

## 1. Thanksgiving

1.1 First and foremost I would like to thank God for His grace that has sustained and strengthened me throughout yet another year.

1.2 In God's goodness as in the past, many people have journeyed with me. I want to thank God especially for the following persons:

1.2.1 Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik for his invaluable guidance.

1.2.2 The Substantive Members of the Executive Board who had made the workload lighter and easier especially when it came to decision-making.

1.2.3 The Conference Officers, Administrative Boards, and Programme Boards, who performed their duties with diligence to help our Annual Conference realize our vision.

## 2. Statistics

2.1 TRAC has 39 local churches and 6 preaching points. Last year, our **membership** was 16,102. At the end of June 2014 we recorded 16,255 in membership. This means our membership increased by 0.95% for the first half of this year.

2.2. Last year our **average attendance** was 12,365. At the end of June 2014 we recorded 13,036 in average attendance. Going by the average attendance, our growth rate would be 5.43% for the first half of this year.

2.2.1 In my maiden Presidential Address last year, I focused on the average attendance of the churches and compared the year 2012's average attendance to the first half of 2013's average attendance, and listed the churches that were showing an increase (18 churches), decrease (15 churches) and stagnation (6 churches) in average attendance.

2.2.2 Now when we compare the first half of 2014's average attendance with 2013's average attendance, we notice that 20 churches have an increase, 16 have a decrease, and 3 are stagnating.

2.3 A report by the United Methodist Church (UMC) in 2013 defines vital congregations in the following manner:

2.3.1 *"A vital congregation is one that grows over time, engages more people in its community, involves more people in ministry and mission and invites people to give generously to mission."*<sup>1</sup>

2.3.2 The same UMC report has defined vital congregations as those who:

- grow disciples in faith and fruitfulness (Galatians 3:28)
- involve people in life-giving ministries (Matthew 28:18-20)
- engage disciples passionately in seeking justice and mercy (Micah 6:8, Luke 4:17-21)
- give generously to the work of God's mission and ministry in the world (2 Corinthians 9:10-12)

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<sup>1</sup> *Background Data for Mission*, Global Ministries UMC, Vol. 25, No. 2, February 2013.

2.3.3 The UMC report has defined vital congregations as having the following components:

- inviting and inspiring worship,
- disciples engaged in mission and outreach,
- gifted, equipped and empowered lay leadership,
- effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership,
- disciple-forming small group ministries, and
- strong children's and youth ministry.

2.3.4 According to this UMC report, "New members brought in by profession of faith are an important indicator of vitality."

2.4 It is apparent therefore, that the number of youth and adult baptisms are better indicators of the growth of our churches through evangelism<sup>2</sup> and that we need to track the number of baptisms taking place in our churches to ensure that we have vital congregations, at the same time working at other components.

2.4.1 The following numbers show the **actual baptisms** that took place in our TRAC churches in the year 2012, 2013, and the first half of 2014.

		No. of infants/children under 12 years			No. of Youths & Adults above 12 years		
	<b>EASTERN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Dec 12</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	<b>Jun 14</b>	<b>Dec 12</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	<b>Jun 14</b>
1	Christ MC Bentong	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	WMC Kuala Lipis	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	WMC Kuantan	1	1	-	8	1	-
4	WMC Raub	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>NORTHERN</b>						
5	TMC Penang	4	12	2	15	8	1
6	WMC Alor Star	-	-	-	5	1	1
7	WMC Butterworth	-	1	-	-	-	-
8	WMC Kulim	7	6	-	-	2	-
9	WMC Parit Buntar	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	WMC Penang	5	4	-	9	13	-
11	WMC Sungai Petani	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>PERAK</b>						
12	Bercham MC Ipoh	-	-	2	-	-	4
13	Canning Garden MC Ipoh	11	9	4	22	15	7
14	Grace MC Ipoh	-	2	-	-	3	-
15	WMC Ipoh	2	-	1	7	6	8
16	WMC Kampar	-	2	2	2	6	-
17	WMC Sitiawan	2	10	-	16	13	17

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that children baptisms are not indicators of evangelism taking place in our churches. Parents who come to the Lord and get baptized through our evangelistic efforts may also present their children for baptism. Furthermore, children under 12 who are baptised may themselves indicate desire for baptism with conviction. Children are capable of making decisions to come to Christ.

18	WMC Taiping	-	-	-	-	12	-
19	WMC Teluk Intan	-	2	-	4	1	1
	<b>SELANGOR</b>						
20	DUMC PJ	-	-	-	115	100	55
21	Emmanuel MC PJ	3	6	-	20	8	-
22	SMC Petaling Jaya	-	-	-	-	4	4
23	SSMC Petaling Jaya	-	-	-	40	18	8
24	TMC Petaling Jaya	16	4	2	-	29	9
25	TMC Sg Buloh	-	2	-	5	2	-
26	Whispering Hope MC	-	1	-	-	-	-
27	WMC Klang	-	2	-	6	12	-
	<b>SOUTHERN</b>						
28	Taman Asean MC Melaka	-	-	-	4	8	11
29	Taman Ujong MC Seremban	-	-	-	-	8	2
30	WMC Johor Baru	6	5	2	7	2	5
31	WMC Melaka	2	-	-	5	5	-
32	WMC Segamat	-	-	1	-	-	-
33	WMC Seremban	2	4	-	-	-	-
	<b>WILAYAH</b>						
34	Christ MC Ampang	-	1	-	-	1	3
35	Faith MC Cheras	-	1	-	4	1	-
36	Grace MC Sentul	1	-	2	2	4	2
37	Life MC Puchong	3	1	2	2	1	3
38	WMC Kepong	2	3	-	3	4	-
39	WMC Kuala Lumpur	18	12	2	1	21	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>142</b>

2.4.2 The figures above show that the number of youth and adult baptism has slightly increased in the year 2013 compared to 2012. Percentage wise it is a 2.65% increase. However, the total number of infant, children, youth and adult baptism in 2013 was 400 compared to 387 total baptisms in 2012. This shows that in total there is a 3.36% increase in baptisms in the year 2013.

