodist Council, delivered the International Lecture Series at Martin Methodist College in Pulaski, Tennessee, USA October 15-16. In a series of lectures presented over the two day period, Dr. Barrett spoke about Education, Ecumenism and Evangelism in World Methodism today, and addressed students, faculty and administration on the differences in Eastern and Western models of Education. Dr. Barrett is the Principal of the International Chinese Anglo School in Singapore, an endeavor launched by the Methodist Church of Singapore and the Singapore Government. During the event at Martin Methodist College, Dr Barrett and Dr. George Freeman, General Secretary of the World Methodist Council, were presented the College's Presidential Medallion by President Ted Brown in recognition of the role of the World Methodist Council in the global Methodist/Wesleyan family today.



**DIALOGUE WITH ROMAN
CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES**

The ninth series of the International Dialogue Commission between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church held its first meeting October 26 - November 2 at the Bose Monastery in Bose, Italy. The Commission meets during each quinquennium and will report to the 2011 World Methodist Council when it meets in Durban, South Africa. Dr. Geoffrey Wainwright Co-Chairs the International Commission on behalf of the World Methodist Council. Bishop Michael Putney of Townsville, Australia, is the Catholic Co-Chair.

**PRAYERS FOR PEACE
- FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

The Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council is asking member churches to pray for peace on the first Sunday in Advent, December 2. Each of the seventy-five member Churches of the Council is asked to include prayers for peace in their worship on December 2. Advent marks the beginning of the Christian year, and the marks the season of waiting for the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Resources to help congregations pray for peace are available at the Division of World Methodist Evangelism website: worldmethodist.org.

Communication has been sent on behalf of the World Methodist Council to

Bishop Zothan Mawia of the Methodist Church of Lower Myanmar, and President C. Kapa of the Methodist Church of Upper Myanmar, reminding them of the prayers of the World Methodist Council family for their country and for the witness of their Church during the current political crisis that exists there. Member Churches are asked to continue to hold the country of Myanmar and Churches and their leadership in prayer as a peaceful resolution is sought to the conflicts that have arisen.

**WORLD METHODIST PEACE
AWARD**

The 2007 World Methodist Peace Award will be presented to Rev. Harold Good of the Methodist Church in Ireland in a ceremony at the Knock Methodist Church in Belfast, Ireland on Saturday, December 8, 2007. Rev. Good is being honored with the highest award from the World Methodist Council for his role in working for stability and peace in his Northern Ireland. The award is given by the World Methodist Council to individuals or groups who have made significant contributions to peace, justice and reconciliation.

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November

6-8	Tue-Thu	Sengoi Mission Conference
9-11	Fri-Sun	32nd Session SIAC
13-16	Tue-Fri	32nd Session SCAC
16-17	Fri-Sat	SPAC-MW 2nd Session Conference
17-20	Sat-Tue	32nd Session TAC
21-23	Wed-Fri	32nd Session CAC
24-27	Sat-Tue	32nd Session TRAC
27-28	Tue-Wed	SCAC Disciple Leaders Training Seminar
30-1/12	Fri-Sat	4th Session SPAC

December

5-9	Wed-Sun	TRAC Youth Leadership Development Programme
10-12	Mon-Wed	SCAC Marriage Enrichment Retreat No.16

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• Bishop Hwa Yung

A Blessing to the Nations

This is a slightly modified version of the sermon preached at the Combined Sunday Service of the Methodist Prayer Convention on 2 September 2007.

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I welcome all of you to this 'Thanksgiving and Celebration of the Methodist Church.' The theme of this morning's message is 'A Blessing to the Nations.' It is based on God's call of Abraham in Gen 12, a passage which has great relevance to us today living in Malaysia.

The Call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)

God's call to Abraham began with, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.' (12:1) Abraham had moved with his family from Ur to Haran. It was in Haran that God called him to leave his home and his people, to go to an unknown land.

For those of us who are not bumiputras, there is a direct relevance here. Our forefathers left behind their home countries and came to an unknown land. But whether we are bumiputras or not, there is a more general application that applies to all of us. We are called to follow God into a future which none of us can foretell. We are called to leave behind our comfort zones, what gives us a sense of security, to follow God!

Then in vv. 2 & 3, God promises to bless Abraham and his family, even as they follow Him into an unknown future. 'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

Here God promised to bless all the peoples of the earth through Abraham. The word used for nation in v.2 is *goy*, and that used for family in v.3 is *mispa*. These words are not exact and often used interchangeably. They represent groups distinguished by race and language. Different translations actually use different words.

The main point that is made here is that, through Abraham and his descendants, all the peoples and nations of different racial and language groups will be blessed. In fact, the whole world will be blessed through Abraham! This promise is repeated or referred to repeatedly in the Bible: Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Ps 72:17; Acts 3:25b; and Gal 3:8.

The NT shows how God's promise to Abraham was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. In Acts 3:25b & 26, Peter argues that God will bless the peoples of the world through Christ, the descendent of Abraham. Through him salvation will come to all the peoples of the world. This understanding of the Bible is correct. But what we also need to note is that this was not the only way in which God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled.

The promise was fulfilled in part in the book of Genesis itself. This is what I would like to concentrate on in this sermon.

Abraham and His Descendants: A Blessing to the Nations in Their Time

When we read Genesis, there are so many

interesting stories there that we fail to see one of the main points that God is trying to teach us. Genesis showed clearly how Abraham and his descendants became a blessing to the peoples and nations around them. We see this again and again in the stories about Abraham and his descendants.

