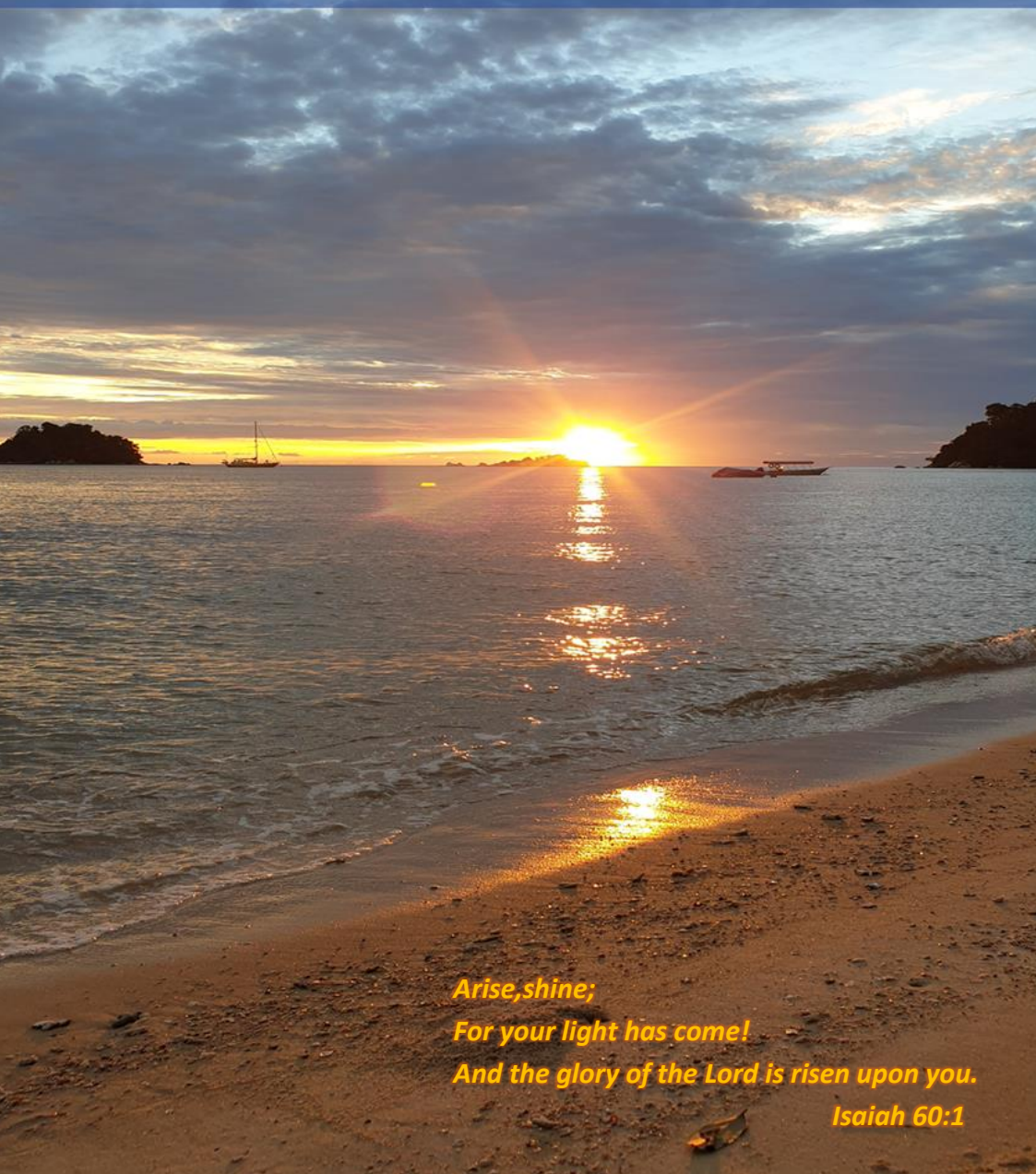




Christian Brethren Secretariat Malaysia

2021 diakonia

ONE LORD, ONE MISSION, ONE HEART



*Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.*

Isaiah 60:1

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FRONT COVER:

A scenic picture of the sun at the horizon taken at Pulau Pangkor. Without knowing when or at which direction the picture was taken, it could be a sunrise or sunset. The assemblies have a rich legacy of Word-grounded Missions. We were a light rising in the East, bringing much needed light into the world of darkness. Are we still the light that the world needs or are we like the sunset, fading into the empty darkness? This issue of Diakonia, seeks to bring some reflection on our Legacy and Prospects.

Editorial

In this year's issue of the Diakonia, we decided on the theme **"Legacy and Prospects"**. The purpose being to do a stock take on where the assembly work in Malaysia is at, try to see how we got here and where we could potentially be heading. In the process of gathering information, we have done two surveys and conducted some on the ground discussions using the SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) template and had hours of conversations with many elders and other assembly members. We like to thank all who have given their time and effort to contribute their thoughts and writings to this edition. This issue probably has the greatest level of participation from members in the assemblies.