2.5 John Wesley said, “You have one business on earth – to save souls.” Until and unless Wesley’s burden for sinners becomes ours, and his passion to save the lost is acquired by us, we will never see people come to the saving grace of Christ our Lord. This burden and this passion cannot be taught or bought. No class or seminary can impart this to us. We acquire the burden from the pages of Scripture which talk about the consequences of distancing oneself from God, and we acquire the passion to lead them to Christ on our knees in sincere prayer for those who do not know the Saviour.

2.6 Churches that forget evangelism or do not emphasize sufficiently on evangelism are forgetting the very reason for our existence and more importantly the evangelistic task entrusted to us by the Lord of the church. It is our Lord who said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20; NIV).

2.7 The door for outreach ministry is slowly closing in this nation. We therefore must heed the word of the Lord that, "As long as it is day we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4, NIV).

2.8 If we want to see more baptism in our churches, amongst other things we need to introduce the following efforts prayerfully:

- Organize Alpha Course and invite friends
- Organize Alpha Youth Course and invite friends
- Organize Marketplace Alpha Course in your workplace
- Take part in Evangelism Explosion programs
- Organize Type-A Evangelism training
- Introduce evangelistic testimonies in church services and newsletters
- Any other good courses or efforts including youth rallies, and healing rallies
- Visitations
- Engage in missional (outwardly focused) activities as I mentioned last year.

### **3. Church Planting**

3.1 We are thankful that this year we have planted three Preaching Points (Bukit Rimau, Nusajaya, and Ipoh) and relocated one Preaching Point to Kota Damansara. Committed people from various churches, came together to make this possible by the grace of God.

3.2 I mentioned last year that one way of planting churches is the way we have always done it and that is, the entire initiative is to be left to a local church. I did suggest that we consider a new model – district churches work together by sending their members, sharing their finances, etc (without ignoring the older model). This year one preaching point was started using the older model and the other using the new model. By planting the new churches using the old and new models we have proven that both still work.

3.3 It is said that the number of Christians in Johor, Perak and Penang are increasing. These are the places that we should be starting more churches. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that Selangor and Kuala Lumpur have a combined population of over six million people.

3.4 TRAC statistics show that migrant ministry is growing significantly. BM speaking and Chinese speaking ministries are also growing. The statistics on baptism show that many migrant workers are getting baptized. For instance, in the last three years the only people who have been baptised in Taman Asean Methodist Church are the Nepalese. I urge our churches to take the migrant ministry seriously and not miss out on this opportunity that God has given to us.

3.5 Last year I mentioned that we must plant English speaking churches (even though it cannot be planted everywhere) without neglecting BM, Chinese and migrant ministries. I am glad that our TRAC churches are definitely headed in the right direction as we start new ministries in Chinese, BM, and other languages. The migrant ministry must be taken seriously as it is said that 8.6% of the population in Malaysia are made up of foreigners.

3.6 TRAC Statistician tells us that church growth has taken place essentially in urban areas. I believe there are two reasons for this:

- i. We are mainly an English speaking church located in urban areas.
- ii. Migrant ministry is bearing fruit turning cities into mission fields.

3.7 We need to continue in this effort to plant churches. A number of places were identified at the last Executive Board retreat early this year and they ought to be pursued.

#### 4. **Pastors**

4.1 As we plant churches and embark on new ministries we need Pastors to shepherd the people.

4.2 We are not unaware of the shortage of Pastors and it is not a new phenomenon. In one sense it may be a good thing that we are short of Pastors. It probably shows that we have not stopped planting churches. Secondly, it helps more lay members to be actively involved in ministry.

4.3 However, we need to raise more Pastors without delaying church planting. We cannot wait for more Pastors to come before we plant churches.

4.4 It is my prayer that we will be able to send a pastor to every church. Lack of money on the part of the local church must not hinder us from sending a pastor to every church. The strength of our connectional system is that we help one another.

4.5 We are mindful that LPL is helping us produce more Pastors. To aid in this effort those who are teaching LPL must not take more than three months to mark the LPL papers. The LPL candidates must also not take too long a time to complete the assignments.

4.5.1 Because the LPL route is becoming a common route that is being taken by our lay members in becoming pastors, the LPL assignments must be marked stringently without compromising on the standards.

4.5.2 Also, because LPL is a recognition that is awarded by the local church and the district, students who embark on this program must ensure that they pursue it with the approval of the LCEC.

4.6 In view of the increasingly rampant questioning and fault-finding of our Christian teachings it is necessary for us to ensure that our Pastors and teachers are properly trained with sufficient theological input. On-going theological equipping is necessary and Pastors especially must pursue it.

4.7 We are glad that some of our Pastors who entered the ministry with LPL certificates are pursuing further theological education. Three such persons have graduated with B.Th. and one with MCS from the seminary. Two more are pursuing B. Th. while one is in pursuit of MCS and another will embark on a program next year. This is commendable.