To begin with, this was true of Abraham. In Gen 13, we find Abraham and his nephew, Lot, settling in Canaan. But because both were rich and had plenty of animals they decided that it was better to live apart from each other so that there will be enough water and pasture for the flocks. The important thing to note is that Abraham did not squabble with his nephew, and in fact gave him the right to choose. Unlike many in the world, he was not kiasu! Lot chose the plains where there was plenty of water and pasture. Abraham stuck to the hill country which was rugged and unattractive. But one result was that Lot got badly corrupted morally because he lived near Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, because he lived away from these sinful places, was actually protected spiritually!

The next thing we read in Gen 14 is that Lot, together with the five kings amongst whom he lived, was captured by their enemies. Abraham, at the risk of his own life, went after the attackers and defeated them. He rescued Lot's friends and the five kings, and got all their possessions back as well. God had begun to use Abraham to be a blessing to the nations!

Further, when the five kings offered to give



Abraham all the booty that he had recovered, Abraham's answer was classic! 'I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a shred or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, "I made Abram rich."' (14:22f.) And sure enough! What we find is that Abraham was richly blessed as God promised. (See e.g. Gen 24:35.) To sum up, even as Abraham obeyed God, God's promises to bless him and to bless others through him had begun to be fulfilled!

Next comes the story of Abraham's son, Isaac. Gen 26 tells us of the encounter between Isaac and Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. In v.16 we read that Isaac had grown wealthy and Abimelech was threatened by him. So he asked Isaac to go away! 'Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.' Isaac chose the way of peace. He moved away! He gave them space. Then in vv.19-22 Isaac's people dug some wells. But the local people wanted those wells also. Again, Isaac would not squabble and moved away instead. Note that by moving away and yielding the water-holes and wells to others, once again he blessed Abimelech and his people, this time with space and water!

But the interesting thing is that in 26:26-31, after chasing Isaac away, Abimelech one day suddenly turns up at Isaac's door. Isaac asked: 'Why have you come?' Abimelech's answer is illuminating: 'We saw clearly that the Lord was with you; so we said, "There ought to be a sworn agreement between us"—between us

and you ...so that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the Lord.' (26:28 & 29.) The point is that even though Isaac was not welcomed by Abimelech, nevertheless they could see that God was with Isaac. And Abimelech could see that if they live at peace with Isaac, he and his people will be blessed as well! But there is much more to come.

We come now to Abraham's grandson, Jacob. Now Jacob in his younger days was a rascal and a cheat. If there was anyone who did not deserve God's blessings, it was Jacob. Yet, God would still bless him and use him as a blessing! Thus, in spite of all the wrong that he did, when he finally left Laban, he returned to Canaan with much wealth and a big family—both signs of God's blessings in ancient culture.

But the most important thing for our purpose is found in Gen 30:26-27. Jacob had served his uncle for 14 years. He was pretty fed up with this man who had cheated and exploited him repeatedly. So he asked Laban to let him return home. But Laban's reply in v.27 is most instructive. 'I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you!' What an amazing statement. 'Divination' is the practice of going to look for mediums and 'bomohs' to communicate with demonic spirits. What Laban essentially said was that the devil told him that God was blessing him because of Jacob!

But it is in the story of Joseph that we find the

most powerful fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis. The story is well-known to all our Sunday School children. The eleventh of twelve brothers, Joseph was cruelly sold as a slave in Egypt. But even as a slave, he was a blessing to his master, Potiphar, who had made him in charge of everything. 'From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.' (Gen 39:5&6.) Yet, as the story goes, one injustice followed upon another. He refused to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife despite her repeated advances, and she spitefully accused him falsely to get back at him. He was thrown into jail. But even there he was a blessing. 'The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.' (39:23.)

Then comes the story of Pharaoh's cupbearer. Joseph correctly interpreted his dream and the cupbearer was restored to his post. But the cupbearer forgot about Joseph—and he languished in the prison for another two long years! He could have become bitter but he did not. He waited for God's timing! Finally God intervenes. Joseph is made the equivalent of the Minister of Agriculture or, more probably, what the Egyptians in those days officially called the 'Overseer of the Granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt'! What was the result? Joseph became a blessing to Egypt and to all the surrounding nations:



‘And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.’ (Gen 41:57.)

We are Called to be a Blessing to the Nation (s)

The story of Abraham’s call and God’s promises to bless him and to use him to bless the nations contains powerful lessons for us today.

Lesson 1 - We are the spiritual descendants of Abraham (cf. Rom 9-11; esp. 9:8). We are called to be a blessing to the peoples and nations of this world: Abraham was called out of his home country. God promised to bless him and that, through him, all the nations or peoples of the world will be blessed. The final fulfillment of this promise is found in Christ, through whom salvation comes to all peoples. But the promise had already begun to be fulfilled even in the time of Abraham and his family!

In a similar manner, because we are Abraham’s spiritual children and belong to Abraham’s family, we are also called to be a blessing to the peoples and nations of this

world. Specifically, we are called to be a blessing to our nation, and the peoples of this nation! This is what being ‘salt of the earth’ and ‘light of the world’ means.

Lesson 2 - Unwelcomed and marginalized;

Yet a blessing to others: Abraham and his family were not always welcomed. The Philistines in fact had told both him and Isaac to move away. Again, Jacob was bullied by his uncle; and Joseph was enslaved and thrown into prison. They were treated unjustly and marginalized! Yet in each of their own situations, they became a blessing to those that did not welcome them or who had treated them badly and unjustly.

