

# **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

**TRINITY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**THE METHODIST CHURCH IN MALAYSIA**

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**(Port Dickson Methodist Centre)**

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**T. Jeyakumar**

## 1. Thanksgiving

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

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

1.2.1 Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik for his invaluable guidance.

1.2.2 The Substantive Members of the Executive Board for teamwork.

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 At this 41<sup>st</sup> Session, which is also the end of a quadrennium, I wish to recall where we are at by the grace of God.

2.1.1 Number of Pastors:

- 23 Travelling Elders
- 3 Deacons
- 3 Probationary ministers in the itinerant ministry
- 17 Local Pastors (ordained and non-ordained)
- 3 part-time Local Pastors
- 9 retired Elders
- 3 retired Local Pastors
- 2 retired Diaconal Ministers

2.1.2	December 2012	June 2016
Membership	15,821	16,938
Average attendance	12,125	12,881

2.1.3 Average attendance increased significantly in 12 churches:

	December 2012	June 2016
WMC Kuala Lipis	21	30
WMC Butterworth	46	61
WMC Kampar	99	106
WMC Taiping	193	235
WMC Teluk Intan	73	83
CMC Ampang	88	142
FMC Cheras	55	70
DUMC	4012	4640
TMC PJ	752	808

WMC Klang	288	342
Taman Asean MC Melaka	27	100
WMC Segamat	55	109

I am encouraged by the growth of the churches above, especially the very small ones. It tells us that a new season can come upon even the smaller churches in the very small towns when the members begin to be outwardly focused.

2.1.4 Average attendance dropped significantly in 10 churches:

	December 2012	June 2016
WMC Kulim	52	23
Trinity MC Penang	403	372
Bercham MC Ipoh	113	92
CGMC Ipoh	823	732
WMC Kepong	150	103
WMC Kuala Lumpur	1081	996
WMC Seremban	262	231
TUMC Seremban	97	79
WMC Melaka	311	276
WMC Johor Baru	277	210

Except for Kulim all the other 9 churches are in large towns and cities. All the above mentioned churches need to study the reasons for the drop in their attendance.

2.1.5 The children and youth ministry numbers are as follows:

	31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2012	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2016
Church School	2054	1644
MYF	1166	1043
BB	1250	1533
GB	1394	1683

2.1.6 There were 39 Local Conferences and 2 Preaching Points at the beginning of the quadrennium. Now we have 43 Local Conferences and 3 preaching points, with another preaching point taking shape.

2.1.7 We have 54 worship services being conducted in English.

2.1.8 Our work has grown to incorporate 6 worship services in Bahasa Malaysia, 13 in Chinese and 2 in Tamil over the last few quadrenniums.

2.1.9 Additionally, we have worship services in the following foreign languages to cater to migrant workers: 1 Cambodian, 1 Telegu, 3 Nepalese and 3 Myanmarrese.

2.1.10 Our churches are making inroads into schools and colleges through sports ministry, chapel services, Christian Fellowships, music ministry, and through Boys' and Girls' Brigades.

2.2 We also have Persidangan Misi Sengoi Methodist (Sengoi Mission Conference) under our care with ministries in 59 villages, and a membership of 4766 members, 23 Travelling Elders, 1 Deacon and 2 Guru Injil in active service, and 2 retired Elders. We have 49 church buildings (called chapels) in the villages.

2.3 New members brought in through baptism are indicators of the church's focus on its mission. The following baptisms took place in our TRAC churches this quadrennium.

		Baptisms under 12 years				Baptisms above 12 years			
	<b>EASTERN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	<b>Dec 14</b>	<b>Dec 15</b>	<b>June 16</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	<b>Dec 14</b>	<b>Dec 15</b>	<b>June 16</b>
1	Christ Bentong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	WMC K Lipis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	WMC Kuantan	1	3	-	-	1	8	-	-
4	WMC Raub	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>NORTHERN</b>								
5	TMC Pg	12	4	4	1	8	6	13	-
6	WMC AS	-	-	-	-	1	8	-	-
7	WMC B'worth	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-
8	WMC Kulim	6	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
9	WMC PB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	WMC Pg	4	1	2	-	13	7	9	7
11	WMC SP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>PERAK</b>								
12	Bercham Ipoh	-	2	-	-	-	4	3	-
13	CGMC Ipoh	9	9	4	8	15	15	28	15
14	GMC Ipoh	2	-	-	-	3	2	-	-
15	LFMC	n/a	n/a	-	1	n/a	n/a	1	-
16	WMC Ipoh	-	2	5	-	6	18	13	4
17	WMC Kampar	2	1	-	-	6	2	3	-
18	WMC Sitiawan	10	-	-	-	13	17	5	-
19	WMC Taiping	-	-	-	3	12	9	11	3
20	WMC T. Intan	2	-	-	1	1	1	3	2
	<b>CD 1</b>								
21	Christ Ampang	1	-	-	-	1	5	1	1
22	Faith Cheras	1	1	-	-	1	1	3	1
23	Grace Sentul	-	2	1	-	4	2	4	-
24	Living Stone	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	1	2

