

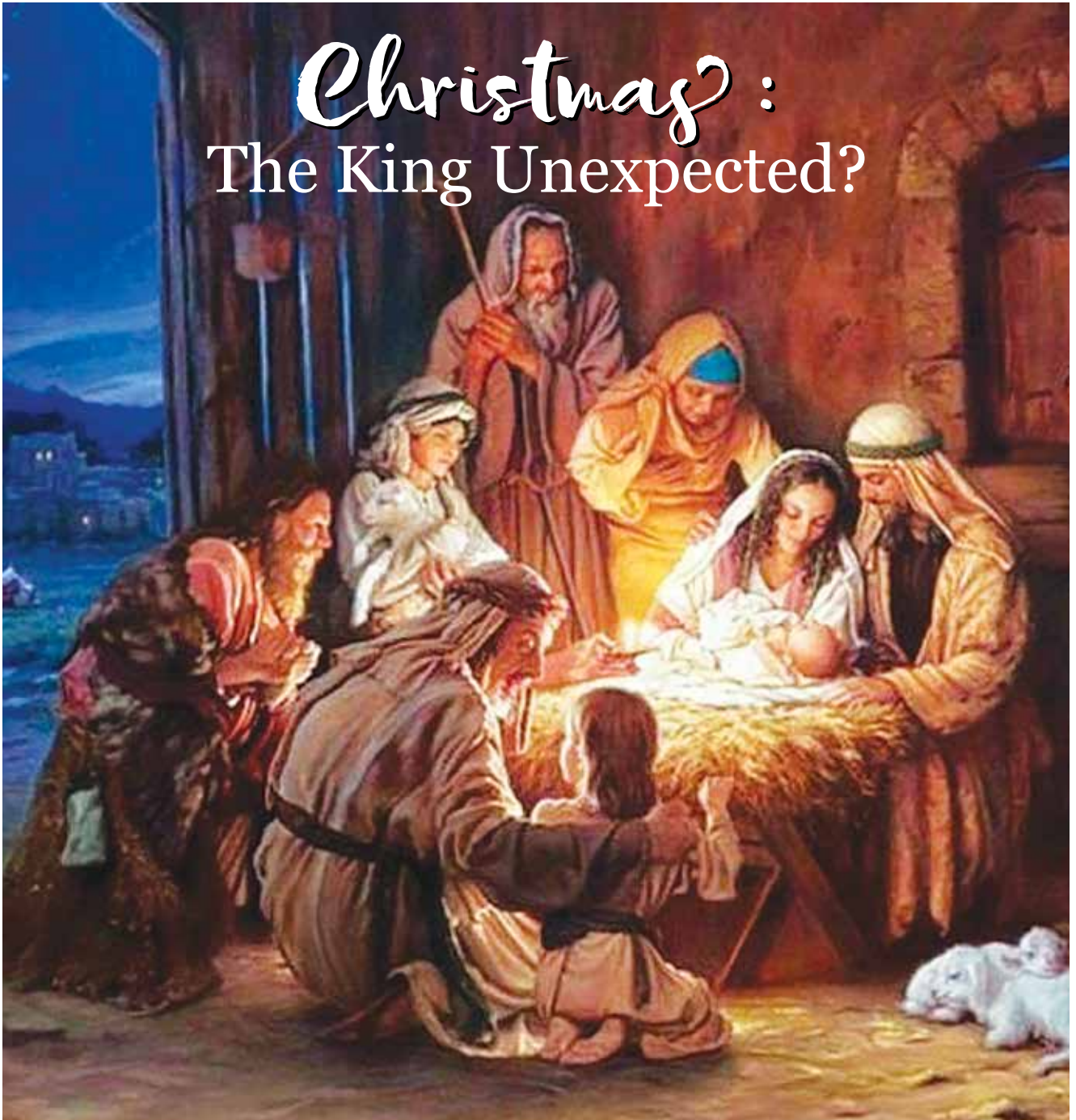
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Christmas : The King Unexpected?



Moment



Bishop and Mrs Ong Hwai Teik visiting the staff of PD Methodist Centre on 20th December 2019 and distributed Christmas gifts in appreciation of their faithful and diligent service.



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O Holy Night

O holy night the stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new glorious morn
Fall on your knees
O hear the angels' voices

O night divine
O night when Christ was born
O night divine
O night
O night divine



"A Church After
God's Own Heart"

- Every Methodist personally renewed in his/her first love for Jesus
- Every Methodist congregation revived as in the Book of Acts
- The Methodist Church to be refocused and reframed after the Word of God and the Holy Spirit

Christmas: The King Unexpected?

We once again journey to Bethlehem after a season of waiting in Advent, to behold the “glory of the new born King”.

I am reminded of two central encounter passages when it comes to celebrating Christmas.

The first is - ^{ESV} **Matthew 2:1** **Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him...**

The King of kings is “internationally *expected* and recognized” as shown by the intentional journey undertaken by the wise men from the East. They were so deeply gripped by the certainty of His existence and the awesomeness of Who He is that they cannot but undertake the journey of homage to behold the “*glory of the new born King*”. The authenticity of this truth remains unchanging because the Cosmic King is immutable [never changing]. He will enduringly remain “internationally recognised and expected” even though there will be passing earthly “Herodian powers and authorities” that will repudiate and even plot to snuff out His existence and reality!

