

## 1. Thanksgiving

1.1 First and foremost I would like to thank God for His grace given for the new set of duties entrusted to me.

1.2 In God's goodness He has given me a team of committed people who have journeyed with me and guided me along the way. I thank God 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 Conference Lay Leader

1.2.4 District Superintendents

1.2.5 Conference Secretary

1.2.6 Conference Treasurer

1.2.7 Conference Statistician

1.2.8 The Administrative Boards and the Programme Boards who performed their duties with diligence to help our Annual Conference realize our vision.

1.2.9 The retired Elders for their prayer and counsel

1.2.10 The Staff in TRAC Office with whom it has been a joy and a privilege to work with.

## 2. Statistics

2.1 TRAC has 39 local churches and 3 preaching points. Last year our average attendance was 12,125. The first six months of this year shows a slight improvement. At the end of June 2013 we recorded 12,224 in average attendance. Our growth rate would be 0.81% for the first half of this year.

2.2 After having compared the year 2012's average attendance with the first half of this year's average attendance,<sup>1</sup> the following churches show an increase in average attendance:

| <b>Increase</b> |                 |                  |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
|                 | <b>Dec 2012</b> | <b>June 2013</b> |
| CMC Bentong     | 25              | 28               |
| WMC Kuala Lipis | 21              | 23               |
| WMC Kuantan     | 138             | 141              |
| TMC Penang      | 403             | 414              |
| WMC Butterworth | 46              | 50               |
| WMC Penang      | 380             | 384              |
| WMC Kampar      | 99              | 104              |
| WMC Sitiawan    | 428             | 431              |

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<sup>1</sup> Figures are taken from TRAC Conference Statistician's report.

|                 |      |      |
|-----------------|------|------|
| WMC Taiping     | 193  | 203  |
| WMC T.Intan     | 73   | 83   |
| DUMC PJ         | 4012 | 4115 |
| SMC Subang      | 85   | 86   |
| Whispering Hope | 86   | 104  |
| TAMC Melaka     | 27   | 75   |
| TUMC Seremban   | 97   | 101  |
| GMC Sentul      | 100  | 125  |
| Life MC Puchong | 110  | 120  |
| WMC K.Lumpur    | 1081 | 1192 |

2.3 The following churches show a decrease in average attendance.

| <b>Decrease</b> |                 |                  |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
|                 | <b>Dec 2012</b> | <b>June 2013</b> |
| WMC Raub        | 9               | 8                |
| WMC A.Star      | 117             | 105              |
| WMC Kulim       | 52              | 44               |
| WMC S.Petani    | 21              | 20               |
| CGMC Ipoh       | 823             | 744              |
| GMC Ipoh        | 78              | 74               |
| WMC Ipoh        | 232             | 221              |
| EMC PJ          | 281             | 274              |
| SSMC PJ         | 629             | 624              |
| TMC PJ          | 752             | 745              |
| TMC Sg.Buloh    | 110             | 100              |
| WMC Klang       | 288             | 264              |
| WMC J.Baru      | 277             | 235              |
| WMC Seremban    | 262             | 220              |
| WMC Kepong      | 150             | 127              |

2.4 The following churches show stagnation in average attendance.

| <b>Stagnant</b> |             |             |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
|                 | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> |
| WMC P.Buntar    | 18          | 18          |
| BMC Ipoh        | 113         | 113         |
| WMC Melaka      | 311         | 311         |
| WMC Segamat     | 55          | 55          |
| CMC Ampang      | 88          | 88          |
| FMC Cheras      | 55          | 55          |

2.5 Numbers do not tell everything. A larger attendance does not mean the people are growing in discipleship and a lesser attendance does not mean less effort is put into evangelism. However, every church must ask whether discipling and evangelism are taking place effectively. While numbers do not tell everything, yet a decrease or stagnation in attendance do show something. Each local church must ask the hard questions – Why is the attendance dropping? How can we address the situation?

### 3. Church Planting

3.1 We are thankful that this year we have been exploring the possibility of starting a Preaching Point in Kota Kemuning. By the time the 38<sup>th</sup> Session is held, three meetings may have been held with a team of committed people from Kota Kemuning who are interested in establishing this ministry. They are from a number of churches in the Klang Valley. A shop-lot at a suitable location has also been ear-marked for the purpose of turning it into a preaching point. Eventually we will call this congregation, Living Hope Methodist Church. The work will start officially in February.

3.2 We also explored to relocate the ministry of BUMC to Kota Damansara. A final decision was made on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November to move to Cova Square. A space is being pursued for rental. Early next year this preaching point will be ministering in Kota Damansara and eventually this congregation will be called Living Stone Methodist Church.

3.3 Exploration was also made in Johor Baru to start a preaching point. A premise has been secured at Bukit Indah 2, Nusajaya. The first worship service will commence sometime after Easter.