25	WMC Kepong	3	-	-	-	4	-	2	1
26	WMC KL	12	9	6	4	21	21	32	3
27	TMC S Buloh	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	3
28	W. Hope	1	1	-	-	-	3	8	-
	<b>CD 2</b>								
29	DUMC PJ	-	-	-	-	100	103	311	13
30	EMC PJ	6	-	1	-	8	7	10	6
31	SMC	-	-	-	-	4	4	-	1
32	SSMC	-	-	-	-	18	18	29	7
33	TMC PJ	4	15	10	1	29	40	29	9
34	WMC Klang	2	1	2	-	12	3	6	-
35	LHMC	n/a	n/a	3	-	n/a	n/a	1	-
36	Life Puchong	1	2	1	-	1	3	2	-
	<b>SOUTHERN</b>								
37	TUMC S'ban	-	-	-	-	8	2	1	2
38	WMC S'ban	4	-	11	1	-	4	3	2
39	TAMC Melaka	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
40	WMC Melaka	-	5	2	-	5	-	2	-
41	WMC Segamat	-	1	-	-	-	4	-	-
42	Nusajaya	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	1	-
43	WMC JB	5	5	1	-	2	18	4	3
	<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>86</b>

### 3. Pastors

3.1 This year two of our pastors graduated with M. Min. One part-time local pastor graduated with B. Div. We are happy that pastors continue to further their theological education.

3.2 A few years ago the Laity Session mooted the idea that pastors be encouraged to go for a retreat of at least 3 days in a year (three days leave given by the local church). The suggestion was then approved by the AC Session. Pastors need to take this seriously and find solitude in a retreat setting and be refreshed. Work never ends. Because work does not end then we need to take time off to equip ourselves for unending work. We can fulfil our vocation well when we have been much with God and heard God much.

3.3 Our vocation as Pastors is to be “spiritual directors” and not “program directors.”

3.3.1 “Why are we so easily distracted? Because we get asked to do a lot of things than this, most of which seem useful and important. The world of religion generates a huge market for meeting all the needs that didn’t get met in the shopping mall. Pastors are conspicuous in this religious marketplace and are expected to come up with the products that give customer satisfaction. Since the needs seem legitimate enough, we easily slip into the routines of

merchandising moral advice and religious comfort. Before long we realize we are program directors in a flourishing business.....

I want to be a pastor. I want to lead people in worship each Lord's Day in such a way that they will be brought into something large and beautiful – into God and His salvation (not reduced or cramped or demeaned). And I want to be with them through the days of the week at those times when they need verification or clarification of God's continuing work and will in their lives (not promoting sure-fire moral schemes, not bullying them into churchly conformity) so that they can live originally and praisingly.”<sup>1</sup>

3.4 I wrote the following prayer for those I labour with:

“Thank you God for pastors with whom I labour for You.  
Help us work knowing that in serving others we serve You.  
Give to us the joy of serving. Enable us to work hand-in-hand;  
shoulder the responsibilities together, and make light one another's load.  
Give us the courage to do what is right,  
the strength to persevere, and the wisdom to make God-honouring decisions.  
At the end of the day when our work is done and we look at the results  
help us know that only eternity can reveal the lasting fruits of our labour.  
With this in mind help us Lord to toil for you,  
knowing our labour in the Lord is never in vain.”

3.5 I have intentionally arranged LPL courses in the TRAC Office. Yearly we try to offer four courses. In this way a person who takes these courses seriously will be able to complete the LPL academic requirements in two years. This effort does not stop courses from being organized at local churches. Next year another 4 courses will be offered in the TRAC Office (OT, Homiletics, Christian Doctrine and one elective).

3.6 We pray that some of the LPL holders will consider becoming part-time pastors (or bi-vocational pastors).

3.7 We have to seriously encourage the younger ones to come into fulltime pastoral ministry. One way to do this is to encourage them to work in the church and this will help confirm their desire to serve.

#### **4. A Vision for the World – Embracing Local and Global Mission for Christ**

4.1 This is our fourth Essential which I wish to emphasise this year. As a reminder I wish to point out that all our churches are to emphasise all the Four Essentials yearly and report on them to our Local Conferences, District Conferences and Annual Conference. At the same time, local churches are also free to focus or emphasise on additional essentials at the local church level. While many things could be going on in the church, the Conference emphasises on the Four Essentials to ensure that these are being seriously attempted at and attended to in the local churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Peterson, Eugene H., *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Eerdmans: Michigan, 1992), p 173.

4.2 We begin this segment by remembering that God is the source of missions. He calls whom He wills and sends those He has called to carry out His purposes.