The second passage is ^{ESV} **John 1:45** **Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”**

The King of kings was *not expected* and recognized by Nathaniel. He had his own drawn-up expectations of the Messiah King. What finally “broke through” to him was that **Jesus the King**, knew something which was most personal and private to him – that He saw him under the fig tree! It was ostensibly a most significant, personal and private “unknown to others” matter so that it was most astounding that Jesus would know that and still affirm him! But then the King of kings had to mildly reprove him for being cynical at first, to now gushing with acknowledgement and confession, adding

“you will see greater things than this”.

It is the proven testimonies of countless men and women through the ages, that when one actually “finds” the King of kings, He will always exceed the boundaries of one’s imagination and expectation. The Scriptures indicate clearly that angels are a sign of the royal presence of the Cosmic King. We worship this same Cosmic King, like the expectant Magi from the East and the non-expectant Nathaniel - and wait to **“see greater things than this”** - this Christmas and into the New Year as we live missionally to His glory.

As we expectantly and reverently celebrate Christmas with worship, delight and merriment, may we do so “being there” in worship of the Cosmic King as the Magi did. May we expectantly receive with joy even as we give with delight, knowing that giving is foremost an attitude, not the cost of the gift; a matter of willingness and giving with an attitude of love. May we remember the humble and sparse circumstances in which the Cosmic King was born, and Who was most personal with Nathaniel – so that we keep things meaningful, sincere, simple and warm.

May the Sovereign Lord grace you with a heart-warming Christmas and a “surprising” New Year!

^{NIV} **Isaiah 25:1** **“O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.”**

^{NLT} **Ephesians 3:20** **“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever!” Amen.**

Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik



கிறிஸ்துமஸ் மகிழ்ச்சி

கர்த்தராகிய இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவின் பிறப்பு கிறிஸ்துமஸ் பண்டிகையின் மையமாக இருக்கிறது. தேவதூதன் கிறிஸ்து பிறப்பின் நற்செய்தியை அறிவித்த போது, பரம சேனையின் திரள் தேவனைமகிமை மப்படுத்தினார்கள். லூக்கா 2:10-14. சந்தோஷம் இல்லாமல் கிறிஸ்துமஸ் பண்டிகையை கொண்டாட முடியாது. கர்த்தருக்குள் மகிழ்ச்சியாயிருப்பதே உங்கள் பெலன். நெகேமியா 8:10.

புல வருடங்களாக கிறிஸ்துமஸ் பண்டிகையின் கொண்டத்தில் பல பழக்க வழக்கங்கள் சேர்ந்து வந்திருக்கிறது. கிறிஸ்துமஸ் தாத்தா வெகுமதிகள், கிறிஸ்துமஸ் மரத்தை விளக்குடன் ஜோடிப்பது போன்றவை சில. இவை பலருக்கு சந்தோஷத்தைக் கொண்டு வரலாம். ஆனால் கிறிஸ்துமஸின் உண்மையான மகிழ்ச்சி, இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவே.

இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவின் பிறப்பு தேவன் நம்மேல் வைத்த மகா பெரிய அன்பை வெளிப்படுத்துகிறது. நாம் பாவத்தில் அழிந்து போயிருப்போம். ஆனால் நம்முடைய ஓரே பேரான குமாரனே இந்த உலகத்தின் இரட்சகராக அனுப்பினதனால் தேவன் நம்மேல் வைத்த அன்பை வெளிப்படுத்தினார். இயேசு பரிசுத்த ஆவியினால் கன்னி மரியாளிடத்தில் உற்பவித்து பிறந்தார். இருதயம் நொருங்குண்டவர்களை குணமாக்கினார். பிசாசின் பிடியில் கட்டப்பட்டவர்களை விடுதலையாக்கினார். அவருடைய கற்பனைகளை கற்பித்தார். சிலுவையில் இரத்தம் சிந்தி மரித்து பாவத்தின் சாபத்தை நீக்கிப் போட்டார். மூன்றாம் நாள் உயிர்த்தெழுந்து மரணத்தை ஜெயித்தார். இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவை விசுவாசித்து அவரை தன் சொந்த இரட்சகராக ஏற்றுக்கொண்டு அவரில் நிலைத்திருப்பவர்களுக்கு நித்திய ஜீவனை தந்தருளினார். அவர்கள் தேவனுடைய பிள்ளைகளாக இருப்பார்கள். (யோவான் 3:16, 1:12)

தேவனுடைய பிள்ளைகளாக, தேவன் நம்மேல் வைத்த அன்பை நினைவுகூர்ந்து கிறிஸ்து பிறப்பை கொண்டாடும் போது நன்றியுள்ள இருதயத்துடன் தேவனை ஆராதிப்போம். கிறிஸ்து பிறப்பின் நற்செய்தியை அறிவிப்பதும், ஏழைகளுக்கு நம் உணவை பகிர்ந்து கொடுப்பதும் நமக்கு மகிழ்ச்சியாயிருக்கும் (நெகேமியா 8:10)

கிறிஸ்துவின் சந்தோஷம் நம்முடன் எப்போதும் இருப்பதாக.