3.4 The English speaking churches cannot be planted everywhere. (BM ministry and Chinese ministry, and migrant ministries must not be neglected.) The areas where we can work are limited. As such the primary areas we need to focus on are urban areas and cities. We must also focus on these areas for the following reasons:

3.4.1 The English speaking population is concentrated in cities and urban areas.

3.4.2 People from rural areas constantly move into cities in search of jobs.

3.4.3 Some from rural areas move in with their families who reside in cities.

3.4.4 Young people congregate in cities in search of higher education.

3.4.5 The poor are in the cities.

3.4.6 Migrant workers (from countries which are hard to penetrate with the gospel) come to cities to work. Ministries to the migrant workers create opportunities to turn cities into mission fields.

3.5 “Of the five hundred cities with a population of more than one million people, the majority are in Asia, Africa and Latin America. . . . . It is not a coincidence, then, that the rapid growth of Christianity corresponds to the rapid growth of cities in those three continents. The rapid growth of Christianity is happening right now. Between 1900 and 2050, the percentage of Christians globally from Africa, Asia and Latin America is forecast to grow from 22 percent to 71 percent.”<sup>2</sup> As such, our churches must be strategically planted in every

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<sup>2</sup> Mac Pier, *Consequential Leadership*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012) 19.

city and urban area to welcome and nurture the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the families and the singles, the employees and the employers, the locals and the foreigners.

3.6 One way of planting churches is the way we have always done it. The entire initiative is left to a local church. If they will not start a preaching point then nothing could be done. If they would start, then the entire load is on them to send a sizeable number of people and support the ministry with sufficient funds. Another model we could employ is to work together as a District in identifying suitable locations and then spearhead the work. In this way every church in the district can send a few people to make up a sizeable group of believers who can be the pioneers in a new ministry in a new area. This model will also enable the churches to share financial resources to help start a new preaching point. Every church in the District can then have some sense of ownership of the new work. It will not be burdensome to one local church. Where possible, we should explore the latter model without regarding the older model as obsolete.

#### 4. Missional Mind-set

4.1 In order for us to grow our churches and effectively meet the needs of the people, our churches must adopt a missional mind-set.

4.2 In her ecclesiology the missional church is incarnational, and not attractional. The missional church understands that she exists in a cross-cultural situation. Thus she seeks to dialogue with the context and culture. The priority of the missional church is to fulfil the Great Commission. Owing to the fact that mission is rooted in the *Misio Dei* (the sending of God) therefore the church must be outwardly focused.

4.3 The missional church is to be led by missional leaders. Missional leaders need to lead always taking the first step themselves. “The Spirit empowers the church for mission through the gifts of people... fundamental change in any body of people requires leaders capable of transforming its life and being transformed themselves.”<sup>3</sup> This Address takes the position that Paul was a biblical model for missional leaders, and the way he understood what church is and the way he reached out to people is a model for missional church.

4.3.1 *Incarnational*. The Apostle Paul understood that to be missional one has to be incarnational. He learned that from the Lord Jesus who said, “For the son of man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Christ incarnated. Likewise Paul went from place to place to enter the community, live in its context, and live the word for others to see. Because he took the proclamation of the gospel seriously Paul travelled great distances to establish churches as far as the provinces of Asia Minor (Galatians 1:21), Galatia (Acts 16:6), Macedonia (Acts 20:3), and Greece (Acts 17:16). His principle was to start work where there has been no work (Romans 15:20f).

4.3.2 *Strategic Points*. Paul went to places from which the gospel can spread. They were strategic points because they were the “main centres as far as communication, culture, commerce, politics, and religion are concerned.”<sup>4</sup> Paul looked for places in which the gospel could change lives and from which the gospel could be brought out

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<sup>3</sup> Darrell L. Guder (ed.), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 183.

<sup>4</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997) 130.

to the surrounding places. These strategic centres must be, in Roland Allen's<sup>5</sup> graphic phrase, more like a spring that flows than a swamp that is stagnant. Being a missional leader Paul was not just concerned for the gospel to reach a certain place, however strategic a location it may be. He wanted the gospel to springboard from that one location to other locations.

4.3.3 *Spirit Led*. It is worth remembering that while Paul went from place to place, he did not merely go places that he chose as strategic centres or where he saw human need. In his own words Paul tells us that he went to places led by the Spirit of God (Acts 16:10); places which he described as open doors (1 Corinthians 16:9). The missional leader must not forget to be led by the Spirit. It cannot all be strategies, study of contexts and cultures, looking at human needs alone, and employing successful methods. All these the Spirit can use but the missional leader must be led by the Spirit in order to know where to go, what work to start, how to employ methods, and how to proclaim in word and deed.

4.3.4 *Obedience*. Being led by the Spirit Paul was obedient to go where the Spirit led him. This too is a missional characteristic that he has learned from the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus was obedient to the Father, even to the point of embracing death on the Cross (Phil.2:8). "Therefore missional leadership requires a spirituality that lives in close relationship with and reliance on the directions of the Father through the Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

4.3.5 *Preach in words*. Paul preached to everyone the whole counsel of God (Acts 17:12; 20:26-27). He did not target any particular audience. Some honourable people (Acts 17:12), men and women, many poor ones and slaves (looking at how many references there are in the epistles that mention slaves) were converted thru his mission. Human sin and certainty of judgment, death, resurrection and the second coming of Christ were all preached. Whether it was the dignitaries, the philosophers, or the poor who were his audience, the message was not compromised. This tells us that while the missional leader must preach with his life and with his good works, he must also preach in words the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27) and not leave the message to the imagination of the people to figure it out. While there is a place for the life to speak, the good news must also be spoken.