4.3. “All mission or missions which we initiate, or into which we invest our own vocation, gifts, and energies, flow from the prior and larger reality of the mission of God.”<sup>2</sup>

4.4 We accept the call of God and carry out His purposes because He is Sovereign. He is the Creator who owns and rules the whole world.

4.5 The coming of God in the person of Jesus shows that God who is the Ruler of the world is intent on saving His people.

4.6 Therefore, as the “body of Christ” we the Church take missions seriously because “the living God is a missionary God.”<sup>3</sup>

4.7 In one sense we can say, all our churches are involved in missions because they contribute to PMSM funds.

4.8 In terms of missions, our local churches are mostly doing missions without much partnership with other local churches.

4.9 TRAC churches are involved in OA work, migrant ministry work, missions in Sabah and Sarawak, and missions overseas.

4.10 Some TRAC churches have sent missionaries overseas and continue to support them financially. Other local churches financially support missionaries though not sent by them.

4.11 Short-term missions’ trips are undertaken by our churches regularly. These trips can bring a three-fold blessings. Firstly, the mission area that is targeted can benefit through a group of people who can carry out a specific task or project. Secondly, the participants often come back with a renewed relationship with God and may even consider missions as their vocation. The participants too often count their own blessings and show more interest in missions. Thirdly, the sending church benefits by a renewed commitment on the part of the participants to be involved in local church ministries.

4.11.1 Therefore, more of our churches should send individuals and families for short-term missions.

4.11.2 However let us be careful that short-term mission trips are not undertaken by those who are not clear of their objectives. The presence of such persons will not help those who are serious about missions and it will definitely not help the mission field either.

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<sup>2</sup> Wright, Christopher J., *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (IVP: Downers Grove, 2006), p 531.

<sup>3</sup> Winter, Ralph D. & Hawthorne, Steven C eds. *Perspectives*, John Stott – The Living God is a Missionary God (Paternoster: UK, 1981), p 3.

4.11.3 Missions, whether short-term or long-term is tough work. I thank God for missions committees in local churches and the TRAC Missions Board that organize these mission trips. I thank God for those who even use their annual leave or take no pay leave to go on these missions trips. Many people use their own money to make these trips. I commend their dedication.

4.12 There needs to be continuous emphasis on missions in our local churches. The emphasis can come through sermons, prayer, and highlighting of missions organizations. When did you last preach/hear a sermon on missions in your local church? When did you last pray that God will raise up missionaries from amongst our members? When did you last highlight the needs of a missionary? When was the last time your church commissioned a missionary? When was a missions organization allowed to set up a booth in your church to promote the area of missions?

4.12.1 There is only one church that I know of whose Missions Committee has been having its own prayer meeting regularly in the home of its Missions Committee Chairman – praying for missionaries, mission trips and mission endeavours.

4.12.2 A study in America shows that only 7% of churches always pray for their missionaries during public services. 28% prays almost always. 45% prays sometimes. 14% hardly prays while 6% did not respond to the survey.<sup>4</sup>

4.13 Like in the book of Acts we need to pray that God will call people from our midst and then set those people apart and send them with much blessings and resources into the mission field. I think the early church sent many people into the mission field because she was constantly seeking the mind and the will of God. The early church took the spreading of the gospel seriously because the Holy Spirit transformed them using the gospel of Christ. If we intend to send out more missionaries then we need to take the gospel and transformation seriously.

4.13.1 “Missions flows from the heart of a people who have been transformed by the Holy Spirit and who leave all to follow Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

4.14 To do effective missions we need money. Therefore we must challenge our people to give more to missions.

4.14.1 At the same time the money that has come into our church coffers designated for missions must be released for missions. The money cannot be kept in fixed-deposits when the mission field is in dire need of money. Don't let the money designated for missions sit in the bank collecting interest when it can be put to use in the missions field where it can help reach souls.

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<sup>4</sup> Rheenen, Gailyn Van, & Anthony Parker, *Missions – Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), p 57.

<sup>5</sup> Engel, James, F., & William A. Dryness, *Changing the Mind of Missions – Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Illinois: IVP, 2000), p 36.



4.14.2 Good stewardship of church money does not mean accumulation of it in the bank. Good stewardship means releasing the funds to the right place at the right time through the right channels.

4.14.3 Unless we allow the Holy Spirit of God to transform our attitude towards missions and towards missions-giving, we are not going to be a mission-minded and missional church.

4.15 Missions now is at our doorstep. Indeed our churches recognize this fact. It is evident by the existence of 8 worship services to migrant workers. It is my prayer we can do more of such services and reach out to more people groups.

4.16 I am aware that sometimes it is difficult for one local church to start a new ministry, especially in the area of missions and migrant ministry. As usual our strength is Connectionalism.

4.16.1 I wish to encourage our local churches at District level to work in consultation and partnership with one another to begin such work.

4.16.2 At this Conference Session we are setting aside time for discussions to take place amongst churches in the same district. I pray this time will be put to good use.