The Joy of Christmas

The birth of Christ is the center of the celebration of Christmas, a time when Christ entered the world with great jubilation. Heaven rejoiced at his birth and the angel announced to the shepherds “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you he is Christ the Lord”. Luke 2:10-14.

Celebrations bring joy to our life. Neh 8:10 says “The joy of the Lord is our strength”. Without a joyful spirit we cannot truly celebrate Christmas.

Through the years many customs and traditions came along with the celebration of Christmas like Santa Claus, gifts, Christmas tree, lights, and so on. Supermarkets are decorated with Christmas lights for commercial purposes. When people see this they say Christmas has come. These may bring joy to some people but the true joy of Christmas is only in Jesus Christ.

The Birth of Christ is the powerful revelation of the great love of God towards us. We should have been destroyed in our sins but God sent his Son Jesus Christ to be born as the Savior of the world. Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit born of Virgin Mary. He healed the broken hearted and set the captives free from the power of Satan. He taught his commandments to people. He broke the curse of sin by his death on the cross and destroyed death through His resurrection. All those who believe in Jesus Christ and abide in Him will be saved and will receive eternal life and they are children of God (John 3:16, John 1:12)

As children of God, when we remember the great love of God towards us and celebrate the birth of Christ, our hearts will overflow with the joy of the Lord and we will worship Him with a grateful heart and a joyful spirit. With joy we will share the good news of His great salvation to people who are not saved and remember the poor and the needy and share a portion of our food with them as it is said in Nehemiah 8:10

“May the joy of the Lord remain with us always. The joy of the Lord is our strength”.

By Rev. Joy Pandian

合神心意的教会

整理：甘慧仪、黄珍珠

2019年11月12至14日，马来西亚基督教卫理公会第四十四届华人年议会，在波德申卫理中心进行。年会本届主题配合总议会，是“合神心意的教会”，有四百零四人报名。

首日下午二时，进行年议会开幕礼拜，王怀德会督（博士）主持圣餐礼，沙巴年议会会长——许光福牧师（博士）证道，其主题是“纷扰困境中的教会——坚忍”。他说，当信徒面对困境时，要持守信望爱的真谛、认定自己的身份（蒙爱和蒙拣选的）和依靠圣灵大能，为上帝作见证。稍后，王会督敬奉圣父、圣子、圣灵之名，宣布华人年议会第四十四届议会正式开始。

吾会会长——郭汉成牧师（博士）向会众介绍来宾和发表“会长演辞”后，李祖国弟兄代表会长制理事部发言，认同郭会长过去三年，尽忠职守，实事求是，提倡团队精神，使年会各部、教区和牧区事工按计划顺利进行。

翌日的早祷会上，许会长以“屹立共忧患的教会——同在”为题，鼓励牧者在牧养中，要让会友感受大牧人——耶稣基督的同在，知道自己没有被丢弃，可凭信心同活在“命定的患难”中，与其他弟兄姐妹同行。

根据年会经济部主席——万福全弟兄的书面报告，2018年的年会经常费总收入为 RM2,423,810，总支出为 RM2,123,846，剩余 RM299,964。截至2018年12月31日，年会总资产为 RM10,468,430，再加上由年会存放于银行的教牧医药金储蓄、定期存款和利息，共是 RM13,233,877。截至2019年9月30日，年会财政处收到的承担额款项是 RM1,695,487，为总承担数目 RM1,720,957 的 98.52%。2020年，年会经济部会以堂会最新的统计人数为准，来规定每名会友每年应负责的承担额。

堂会会友人数 (组别)	每名会友承担数额 (2020年1月1日生效)			
	2003年 (RM)	2008年 (RM)	2016年 (RM)	2020年 (RM)
1-65	35	35	40	40
66-200	40	45	50	50
201-400	45	50	55	55
401 至以上	45	55	60	60

从2017年起，年会经济部每年拨款RM100,000，确保每位有资格的教牧在六十五岁退休时获得恩俸金。2019年，领取退休教牧恩俸金的牧师，是黄约辉牧师（侍奉逾三十九年，可得RM68,000）和李学谛牧师（侍奉逾三十四年可得 RM58,000）。

2020年的宣教金收入预算为 RM1,650,000。截至 2019年9月30日，年会宣教金（银行存款）为 RM574,511.79。年会2020年的预算案是赤字预算，基于明年有多项新事工要进行；预算案总收入是 RM4,601,000，支出是 RM4,710,600（包括预备金拨款），大约不敷 RM109,600。

经选举后，万富奇牧师（博士）成为来年的年会文书（2020年），接替黄约辉牧师（博士）。郭会长、莫泽川牧师、黄迪华牧师（博士）、萧帝佑牧师（博士）、万富奇牧师、廖克民牧师和翁进兴牧师当选为吾会在总议会的牧师代表；李祖国、万福全、廖春煌医生、钱本华、吴永基医生、林伟杰和周道惠当选为吾会在总议会的会友代表。

下午二时五十分，年会资讯与出版部部员——简永裕牧师在新书推介礼上，简介南钟九十丛书系列的第五本《中间的起点之后——约翰·卫斯理神学文集》，作者是黄迪华牧师（马来西亚神学院学生主任）。