4.3.6 *Apostolic*. The Apostle Paul was the type of leader who could see beyond his own people and their needs and see all people as having the need to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ alone who gives salvation. In Romans 10:1 he says, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer, to God for the Israelites is that they might be saved." At the same time he calls himself an apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13) acknowledging God's call upon his life to bring the Gentiles to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He also mentions that he has "declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21). The missional leader must remember that Jews and Gentiles are heirs, "members together of one body, and share together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6). The missional leader is apostolic in this sense – he wants to form a people who know their identity to be the kingdom people, regardless of race. Paul himself taught this in Romans 11:25-26. According to Paul "there is ultimately only one people of

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<sup>5</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Illinois: Eerdmans, 1962) 17.

<sup>6</sup> Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church*, 186.

God, and the only way to belong to it now, for Jews as much as for Gentiles, is through faith in the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>7</sup>

4.3.7 *Empowering*. The missional leader empowers people and does not take up to do everything on his or her own. Paul often invested his time in potential young leaders, mentoring them to carry on the task of sharing the good news. Timothy and Titus are such examples. Paul recognized the corporate nature of the church and worked with teams.<sup>8</sup> When he came into any region to preach he formed the people into churches. He instructed them and set some of them up as leaders (Acts 14:21, 23). We find that this happens rather quickly in many places. In this way he was able to train up new leaders in the local church constantly and allowed them to work freely. Paul did not have to carry heavy loads of responsibility all alone. He also asked Timothy to do likewise (2 Timothy 2:2) looking for reliable people.

4.3.8 *Reign of God*. Miracles were definitely part of Paul’s ministry (Acts 19:11; Romans 15:19) and they attracted people to God. The miracles showed people the superiority and divinity of the Christ that Paul preached. Most importantly miracles showed people that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated right now in the present. So the miracles, words, and the good works of a missional leader gives people a glimpse of what things will be like and what they will be like in the end when the reign of God has fully come.

4.3.9 *Contextual*. The missional leader must be contextual and culturally relevant in his approach to a given people whom he ministers to. The apostle Paul was such a person. He said, “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law . . . so as to win those under the law. . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:20, 22). The missional leader takes into consideration the culture and context in which he is ministering and thus makes his message relevant to the people he speaks and ministers to. Those who have been successful in alien cultures have been people who have paid attention to the culture they have gone to live in and even adopted the culture and the language for the sake of presenting the gospel in a culturally relevant manner. Paul shows us that to be missional we need to understand cultures and contexts we live in.

4.3.10 *Messianic Spirituality*. The missional leader adopts a messianic spirituality and not a dualistic spirituality like the Greco-Roman empire which sees the world as religious and nonreligious. The messianic spirituality adopts the world-view of Jesus thus seeing “the world and God’s place in it as more holistic and integrated.”<sup>9</sup> “A messianic spirituality has a redemptive approach to all aspects of life. This theme has much to offer us in the construction of a courageous missional spirituality because it gives us a framework to (re)conceptualize our actions in the world.”<sup>10</sup> What all this means is that our good works display the power of God, the reign of God and the grace of God. Thus Paul adopted a messianic spirituality and we see it in his call for us to do good works by saying that we were created for this purpose (2 Cor. 9:8; Ephesians 2:10; Col 1:10; 2 Tim. 3:17).

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006) 528.

<sup>8</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader* (USA: Jossey-Bass, 2006) 13.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (USA: Hendrickson, 2003), 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

4.4 It is very much my hope that the leaders in our churches could be missional leaders to give leadership to help our churches transition from where we are to be fully missional in our mind-set. A church with a missional mind-set and a leader of change must do the following:

4.4.1 *Cast Vision*. Proverbs 29:18 says, “Without vision, the people perish.” Bill Hybels says, “Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion.”<sup>11</sup> As missional leaders we need to share with our congregation what a missional church is. We need to picture the kind of missional church that we need to be and share this vision with the people. If this vision is not made known to the people we cannot move the church forward. If this vision is unclear the people may go in all directions without a proper focus. Thus we need to tell our congregation what being missional is about. We must also tell them how they can participate and what they can do if we are to be missional.