There is a powerful lesson for Christians living in this country. Like Abraham and Isaac, some of us are sometimes reminded that we are ‘pendatangs’ and are not welcomed by some people. Or, some of us may also feel like Jacob and Joseph—though bumiputras, we sometimes feel that we do not get what is fairly due to us. Yet, in each of their respective situations, Abraham and his descendents became a source of blessing to those among whom they lived. And this was the case even when, e.g., Laban disliked Jacob intensely and yet had to acknowledge that God had blessed him because Jacob was with him!

The challenge to us is to live in such a manner that even those who may not welcome us or who wish to marginalize us will still want us to be with them, for they know that because God is with us, they too will be blessed because of us! How do we do this?

On the first night we spoke about issues like corruption and injustice in our nation. Thus, for example, if a Christian politician makes an effective stand against such social evils and demonstrate a real care for the poor, then even those who are not Christians will want to vote for him or her! Or, if the whole church takes a stand against social evils and demonstrate a real care for the poor, then even those who are not Christians will respect the church and honour Christ! We see this in the life of Mother Teresa of India. At her death, India mourned—not just Christians, but also Hindus, Muslims, and others.

Again, many Christians are in the professions and business world. Some

amongst us are even key leaders and captains of industries. If we show ourselves to be the best professionals and most able leaders in the business world, then when people or companies or even the country is in need, they will turn to us. Without mentioning names, we know this is already happening before our eyes! For example, because of his proven record and integrity, one Christian was asked to take over a major GLC which was losing hundreds of millions a year. And in two years or so, he appears to have successfully turned the company around!

Lesson 3 - Our security and our future are in God’s hands:

Abraham and his children knew that God had promised to bless them and made them a blessing. Thus they also knew that they did not need to squabble or fight for their rights or for their own advantage. For example, Abraham allowed Lot to choose where he wished to settle, although as the uncle he had the right to choose first! Or, when the local people asked them to go, Abraham and Isaac just moved away and gave up the wells they had dug—even though it must have been costly to them since water was their life-line in a semi-desert land! Yet, as Genesis reminds us, God blessed them and their families abundantly.

This should address the fears of many of our hearts and challenge us as Christians to be faithful to God’s call. Many of us are concerned about our future and our children’s future. But the story of Abraham reminds us that God does not fail in His promises to us! Our security is in God. Remember what Abraham said in Gen 14:22f that he was depending on God alone to provide for his material welfare!

Lesson 4 - Holiness and Integrity:

We can learn something too about holy living and integrity from the lives of Abraham and his family. Each of them also had to grow in these areas. But perhaps it is Joseph who has most to teach us. He refused to yield to temptation to sleep with Potiphar’s wife, even at the risk of imprisonment and, perhaps, of his own life. He proved his integrity even while a slave in his master’s house, and when in prison. He did not become bitter towards his brothers for the enslavement. Neither was he bitter to the cupbearer who forgot him and left him languishing in prison for two extra years! Thus when a crucial

national need arose, Pharaoh turned to him because both his ability and integrity had proven rock solid!

Some of us may say that integrity no longer works in our world today. But that is not true. Let me give an example. A few months ago my son passed me a book on a man called Marvin Bower. Bower took a small engineering firm in the US and slowly, through discipline and hard work, built it into a world-class management consultancy firm. My son then added the comment that, although the book was written for the secular business world, with little or no interest in religious things, the author had clearly implied that at the heart of Marvin Bower's work and success is his commitment to his values as a Christian. Integrity shone through everywhere!

For those who do not recognize the name of Marvin Bower, the firm he built up is McKinsey, which is often rated as the top management consultancy firm in the world today. What emerges from the book is that Bower, by sticking to his Christian values and applying them to the company, made it the best in the world! (See Elizabeth H Edersheim, *McKinsey's Marvin Bower*, [John Wiley, 2004].)

Joseph was able to be a blessing because of holiness and personal integrity in his personal and professional life. If the Christian community is to be blessing, we will have to live in exactly the same way. The tragedy is that Christians are not always well known for integrity in personal lives, and in our work and businesses. Today the church is not known to be what non-Christians used to call a place of 'holy-holy' people! We have become too much like the world. Moreover, there are unfortunately too many examples of Christians who are dishonest and involved in corruptions of various kinds.

If the church is to be a blessing to our nation, then repentance is needed here! Otherwise, we will end up like what Jesus described: 'But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.' (Mat 5:13).

Lesson 5 - Obedience:

This brings us to the last lesson, obedience. Abraham became a blessing to the nations

because he was willing to obey God all the way. Heb 11:8-12 speaks of him obeying God to leave home for an unknown land, and trusted God for a child even when both he and Sarah were beyond the age of having children. The ultimate test of obedience came when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac, as an offering to God! (Gen 22:2).

What about us? How many of us are willing to obey God to the extent that we are willing to give our sons and daughters for God? If the church is to be a real blessing to the nation, we must not just pray. But we must ask God specifically to raise up a new generation of people, especially among the youth, who are willing to give their lives for Christ. Unfortunately, many young people today are mainly interested in making money and achieving worldly success as their goals in their careers and lives.