接着，郭会长恭请王怀德会督概述总议会事项：

- 一、2019年，已出版《2016中文翻译版法规》；
- 二、2019年9月16日，“马来西亚祷告日”在 Grace Convention Centre 进行；
- 三、2020年5月19至21日，第二届卫理代祷者学校将在波德申卫理中心进行；
- 四、2020年8月6至8日，第十二届总议会卫理妇女会代表大会将在卫理大厦进行；
- 五、2020年9月8至11日，第十二届总议会会议将在吉隆坡伊斯廷酒店进行；
- 六、马来西亚基督教教会协会（CCM）今年的主题是“A New Creation: A Revived Church and Renewed Nation”等等。

之后，牧职部注册员——黄迪华牧师当众介绍十位新同工，即洪耀民、郑天恩、陈明文、詹则颂、萧欣珠、傅锦芳、刘葛薇、陈智仁、周平光和王宗义。年会布道部也颁发奖励盾给所有在本年增加十巴仙新会友的二十间堂会、布道所和成立新布道所的代表们，以示鼓励。

当晚，年会为已安息的温月圆传道和年会前会友领袖——林恩忠校长办追思礼拜仪式，他们的生平事迹分别由杜奇贤牧师和李祖国弟兄述史。最后，王昆和牧师和郭成光牧师为已逝者的家属祷告。

按立牧职典礼

第三天，许会长在按立牧职典礼上证道的主题是“作诚信正直的仆人”，提醒牧者要发出合乎真理的心思和言语，在信望爱的盼望中殷勤和劳苦、以真诚和温和的态度，实践领导的权柄。

按立牧职典礼由王会督主持，郭会长襄礼。年会牧职部注册员——黄迪华牧师（博士），恭请会督依《法规》条文，按立谢国镇、谭鸣晖和萧艾雁为年会长牧，并授权让他们在上帝的教会中，传讲圣道和施行圣礼。

2020年的十位教区长，是陈志浩牧师（北部）、雷德瑞牧师（曼绒）、王昆和牧师（近打）、莫泽川牧师（中一）、林加道牧师（中二）、潘武忠牧师（中三）、陈华彬牧师（中四）、张世杰牧师（南中）、陈金发牧师（南部）和郑仁宾牧师（东部）。郭会长敬奉圣父、圣子、圣灵三位一体上帝的名，接纳各教区长宣读的委任表，并授权让他们召开教区和牧区议会。

最后，郭会长在闭幕礼上宣布：2020年11月9至12日，第四十五届年议会将在波德申卫理中心进行，由中四和南中教区协办。

AGMC completes Disciple Yellow Book

MIRI – A batch of the congregation from Agape Grace Methodist Church successfully completed the Disciple Yellow Book (Under the Tree of Life) on Nov 3, 2019.

Facilitated by its Pastor-in-charge Linberg Wong, the group of 11 students out of the initial 13, proudly received their respective certificates during the Sunday Service on Nov 24.

To study this Book, one needs to have at least completed first the Red Book; DISCIPLE: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study.

The student is also expected (in terms of time and discipline) to invest 30 to 45 minutes of daily reading and note-taking. They are also expected to reflect and pray for 6 days a week, and participate in a two-and-a-half-hour weekly group study for 32 weeks. No certificate is awarded to those who miss the class for more than four times.

Bishop Richard B. Wilke, who created The DISCIPLE Bible Study Series, has always said that the Disciple Study is not for information but for Transformation.

Here are some testimonies from the participants:

Nine months of journeying through the Disciple Yellow Course with the theme “Under the Tree of Life” finally comes to an end. I would like to express my sincere thanks to our facilitator, Pastor Linberg Wong and the twelve participants for the lively discussion, sharing, joyful fellowship and wonderful time spent in studying God’s Word together.

I hesitated to enrol for the Disciple Yellow Course initially due to my lack of faith that I would be able to cope. But with the encouragement from sisters-in-Christ Irene Pui and Magdalene Lee, I finally took up the challenge and ended up being the last person to enrol for it. Frankly speaking, Disciple Yellow Course is not as tough as Red Disciple Course as less reading is required daily. The participants’ invaluable contributions via sharing personal experiences have enriched me in some ways and helped strengthen my walk with the Lord. All praise and glory be given unto Him for guiding and leading me throughout this journey. Last but not least, may I encourage you to sign up for the Yellow Disciple Course and discover for yourself what you will learn as you journey along. Do enrol for the course as you have nothing to lose but everything to gain. This is the kind of treasure all of us want to store up in our life: “Storing up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt 6:20-21)
– Stephanie Ho

God has shown me and guided me throughout the course and He uses His Word from my daily reading to rebuke, correct and remind me as I persevere and continue to pray to commit my walk with Him each day.
– Robert KS Ting

The course has disciplined me to manage my time effectively as I’ve become a retiree. It has brought me closer to God, knowing His Blessings and His Love. Finally, I wish to thank Pastor Linberg and my peers who for the past nine months have accompanied me in completing my final book of the Disciple Series.

– Roseline Lee

Through studying the course, I have gained more knowledge of the Bible and that has given me deeper understanding. It has enabled me to build a closer relationship with the Creator.