4.4.2 *Outwardly focused*. The missional church is outwardly focused with the intention to bless the lives of people. It is not just about church growth but kingdom growth. A missional church can involve members of her church to start marriage courses, premarital courses, parenting courses and the like in their neighbourhood to support people in family life. Ministries must not be restricted to local church premises. Homes should be opened for these purposes. Schools and privately owned institutions need to be entered into to start Christian ministries according to the needs of the people who are there. Christian ministries could be done via non-governmental organizations, and youth organizations like the Boys’ Brigade and the Girls’ Brigade, without losing our evangelistic focus. We must be a “healthy church (reaching out) ... with empathy, compassion, love, gifts, and service.”<sup>12</sup>

4.4.3 *Utilizing own premises*. Being missional does not mean that we need to do all the outreach and good works outside our premises. We need to be a dynamic worshipping community and invite non-Christians to come into our worship celebrations and hear the word of God preached with conviction. We ought to be missional by being relevant to our community. Within the church premise we can organise courses, classes and activities beneficial to the non-Christian community. We must not see the premise only as a place of worship but also as a place where we do good works. In this way our good works can be an act of worship to God. The mind-set of our people needs to be challenged to achieve all these. Otherwise we end up practising dualistic spirituality – only worship is holy and all other works are unholy; the sanctuary is holy and all other places are unholy.

4.4.4 *See where God is working*. Avery T. Willis and Henry Blackaby<sup>13</sup> tell us that we are to see where God is working and where He is particularly calling us to join Him in His work. They tell us that even Paul worked this way. How much more should we! When we speak of being a missional church, some people may feel that they should just go and do anything and everything that they want to do. Missional leaders should therefore guide the church into sensing together where God wants us to work. Otherwise we set ourselves up for frustrations in spreading ourselves out so thin. We need to acknowledge that what other churches do is also the work of God and we

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<sup>11</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2002), 32.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen A Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church – 10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999) 149.

<sup>13</sup> Avery, T. Willis, & Henry T. Blackaby, *On Mission With God*, (Nashville: Broadman and Hollman, 2002) 192ff.

must not be in competition with them. We can be in partnership but not in competition.

4.4.5 *Reign of God*. Owing to the fact that people in our neighbourhoods do delve in the demonic, as missional leaders we ought to preach the supremacy of Christ in order to show that victory over demons is possible. We must not only preach the word but also demonstrate the power of the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). We must not deny the existence of spirits and demons. We must help people see that “he who is in you is greater than the one of this world” (1 John 4:4). As Andrew Kirk points out, in many parts of the world the church is growing rapidly. One of the reasons he says the church grows is because it has taken the healing ministry seriously. In fact the healing ministry and the casting out of demons go to show the power of God over the previous lifestyle of the people. Thus as he puts it, “the Christian message is linked with the hope of a new life.”<sup>14</sup> We need to train people in fasting and prayer, and teach them the meaning of the coming of the Kingdom of God. The fact that the Kingdom of God has come, means we can do this even now because Jesus has inaugurated the kingdom of God. Still what we must inculcate is the need for all in the church to take this ministry seriously and not just leave it to some ‘professionals’.

4.4.6 *Good works*. To show the reign of God we also need to show the good works. Scripture calls us to do these good works (2 Cor. 9:8; Ephesians 2:10; Col 1:10; 2 Tim. 3:17). In fact, our Lord Jesus said, “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:13). When people see our good works they may see that it is not us but these are the results of the reign of God having come into our lives.

4.5 Having done all the above, the missional church must not forget the following:

4.5.1 *Faithfulness*. In being missional, faithfulness to God’s leading and guidance is of utmost importance.

4.5.2 *Gospel power*. We must know that the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord itself has inherent power to bring about growth wherever it is spoken or demonstrated and it is not so much the church’s understanding of ecclesiology or her theology of missions that make the ultimate difference.

4.5.3 *Prayer*. The missional church must remember to pray. All our strategies and plans, methods and paradigms will be utterly useless unless we pray. If we fail to be prayerful we may not be doing the work in the power of God. “Prayer is our declaration of dependence on God.”<sup>15</sup> To have a missional ecclesiology, missional theology of leadership, and a host of missional leaders is all great but the One who gives success is God and not our leaders, understandings, or methods. We must seek God and entrust even our noblest missional vision to Him.

## 5. Lifelong Discipleship through Small Groups

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<sup>14</sup>Andrew J. Kirk, *What Is Mission? – Theological Explorations*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 220-221.

<sup>15</sup> Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders*, (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Baker Books, 2005) 53.



5.1 The Rev John Wesley's church growth strategy can be summarised in "four maxims:"<sup>16</sup>

- 5.1.1 Preach and visit in as many places as you can.
- 5.1.2 Go most where they want you most.
- 5.1.3 Start as many classes as can be effectively managed.
- 5.1.4 Do not preach where you cannot enrol awakened people in classes.