We must plead with God to raise up a new generation who are prepared to die to self and willing to place God first in their lives and careers. Some will be pastors, theologians and missionaries. Others will go into various professional fields, the

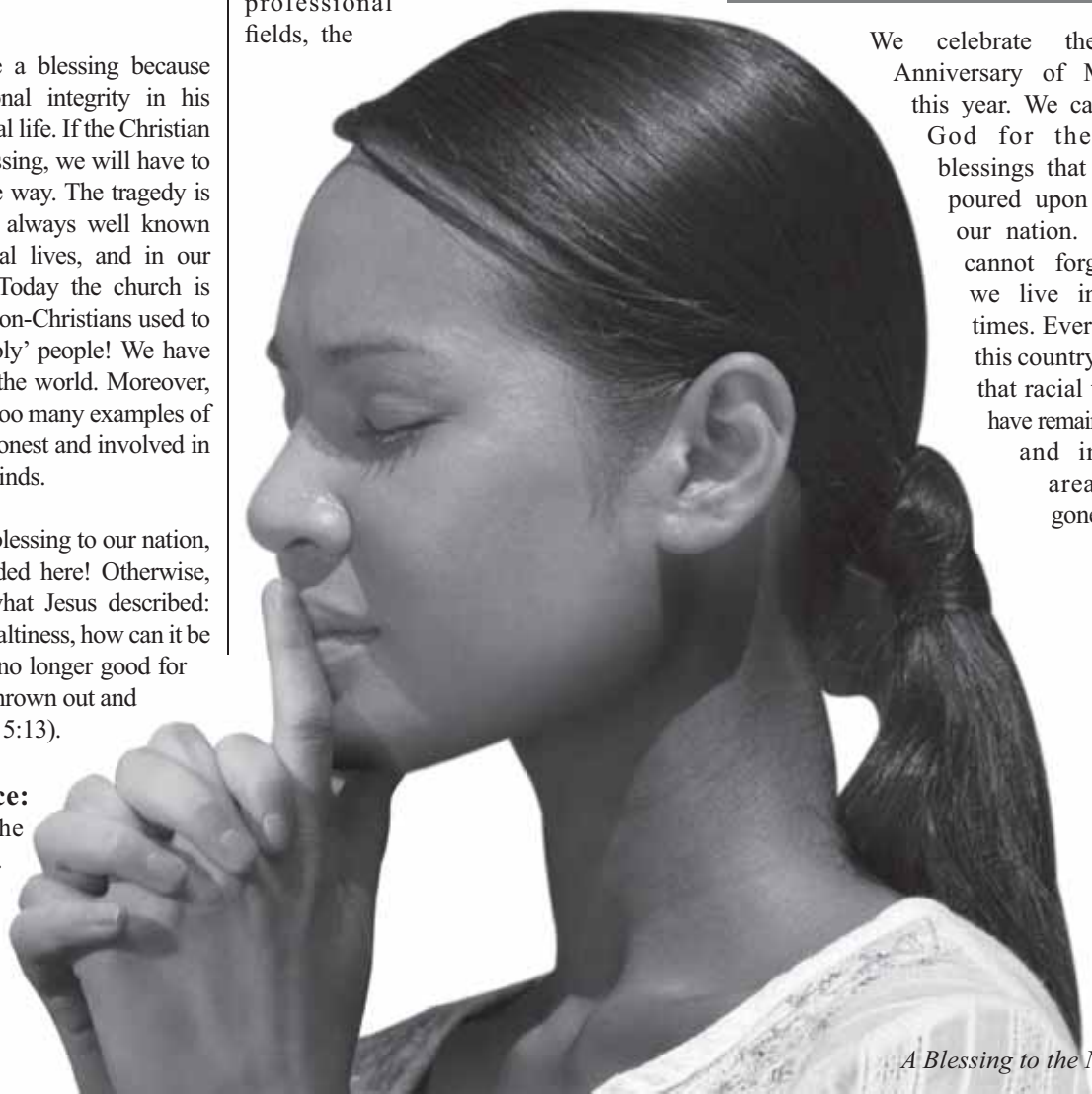
marketplace and business world, schools and universities, the media and mass communications, etc. There they will be salt and light in the world. Wherever they are, they will make obedience to God their first priority. Through their faithfulness and witness, they will impact the nation for Christ. By so doing, they become a real blessing to the nation!

But where is such a generation of young people to come from? It will have to come from homes where Christian parents daily teach and pray for them so that they will learn from young to live for Christ! The greatest missionary that served in China in the 19th century was Dr Hudson Taylor. Many years after he had left for the mission field, his parents revealed to him that soon after his conception and even before he was born, they had prayed: 'Dear God, if you should give us a son, grant that he may work for you in China!' Do we wonder why Hudson Taylor's missionary career had such an impact?

Abraham willingly gave his son when God asked. What about you and me?

Will the Malaysian Church Fulfill Her Calling to be a Blessing?

We celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Merdeka this year. We can thank God for the many blessings that He has poured upon us and our nation. But we cannot forget that we live in tough times. Every one in this country can see that racial tensions have remained high, and in some areas have gone worse.



To this can be added the growing inter-religious tensions, especially between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Corruption appears to have gone up dramatically. For example, the comments by Tun Haniff, a former IGP, on alleged corruption in the Police and ACA are well-known. There have been growing allegations of corruption and inefficiency in the judiciary, and we are told that there is a backlog of hundreds of thousands of unresolved cases in the courts today. On the Transparency International Index on corruption, we appear to have slowly declined over the last few years relative to others. Crime rates have gone up, and drug addiction has reached dangerous proportions with an estimate of 1.2 million addicts today.

Is there a future for our country? Many have already answered with a clear 'No' and have packed their bags and left. But the question that we must all answer is: Are we Abraham's offspring? If we are, do we have a part in God's promise to Abraham, 'I will bless you and ... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you'?

I have over the last few years come to one sad conclusion. It appears that no political party, no NGO, no institution, no group of citizens have the spiritual, moral and numerical strength to bring about the needed moral, social and political reforms to save this country from slipping into self-destruction. No doubt many groups and individuals have done much good in many ways in Malaysia. But all these good efforts added up do not seem to be able to reverse certain overall downhill trends such as the increasing breakdown of family and community life, the gradual tearing apart of the social fabric of our nation delicately built upon the multi-ethnic and multi-religious identities of our people, the rampant growth of corruption and crime, and the persistent devotion to mediocrity in national achievements despite all the hype over 'Malaysia boleh'!