4.16.3 I encourage churches to work directly with the Board of Missions too in order to join in the work that we are undertaking in Sabah and Sarawak as well as overseas.

4.16.4 We must also work to help Persidangan Misi Sengoi Methodist, Sarawak Iban Annual Conference, Tamil Annual Conference, Sidang Injil Borneo, Protestant Church of Sabah and anyone else who seek our help.

4.17 At least 10 more OA villages have opened up to us for further ministries in upper Perak. TRAC will have to cover these new frontiers with our funds and workforce.

4.18. In this whole area of missions I would like our churches to join in the discipling of Orang Asli in Peninsula and Orang Asal in Sabah and Sarawak. Then I urge us to reach out to migrant workers with a view to introduce Christ to them. And then let churches who can manage overseas missions to move in that direction too.

4.18.1 If I am forced to state my priority according to the urgency and the limited resources we have, I would say the following is the way I would prioritize it.

- Disciple Orang Asli and Orang Asal
- Introduce Christ to migrant workers
- Support overseas missions

## 5. Further Forward

As we look to a new quadrennium let me suggest briefly a way forward if we truly want to see every one of our local church grow and Trinity Annual Conference march forward.

### 5.1 Take Scripture seriously

5.1.1 Read it daily. Follow a scheme that helps you and the people in the church to read the Bible from cover-to-cover.

5.1.2 Preach and teach the Bible faithfully.

5.1.2.1 All who are taking our pulpits regularly or occasionally have to improve on their sermon preparation ability and delivery skills. Some people might fall asleep in church because they are on medication or they did not have a good night's sleep the previous night. But no sermon should take the place of a sleeping pill.

5.1.3 Bible-focused sermons will raise Bible-focused Christians. Preachers' opinions on certain matters help but ultimately people come to church to hear what the Bible has to say. So I recommend expository sermons.

5.1.4 People don't want self-help sermons. They want Bible based sermons that help them know God and provide biblical solutions to their challenges.

5.1.5 Guard the pulpit. Don't give it to just anyone and invite wrong teachings.

5.1.6 I hear all over that many people are going to a particular Bible Study outside the church or join in one that borrows our premises. Is this happening because we have failed to provide Bible studies in our churches?

5.1.7 We need to offer good Bible Studies and discipleship classes in our churches. We cannot leave our people to go find food somewhere else because we have failed to provide it.

### 5.2 Worship exuberantly

5.2.1 Our worship services must help people connect with the living God.

5.2.2 Worship has become a "missing jewel" (in the words of A. W. Tozer) in some of our services.

5.2.3 "Many young believers enjoy what is often called 'contemporary worship' but fear that they are getting little more than a disguised version of their culture in Christian language, so they begin to consider alternatives. They enjoy raising their hands, singing songs of adoration to God, and seeing

PowerPoint and video clips, but they are no longer impressed. They are not sure what is missing, but they want something more mysterious, deeper, more foundational to who they are. They long for an encounter with the mysterious God, who cannot be defined in consumer-oriented techniques and self-improvement language.”<sup>6</sup>

5.2.4 Have the interest of all age groups in mind when doing church and especially worship service. Have everyone worship God.

5.2.4.1 Create extra worship services to cater for different styles of worship if necessary.

5.2.5 We need to think through the flow of our services. Much thinking needs to go into this.

5.2.6 To take an offering after the sermon does not seem to me a right response to the sermon. It might be suitable for those who come from other traditions but not for us who come from the Wesleyan tradition.

5.2.6.1 John Wesley gave altar calls at every place after he preached. Often he wrote in his journal the following words: “I there offered Christ;” “I offered the redemption that is in Christ;” “I declared the free grace of God;” “I began to call sinners to repentance;” and “I invited all guilty helpless sinners.”

5.2.6.2 It will be a lost opportunity to preach and let the people go without challenging them to make a decision either to accept Christ or to respond to any point in the sermon. For me, to take an offering or make an announcement after preaching is to waste a God-given opportunity.

5.2.6.3 In one of our churches invitations are given every time at the end of the sermon. It is no wonder that we see people coming forward regularly for prayer and new-comers choosing to become followers of our Lord Jesus Christ practically every week.

5.2.7 The amount of time spent in making announcements needs to be scrutinized. Announcements need to be crisp and to the point. Only a few announcements needs to be highlighted.

5.2.8 The frequency of second offering needs to be thought through. If we are taking second offerings frequently, what are we saying about the church’s ability to be good stewards of funds already given by members? What are we saying to seekers about church and money?

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<sup>6</sup> Rea, Robert F., *Why Church History Matters*, (IVP: Downers Grove: 2014), p 57.