5.2 Wesley strongly felt that he needed to mobilize every person that he could to nurture and enfold new converts. Otherwise he knew that, "The devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again. Therefore, I determine by the grace of God not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow."<sup>17</sup> Twenty years later he was convinced that preaching without being able to follow through the converts by "training them in the ways of God.... is only begetting children for the murderer (i.e the Devil)."<sup>18</sup>

5.3 When Wesley saw the conversion of the masses he knew that he must organise them in such a way as to ensure that they would not fall back into their previous ways of life. He therefore formed the Methodist Society. Then he thought of the class meetings and the bands to enquire of the condition of the souls<sup>19</sup> of the people. He laid down only one criteria to join the Society, and that was a desire "to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." The purpose of the classes and bands more specifically was to "confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed."<sup>20</sup>

5.4 George Whitefield had this to say about Wesley's ability to give pastoral care through small groups and the need for accountability within those small groups that Wesley created. "My brother, Wesley, acted wisely. The souls that were awakened under his ministry, he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruit of his labour. This I neglected and my people are as a rope of sand."<sup>21</sup>

5.5 The importance of small groups for Wesley can be seen in the letter below:

From the time you omitted your class or band you grieved the Holy Spirit of God.... I exhort you for my sake (who tenderly love you). For God's sake. For the sake of your own soul. Begin again without delay. The day after you received this. Go and meet a class or a band. Sick or well, go! If you cannot speak a word, go; and God will go with you. You sink under the sin of omission! My friend, my sister, go! Go whether you can or not.<sup>22</sup>

5.6 From the above letter we can surmise that for Wesley participation in the small group was a covenant with God. It enabled a deeper connection to God. Through the small groups

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<sup>16</sup> George G. Hunter III, *To Spread The Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987) 56.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The enquiry of souls in the small groups arose as a result of the Methodist leaders discussing about meeting the financial needs of the Methodist movement. It was felt that even as they formed small groups to collect the necessary funds for the sustaining of the ministry works, it also accorded an opportunity to enquire about the souls of the members.

<sup>20</sup> Victor A. Shepherd, *Mercy Immense and Free: Essays on Wesley and Wesleyan Theology*, Vol. 1. (Toronto: Clements Publishing: 2010) 98.

<sup>21</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley the Evangelist* (London: Paternoster Press, 1967) 188.

<sup>22</sup> Gabriel Liew, *Pastoral Care in the Wesleyan Spirit*, (Singapore: Beaumont Publishing, 2000) 55.

people were to grow in maturity in Christ. Participation in class, band, and specialised bands were also ways to show commitment to one another. “They began to ‘watch over each other in love,’ and to hold one other accountable for their discipleship.”<sup>23</sup> These small group meetings were also to help the people have their “every fetter broken.”<sup>24</sup>

5.7 Scholars are of the opinion that one of the main reasons why the Methodist revival lasted for one hundred solid years is because of the formation of the Methodist small groups. The nurture and accountability created in the small groups helped the Methodist movement thrive in its membership. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Methodism had about 100,000 members, having about 10,000 class and band leaders. In England although the bands ceased at about 1880, however “among the British Methodists class attendance was a condition of church membership until 1912, while in the United States the Methodist Episcopal Church, South dropped the requirement in 1866.”<sup>25</sup> Owing to the undoing of the requirement to attend small groups, today we have difficulty asking anyone to attend small groups. However, we who are not used to small groups and we who resist small groups must ask ourselves whether Wesley would have considered someone a Methodist if he/she did not attend a small group during his days.

5.8 Henderson very aptly tells of the impact the small groups had on Methodism. “The Wesleyan revolution is an illustration that long-lasting spiritual transformation.... comes only through serious disciple-building.... The class meeting which Wesley developed was the instrument by which preaching and doctrine were harnessed into spiritual renewal. It carried the revolution.”<sup>26</sup> Methodism grew because of small groups, in other words.

5.9 Not only did Methodism grow because of small groups but in these small groups the people grew as disciples and took up leadership positions. Wesley was able to raise many lay leaders through class and band meetings. He was mostly raising the working class as his leaders. In fact, Augustus Toplady’s (the writer of the hymn *Rock of Ages*) accusation hurled at Wesley shows the kind of lay persons Wesley used. Toplady saw the use of lay people in ministry as “prostituting the ministerial function to the lowest and most illiterate mechanics, persons of almost any class, but especially common soldiers, who pretended to be pregnant with ‘a message from the Lord.’” Thus he advised Wesley in the following words: “Let his cobblers keep to their stalls. Let his tinkers mend their vessels. Let his barbers confine themselves to their blocks and basons. Let his bakers stand to their kneading-troughs. Let his blacksmiths blow more suitable coals than those of controversy.”<sup>27</sup> Yet it was the small group which accorded everyone an opportunity to become disciples, to minister to others, and for Wesley this was the place to train and raise leaders. In fact he tells one of his preachers in a letter, “I positively forbid you or any preacher to be a leader: Rather put the most insignificant person in each class to be the leader of it.”<sup>28</sup>

5.10 Likewise today in TRAC we need to take small groups seriously. This will be the way to disciple, raise leaders and pastors, and move forward as an Annual Conference.

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<sup>23</sup> David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship: Christian Formation Thorough Natural Accountability*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991) 44.

<sup>24</sup> Victor A. Shepherd, *Mercy Immense and Free: Essays on Wesley and Wesleyan Theology*, 96.

<sup>25</sup> Howard A Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Growth The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal* (Illinois: IVP, 1980) 62.

<sup>26</sup> D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Indiana: Francis Asbury Press, 1997) 31.