– Sim Kim Lai

Studying the Yellow Book helped me understand and know more who our God is. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

– Panti

Going through Yellow Disciple Book for 32 weeks together with our Pastor, brothers and sisters in this fantastic journey of learning, pondering and sharing, I experienced the love of God, the love of brothers and sisters, spiritual growth and deeper relationship with our Lord. The Lord brings joy to my life. Before, the Bible to me was just a boring book but now I hunger for the Word of God which I’ve never experienced in my life. The Word becomes alive and so real. The Holy Spirit has revealed insights of the Word. Hence, I have a better understanding of it, enabling me to experience His blessings and goodness. I have learned to fear the Lord and to be obedient to Him. My eyes are opened and I have found greater wisdom. I know now “Fear the Lord is the foundation of WISDOM” (Proverbs 9:10). Wisdom brings understanding, truth, knowledge, discernment, strength and good judgement. The most pivotal end time prophecies in the Book of Revelation is an eye opener for me which really helped me to ponder over my spiritual life and reminded me to stay alert and be on guard all the time. Come, join the disciple class, experience His powerful Word and the wonder of our Lord touching hearts and lives. He prepares our future home. Lord, how wonderful You are!

– Monica Tiong

When asked, Pastor Linberg summed up his thoughts: “It was a long yet enjoyable journey to go through with this group of people. I believe all have benefited from the study over the past 32 weeks, not just informative, but trans-formative. I pray that all would continue to thirst for God’s Word, as the completion of Disciple class is not the end of a journey, but the beginning of a new journey in encountering God.”

A warm, celebratory dinner was held at a local Thai restaurant after the final lesson.

By James TC Wong

Synergising the Methodist Indigenous Ministry through Indigenous Ministry Task Force (IMTF)

In 2014, the General Conference Executive Council (GCEC) formed the Indigenous Ministry Task Force (IMTF) which took over the coordination and synergy of this ministry from the Council of Mission. The main vision of the IMTF is to take the Gospel to all the indigenous people communities in Malaysia. The IMTF would partner the indigenous Church so as to see the fruits of evangelism and discipleship, and to uplift the quality of life of the indigenous community within the Methodist Church in Malaysia specifically and the Malaysian church in general.

The ministry amongst the Indigenous peoples (the orang Asal and orang Asli) spans throughout Malaysia. In Sarawak, SIAC is the main body of indigenous work. This ministry amongst the Iban peoples also involves TRAC and SCAC. In Sabah, SAC has a BM ministry. This ministry includes the Kadazan, the Rungus, the Murut, the Dusun and many other indigenous groups. In Peninsular Malaysia, the ministry is mainly carried out by TRAC through Persidangan Misi Sengoi (PMSM). CAC and TAC also have missions in many parts here.

IMTF focuses its ministry through 6 core strategies:

a. Direct Church Planting and Mission ministry

b. Leadership, Personnel and Spiritual Focus

The main area of focus in this area is training up leaders, especially assistants to pastors who work amongst the indigenous peoples themselves. This is done through the Church Planting Institute (CPI) program. This formal training program is carried out both in Sarawak and Sabah. Graduates of the CPI training would be called Assistants to the Pastor for rural and semi-urban longhouse ministries.

The IMTF also consolidates and prints materials and resources for the ministry. In working with Publication and Printing ministries such as Wawasan Penabur, Cornerstone Resources and Pristine Publications, materials such as bibles, magazines and training resources have been made available to the indigenous peoples.

The IMTF has also been involved in giving financial aid to the Cultural and Mission Centre based in Methodist Theological Seminary.

c. Political Advocacy

The IMTF also encourages Methodist lawyers to work with

other Christian lawyers to address constitutional and legal rights issues for the indigenous peoples. This includes sourcing for an advocacy team to stand by the indigenous people whose lands have been encroached.

d. Education

All the Annual Conferences have been very active in the education of the indigenous peoples. Many kindergartens and hostels have been established. The IMTF has helped out financially and has also offered advise to these education centres.

e. Economic Empowerment Program

Through the collaborative experience of the individual Annual Conference in various Economic empowerment programs, the IMTF has become a resource centre for the whole church. These include expertise and agricultural programs, solar systems for power generation and models for health care in the rural areas. The IMTF has also funded students pursuing tertiary education in the local colleges with the hope that they will return to serve in their communities on completion of their studies.

Some of the Annual Conferences with partial financial aid from the IMTF has sourced for fulltime staff to work amongst the indigenous peoples. This has brought fruit in many areas of ministry especially in the interiors of Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah.

f. Synergizing and Awareness

The IMTF has conducted seminars, conferences and training for the indigenous peoples and also for churches which have the focus on indigenous ministry. The IMTF also coordinates inter Annual Conferences working relationships so that better cohesion and cooperation is built up in this ministry.

Looking to the Future

Through God's enabling grace, the ministries of the indigenous peoples have grown in our country. The IMTF has been blessed in many ways and seeks to be a blessing to many others through this ministry. There are still much to be done through the IMTF. The IMTF needs more human and financial resources to grow this ministry. May it continue to be faithful and be dependent on the Lord for this ministry.