As we went through the exercise of information gathering, it is clear how diverse we are; not surprising due to the autonomous structure of governance of the individual assemblies. True to what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12 ***"There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all."***

While our past and present is interesting and should provide us reasons for thanksgiving to the Lord for His leading, it should also be a time for us to reflect, what could we have done better? Should we continue as we are or are there changes we have to make moving into the future? Are what we do as witnesses

still relevant in our respective communities?

The future of the assembly witness is something for all of us to think about. There is a diversity of views on how we should proceed into the future, ranging from "just let things be, the Lord will take care of things; there is no need to plan" to "we must be good stewards to proactively put plans in place and carry them out to grow the assemblies". For sure there will be Biblical basis for both views. Are there clues in our past trajectory, bringing us to where we are now, that will provide some guidance as to where we would or should be headed in the future?

In a sense, Diakonia 2021, assumes the role of a "watchman", to report what is. (Ezekiel 33:1-9). In Ezekiel 33, there was an expectation for a response from the announcements of the watchman. We hope this issue will spur saints in the assembly to step-up, in order that the lampstand of witness of the assemblies will continue to **shine** before man that all may **see** our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

May the Lord bless your reading of this Diakonia 2021 and use this occasion to praise His Name for the Assembly's past and contemplate our prospects as witnesses into the future.

The Editorial Team

Cheah Lay Lin Samuel Chandy
Teo Pek Bing Khong Yoon Loong
Calvin Tan Kim NgNgang

Chairman's Message

We praise and thank our God for His faithful guidance and provision for the past 25 years that CBSM has been in existence since its inception in 1996.

From a Pro-Tem Committee to a Board of Trustees, having our own office space and an office staff; from a Working Charter to a legal Trust Deed, the Lord has enabled us to better serve the assemblies in Malaysia.

Moving forward, CBSM faces challenges arising from the fast-changing environment around us, whether it is political, economic or the internal spiritual challenges every assembly is facing, such as an onslaught of false teachings, issues of leadership succession, the dwindling numbers of youth, an aging membership etc.

We are setting up special task-force teams to address issues on how to better understand and protect our assemblies in relation to taxation laws and perhaps other issues in this changing political landscape in our country; to address the dwindling numbers of youth in our assemblies and to address the needs of the smaller assemblies in the country.

I am thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to lead the Board of Trustees in this two-year term, 2021 to 2023. Also thankful to the previous Chairman, Elder Lee Kha Kooi, for his leadership and contributions during his tenure. Coming

into the chairmanship with a sense of inadequacy and weakness, I am comforted that I have the support of strong and dedicated trustees of the Board.

Nevertheless, we should always remember that without the Lord, we can do nothing. It is not about our expertise and training, our resources, our abilities or even our experiences in the past; for it is about remaining in Christ, all the more for leaders living in these end-times. To rely on anything outside of Christ's power and direction, is the greatest weakness. May we hearken to the Lord's word, both the Board of Trustees and all Elders of Assemblies in the country, as we tend to the flock under our care.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

Finally, a word of thanks to the Editorial Team of the Diakonia magazine, who worked very hard to produce this informative issue.

Chiew Sai Kee
Chairman, CBSM

From the Secretary's Desk

Since its inception, CBSM has been evolving and learning to better serve the assemblies in Malaysia. We continually explore and fine-tune our role and purposes, being careful not to undermine the individual assemblies' responsibilities. One of the objectives of CBSM is to harness the combined strength and resources of the assemblies towards missions and discipleship. CBSM does not direct the affairs of individual assembly but to provide support and enlists the help of willing assemblies. Pray for us and the assemblies that we might work together, using our combined resources and gifts to edify the body of Christ together.

Assembly Leaders Conference (ALC) Elders Meeting

Due to the pandemic, we were not able to hold a physical Assembly Leaders Conference in 2021. The trustees decided to postpone the physical conference to 2022. Meanwhile, we held an ALC elders meeting via Zoom on 16th Sept 2021. During that meeting, several decisions were made. These decisions are as follow:

i. Appointment of Trustees for the 2022-2023 term: New trustees were elected and inducted. We thank the outgoing trustees, Cheah Huck Leong, Jimmy Chok, Dr. Khong Yoon Loong and Stephen Yam Si Kin, for their years of service. We welcome our new trustees; William Chang and Adrian Low. The trustees for the term 2022-2023 are as

given at the end of this article. The newly elected chairman is Chiew Sai Kee.

ii. New Task Forces: Two new task forces were commissioned at the meeting. The first is to look into the **Plight of Small Assemblies** (particularly in small towns but not limited to small towns). The objective to look into the needs of these small assemblies that are at risk of closing down, and providing the help that they need to revitalize their assemblies. The effort will be carried out in partnership with the CASM (Chinese Assemblies' Secretariat Malaysia) and the Tamil-speaking assemblies. The task force was later renamed **Church Revitalization**, and is led by Peter Tan.