## 5.3 Make disciples

5.3.1 To those who were interested in His life and teaching Jesus invited them to follow Him. He was calling them to be His disciples, in other words. And they literally followed Him in the first century AD. But, “as we read the Gospel narrative we quickly observe that the ‘following’ also involves a *μετάνοια* (a radical turning around) of lifestyle, world-view, and spiritual orientation, a total transformation of the self...”<sup>7</sup>

5.3.2 Mentor church people. Why is it important? Because “Mentoring is a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing their wisdom and resources.”<sup>8</sup> This will help especially new Christians grow in Christ by observing the maturing Christians. Let it become a culture to us.

5.3.3 There are 826 small groups this year, compared to 577 in 2012. In December 2012 our AC Session made a decision to encourage every church to take small groups seriously and this decision has paid off well. This steady growth is encouraging. 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, we will see our members grow as true disciples of our Lord.

5.3.4 Last year we were hoping to meet the needs of specific groups, in particular the needs of men and the needs of women in a more specific way. We thank God that DUMC organised a Men’s Conference in the month of October this year. The Conference was attended by about 400 men. Most of them went away with a commitment to start men’s group.

5.3.5 Our sisters have also taken seriously the call to meet women’s specific needs by organizing Women’s Conference. In fact, there will be two Women’s Conferences in the year 2017.

5.3.5.1 I pray these Conferences will bring about awareness to create separate avenues for men and women to talk, share, pray and to fellowship with the view of meeting specific needs that each gender has.

5.3.6 Ministries to different age groups and gender groups have their place in the Methodist Church. Don’t neglect the opportunity to disciple the groups separately.

5.3.7 There are 95 prayer groups in our churches today compared to 104 in the year 2012. Eight churches did not have any prayer group in 2012, whereas currently we have only four churches without any prayer group. (Last year there were 5 churches without any prayer group.) In 2012 we had 809 people in prayer

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<sup>7</sup>*Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making*, (Anglican Witness: London, 2016), p4.

<sup>8</sup> Elmore, Tim, *Life Giving Mentors*, (Growing Leaders Inc.: Georgia, 2008), p 2.

groups whereas we now have 962 people attending prayer gatherings in their churches.

5.3.7.1 Oswald Chambers said, “We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense.” If we know the importance of prayer we will encourage corporate and individual prayers.

5.3.7.2 In all your prayers pray for the church and the nation always.

5.3.8 Teach our people to give generously to the church. “Not, how much of my money will I give to God, but, how much of God’s money will I keep for myself?” - Rev John Wesley

5.3.9 Disciple the Christians to be free of corruption. Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index has placed Malaysia at 50 (last year it was 52) on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The church must not follow in the declining footsteps of the nation.

#### 5.4 Plant churches

5.4.1 The total population of Malaysia stands at 31.7 million people according to a statistics released in July 2016 by the National Statistics Department.

5.4.1.1 89.7% citizens; 10.3% non-citizens  
Ethnicity - BP 68.6%; Chi. 23.4%; Ind. 7.0%; Others 1.0%  
Age group – 0-14 - 24.5%; 15-64 - 69.5%; 65 and above - 6.0%  
Gender – Male 16.4%; Female 15.3%  
Highest population Sel. 19.05%; Sabah 12%; Johor 11.5%  
Christians in Malaysia 9.2% (S’wak 42.6%; Sabah 27.8%)

5.4.2 The above statistics tell us many things. Firstly, that TRAC can and should plant many more churches especially in Selangor and Johor since they are the most populous States in Peninsular Malaysia. Certainly we can plant English speaking churches in these two States.

5.4.3 Chinese, BM, Tamil and migrant ministries must not be neglected. These services are helping us reach out to more people. The migrant ministry must be taken seriously as 10.3% of the population in Malaysia are made up of foreigners.

5.4.4 We need to actively plant churches. In the light of stringent laws coming into place. It would be helpful to have more churches before we are disallowed the privilege of planting new churches. We have all read recently about the situation in Brunei. Although only 67% are Muslims but no new churches are

going to be allowed now that their Parliament has adopted the hudud law.<sup>9</sup> It is said that Muslims make up about 60% of Malaysia's population.

5.4.5 We need to be missional. Our focus must be beyond the four walls of our churches. We need to be outwardly focused.

5.4.6 Take evangelism seriously. Train our people to share their faith. "You have one business on earth – to save souls." – Rev John Wesley

5.4.7 We must train and mobilize all our people to participate in ministry within and outside the premises of the church.

5.4.8 Support new ministries and preaching points. New congregations reach new people. It appears to me that most of the new congregations are doing more baptisms than congregations that have been around for quite some time.

5.4.9 The missional church works with others. TRAC must work with any church that is willing to work with us.

## 5.5 Reach the poor

5.5.1 The church has a responsibility towards the poor. So we must reach the poor, touch their lives and meet their needs. Let us guard against becoming a middle class church that invites only the middle class and the upper middle class.