<sup>27</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> Alice Russie, (ed), *The Essential Works of John Wesley: Selected Books, Sermons and Other Writings* (USA: Barbour Publishing, 2011) 1293.

5.11 Ajith Fernando recently wrote to a few of us saying how small group worked in Sri Lanka:

5.11.1 Today is a public holiday and I spent the day in a church about 90 minutes from home. This work began in the mid-1990s and gradually grew into about five churches covering a wide geographical area. After the attacks on churches and other challenges to large groups meeting for worship, they transformed into scores of small house churches. The work seems to be thriving. I taught about 150 or more cell group leaders on personal discipling. I had always felt that the concept of a sacred place of worship was so much a part of our culture that the house church model may not work too well in Sri Lanka. Here is a situation where it seems to be doing very well.<sup>29</sup>

5.12 It is worth taking note that, “Future churches will be less tied to the construction of buildings.”<sup>30</sup> Especially in our country, given all the challenges we face, homes may yet be a better place for ministries to be effective.

## 6. Leadership Development

6.1 Thank God that between the Annual Conference sessions we have been able to appoint three persons as Pastors.

6.2 This year we were blessed to have 27 Pastors and 3 lay members attend the World Discipleship Congress in Manila. I take this opportunity to thank the generous donor who made attendance at this training possible. We were not only inspired by the sessions but when we returned, about eight of us formed a study team using TRAC Office as a venue, meeting monthly. We are still studying about discipleship, how to be disciples, and how to make disciples.

6.3 At the Pastors’ School this year we agreed that most of us need to improve on our preaching. To help us to preach better we are asking Dr William Benjamin Lawrence, Dean at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in the United States to guide us into better preaching. The Session will be called GOOD TO GREAT PREACHING. It is from 7-9 January 2014. Wesley KL will be our venue.

6.4 On-going training sessions are necessary for leadership development. Everyone in the church leadership need to lead, while at the same time upgrading themselves by doing further studies, attending seminars and readings. There is no way we can serve, minister, teach, and preach effectively without on-going studies, refresher courses, and readings. On the importance of reading, John Wesley wrote the following letter to a fellow preacher by the name of John Premboth, on August 17, 1760:

6.4.1 What has exceedingly hurt you in time past, nay, and I fear to this day, is want of reading. I scarce ever knew a preacher read so little. And perhaps, by neglecting it, you have lost the taste for it. Hence your talent in preaching does not increase. It is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety, there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. O begin! Fix some part of

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<sup>29</sup> Used with Ajith Fernando’s permission.

<sup>30</sup> Ed Stetzer & Warren Bird, *Vital Churches* (USA: Jossey-Bass, 2010) 191.

every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not: what is tedious at first, will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days, and a petty, superficial preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer. Take up your cross and be a Christian altogether. Then will all children of God rejoice (not grieve) over you in particular.

## 7. Conferences

7.1 After some time we forget why some meetings are called for. Sometimes we carry out meetings to fulfil the Disciplinary requirements, and go through the motion. We need to improve the way we do our Local Conferences and District Conferences so that they are meaningful and fruitful.

7.2 For Local Conferences to be meaningful we need to encourage committee chairs and organization leaders to report under the following headings:

### 7.2.1 First Local Conference

- What are the plans for the year?
- How do we intend to carry them out?
- What will it cost in terms of finance?
- What are the intended results?

### 7.2.2 Second Local Conference (for the purpose of evaluation).

- What was planned and carried out?
- What were the results?
- What was planned but not carried out?
- What were the reasons?

7.2.3 At the Local Conferences, up-to-date statements of income and expenditure must be presented. The local churches must also present audited statements of accounts for the past year. Kindergartens, organizations and groups who have separate bank accounts must also present their up-to-date accounts and audited accounts to the Local Conferences.

7.2.4 Malaysia's Auditor-General's report which was released recently shows financial embezzlements and leakages of all sorts. Malaysians with conscience have been appalled by some spending, some losses of items in the sea, some unusable new items that have to be disposed of, and generally the way some expenditures were covered. By the grace of God, our churches have been spared of such spending and leakages because of our Methodist connectional system that holds us to accountability. Therefore, reports to Local Conferences and District Conferences should not be done flippantly but must be done with utmost integrity and a sense of absolute accountability. It will not take the church very long to follow after certain government department's type of spending, monetary leakages and lack of accountability if we take our accountability system lightly and trample upon our connectional system. The check and balances in the Methodist polity must be adhered to, if not for the sake of the polity, then at least for the sake of our conscience.

7.3 For District Conferences to be meaningful we need to do a number of things. Firstly we report in the following way:

#### 7.3.1 First District Conference

- What is the vision of the church for the year?
- What is the church's theme for the year?
- What are the church plans for the year under the Four Essentials?<sup>31</sup>
- What are the expected income and expenditure for the year?
- What are the memberships of the church and other organizations within it?
- What was the average attendance the previous year?

#### 7.3.2 Second District Conference

- What was planned and carried out under the Four Essentials? What were the results?
- What was planned but not carried out? What are the reasons?
- What were the significant growths in the life of the church?
- What were the setbacks in the life of the church?