Plant churches

- At Long Abit, Long Peran



TRAC OA WORK

Tuition and Children's program in the village



Installing solar power in a village



Kapit

Christmas Day baptisms. The first results of our Mission to the Iban (Dyak) people of the Upper Rejang River valley in Sarawak, Borneo, were realized on Christmas Day when 29 adults and children were baptised into the Christian faith. This work which was begun by the Rev. and Mrs. Paul H. Schmucker and Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Mamoera (Elizabeth, his first wife, who died in December, 1947), and the faithful work of the Mamoeras during the war years, followed by the work of Mr. and Mrs. Djaleb Manoeroeng and the Rev. and Mrs. Burr Baughmann, is now showing very definite results. A number of the names of those baptised are already familiar to the readers of *The Malaysia Message*. The chief persons baptised were Penghulu Temengong Koh and family, Penghulu Sibat and family, Penghulu Jugah and family, Penghulu Jinggot and family, Tedong, Kumbang, Penyau; several others, were among the number. There are others who wanted to be baptised but they could not remember the exact date and so were not present. It is planned to baptise them later. This was an epoch-making experience for our Kapit missionaries and an account of the same will appear in the next issue of this magazine.

The Malaysia Message
Vol. 54 No. 1
January 1950



Kanyan and Segura, children of Pengulu Temengong Koh and students in our Methodist Iban School. They were baptised on Christmas Day

Correspondence

The following letter was sent out by the Rev. Burr Baughman to members and friends of the Home Missionary Society telling of the wonderful Christmas Day they celebrated at Kapit. This gives in full detail the information promised in the January issue.—Ed.

A Letter from Kapit

Christmas really came to Kapit. We experienced again the fact of the birth of Christ into the world.

We had invited to the mission station parents of the school pupils, a few Old Boys (alumni) of the school and some friends who have been most closely in touch with the mission programme. From forty to sixty actually turned up to help us celebrate Christmas.

Our object in these festivities was two-fold:

1. to try to put across the Christian message of the birth of Christ; and
2. to show the Iban people that we could have a good time, a festival ("gawai") without the pagan accompaniments of their traditional feasts—pagan offerings and sacrifices, widespread drunkenness and lewd horseplay.

A programme was arranged, and included a midnight Christmas Eve service with pageant by the school children, a Christmas morning service and the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the evening. There was also carol singing in the public square of

the village, and in homes of local Christians. There were picture shows, and sports for young and old. Christmas morning there were gifts for the school pupils, and biscuits and sweets for everyone. There was also (a big item) lots of food for all, through the efforts of Tek Lin and her helpers.

On Friday and Saturday we gathered a group of the elders together to talk over this matter of entering Christianity. These were the men with whom Paul Schmucker (American missionary) had started our work before the war, and with whom Lucius Mamora (Batak missionary) has been working since 1939. I began the discussion by emphasizing again that Christianity means the worship and obedience of the one God, whom we know through Jesus Christ: all other gods, spirits and demons must be discarded. This was all right; but then the men had some questions to ask.

If they become Christians, would they have to throw off all their traditional Iban customs, manners and way of life? Would they have to cut their hair short? Stop wearing the loincloth? Dress their women in long dresses? Take European names?

When I assured them that long or short hair, long dresses or short black skirts, loincloth or trousers were entirely optional—they could do as they pleased about such. The next question was: Why, then, do so many of the high government officials tell them they must never cut their long hair, must never wear trousers instead of loincloth, must never confine the women in dresses or sarongs, must never change their age-old long-houses

culture? (You answer that one).

About one thing several of the men were quite emphatic: they could not give up their charms—the charms that ensured their getting a good rice crop, those that made it certain they would shoot straight and get their game when out hunting, or those that protected them from their enemies' shot and sword when at war.

This was a sticker. How do you reconcile pagan magic with Christianity? I cannot. But I could not help remembering that the Gallic and Germanic forebears of modern European Christians probably kept as many pagan, magical elements in their lives after entering Christianity as these Sea-Dyaks were asking to do. Also I knew that in the Roman Catholic sect of our religion, to this day, "Christian" charms and amulets are sold and used openly and with the full knowledge, and often the approval, of the church authorities. I could, and did, speak feelingly of the uselessness of any charms; but I could not feel that here was reason enough to cast out those who were honestly trying, to the best of their ability, to understand and follow a religion which is in so many ways different from that which they have known all their lives.

After the periods of discussion, the men were asked if they wished to be baptized and to become Christians. As each was questioned, he answered, "Ka" (wish). As we were anxious to make this a family as well as individual affair, we then took the names of the men and of such members of their families as were present at the time. These plus several of our older school students who had been given special instruction, totalled twenty-nine individuals—from a one-year-old baby to an eighty-year-old patriarch.

The service of baptism was held on Christmas morning. Well over a hundred Iban crowded into our large front room to take part in the worship as Lucius Mamora and I conducted the ritual by which these twenty-nine Sea-Dyaks pledged their allegiance to Jesus Christ, and were accepted into the fellowship of the Christian church.

There was old Penghulu Temenggong Koh, the paramount Iban chief in Sarawak. There were Penghulu Sibat and Penghulu Jugah, two of the ablest leaders in this district, and their fellow-chief, Penghulu Jingga. There were Kumbang and Tedong, brothers of Jugah; and Panyau and Majau, former pupils of the school. There were Bawang, Sagura, Gading, Madu and Ilam: school-girls; and Igai, Manja, Ajan, Ajat and Jimbun: school-boys. There were wives and children.