4.8 While still on the subject of Pastors let me reiterate my parting words at the end of the 38<sup>th</sup> Session. Pastors are sent to work with the existing leadership. Let me further add to that and say that there must be mutual accountability and submission in church leadership.

4.9 A word of caution to all in leadership. No one is above the decision-making body in our churches. No decision made by the decision-making body can be or should be overturned or disregarded by any individual or groups. Once a decision is made collectively we need to abide by it, even if we had disagreed with it in the meeting.

4.10 As far as possible, the office hours must be maintained although there is flexibility for Pastors and ministry workers to be out of office for ministry purposes. When we are not in the office part of accountability is to inform the people we work with as to our whereabouts.

4.11 Generally, I can say that our Pastors do work hard. Some of them are maintaining tight schedule and are not missing out on workloads in spite of personal challenges and family crisis. I commend them and ask us to lift them up to the Lord in prayer. Scripture does say, “Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.” 1 Thess. 5:12-13.

4.12 We thank God that between the Annual Conference sessions we have been able to appoint two persons as Pastors. Both of them will continue in the pastoral ministry in TRAC.

4.13 To help the pastors to preach better, Dr William Benjamin Lawrence, Dean at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in the United States came to guide us into better preaching. The Session was called GOOD TO GREAT PREACHING. This training was well attended in January and much appreciated.

4.14 There was a GOOD TO GREAT PREACHING II that was conducted by Bishop Emeritus Dr Hwa Yung and Rev Hwa Chih for lay preachers only. That training was timely and well attended in July.

## **5. Lifelong Discipleship and the Bible**

5.1 The Bible has taken much beating recently. Last year there was a threat to burn the Bible. This year the person who threatened to burn it was exonerated as defending his religion. Then early this year the Bible was confiscated and only on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November it was returned by the authorities. Then in a seminar held in a university the Bible took further beating as there were claims made that it is fake. In one of the states in our country, certain authorities have disallowed the Bible from being placed in hotel rooms.

5.1.1 In view of the above what should we do? Definitely as Christians we should not threaten to burn any book that is viewed sacred by anyone. I am confident Christians in Malaysia will not do such a disrespectful thing because our parents and pastors have taught us well. Moreover, we imitate our Saviour who was not violent.

5.1.2 What then should we do? Because the Bible is the word of God we must read it, study it, reflect on it, memorize it, teach it, preach it and live by it. In this way we defeat those who show contempt towards the Bible. If we don't teach and preach the word of God faithfully our churches will die.

5.1.3 We should not only teach the Bible but tell our members how to defend the Bible. We must not only teach what we believe but also teach why we believe it. Christian apologetics must not be overlooked. *Unveiled* or any similar material should be taught vigorously in view of the onslaught that the Bible is taking so that Christians will know which is fake and which is genuine.

5.1.4 In our preaching and teaching we need to show how the Bible addresses issues and concerns faced by society today. This is to show that because the Bible is a book inspired by God it has authority and it never lost its relevance to address ethical, moral and social issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We need Christian scholarship that will show to the Malaysian society that Scripture is applicable and relevant in today's society.

5.1.5 The Conference Statistician tells us that last year seventy-six small groups were formed. This is certainly an encouraging piece of news. If we could strengthen this ministry by emphasizing the study of the word and prayer to take place without neglecting time for praise and fellowship, in no time we will see our members grow in discipleship. As believers grow in discipleship, they will be able to help others grow in the Lord.

5.1.6 In the confiscation of Bibles and in the banning of Bibles we can see that even those who are opposed to the Bible are subconsciously affirming the inherent power of the Bible to transform the lives of its readers. Can any text book convert or transform lives if it is not the word of God? Let those who want to confiscate, ban and burn the Bible be left to the mercies of God.

5.1.7 For thousands of years many men and women have tried and done their best to disprove, discredit, demean, debase, degrade, defeat, defile, and destroy the Bible. Christians need to remember this - none of them succeeded. The Bible is here to stay. It continues to be translated into many more languages in order to speak to people in their mother tongue. "As of November 2012 the full Bible has been translated into 518 languages, and 2,798 languages have at least some portion of the Bible."<sup>3</sup> All those who have tried to burn and bury the Bible have themselves withered away like grass. The word of God lives forever.

5.1.8 The Prime Minister spoke at the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly about the practice of moderation. He said, "The fight against extremism is not about Christians versus Muslims or Muslims versus Jews but moderates versus extremists of all religions. We therefore need to rally a coalition of moderates, those willing to reclaim their religion and pursue the path to peace..... By demonstrating moderation in the political process, we can ensure no one is left outside society. By practicing moderation in religion, we can marginalize the extremists." To demonstrate moderation, the PM should have taken immediate steps to order the return of the confiscated Bibles. The world is watching. Furthermore, let the Prime Minister realize that the Christians in Malaysia are moderates. We give him both our hands to work together to pursue this agenda of the global moderates.

## **6. Wholesome Families**

6.1 Last year my emphasis was on Lifelong Discipleship – Following Christ, Becoming Like Christ (the first of the Four Essentials) and the need to be missional churches (outwardly focused churches). These two emphases must be on-going in our churches. This year let me focus on the second Essential which is "Wholesome Family – Growing Strong Families for Christ."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible\\_translations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translations)

<sup>4</sup> See TRAC Journal 2009 for more details.