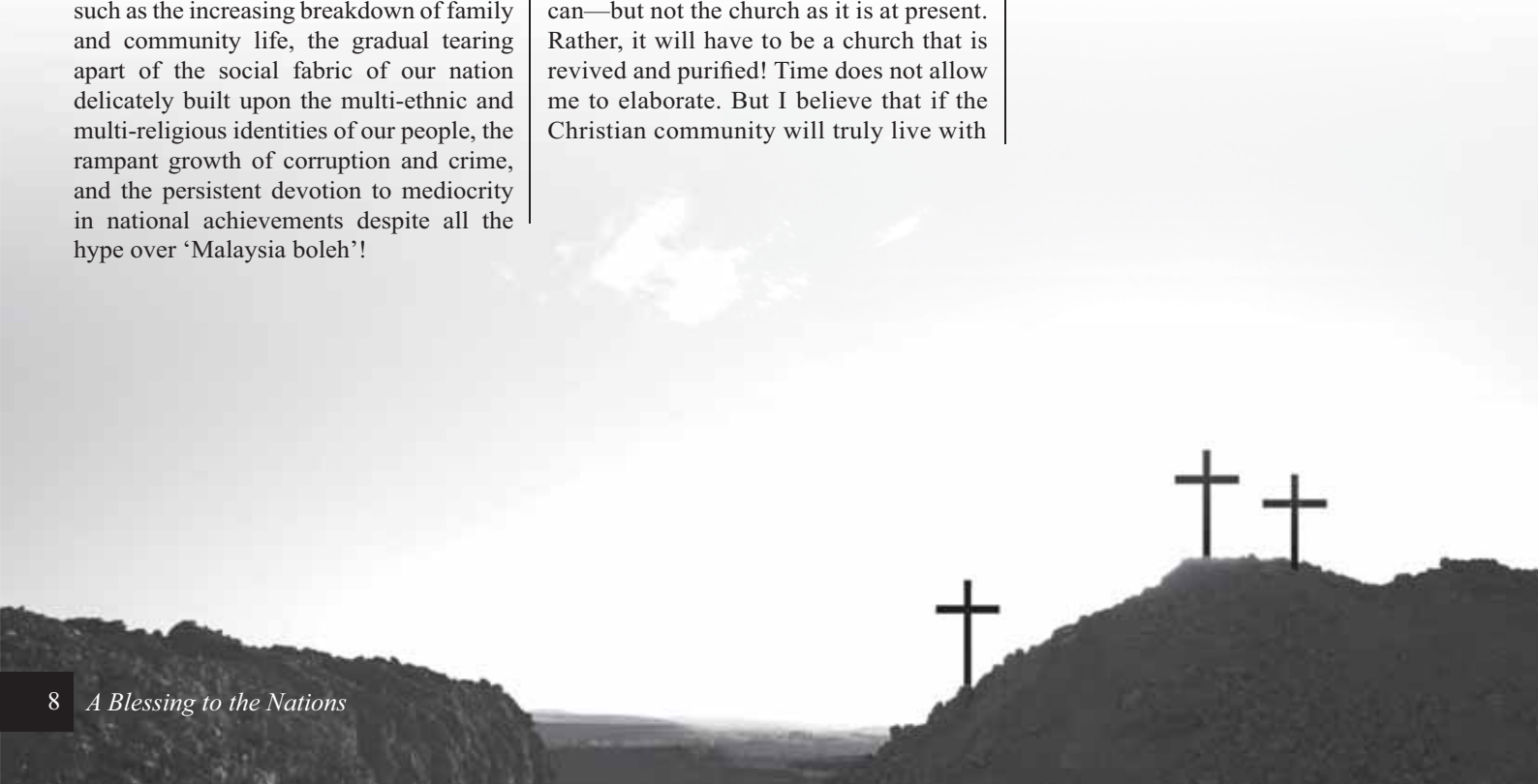


But Christians, as the spiritual heirs of Abraham, have been called to be a blessing to the nation! Will the church therefore respond to God's call and act as His instrument, in cooperation with others, to reverse the downward moral and social slide of our nation? Can the Christian community do it? I believe it can—but not the church as it is at present. Rather, it will have to be a church that is revived and purified! Time does not allow me to elaborate. But I believe that if the Christian community will truly live with

integrity and moral rectitude, make a clear stand for compassion, justice and social righteousness, and strive to be agents of reconciliation in the midst of ethnic, religious and sociopolitical divisions, we can indeed be God's instrument of transformation for this nation. We will become, like Abraham, 'a blessing to the peoples and nations.'

Perhaps some will say, 'What can a minority like us do? Our numbers are so small!' In response, I will simply quote Robert Bellah, a sociologist who used to teach at Berkeley. In his comments on the possibility of social transformation, he writes: 'I think we should not underestimate the significance of the small number of people who have a new vision of a just and gentle world ... The quality of a culture can be changed when two per cent of its people have a new vision.'

God told Abraham: 'I will bless you ... and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' If we take seriously God's word to Abraham, I believe three things will happen. First, God will use the church to be a blessing to this nation, and make it harmonious and peaceful, righteous and just, and prosperous and great. Secondly, in ways we do not understand, God will fulfill His promise to Abraham in us far beyond what we dare ask or imagine. Finally, the church in this nation, through faithful missions overseas, will become a powerful source of spiritual and material blessings to other nations in different parts of the world. May God grant us the faithfulness and courage to live as the children of Abraham!