As you realize, the service did not just bring twenty-nine more converts to the fold. It brought into the church twenty-nine individual men, women and children who will need continued education and nurture in the Christian life.

We call this a harvest. For them it is the beginning of a new life in which they will need much help.

By Burr Baughman

(P.S.— "Sea-Dyak" is the English name used to denote the people with whom we are working. "Iban" is the local, indigenous name. Both mean the same thing: either this people of Sarawak, or their language).

The Malaysia Message
Vol. 54 No. 4
April 1950

Devotion

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

He's Generous

God is ever giving to His children, yet hath not the less.
His riches are imparted, not impaired.

(Thomas Watson)

IN WORD: Imagine one of your good friends suddenly revealing that he secretly inherited hundreds of millions of dollars a few weeks ago. Then imagine him giving you a million dollars this Christmas, just because he likes you and wants to share his wealth with you. To him, the gift was a drop in the bucket, hardly making a dent in his wealth. Now suppose the next time you went out to lunch together, you forgot your wallet, and he had to pay. Can you imagine him being outraged at having to fork over the price of your lunch? Is a person who gave you a million dollars the type to get angry over pocket change?

That's pretty easy to answer, isn't it? Even if you have no wealthy friends, you probably can't envision one being generous with a lot and stingy with a little. Generous hearts don't work that way. And our God has a very generous heart.

But we sometimes approach Him more as a stingy Lord than a generous Father. We feel as if we are twisting His arm when we pray, not realizing that the length and intensity of some of our prayers are designed to draw us closer to Him. The answers we seek are never withheld because God is reluctant. He who did not spare His own Son for us is clearly not a reluctant Father. He is a generous friend who would give us the world.

IN DEED: Maybe understanding that is the first step in getting answered prayers. If we pray expecting Him to be a hard Master, we may find a hard Master. But if we pray expecting an extravagant Giver, we may find an extravagant Giver. After all, Jesus did say that we would receive according to our faith, and that without it, it is impossible to please God. If we feel that we have to twist God's arm, maybe it's because we believed we would have to.

God has graciously given us all things—His Kingdom and more. Believe that, and you'll see it more often.

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:32

The Miracle of a Changed Life – John Wesley

Bishop Edwin F. Lee

Continuation from Oct/Nov issue

John Calvin in Geneva had seriously attempted to establish a church-controlled society in the municipality of Geneva. In the British Isles, with special emphasis upon England, Oliver Cromwell attempted so to organise a society that people would be restrained from evil and practically compelled to lead sober and godly lives. Naturally such attempts proved to be failures. It is interesting that the world at the present time is witnessing like attempts to control large national groups with a totalitarian programme. When history repeats itself these will likewise fail. The church in Wesley's day was mistaken in its thought that an organized religious expression would be adequate. The pages of history record through centuries the succession of failures to make such programmes a success. Across in France the common people revolted against the unfair social and political order which ground them and their children into object poverty. They were infuriated when a queen foolishly suggested, in response to their cry for bread, that they be given cake. No permanent society can be established with such breaches between groups of people. One great historian has given in judgement that the evangelical movement released in England by Wesley and his associates saved England from a bloody revolution like that which devastated France. In this period the people in the British Isles, to a remarkable degree, responded to a spiritual emphasis and one finds that the roots of most of the movements for the alleviation of poverty and distress go back to this period in the latter years of the 18th century. We are especially happy as a group of people, most of whom are called Methodists, to commemorate this 200th anniversary of the conversion of this good man, but we must not forget such comments as have been made by J.R. Green, the English historian who said "The Methodists were the least result of the Methodist revival".

One's mind naturally turns to a well known conversation when Nicodemus, a doctor of the law, came to talk to Jesus of Nazareth about his emphasis upon the life of the spirit. His question was: How can a man be born again i.e. be born from above, spiritually. Jesus answered "The wind bloweth where it listed, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that

is born of the spirit". Two of His followers, after his resurrection, conversed with him not knowing who he was and afterward when they recognized him said to another "Did not our heart glow within us while he talked to us by the way?". It is this glow of the heart, this transformation of the human soul, this comprehension on the part of a man that his heritage is that of a son of God, his assurance, that becomes a part of his being, that life here can be the fore-runner of a life that is to come. This is the miracle through the ages that has touched life after life as seen from generation to generation and from century to century until it was especially apprehended by the Movarians in Germany and passed on by them to John Wesley and produced in him the miracle of a changed life.

John Wesley did not at first understand the channels through which his influence would flow. Figures can be merely prosaic representations of uninteresting facts. The number of rubber trees in a garden and their average yield per month can be recorded in figures but statistics tell only a small part of the record of a cultural or spiritual influence. Denied access to the regular churches, Wesley whose mind was methodical and whose methods were so methodical that the wags christened his followers as "Methodists", a name from which the sting of jeers has been removed, organised the first groups into societies who met for study and mutual helpfulness in the search for spiritual values.