6.2 Malaysia ended the year 2013 with a total population of 29,948,000.<sup>5</sup> In July 2014 the population is estimated to be at 30,073,353.<sup>6</sup> The age structure is as follows:

0-14 years: 28.8% (male 4,456,033/female 4,206,727)  
15-24 years: 16.9% (male 2,580,486/female 2,511,579)  
25-54 years: 41.2% (male 6,277,694/female 6,114,312)  
55-64 years: 7.6% (male 1,163,861/female 1,122,746)  
65 years and over: 5.5% (male 777,338/female 862,577)

The Christian population in this country was 9.2 % at the time the 2010 census was taken.<sup>7</sup> The ethnic groups are as follows as per 2010 estimates: Malay 50.1%, Chinese 22.6%, Indigenous 11.8%, Indian 6.7%, others 0.7%, non-citizens 8.2%.<sup>8</sup>

6.3 According to one study the Malaysian families are fragmented. Since the 1960s changes in population patterns and the economy have significantly affected Malaysian families. Over those four decades, economic development, modernization, and rural-urban migration together altered family ties and contributed to a more fragmented family structure.<sup>9</sup>

6.3.1 One of the reasons for family fragmentation is divorce which is rising in the Malaysian society. Divorce rose by 105% from 2002 to 2009.<sup>10</sup> A more recent report says that there is a divorce taking place every ten minutes in this country. “In 2012, a whopping 56,760 divorces were recorded, which is equivalent to a marriage breaking down every 10 minutes.”<sup>11</sup> The outcome is a rise in the number of single parents in this country. As a result of single parenting and also as a result of both parents being gainfully employed outside the home, children are being sent to child-minders. This creates further problems. As Bishop Emeritus Dr. Hwa Yung points out “parents are finding it increasingly difficult to relate to their children.”<sup>12</sup>

6.3.2 Parents do not have enough time with their children. Parents, on an average in Malaysia, are spending about 8 minutes a day with their children.<sup>13</sup> According to Focus on the Family Malaysia, parents spend about forty nine hours a week watching television, but spend only about thirty nine minutes a week in “meaningful conversation with their children.”<sup>14</sup> Children also do not have much time with their parents, as the parents sign them up “for numerous sports teams, music and dance lessons, social clubs and all kinds of community organisations.”<sup>15</sup> When parents do

<sup>5</sup> <http://countryeconomy.com/demography/population/malaysia>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/demographics_profile.html)

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_Malaysia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Malaysia)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/demographics_profile.html)

<sup>9</sup> Sunil Kukreja, “Malaysia – “Marriage and Family Formation Patterns” <http://family.jrank.org/pages/1090/Malaysia.html>

<sup>10</sup> John Emmanuel Kiat, Malaysia Divorce Rate Rises 105%, <http://mforum.cari.com.my/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=503686>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/one-divorce-in-malaysia-every-10-minutes#sthash.YHtlywTY.dpuf>

<sup>12</sup> Hwa Yung, “The Role of the Church in Vision 2020”, in *Modernity in Malaysia: Christian Perspectives*, ed. Ng Kam Weng (Kuala Lumpur: Kairos Research Centre, 1998), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Chew Sue Lee, “Godly Families – the Church’s Challenge”, in *An Evangelical Footprint: Leaving A Spiritual Legacy For Future Generations*, eds. Samuel Ang, Brenda Boler, Debbie Loh (Puchong: NECF, 2012) 114.

<sup>14</sup> James Dobson, “Making Family Time a Priority”, [http://www.family.org.my/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1766:making-family-time-a-priority-2011-08-15&catid=102:articles-on-the-star-parentshots-parentshotscom&Itemid=164](http://www.family.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1766:making-family-time-a-priority-2011-08-15&catid=102:articles-on-the-star-parentshots-parentshotscom&Itemid=164)

<sup>15</sup> James Dobson, “Making Family Time a Priority.”



not have enough time with their children, it gives rise to many emotional and social problems. It is believed that eighty per cent of juvenile offenders in Malaysia come from broken homes.<sup>16</sup>

6.4 The rising problems in homes are affecting the society. Crime rate has increased rapidly. Let me give one example. About three thousand rape cases were reported in 2012 alone. Most of the victims were below seventeen. However, activists say many more cases go unreported due to a continuing stigma for rape victims.<sup>17</sup>

6.5 The church is not facing a lesser challenge compared to others in this nation. Christians are not spared of divorce. In the church, in many instances, although counselling is provided to help couples, the church is still unable to help Christians to prevent divorce. One of the reasons the church is unable to help these couples is because often the couples who are facing problems in the marriage make known their problems to the church leaders at a very late stage – when they have already made up their minds to pursue divorce. Usually either one or both the persons refuse to work on their marriage.

6.6 If Christian parents who both work outside the home are also busy in church ministries after work, they are going to have even less time with their children. Without mincing words, Goh Keat Peng tells us of the challenges that even Christian parents are facing as a result of the lack of time with children. “This widening gap between parents and children, even in the Christian home, has been cited as the root cause of symptoms of maladjustment such as absenteeism, indiscipline and rebellious behaviour amongst school children. As their children grow older, the fears of the parents become deeper especially if they have not given them sufficient spiritual grounding to counter the ‘attraction’ of sex, violence and cultism.”<sup>18</sup>

6.7 To create wholesome families the church must first look at marriages.

6.7.1 In Scripture it is clear that God set up the institution of marriage and family first before any other institution, even the church. Genesis 2:24 says, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”<sup>19</sup>

6.7.2 We need to help unmarried people make right choices of finding spouses influenced by Christian principles. One of the books that can guide young adults and singles to make the right choices with regards who they should marry is the book *The Million Dollar Mate* by Randy Pope. This book offers six key principles to help a person find his/her “million dollar mate.”<sup>20</sup> *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris is another good book to guide young people to pursue smart love and not dumb love.