MCSC 50th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service



The Malayan Christian Schools' Council was known as the Malayan Aided Schools Council (MASC) prior to 1957 when the name change was made. On 18 October the MCSC celebrated its 50th Anniversary at St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

The MCSC is the body that looks into the welfare and advancement of Christian mission schools of the Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Brethren and Presbyterian Church. It is concerned to preserve the ethos and culture of these schools and their development, to support the heads of schools and teachers, and to promote

teaching of Bible knowledge in schools. This requires dialogue and consultation with the Ministry of Education, and also carrying out its own programmes towards achieving these goals.

At its Annual General Meeting held before the Thanksgiving Service it highlighted some of its achievements.

- The MCSC has seen more Christians appointed to be heads of mission schools.
- Annual Quit Rent and arrears for schools have been reduced to a nominal RM1.
- Increasing candidacy for the SPM Bible Knowledge paper. In 2006 about 700

students sat for it. The goal is 3000 candidates. (See the accompanying statement.)

- The successful change for the BK paper to be based on the Good News Version (GNV) from the older Revised Standard Version, providing a contemporary English translation for today's students.
- A new Study Guide based on the GNV produced locally to help students prepare for the paper.
- The Annual BK Oral Quiz (now in its 11th year,) and the Postal Quiz (in its 6th year) had about 560 and 3300 participants respectively.
- To affirm and encourage teachers the Christian Teachers' Day is organized every year.
- A VCD package on "Teaching as a Mission and Vocation" to encourage more Christians to take up the teaching.

We need to uphold the MCSC Executive Committee and Mr Yap Kok Keong, the Chairman, as they continue to represent the mission schools to the education authorities, and to work towards enhancing the quality and witness of these schools to the nation.



STATEMENT FROM MALAYAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS' COUNCIL

Scaremongering Email on SPM Bible Knowledge

A scaremongering email was sent to many Church leaders recently that if the number of candidates taking Bible Knowledge for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) did

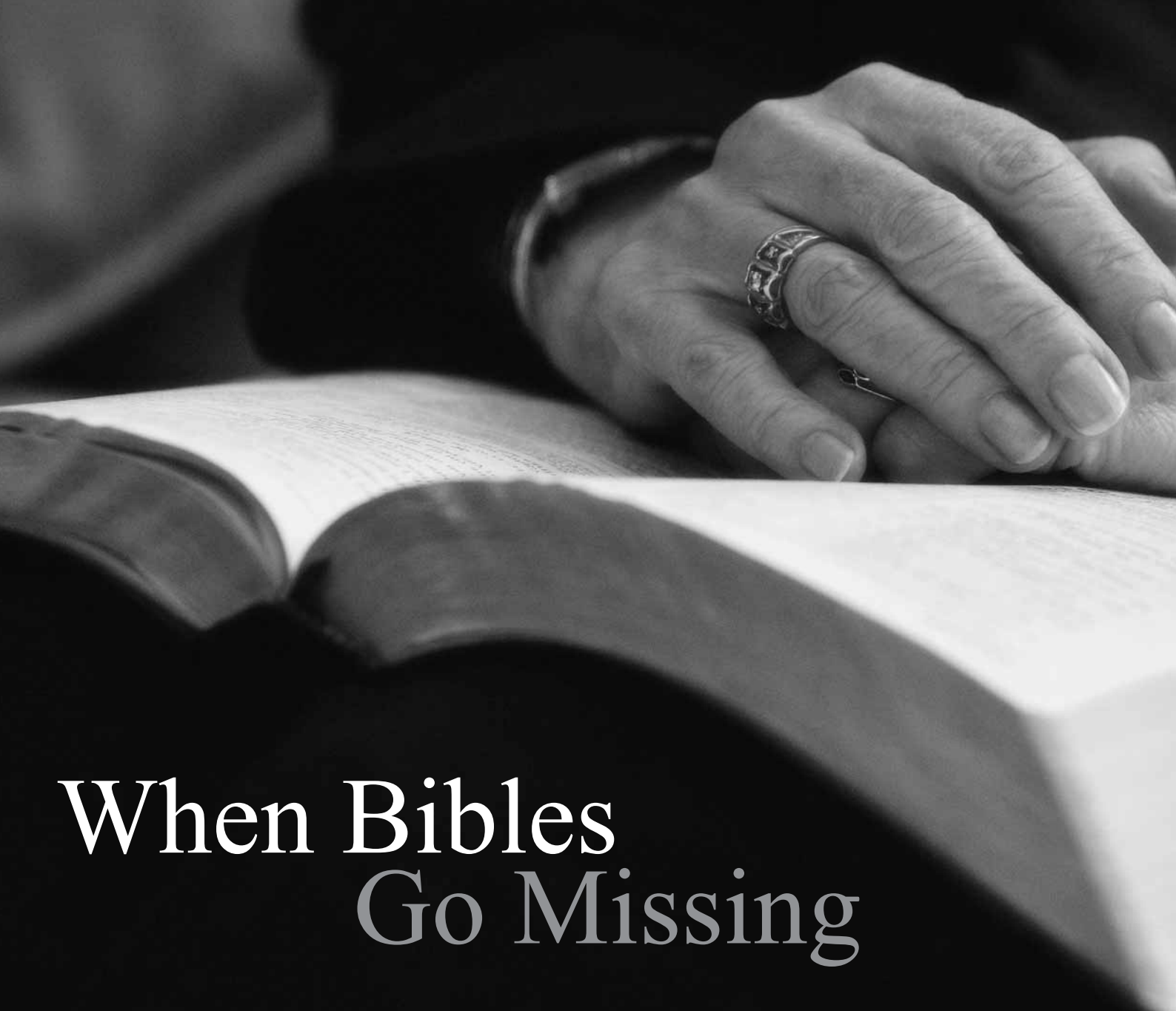
not reach 3000 by the year 2008, the paper would be abolished.