7.3.3 Aside from the above reporting (and other requirements that may be made known by the District Superintendents from time to time), the District Conference should also see how the churches can work together. What are the ministries, programs, trainings that can be carried out together? Working together can help us save costs, reduce duplication of work, and create optimum usage of resources. Sharing of resources (financial, material, and human resources) can help the churches in the district. Normally the smaller churches benefit from the programs and trainings of the larger churches. Can we also plan certain trainings and ministries according to the needs of the churches in the district?

7.4 We need to do Annual Conference sessions well. This year we have chosen to do the 38<sup>th</sup> Session for three days. Working with a tighter schedule must not hinder us from doing all that needs to be done, and to do them well.

7.4.1 Each year we need to pay attention to at least one concern that we have. This year we are focusing on being missional and raising concerns on young adults. Next year we will focus on family-friendly churches. The following year we need to focus on social actions (and not only social concerns as we are always doing in our local churches). The fourth year we will focus on being missional at home and abroad.

7.4.2 Our reporting need to be done well. There will be no time for presenters of reports to come to the podium only to say, "I have not received any questions." Neither should we spend time highlighting on-going work, as the report would have already captured those. We need to highlight what is newly being done, if any. As such not everyone who wrote reports would be called upon to the front. We nevertheless submit written reports as we are all accountable to the whole Annual Conference and we need to be informed of what is going on and what is on-going.

7.4.3 However, in line with our on-going focus on church-growth, the District Superintendents need to give us succinct report on progress and concern areas in the

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<sup>31</sup> Lifelong Discipleship – Following Christ, Becoming Like Christ; Wholesome Families – Growing Strong Families for Christ; A Voice to our Nation – Seeking Our Nation's Welfare in Christ; A Vision for the World – Embracing Local and Global Mission for Christ. See TRAC Journal 2009 for more details.

District. They too should highlight to us on growth and setbacks within the District and the District churches. We will spend some good time on the District Superintendents' reports.

7.5 For significant discussions to take place in our Conferences (and even in the LCEC for that matter) all those who are required to submit written reports should do so early. Submitting early reports is not just a good practise and about keeping to deadlines. Doing anything on time is as a result of a sense of accountability towards others and arises out of deep spiritual discipline.

#### 8. PMSM, Indigenous Church, and BM Ministries

8.1 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.

8.2 In January 2013 all the PMSM Pastors received an increase in salary. Over and above that, the salaries of four Pastors were further increased. In 2014 the travel allowances of all the Pastors will be increased 100% to enable them to travel more, to various places for ministries. Further to that, the salaries of five more pastors will be raised in 2014 significantly.

8.3 There is a good sum of money in the fixed deposit kept for the 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. Our concern now is to see how we can multiply the sum of money. The Executive Board has set apart a task force to advise the Executive Board on some viable ways to see to the increased multiplication of the sum of money. It is hoped that by next year we will be able to have something to report to the Annual Conference on this matter.

8.4 We are also thankful to the other Annual Conferences in our Methodist Church in Malaysia who have agreed to support the PMSM work financially for the next seven years. Our request to them was to give us RM1 per member per year. The Presidents have consented. Our Episcopal Head, Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik has requested at the GCEC meeting in August that each Annual Conference gives *at least* RM1 per member per year, for the next seven years. CAC has pledged in that meeting to give RM35,000.00 for the year 2014.

8.5 Mr Tham Leong has written a book about Rev Bah Rahu Hassan. The book was printed with sponsorship from two sources. If all the five thousand books could be sold, a sum of RM50,000.00 could go towards the Sengoi Endowment Fund. We thank Mr Tham Leong for his labour of love. Mr Tham receives no royalty from the sale of these books.

8.6 Our Annual Conference is also committed to help the Indigenous Church in Malaysia. The churches in our Annual Conference have the resources to help the Indigenous churches. We need to strengthen the Indigenous churches with our financial resources and like some churches in our Annual Conference we need to work with the Indigenous churches in the area of training.

8.7 Our Annual Conference must also see how we can strengthen BM ministry in our churches. One way is to equip the existing BM speaking Pastors and empower them to spearhead this ministry all over the country. In this way we are also strengthening and contributing to the Indigenous work.

8.8. As much as we ought to be involved in the overseas missions and support it financially, we must also see the local missions as legitimate and deserving of our financial support. To neglect the local mission is to hinder the growth of Christianity in this country. We neglect local missions to our own peril.

## 9. General Concerns

9.1 The Methodist Prayer Convention 2014 will be held from 29-31<sup>st</sup> August. The speaker will be Dr Steve Seamands. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 17,000 people are expected to gather at the Bukit Jalil Stadium. The following words (9.1.1) from the Episcopal Head of the Methodist Church in Malaysia should be heeded:

9.1.1 The GCEC on 17 Aug 2014 has made a decision to follow what was previously done in the 1<sup>st</sup> MPC 2007 when it was also held in KL i.e. that we take this as an excellent opportunity for all the Methodist Churches in the Klang Valley to come together as a united Methodist Family to worship on that morning. As before, the 31 Aug 2014 Worship Celebration - will replace the morning services of Methodist Churches in the Klang Valley. However, churches are free to reschedule their services for that day. We intend to celebrate the Lord's Supper / Eucharist together then.