6.7.3 Premarital counselling needs to be taken seriously in our churches. When I was in CGMC we used to say to the couples intending to marry that they should go through premarital counselling first before they set the date for the wedding. The book

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<sup>16</sup> James Nayagam, as quoted by Chew Sue Lee, Godly Families – the Church’s Challenge, *An Evangelical Footprint: Leaving A Spiritual Legacy For Future Generations*, eds. Samuel Ang, Brenda Boler, Debbie Loh (Puchong: NECF, 2012), 113.

<sup>17</sup> <http://t.news.malaysia.msn.com/regional/four-charged-over-gang-rape-of-two-teens-in-malaysia-3>.

<sup>18</sup> Goh Keat Peng, Christian Family Life in a Changing Society, In *Modernity in Malaysia: Christian Perspectives*, ed. Ng Kam Weng (Kuala Lumpur: Kairos Research Centre, 1998), 53.

<sup>19</sup> All Scripture quotations are taken from *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)

<sup>20</sup> In fact this is such a good and helpful resource, that a few years ago I used the contents of this book as a basis to create a seminar for single young adults. The response was great and the young adults came from at least seven different churches. The participants wanted a sequel, which I offered.

*Before You Say I Do* by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts is an excellent book to work through in preparation for marriage.

6.7.4 Marriages can be strengthened by taking the married couples through *The Marriage Course* by Nicky and Sila Lee.

6.8 Second, to create wholesome families the church must disciple and equip parents to do faith-formation at home.

6.8.1 The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments call for faith-formation at home. For instance, the book of Deuteronomy calls fathers to tell the story of the Passover to their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Paul's letter to the Colossians also reminds the parents to instruct the children in the Lord. The Scripture passages from both Testaments help us discover the roles God has given to the parents, especially the fathers, to disciple the children.

6.8.2 While the emphasis may be on the role of fathers, Bruce K Waltke, who is an Old Testament Scholar, helpfully points out based on Proverbs 31:26 that "Mothers stood on equal footing with fathers in teaching children."<sup>21</sup>

6.8.3 When looking at Deuteronomy 4:9, we discover that grandparents also have a role in telling the story of the faith and in discipling the later generations. The Scripture says, "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." It is said, "Since parents devoted much of their time to work, the care of children as well as the inculcation of morals, beliefs, and values were frequently the province of grandparents."<sup>22</sup>

6.8.4 "If we want homes to be the center of faith formation, it's critical we train parents for their role."<sup>23</sup> We need to train parents to understand their children. *The Parenting Course*, by Nicky and Sila Lee is extremely helpful in this area. There should also be training for parents to do devotions at home, and there should be recruitments and training for families to lead in worship and be involved in mission. This will also help families spend time together, and parents will be able to do spiritual mentoring<sup>24</sup> of their children in the Christian faith while serving together.

6.9 Third, in order to create wholesome families the church should also be concerned about parents and children having more time for each other, both in the church and at home.

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<sup>21</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, "The Role of Women in Worship in the Old Testament" (Palo Alto, CA: Discovery Publishing 1995), <http://www.ldolphin.org/waltke.html>

<sup>22</sup> Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 177.

<sup>23</sup> Ben Freudenburg, with Rick Lawrence, *The Family Friendly Church*, (Colorado: Group, 1998) 80.

<sup>24</sup> A good book to consult would be Joe White and Jim Weidmann, *Parents Guide to the Spiritual Mentoring of Teens* (Illinois: Tyndale, 2001) This is a book that will guide parents to help their teens to know the biblical truths, grow into a relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord and overcome peer pressures.

6.9.1 The church must not be a place that “fragment(s) the families in its ministries, especially on weekends, even though it is the only institution that regularly calls the family to the same place week after week.”<sup>25</sup>

6.9.2 The church must not compete with family-time by taking parents and children away from home too often in order to be in church. The church needs to be sensitive to family-time when she works out her programs.

6.9.3 The church should not encumber parents, especially young parents, with too many meetings and/or activities in the church that would impede on quality time such as bonding and spiritual-building at home. Family-centred agenda must take priority in our churches.

6.10 Fourth, both the Old and New Testaments show that wholesome families can come about when the religious community has a role to play in supporting the spiritual growth of its members. As such, the church today should partner with parents to achieve this objective without taking away the responsibility of the parents. Scriptures also show that the religious community has to come alongside those who are not from Christian families, to ‘adopt’ them into the Christian homes in order to disciple the children in the context of a Christian family. Spiritual fathers and mothers are greatly needed for these purposes. What Paul was to Timothy and to Titus, and what Lois was to Timothy is something the older Christians today should emulate.