It is of value to us to note what statistics are given at the present time concerning the Methodist churches throughout the world. I take these from the latest the 14th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Ministers 59,824; Lay preachers 93,081; Church membership and probationers 11,869,388; Sunday scholars 10,086,907; Churches etc. 105,596. December 24, 1794 the Methodist Episcopal Church was organised in the U.S.A. under the leadership of Thomas Coke, D.C.L. (Oxford) and Francis Asbury both appointed by Wesley to be superintendents of the work in America. The church thus established began its ecclesiastical career with 18,000 members, 104 travelling preachers, about the same number of local preachers, and more than 200 licensed exhorters. There were 60 chapels and 800 regular preaching places. Within five years the number of preachers swelled to 227, and the members to 45,949 (white) and 11,692 (coloured)."

You will note on page 4 of your programme a quotation from

Bishop Boaz of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in which he estimates the number of adherents, or those who naturally turn to the Methodist churches for their religious expression at some 40 millions. These are scattered round the world in some 50 countries and major colonies and represent the direct outgrowth of the Methodist movement in England and the British Isles and later that which, following the organization of a separate government, developed in the U.S.A. The world-wide Methodist constituency represents the outgrowth of the missionary effort of the American church co-operating with their brethren in Great Britain. It is interesting to note how close and friendly has been the fraternal relationship of these groups. An Ecumenical Conference held approximately each decade, brings together for mutual study and fraternal relationship representative Methodists from the entire world.

Five years ago the three major Methodist groups in Great Britain united to form one organic church known as the Methodist Church. It is interesting that three Methodist Churches in America are following that good example. One small group now numbering about 300 thousand members withdrew 100 years ago from the main body over difference of organization and method of work. In 1844 the Methodist Church in America was split in two on the question of slavery, a great moral issue on which it was more honourable to separate than to remain together. For years there have been friendly approaches. We have long been using a common hymnal. It is interesting now for us to record that three weeks ago the last of the three groups voted in the affirmative on Unification. The whole vote has been from 85% to 94% for union which will be completed upon the assembling of a Uniting Conference in May of 1939. This does not tell the story. It shows a willingness to unite for the sake of greater effectiveness as messengers of the Christian faith. Through the years no group has been more ready to co-operate with other groups than have the rank and file of this church, who have followed the spirit of the leader, who, when asked what was required to become one of his associates replied: "If your heart is as my heart, give me your hand".

There has been through these two centuries a fairly successful attempt to maintain a constructive evangelical note in the interpretation of the Christian faith, but along with this there has continued the spirit of John Wesley in allowing for wide liberty of individual development and religious expression. It has been the spirit and not the letter of the law that has been the quest.

As I tried to say in the opening sentences, this 200th anniversary service throughout the Methodist Churches of the world in commemoration of the conversion of John Wesley which enabled him to shift the centre of gravity from himself to God, is not primarily a recognition of the man but an attempt so to understand what happened to the man John Wesley that the same transforming power can be apprehended by

others in this day. I am sure that if John Wesley were to step into our midst to-night he would remind us of the confusion and the floundering throughout the world of the present day that is not a little akin to that which prevailed in western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. We have on every hand short-sighted and selfish attempts to lift the level of life in various nations by an unwise emphasis upon nationalism. Someone has wisely observed that since the world war all the movements of mankind have been in reverse. I recently listened to a professional economist who, with much enthusiasm, explained a proposed law which he had written which is expected to revise the land laws of a country and to bring in the rights of the common man. I could not fail to sense the fact that this man expected to do this solely as an economic programme stamped with the approval of a national assembly. Would that he would go back and read the pages of history and learn that in every age unscrupulous men have found ways to defeat well intentioned laws and to enslave those who were less fortunate than themselves. It is just this point to which I would call your attention, all who are within the sound of my voice in this hall or listening in on the air. Never before have we more solely needed a religion of dynamic spiritual power than we need to-day. I therefore challenge you to a study of the life of this remarkable man John Wesley, who is one of the outstanding contributions England has made to the world.

In closing I invite your attention to the words of Richard Watson Gilder, a poet whose pen was certainly inspired. This is his estimate of John Wesley.

"In these clear, piercing eyes behold
The very soul that ever England flamed!
Deep, pure, intense; consuming shame and ill;
Convicting men of sin; making faith live!
And—this the mightiest miracle of all—
Creating God again in human hearts."

The Malaysia Message
Vol. 48 No. 6
June 1938



2020
**PASSION
PLAY**
OBERAMMERGAU

PERFORMED ONCE EVERY 10 YEARS

Departure Dates:
May 31, Jul 25 & Sep 4

The image shows a large crowd of people in traditional, dark, heavy clothing, likely participants or spectators of the Passion Play. The text is overlaid on the image.



HOLYLAND 2020

*Make your dreams come true.
Visit the Holyland & see the Scriptures
come to life!*

Departure Dates:
Jan 27, Feb 26, Mar 14, Mar 16,
Mar 22, May 01 & May 31

The image features a tall, dark, twisted tree-like structure against a cloudy sky, representing the Holy Land. The text is overlaid on the image.



GREECE 2020

Departure Dates:
Apr 26 & Oct 2

The image shows the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, with its iconic columns and pediment. The text is overlaid on the image.



TURKEY 7 2020
CHURCHES

Departure Dates:
Mar 22, Apr 16, Oct 11 & Nov 17

The image shows a large, ancient stone building with multiple columns, likely a church or temple in Turkey. The text is overlaid on the image.

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