5.5.2 "Do not confine your conversation to gentle and elegant people. ... I want you to converse more, abundantly more, with the poorest of the people, who, if they have not taste, have souls, which you may forward on their way to heaven. And they have (many of them) faith, and the love of God in a larger measure than any persons I know. Creep in among these, in spite of dirt, and a hundred disgusting circumstances; and thus put off the gentlewoman."<sup>10</sup>

5.5.3 The poor are increasing. The number of people needing BR1M help shows that the needy persons and families are increasing.

## 5.6 Help families and singles

5.6.1 Don't neglect ministry to families. Unless we come alongside families to equip them and work alongside them, we will see very little results in the life of individuals.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/10/03/new-churches-or-temples-not-allowed-only-completed-places-of-worship-to-remain-in-brunei/>

<sup>10</sup> John Wesley in a Letter to 'A Member of the Society, February 7, 1776, Works 12: 301.

5.6.2 Keep families together in the worship service. Promote intergenerational worship services. But intergenerational worship service does not mean that we abandon one form of worship for the sake of another.

5.6.3 Continue offering the marriage and marriage preparation courses.

5.5.3.1 A study in 2009 shows that pre-marital courses help reduce the risk of divorce by 30%.

5.5.3.2 Empower married couples to conduct these courses.

5.6.4 Early this year a task-force was formed to further define “Wholesome Family.”

5.6.4.1 “A wholesome family is a family marked by the saving work of God in their lives and healthy relationships with one another.”

5.6.4.2 “Family ministry is building families that are marked by the saving work of God in their lives and healthy relationships with one another.”

5.6.4.3 A Family Ministry Framework was also plotted by the task-force. It has five steps to it.

5.6.4.4 We thank the Task-Force for completing this project. We pray the material will be of invaluable help to the local churches.

5.6.4 Don’t forget the Family Ministry Growth Strategy Project (FMGSP) which describes the family life cycle from pre-married stage to post-career empty nest stage. If used well, this material can help us know what the families’ needs are at different stages and how we may be able to minister to them at their point of need. The FMGSP also directs us to resources that are available to help carry out effective ministry to equip individuals and families.

5.6.5 We must emphasize our concern for families without neglecting the concerns of single people in our church. We need to remember the needs of the singles and come alongside them through genuine concerns and effective ministries.

## 5.7 Rejuvenate children and youth ministries

5.7.1 Statistics in the earlier pages show that overall Church School and youth ministry are declining. After carefully looking through the statistics I realize that churches have not reported correctly. Careless reporting will affect the entire interpretation and understanding of what is going on in our churches to some extent.

5.7.2 Although membership and average attendance have increased, children ministry and youth ministry seem to be on the decline. Are they really declining?

5.7.2.1 I would like to suggest to the Conference that we report our baptisms in three categories so that we know which age group is joining our church more. I suggest the first category as 0-12. Second – 13 to 45. Third – 46 and above.

5.7.3 Churches have found the last Church School Teachers' Retreat organised by ICM very helpful. We need to continue to meet these needs as more Church Schools are seeking guidance and help with training of teachers, and sourcing for new materials. Particular attention needs to be given to strengthen the children ministries in our churches even as we see the number of children in this ministry in TRAC is on the decrease whereas the total population of children in Malaysia from 0 -14 years of age is 24.5% of the population.

5.7.4 In Egypt I learned a precious lesson. One of the main reasons why Christianity survived persecution and onslaught the last 1400 years is because they have taken children ministry seriously. From young the children are intentionally and systematically taught the word of God. There is much emphasis on children ministry in Egyptian homes and churches. In spite of persecution and in spite of about 100 churches having been destroyed totally or partially recently, yet Christians make up 10% of Egyptian population (according to government statistics).

5.7.5 We can check with our churches what good materials are available to teach children and youths. Those who have found good materials should make it known to others.

5.7.6 One more thing about ministry to the younger ones. The safety of the children and youth must not be compromised. Churches need to be careful of sexual predators and paedophiles. We must be careful in choosing volunteers/workers for children and youth ministries. Earlier this year a 30-year-old man admitted to 71 charges, including against 23 children in Kuala Lumpur, at London's Central Criminal Court, and is facing multiple life sentences. We cannot afford to be negligent.

## 5.8 Inculcate team ministry

5.8.1 Raise a generation of leaders. Train & equip the next generation of leaders.

5.8.2 Every church should budget for training according to its ability.



5.8.3 Develop the clergy and at the same time empower the laity. The strength of Methodism has always been the ability to mobilize the laity to work with the clergy. We must not create a clergy-laity divide. This is not only unhealthy but it is sinful. To be sure there is a difference between the clergy and the laity. The difference is in the calling and the gifting. May we be contented to be laity and clergy in the role God has given to us without envying one another's position in the Church of God! May we be patient a little longer so that when the Kingdom of God has fully come there will be no such difference even.

5.8.4 The church is not about any one person's agenda. The church is about God's mission in the world and how we all work at it together.

5.8.5 Seek a common direction for the church. Let it be a clear direction for all to focus on and follow. Slogans and statements alone will not help. Directions are needed for every step of the way for the church to move forward. The direction must be worked at together in a team setting and followed through meticulously.