6.10.1 To achieve the above, the church should take mentoring seriously and equip every parent and every older person to be a mentor. When we do mentoring we also adopt Jesus’ method. “Values are caught more than taught..... So he (i.e. Jesus) taught them through real-life experiences...”<sup>26</sup>

6.10.2 Youth ministries cannot be done by one or two persons. In the book called *Foundations of Ministry* it is written, “For a church’s ministry to teenagers to be successful, it needs to have an adult staff to student ratio of approximately 1:8 for high school students and 1:6 for junior high students.”<sup>27</sup> This clearly tells that most youth ministries run by one fulltime personnel or a couple or two is not going to be effective. So it comes back to the fact that parents and older adults in church could truly support the ratio needed to carry out an effective youth ministry.<sup>28</sup>

6.10.3 Mark DeVries<sup>29</sup> points out and rightly so, that youth ministry should be an integrated ministry and not done in isolation. It should not be a ministry of the youth to the youths. It should not be a ministry of one person – the youth coordinator/pastor

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<sup>25</sup> Herbert Tan, as quoted by Chew Sue Lee, *Godly Families – the Church’s Challenge, An Evangelical Footprint: Leaving A Spiritual Legacy For Future Generations*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Larry Kreider, *Authentic Spiritual Mentoring – Nurturing Younger Believers Toward Spiritual Maturity* (California: Regal Books 2008), 113.

<sup>27</sup> Michael J Anthony (Ed.), *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a New Generation* (USA: BridgePoint, 1992), 164.

<sup>28</sup> Youth Ministry Architects, <http://ymarchitects.com/family-based-youth-ministry/> This website shows us Mark DeVries’ ministry of consultation to churches helping them come to know the God-designed structures of the nuclear family and the extended family of the church to help children and youth grow into maturity.

<sup>29</sup> Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministries*, Illinois: IVP, 1994) 103.

– to the youths as currently it often is. It should be done in partnership with families and adults in the church. Again to achieve this, a supportive community is needed.

6.11 Fifth, wholesome families come about through the church which is intergenerational in its worship ministry.

6.11.1 Scripture teaches that every generation should grow spiritually together with the others. Worship services in the Old Testament and New Testament were not only for adults but also for children. Parents and children worshipped together. Every generation grows emotionally and spiritually stable when it has the support of other generations.

6.11.2 In Exodus 12 it can be seen that the Passover was to be celebrated as a family. The children would be there with the parents in the celebration. The Passover celebrations were intergenerational. In Nehemiah 8:2 it is written “So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.” One can be sure that the mention of “all who were able to understand” shows that even children were part of the assembly. In this verse too it can be seen that Israel’s gathering to worship and hear the word of God, was an intergenerational gathering. More than one generation gathered together for public worship. In the Old Testament therefore, public worship was an intergenerational family affair.

6.11.3 Turning to the New Testament, again it can be seen that children formed the believing and worshipping community. Acts 18:8 says, “Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; ....” The fact that families and households were saved must mean subsequently households worshipped together when they met as Christian communities. Furthermore, the fact that the Epistle writers wrote addressing both the parents and their children tell us that households were worshipping together. In other words, the early worship gatherings must have been intergenerational worship gatherings. The early church then was intentionally intergenerational. Therefore, TRAC churches should also be intentionally intergenerational in order to focus on being wholesome families. The family that worships together in the church will be able to worship together at home.

6.11.4 Another item we ought to factor in is that no ministry in the church should clash with the time of the worship service so that it reflects the core value of conducting intergenerational service. The church must ensure that the children ministry and youth ministry are not clashing with church services, and the family time.

6.12 In his sermon, “On Family Religion”<sup>30</sup> based on Joshua 24:15, John Wesley states much of what he believes about marriage, family, and raising up of children. Although his own marriage to Moly failed, and he did not have any children, still he was spot on in his advice. One reason was surely because he knew Scripture well and secondly it is possible that he knew much about faith-formation of children as he saw this modelled well by his mother Susanna.

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<sup>30</sup> John Wesley, “On Family Religion,” a sermon, <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/94/>

6.12.1 In the above-mentioned sermon Wesley states that it is the duty of parents to impart spiritual knowledge and thus inculcate faith-formation of their children. Parents are given grace by God to carry out this responsibility. Any other person who comes to inculcate spiritual values at a later time is really coming in late for this sacred task. Faith-formation must begin as soon as the child is able to understand, able to reason, and is able to exercise his will. The child must be taught the Scripture from very young so that by knowing and becoming obedient to the Scripture the child experiences transformation.

6.12.2 Wesley says, “Next to your wife are your children; immortal spirits whom God hath, for a time, entrusted to your care, that you may train them up in all holiness, and fit them for the enjoyment of God in eternity. This is a glorious and important trust; seeing one soul is of more value than all the world beside. Every child, therefore, you are to watch over with the utmost care, that, when you are called to give an account of each to the Father of Spirits, you may give your accounts with joy and not with grief.”

6.12.3 He goes on to state that the task of the parents does not just stop at imparting spiritual knowledge and leading the child to have faith in God but more than that. In three areas at least (choice of school, career, and marriage) he feels that parents must continue to carry out their role as spiritual guardians.<sup>31</sup>

6.12.4 Wesley saw the spiritual responsibility entrusted to the parents as a wide and heavy responsibility. Parents must ensure that the child remains in the faith and grow in maturity in the faith, applying spiritual values in all areas of spiritual life.

6.13 When the home and the church join hands in ministry, a greater impact and impression can be achieved. This is necessary for transformation to take place. The church is made up of families. Therefore a church cannot be transformed if the homes are not transformed. The homes need to be so transformed in such a way that Kingdom love and values are the norms in the home. Christian parents need to understand that they must fulfil their God-given role towards their children and that the parents are the primary agents of faith formation.