The Malayan Christian Schools' Council would like to state that the content of this email is NOT TRUE. There was no such intention of threat made. The Education Ministry official merely challenged the Christian community to try their best to raise the number of B. K. candidates to

3000 by the year 2010.

As such, the Malayan Christian Schools' Council would like to appeal again to church leaders, pastors and parents to encourage their children to take up Bible Knowledge for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia .

18 October 2007



When Bibles Go Missing

Rev. Lenita Tiong

Recently a friend called me to pick my brains, so she said. She has been going to this particular Methodist Church for a number of years and last week, happened to pick up a Bible from the pew. On the inside page, it read “Property of xxx Methodist Church. Please do not remove”. It upset her as she shared that if someone is materially needy enough to take a Bible, then the church should allow him/her to take it. But if someone wants to steal it, then the person would be spiritually impoverished and thus equally in need of it.

“So, as a pastor, what is your response?” she challenged me.

The conversation set me thinking as I remembered many other stories of missing Bibles.

Years ago, when I was worshipping at Wesley Methodist Church, Singapore, a friend discovered that his car was broken into during lunch time. Only his briefcase was stolen. In it were his camera, some paperwork and his Bible. Although the Bible had sentimental value, he was glad that the thief had stolen it. “He needs it more than me!” was his immediate response.

Then I heard this story from a Dutch friend. As a young non-Christian man, he fell in love with a Christian girl. But the girl rejected him, telling him that she would not marry a non-Christian man. She left Holland and went off to Africa to serve while he, in his anger and hurt, left Holland and went as far as he could in the other direction. As a young executive in Asia, his company sent him traveling

around the region. One day, when he was in Sibul he found a Bible in his hotel room. With cynicism about this book that had influenced the girl he loved, he silently challenged God to show him what’s so great and special about this one book. He spent that night reading through the book of John and within that week, he was so convicted of the reality of Jesus Christ that he sought out a pastor to discuss his new found faith. A few years later, he met his lost love in a church in Singapore and they both glowingly testified to the goodness of God in bringing them together. But he had a confession to make; he “stole” the Bible from the hotel room so he could finish reading it. He, of course wrote to the Gideon’s International to “confess his sin.” When I met him, he proudly showed me the “stolen Bible” as evidence of the faithfulness of God.



In researching for this article I wrote to the Doulos International Office to verify the above story and received the following reply - There are several stolen Bible stories

“When the Logos docked in Cagayan de Oro (Philippines), my brother and I went to steal books not buy them. I took a little book with the title “Goodbye World”, which was about future events. My brother stole a Bible. I found that verses in my little book were from his big one.

The verse that attracted me so much is in Rev. 20:15 “Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” It troubled my mind, I did not want to go to hell. Maybe this Book of life is on the Logos, I thought. I looked for help and spoke with a pastor. He helped me study the Bible and I prayed to the Lord. As a result of my testimony many of us got saved. Six of us are now pastors!”

Pastor L, Bible Study Fellowship,
Mindanao, Philippines

While making advance preparations for this port, Joel met a gentleman who was the brother of a woman who had stolen a Christian book from the book exhibition of the original LOGOS. She had taken it home, read it, and believed in Jesus. She is now a pastor in St. Kitts, but because of her work schedule, she was unable to visit the LOGOS II while in port.

Basseterre, Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis
21 - 24 June 1996

So, what is the verdict? Should we encourage the “stealing” of Bibles? Should we be glad when our Bibles go for a walk from the church?

I know many churches face the challenge of missing Bibles and Hymnals and I know the cost involved in replacing these items. But yet again, it’s the Bible itself that tells us, the gospel ... is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: (Romans 1:16)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. (2 Tim 3:16)

In Cambodia, Bibles are definitely “worth” stealing. A Bible can cost

anything from USD6 to USD18 for a leather bound one. They are beyond the means of an average church member and most churches have very limited supply of Bibles – maybe 5 or 10 copies and yes, Bibles do go for a walk too.

In the past few years, the practice at our Bible school is for the school to buy Bibles in bulk and then “sell” them to the students at USD1 each.

Another organization is also selling the Bibles at the same price on condition that the person buying it must complete a small booklet of questions on the Christian faith. Anyone can collect the booklet for free and be given a small New Testament. When the completed booklet is submitted, a soft cover Bible can then be purchased at USD1 each.

The Roman Church had placed the Bible only in the hands of the priests, giving the priests the final authority in reading and interpreting the Scriptures. But John Wycliffe, John Hus, Martin Luther, William Carey, Robert Morrison and hundreds of unknown translators have labored and are continuing to labor so that Bibles can be placed in the hands of the common folks in a language that they can understand.

Can the Church today say “Do not remove” or should we stamp in all our Bibles “Take it, read it and ingest it as you need it”?



Rev. Lenita Tiong

Lenita is an Elder with the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference. She served as the Academic Dean at the Cambodian Methodist Bible School, Phnom Penh from 2001 – 2006 and is currently back home in Sarawak caring for her elderly mother.