5.8.5.1 I have found the book *Courageous Leadership* written by Bill Hybels very helpful. It tells us how to cast visions and give direction to the church.

5.8.5.2 For those who want to involve more people in the ministries of the church try reading *The Volunteer Revolution* by Bill Hybels.

5.8.6 The Methodist Book of Discipline (MBOD) is empowering and not stifling. Don't use it to hinder ministry.

5.8.6.1 The MBOD shows us the way to prevent financial scandals, disallow misuse of positions, prevent favouritism, and show us fair governance. Because we have the MBOD we have a guide that prevents us from going the path that some other churches and the country have gone. But the truth is even with the MBOD a few churches sometimes wade into unhealthy waters. Conversely, having the MBOD has helped us recognise where we have gone wrong and put us back into a check and balance situation.

5.8.6.2 All said, the MBOD is empowering. It leads us in the right way of doing things. It is not promoting uniformity, because it gives much flexibility in doing church according to the size of church. Without promoting uniformity it promotes unity and integrity and it most certainly creates team spirit.

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

6.1 We continue to strengthen the 10 Pillars (10 Tiang) in Persidangan Misi Sengoi Methodist (PMSM). The ten pillars are: Church Planting, Discipleship, Tithing,

Children Education, Cooperative/ Entrepreneurship, Land Titles, Pastor's Image, Prayer Focus, Functional Church, Breaking Subsidy Mentality.

6.2 This quadrennium we contributed a number of vans to PMSM. This ongoing generosity has resulted in PMSM owning 6 vans and 25 motorcycles.

6.3 Having more people understand the work of PMSM, and having many of them partner with us, has enabled us to increase the salaries of all our PMSM pastors and workers once again.

6.4 After signing the MOU last year with the Methodist Church in Korea, we now have nine Korean Pastors whose assistance we can count on.

6.4.1 Through the help of MCK Pastors we have been able to build several churches in PMSM villages in the last few years. The help was given through TRAC and not directly extended to the villages.

6.4.2 We are looking forward to greater partnership in other areas of ministries as we work together with the MCK Pastors.

6.5 The hostel project in Raub has taken shape. Currently there are 10 Primary School children being supervised by Rev Shuriawali. We expect a higher intake next year.

6.6 We are grateful to Chinese Annual Conference for partnering with us to start a hostel for Secondary School children. The efforts began in October. The Wesley MC Raub parsonage has been turned into a hostel temporarily until we build a proper hostel.

6.7 I am glad that the progress of the hostel ministry in Raub has spurred our Sengoi brothers and sisters in wanting a hostel for their children in Kampar. This project is underway now.

6.8 With the above projects in place in Raub and Kampar, we appeal to our churches to adopt a child each for prayer and financial support. In this way, we can help many of our OA children have a brighter future with good education. I am hoping that by early next year once the intake has been settled we can send to churches, photographs of these children and the cost incurred in putting each one of them through the hostel yearly.

6.9 I am very encouraged that many churches and individuals have come forward to help the on-going and growing ministry of PMSM. Please note that if you would like to continue contributing financially or offer your services (i.e. training), please do so through the PMSM and TRAC offices. This is to ensure that all PMSM villages are blessed and not only the same few.

6.10 We are seriously helping PMSM achieve the Wawasan Berdikari 2020 whereby in January 2021 PMSM can be a Provisional Annual Conference.

6.11 Slowly we are beginning to see resistance to building of chapels in OA villages. However, by the grace of God we have been successful in negotiating with our detractors to allow us to continue building. I believe we should speed up our efforts in ensuring that all villages have their own chapels as soon as possible. Another 10 villages need chapel building.

6.12 Next year we are planning to expose the young people in PMSM to short-term missions in Sabah, Sarawak, and Myanmar where the conditions are similar to ours.

## **7. General Concerns**

7.1 I am thankful to DUMC for organizing and hosting the men's Conference with Patrick Morley as the main speaker. Many men went back with a vision to start men's accountability group. It is my prayer that these groups be formed and bear good fruits in the lives of men and their families.

7.2 The Methodist Women Organization has eight local societies with 397 members. The MW President announced at the TRAC MW 41<sup>st</sup> Session that there will be a Women's Conference in 2017.

7.3 This year MSF celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organization with a handsomely bound souvenir programme. I am glad that MSF continues to expand its wings with 18 chapters so far and more importantly, there is greater emphasis in the area of missions, and its willingness to support the Emanuel Lifespring ministry to the seniors. MSF also is helping to fund a Sengoi Pastor's son achieve his dreams to further his studies in UTAR.

7.4 We are noticing more young adult participation in our churches. They are also moving into leadership positions in our churches.

7.5 I thank the churches who have repeatedly given generously to The Methodist Education Foundation so that we can offer scholarships to the needy students. So far in the last 32 years RM3.4million have been given in scholarships to deserving students. Kindly keep to this practice of allocating generously to the MEF.