6.13.1 The well-being of the church depends on the well-being of the family. “The family is the backbone of the Christian church and of society as a whole. History shows us that, if any society wants to survive, it must uphold, strengthen, and continue to build upon the biblical institutions of marriage and family.”<sup>32</sup> The church therefore needs to be in partnership with the parents in instilling biblical values in the children. If the families will have strong Christian faith, the church will be vibrant. The church alone cannot be ministering to each member of the family. The family itself needs to take interest to reinforce what the church teaches and the family is in a better position to reinforce biblical values taught by the church because the family spends more time at home than at church. Moreover parents have spiritual authority over their children. The church is made up, by and large, of families. If this ministry is taken seriously, one may see every person in church being disciplined and every member growing in the Lord. Thus the church itself will be vibrant, meeting the needs of the church via families who model godly lives to everyone.

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<sup>31</sup> See my book, *A Family-Friendly Church – Home and Church Joining Hands*, (Malaysia: Faith Books, 2014). The net proceeds from the sale of this book go towards the fund that is set aside by TRAC to subsidize the salary of TRAC Pastors.

<sup>32</sup> Dennis Rainey, *One Home at a Time* (Illinois: Tyndale, 1997), 199.

## **7. PMSM and Indigenous Church Ministries**

7.1 The formation of the Indigenous Ministry Task Force is a milestone achievement in MCM in recent years. The IMTF has formed strategies that will be shared with us tomorrow. We look forward to be in partnership with IMTF in order to see the name of Christ our Lord magnified and the lives of His people blessed, so that the less educated people especially will not be deceived and converted in dubious ways without their knowledge and consent.

7.2 There are ten areas that we are working hard at to strengthen the work of PMSM. They are: Church Planting, Discipleship, Tithing, Children Education, Cooperative/Entrepreneurship, Land Titles, Pastor's Image, Prayer Focus, Functional Church, Breaking Subsidy Mentality.

7.3 There is a good sum of money in fixed deposit kept for PMSM work. The plan is to hand over this money to PMSM to draw interests from the capital sum to manage the work from 2020 onwards. The Task Force set up by TRAC last year to multiply the sum of money is continuing in its task to find a proposal that is acceptable to the Executive Board and that is consistent with the guidelines set by the Methodist Church in Malaysia in financial matters.

7.4 We are also thankful to the other Annual Conferences in our Methodist Church in Malaysia who are supporting this work financially.

7.5 It is true that TRAC has continually supported PMSM for decades. But it is not true that PMSM has been on the receiving end all the years.

7.5.1 The members of the PMSM have given their own land at various villages to help build churches. These are pieces of land that could have been used for agricultural purposes and thus could have been used to generate income repeatedly. However, families of our PMSM members have donated the land willingly for churches to be built.

7.5.2 Our PMSM Pastors also make sacrifices to serve the Lord. Some of our Pastors serve in more than one village. They have to purchase their own motor-vehicles to travel to the interiors of the jungles.

7.6 With regards to giving I am glad that many of our churches give in many different ways. However, I do wish to mention that any item that we donate (be it clothes, vans, or motorbikes) to aid in the work of PMSM, must be usable items. Nothing should be given that could increase the burden of maintenance.

7.7 We will be doing a feasibility study to see if we can build a hostel to help the students in rural areas to come into Raub town to stay and study. We need prayerful planning in this matter. Much money may be required too.

7.8 We are thankful for the Korean Methodist partnership with us in this ministry and for their sacrifices. Yet we remind our Korean brothers and sisters of the sensitive nature of the ministry and at the same time, the need to respect the culture and leadership of the indigenous Christians, not forgetting the Wawasan Berdikari 2020 that we are working towards.

7.9 The PMSM Pastors have seen a need to further equip themselves in the area of theological education. Some of them are attending courses conducted by STM in SWTC Kampar.

7.10 Our Iban Methodist brothers and sisters have been blessed with parcels of land in town areas on which they wish to build churches. With some support from us they have been able to build one church in Bintulu. They are now ready to build at Sibu Jaya. Let us heartily support these ministries. The future of the Malaysian Church lies in the hands of the indigenous Christians.

## **8. General Concerns**

8.1 We thank God for the Methodist Prayer Convention 2014. I wish to thank our TRAC churches and individuals for the financial support given to organise the MPC 3 as well as sponsor the members of PMSM and some Iban Methodists to enable them to attend.

8.1.1 As a follow up to the Convention there are now Combined Methodist Prayer Gatherings around the country.

8.1.2 We also praise God for the participation of Methodist people in the 24/7 Prayer taking place in this nation. Members of our TRAC churches have chosen Mondays and Wednesdays to be the days when we pray for Malaysia.

8.2 I am glad to note that the attempt made last year to do our Local, District, and Annual Conferences is bearing fruit. We need to keep our meetings brief, our discussions to the point, and achieve the purposes for which the meetings were called.

8.3 Ministry to young adults is still our concern. The end goal is not to bring the young adults to the LCEC or even back to the church. The end goal is to connect them to God. We can help in this process by mentoring the young adults and cultivating relationship with them.

8.3.1 At the 14<sup>th</sup> June Young Adult Conversation held in the TRAC Office the young adults who were present indicated the following:

- Sermons preached in some of our churches need to be more life transforming and relevant. Relevant applications need to be made in the sermons.
- Churches need to have a sense of direction and it needs to be made known to the whole church.
- YAs cannot cope with faith and life in colleges and universities when they are confronted with opposing religious views.
- Disciple building and relationship building are important in church and need to be cultivated from young while they are in church.
- They find the church overloaded with programs but then the church doesn't seem to be a community.
- YAs want to be relational. Support groups via internet have to be a viable option.
- Meetings and ministries need to be sensitive to time because young adults are working people. "LCEC is super-scary" in the way it operates and some young adults are put off by it.