9.1.2 TRAC Executive Board that met in September has requested all churches to financially support the organizing of the MPC 2014. The Executive Board is recommending that all money be sent to TRAC. TRAC then will gather the sum and send to MPC 2014 one lump sum. Please budget for this in your 2014 budget and send the cheques to TRAC Office by 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2014.

9.2 Children ministry and youth ministry need refocusing in many of our churches. Ministry to children and ministry to the youth must not be the sole responsibility of the church. These ministries ought to begin at home. The church's focus should be to equip parents to be disciple-makers at home, and involve parents and other adults in the church to minister to the young ones in the church. Children ministry and youth ministry should be home-centred and church-supported. At the same time the church must create opportunities for families to worship together in the church and at home. It is my hope that our worship services will be fully intergenerational worship services. If the home and the church will join hands in ministry, the gospel can impact the world and transform it to be a better place. The church cannot be transformed without the transformation of the homes because the church is made up of families. Christian parents need to understand that they ought to fulfil their God-given role towards their children and that parents are the primary agents of faith-formation. This concern will be the focus of my next Presidential Address.

9.3 Ministry to young adults needs to be thought through carefully. We are not just concerned about participation of the young adults in our LCECs and some other programs. We cannot just be contented to see them in the church services. We need to engage them in conversations, mentor them, and meet their needs. The ministry to young adults should be a holistic ministry.

9.4 We are thankful to God for the MSF and MW. The coming together of the seniors and the women in the churches to minister to one another is a healthy sign and it ought to be encouraged further. Their desire to arrange themselves into organizations is a commendable one. Both these organizations keep themselves active by carrying out many activities and

programs throughout the year. Above all else, whatever we do in and through our organizations and ministries, we must not forget that we are a community of believers in Jesus Christ our Lord whose reasons for existence is to worship Christ, disciple the believers, and evangelize the world. We do well to remember what C. S. Lewis said: “Put first things first and we get second things thrown in. Put second things first and we lose both first and second things.”<sup>32</sup> We must always guard ourselves from putting second things first. We need these two organizations to be focused on helping further strengthen our churches and for members of these organizations to help edify the church through their gifts and talents, and not focus only on their own organizations. I commend these two organizations for being in the forefront to raise funds for ministries carried out by TRAC and for taking initiatives to start new ministries.

9.5 Early this year there was a suggestion made by the Executive Board members for the need to have a *Think-Tank* in order to quickly respond to social, political, and religious issues, making known where the Methodist Church stands vis-à-vis these issues. Our Bishop and the Council of Presidents have allowed TRAC to form this Think-Tank to study the issues at hand and make appropriate biblical statements. These statements will be bounced off the Episcopal Office before it is released to our Methodist people. Acting on this, the Executive Board in September made a decision to form this Think-Tank.

9.6 Rev Charles Tran, an Elder from UMC, United States, who has been giving leadership in the Vietnamese ministry here in Malaysia, has had to leave to US for good. He has been given a new posting by his Annual Conference as his wife has not been very well. We pray for him and his wife, and wish them God’s blessings. We thank him for serving for five years in Malaysia.

9.7 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 we could, both as individuals and as churches.

9.8 The Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) has spearheaded mission to the Akha people in Nam Pang. It is our joy and privilege to work with CAC at the General Conference level to support this work with personnel and finance. We pray the Lord of the harvest will bring our ministry to fruition amongst the Akha people.

9.9 We thank God that CFM, CCM and MCCBCHST highlighted, spoke up on and stood up to challenge many issues that cropped up in this country, like the billboard issue during GE13, Conversion Bill, canteen in wash room issue etc. In the case of the controversial Conversion Bill even the Federal Cabinet relented and withdrew the Bill from being tabled in the Parliament. The Allah Fact Sheet issued by CFM was extremely helpful to educate not only those who are not familiar with the issue but especially the Christian folks who have taken the issue lightly, and who have not understood the issue and all that is at stake. We are also thankful that the Association of Churches of Sarawak recently made a statement that they would continue to use the word Allah no matter what the courts decide on this matter. We in TRAC and PMSM should also use the word “Allah” no matter what the courts decide. In the coming days we will have to make more open statements and make open stands in this country as we see the way the nation is heading. As John Wesley said, “The making of an

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<sup>32</sup> C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, as quoted in [http://cawley.typepad.com/blog/2005/04/defining\\_succes\\_1.html](http://cawley.typepad.com/blog/2005/04/defining_succes_1.html)



open stand against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness which overspreads our land as a flood, is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of His enemies.”<sup>33</sup> We need to be vigilant in this nation. A little slumber and we may lose our fundamental rights that have been guaranteed by the Federal Constitution which is supreme.

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

9.11 Soli Deo Gloria!

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

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<sup>33</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal*, 87.

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