7.6 Veterans of the Cross Fund is used to give Christmas gifts to retired pastors and pastors' widows. Each year at Christmas RM1000.00 is disbursed to each person. Currently there are 21 recipients. Continuous giving to this fund will help us attain our goals even though minimally.

7.7 We are thankful to our General Conference which organized the Methodist School of Intercessors (MSI) in the month of June.

7.7.1 At the MSI, Bishop mooted the idea of Isaachar Watchmen Movement with 6 strategic Prayer Foci:

- Clearance of cosmic powers of darkness over the nation
- Rise, growth and completion of God's Church in Malaysia

- Crucial institutions in our land
- Progressive political restructuring
- Methodist Church to be a Church after God's own heart
- Successfully leave a generational legacy

7.8 Although 24/7 Prayer has come to an end, individuals and churches are carrying out the habit of praying round the clock.

7.9 The attempt to implement strict hudud laws will affect all of us non-Muslims. We need to be vigilant and work with any concerned citizen, religious groups, NGOs and political parties to ensure that we are not subjected to hudud laws.

7.9.1 Even the former IGP Tan Sri Rahim Noor is against the implementation of the hudud laws. The interview with him is published at this link <http://www.malaysia-today.net/why-former-igp-rahim-noor-is-against-hudud/> The interview shows our fears are not unwarranted and there will be great problems and injustices in implementing the hudud law.

7.10 Extremists and racists are on the increase in this country. We need to support NGOs who engage those groups in order to have respectful discussions with them.

7.11 Let us encourage and ensure that all our members who are eligible to vote at the next General Election are registered to do so.

7.12 Alkitab Versi Borneo was launched in Petaling Jaya on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. I thank God for this Bible translation which is closest to the BM we have learned in schools and thus reading it makes us feel so much at home.

7.13 On October 31, 2017, many in Germany and around the world will mark 500 years of Reformation that permanently changed the face and course of Christianity. Let us remember to celebrate this great event here in our churches. 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017 will be a suitable Sunday to highlight the need for Reformation in the past, the necessity to understand the word of God even today and inculcate in everyone the need to read and live by the Scripture.

7.13.1 "I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen." [Luther at the Diet of Worms -1521] - See more at: <http://lutheranreformation.org/#sthash.wAWcR3zt.dpuf>

## **8. Personal Remarks**

8.1 We congratulate our Bishop on his re-election as the Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia for a second term. We in TRAC continue to uphold him and his family in prayers.

8.2 We bid farewell early this year to two faithful servants of God who served Him through TRAC valiantly. They are Rev Won En Mien and Rev Lawrence Francis. We appreciate that even after retirement they gave their time to TRAC to be reconcilers and encouragers, aside from carrying out pastoral duties which we all appreciate. No matter what profession one may be in, one can learn from the two pastors how to spend retirement years fruitfully. May our prayer be like the prayer of John Wesley: “God grant that I may never live to be useless!”

8.3 We also said goodbye to Mr Yong Chee Seng who served as Executive Secretary of the Board of Education and later the Council of Education. He was also one of the founding members of the Methodist Education Foundation and faithfully served MEF till his last breath. We thank God for this enthusiastic educationist.

8.4 I wish to place on record Rev Bernard Yogaraj’s (retired pastor) sacrifice in giving up the Raub parsonage in order to be used as a hostel and moving into the kindergarten space to stay when he is in Raub. I am truly humbled by the sacrificial spirit and servant heart he possesses.

8.5 The following churches’ efforts caught my attention this year:

- Wesley MC Raub’s generosity in lending the parsonage to OA ministry
- Wesley MC Penang’s anniversary choir
- Bercham MC’s sports ministry
- Christ MC Ampang’s significant increase in attendance
- SSMC’s efforts to raise awareness on corruption
- Emmanuel MC’s focus on Tadika ministries for East Malaysia
- DUMC’s ministry to men
- Faith Cheras MC’s growing number of young adults
- Taman Asean MC’s large free-tuition class

8.6 As an Annual Conference we thank God for CFM, CCM (especially Rev Dr Hermen Shastri), NECF, and others who have stood up in these exasperating times and spoken up for the Church in Malaysia. Those involved in these ministries need our continuous prayer support.

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

8.8 I thank everyone who prayed for me, encouraged me and laboured with me. Please continue to pray for me. This year I give thanks to God for my 25 years in ministry.

8.9 This year my prayer for TRAC is based on Isaiah 59:21 which says:

As for me this is my covenant with them,”  
says the Lord,  
“My Spirit that is upon you,  
and my words that I have put in your mouth,

shall not depart out of your mouth,  
or out of the mouth of your offspring,  
or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,”  
says the LORD,  
“from this time forth and forevermore.”

May the Lord make us and the generations after us His faithful witnesses now and  
always!

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

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