8.4 Four TRAC Methodist Women societies closed down this year, leaving eight societies to function. The tough question that TRAC MW must ask is whether the structure of MW is hampering its function or the sisters in our AC are busy with other ministries in the church. If the structure is hampering our ministry then the MW should petition for some changes to the structure through the DRC. Structures are there to help us do ministry better. If old structures are not suitable to do ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, then we need to attend to the matter and



create new structures that suit us. This however should be done using the proper channels. I do note that there are women's ministries in some of our TRAC churches without calling themselves MW. This should be proof enough that the ministry of the women, to the women, by the women has not lost its relevance.

8.5 TRAC Methodist Seniors Fellowship has eighteen chapters. Our seniors are not allowing their age to slow them down from serving the Lord. Their involvement in mission and in wanting to establish ministry homes for others is encouraging and commendable. I pray that they will look into one more area and that is MENTORING. The seniors have much wisdom to impart and they can create healthy relationships which can help the younger ones.

8.6 The Methodist Education Foundation is seeking to increase its funds in order to be able to give out more loans and grants to deserving students who apply for it. Our giving will help students pursue knowledge. This year a number of TRAC churches contributed towards this fund. The year has not ended. Those who have not given can still do what they can, both as individuals and as churches.

8.7 Our involvement in Schools is absolutely necessary. Again while the doors remain open and in order to keep them open we need participation from all our members in the ministries of the schools – both government-aided schools and our own private schools. We need to help build strong mission schools. In this way, we can make a lasting spiritual impact in the lives of the teachers and children who go through our schools.

8.8 In countries where ISIS is massacring Christians and destroying every bit of Christian memory, we need to help the Christians. This year we were able to send money to the living victims of such deplorable acts. The international community has been slow in coming to the aid of Christians. In fact, it is said that in 110 countries Christians are facing persecution. Neither do Christians fight back. Truly it is Christianity that is the religion of peace because we follow the Prince of Peace. Let us continue to help the Christians who are victimised and persecuted anywhere. Let us pray that the demonic expressions of ISIS will be totally annihilated by the Lord God Almighty.

## **9. Personal Remarks**

9.1 As an Annual Conference our concern is for church growth. We cannot deny the need to become vital congregations. I believe we will become vital congregations if we adopt the:

- Persistence in ministry of Wesley MC Kuala Lipis
- Biblical truth emphasis of Wesley MC Alor Star
- Social ministry emphasis of Wesley MC Penang
- Administrative and IT proficiency of Trinity MC Penang
- Generosity of Wesley MC Butterworth
- Supportiveness of the lay leadership of Wesley MC Taiping
- Exuberant worship of Living Faith, Ipoh
- Vernacular ministry emphasis of Wesley MC Sitiawan
- Missions emphasis of CGMC, Ipoh
- College ministry emphasis of Wesley MC Kampar
- Adult nurture class emphasis of Wesley MC Kuala Lumpur
- Family ministry emphasis of Emmanuel MC
- Free tuition emphasis of Living Stone, Kota Damansara
- Visitor-friendly emphasis of Living Hope, Bukit Rimau
- Evangelistic passion and fervent prayer of DUMC

Discipling emphasis of Subang MC  
Unity of Trinity MC Sg. Buloh  
Children ministry emphasis of SSMC  
Youth ministry emphasis of Trinity MC PJ  
Courageous leadership of Nusajaya Johor  
Hospitality of Wesley MC JB<sup>33</sup>

9.2 We are saddened by the passing away of the following persons who served the Lord and HIS Church valiantly. Our condolences to their families:

- Rev. Mazlan A/K Tempel – PMSM Pastor
- Rev. H. Paul Castor – Former MAC, SMAC Pastor
- Mrs. Judith Guinn (wife of Rev. Oscar A. Guinn Jr.) – MAC, SMAC Pastor's wife
- Dr Chan Kook Weng – Former Conference Lay Leader
- Dr Thurairatnam – Former Chairman of TRAC Board of Finance

9.3 This year we were shocked by the disappearance of the civilian plane and the passengers of MH370 and the shooting down of the MH 17 civilian plane that has caused the loss of innocent lives. Our prayers remain for the family members of the victims of the tragedies.

9.4 A word of thanks to Ms Matilda Renganayagee for her many years of service as the TRAC Office Administrator. She worked until retirement age and subsequently for another five and a half years after retirement.

9.5 I praise God for every sacrifice that everyone makes to ensure that TRAC churches and our ministries continue to flourish.

9.6 A special word of thanks to all retirees, including pastors who although retired but are not tired of serving.

9.6.1 John Wesley who passed away almost at the age of 88 said, "I am tired in the work but I am not tired of the work." Let that be true of all of us!

9.7 As an Annual Conference we thank God for CFM, CCM, NECF and others who have stood up in these trying times and spoken up for the Church in Malaysia. Those involved in these ministries need our continuous prayer support.

9.8 I thank everyone who prayed for me, encouraged me and laboured with me.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Rev. Dr. T. Jeyakumar  
President  
Trinity Annual Conference  
Methodist Church in Malaysia

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<sup>33</sup> I am pointing out only one of the strengths of each church. This does not mean that the churches mentioned have only one strength each. As for the churches not mentioned here, it simply means I have not observed their strengths carefully.

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