Then sometime last year I heard this “stolen Bible” story from the MV Doulos. The ship had gone to Malawi, Africa years ago and without their knowledge a little boy having no money to buy any book, stole one. About 10 years later when the ship went back to the country, a young man came on board and sought to speak to the captain. The young man confessed his sin of stealing the book and told how as he read the book, he not only learnt that his act was wrong but also learnt of the forgiveness and redemption available to him in Jesus Christ. Years after being a Christian, he decided to dedicate his life to serving God, entered seminary and became a pastor. He then handed the stolen book back to the captain; it was a dog-eared copy of the Bible!

A Response to the Prime Minister's Speech at the General Assembly of UMNO **on November 8, 2007**

The Christian Federation of Malaysia has noted with great appreciation Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi's presidential address to the UMNO 58th General Assembly where he had stressed the importance of maintaining harmony between the various communities and religions.

As Prime Minister, his speech was not only meant for the UMNO delegates but also for the whole nation.

In his speech he particularly highlighted the central place of the Federal Constitution and for it to be interpreted as a whole and in the spirit of the social contract of the founding leaders of the nation.

He also called for curbing all forms of religious extremism, bigotry and

overzealous enforcement of laws that curb the freedom of religion as guaranteed in the Federal Constitution.

His clarion call must engage the best efforts of all Malaysians to ensure that our country is governed with honesty, integrity, justice, equality and peace.

The Christians of Malaysia want to assure the Prime Minister that we are prepared to work with all other religious communities in mutual dialogue and accountability. The well-being of our country can only be achieved by practicing religious moderation and respecting the Constitution as the supreme law of the land.

The government should act decisively against those who promote religious

chauvinism and extremism that can greatly harm the spirit of religious harmony existing in our country.

May God grant the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers good health and wise counsel as they lead the country to become a model of inter-religious harmony for other nations to emulate.



.....
Bishop Dr. Paul Tan Chee Ing, SJ
Chairman, Christian Federation of Malaysia
Dated: 9 November 2007

>>from page 16



WCC general secretary the Rev. Samuel Kobia addresses the Global Christian Forum. Photo: Fredrick Nzwili/ENI (c)

"It is only by lowering barriers, by coming fully into each other's presence and confronting our prejudices, that we may come to understand each other significantly better," said Kobia, a Methodist from Kenya.

In a personal testimony, Kobia recounted how his parents were first-generation Christians, converted in revivals that swept Kenya and neighbouring nations during the colonial era. His father eventually became a charismatic street preacher and decided to leave a piece of the family's land for the building of an Assemblies of God church.

"I hope that we will take the risk of working together ... and praying for the growth that is God's gift," said Kobia.

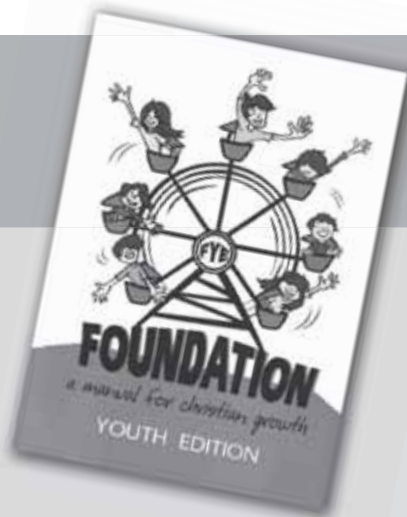
A message from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, described

the forum meeting as significant and timely. "The call to unity and common witness requires us to develop new conversations as well as to build on the fellowship we already enjoy," he wrote.

Guirguis Ibrahim Saleh, the general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches, in greetings to the forum, said it was vital that Christians in his region revitalised their own cultural role that has characterised their modern history.

"It is no exaggeration to say that Christians of the Middle East are indispensable to a democratic and pluralistic Arab world," said Saleh. "Their presence is as important to the outside world as to their own."

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Alam. However, recordings of specific speakers can also be ordered. The audio recordings are of the workshop sessions but not all are available. The full list is given below.

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The Methodist Church in Malaysia Recruitment Notice

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- Should be computer literate.
- Salary will be commensurate with experience.

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- Should be computer literate.
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- Salary will be commensurate with experience.

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The Global Christian Forum



The Rev. Cecil Robeck addresses the Global Christian Forum. Photo: Fredrick Nzwili/ ENI (c)

Nairobi (ENI). A prominent Pentecostal leader has hailed a global gathering that has been described as bringing together the broadest range of Christian traditions ever assembled at a global meeting.

"I am stunned. We have here what might be described as a new Pentecost," the Rev. Cecil (Mel) Robeck, an Assemblies of God minister from the United States, told about 240 Christian leaders attending

the 6-9 November gathering near Nairobi called the Global Christian Forum.

The leaders come from Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal and other churches from around the world.

Robeck, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in California, is an expert in global Pentecostalism, a Christian renewal movement dating from the early 20th century.

Pentecostalism takes its name from Pentecost, the Christian festival that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus, allowing them to understand each other although they did not speak the same language.

It is now seen as one of the fastest growing Christian movements in the world, particularly in the Southern hemisphere. In the past, however, many Pentecostals have not been part of the organized movement for Christian unity

symbolised by the Geneva-based World Council of Churches.

The Kenya forum aims to include all streams of Christianity, including those which have not been "in conversation" with one another, the WCC said.

"Some would have said that this event was not possible, but here we are," said WCC general secretary the Rev. Samuel Kobia, addressing forum participants on 6 November.

The forum idea was originally proposed in the mid-1990s by the Rev. Konrad Raiser, a German theologian who was then WCC general secretary.

He said it could reach out to Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches that do not belong to the Geneva-based grouping, whose 347 member churches are drawn predominantly from Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox traditions.

>>continue on page 12

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