The second task force is to look into growing the **Youth Ministries** in the assemblies. The number of youths in our assemblies are dwindling over the years. If we do nothing, the population of the assemblies will be mostly of the aged and there will be a lack of leaders in the pipeline. The task force's goal is to reduce the attrition of youths and build a sustainable ministry of reaching out and discipling youths. This task force is led by Michael Fun.

Pray for these two task forces and their team leaders.

CBSM Communication

One of the shortcomings of CBSM as felt by the trustees is the lack of communication to the assemblies. We have taken on ourselves to work on

improving his area with the initiatives as listed below

i. Prayer newsletter: The monthly prayer newsletter was revived and to save formatting time and effort, we've switched to simply publishing in regular A4 paper size instead of the 3-fold format. Note that this not just a prayer request but also a newsletter so that the assemblies at large will be informed of what is happening throughout the assemblies. We encourage assemblies to submit news so that all may hear of what the Lord is doing and the needs to be brought to the Lord.

ii. Whatsapp group: We've formed a Whatsapp group of assembly **elders** so that information can be shared quickly among the elders of the assemblies. If any elder is not in the group, let me know and I will add you. Note that only admins can post so if you have anything to post, please send to me and I will post for you.

iii. CBSM website: Our website has been upgraded with a new look. It takes on a minimalist approach. If you cannot find what you're looking for, click on "**More**". On the website, you will find CBSM's trust deed, all issues of Diakonia, Directory of Assemblies, Agencies and their descriptions. We will continue to upgrade the website to provide even more updated information.

iv. Agencies booklet: We are working on the Agencies booklet that was published more than 10 years ago. This booklet provides information on CBSM partner Agencies. God-willing we will publish

the booklet in pdf first before putting it in print. In the meantime, most of the information are on the website under "Agencies" tab.

Financial Assistance

We have been able to provide financial relief to those affected by natural disasters. Notably, we provided:

- i. Disaster Relief to PMOAM for those affected by the floods
- ii. Disaster Relief to the Kapasan Assembly during the Taal Volcano eruption in the Philippines – RM10K. This assembly attended and presented at ALC2019 and was helping families affected by the volcano eruption.
- iii. Disaster Relief to Nepal for families affected by Covid19. RM11K per month for 4 months (May – Aug 2020)

The Legacy Fund is a fund set aside by CBSM to assist Mission oriented projects. It is open to any assembly-led mission project and is limited to RM50K. To-date, we have approved applications from PMOAM in May 2020 and Yi Sheng in June 2020.

Resuming of Church Services after lockdown

In May 2020, during the Movement Control Order (MCO), the National Security Council (NSC) announced that churches were allowed to resume meeting physically, provided they apply to the Ministry of National Unity through their respective religious bodies. Our assemblies are without a denomination representation to the government. CBSM

then worked with NECF which is a recognized body for evangelical churches. We were able to be attached to NECF purely for our assemblies to apply to open church services. Before we could use this facility, the NSC announced that there was no need to apply for permission. Nevertheless, CBSM continues to work towards being recognized by the government as representing the assemblies. Pray with us as we pursue this path.

CBMPTB Administrative Support

We have been discussing and preparing to provide administrative support to CBMPTB (Christian Brethren Malaysia Properties Trust Berhad) but have yet to carry it out. The concern is having a proper staffing to perform the tasks regularly. We have already acquired a fireproof safe for the safe storage of the title deeds.

Teo Pek Bing

General Secretary CBSM



					
Chew Sai Kee	Lee Kha Kooi	Adrian Low	William Chang	Michael Fun	Chris Tay

CBSM Trustees

2022 – 2023

Michael Choo	Peter Tan	Stephen Chang	Teo Pek Bing	Shanmugam	Terence Chong	Rodney Tan
						

Lucy Kamala Samuel – A Faithful 100 Years

YL Khong



I made my entry in an unceremonious way into the home of Lucy Kamala Samuel by scaling the gate. Thankfully, there is still some youthfulness and balance in me that I manage to get over dozens of times without falling off. Once inside the compound, the key into the house is easily accessible to those who know where it is kept. She is not able to come out and open the gate due to mobility issues. You see, Lucy Kamala, just past her 100th birthday last year in 2020. This probably makes her the oldest person among our assembly members.

Each time I visited, I am uplifted by her faith in the Lord, never wavering all these years. I am constantly amazed at her sharp mind, keeping tab of her day to day affairs and maintaining a keen memory of her distant past. There are not too many details that escape her. So, for this issue of the Diakonia, I thought it might be encouraging for us if some of her thoughts and memories of her earthly sojourn can be captured. I was very

happy that after some persuasion, she consented.

Lucy was born in on 29th October 1920 in Penang to a godly family of 9 siblings of which she is the youngest. She grew up with family prayer times led by her father James Samuel, a doctor. Her mother, Alice Daniel from Burma. Her father was one of the early elders of Farquhar Street Chapel that survive today as Burmah Road Gospel Hall.

Mr. Samuel would make frequent missionary trips to India, his country of birth. In one of those long trips in 1931, Lucy was left to stay with her eldest brother in an estate at Bagan Datoh, Perak. Upon her parents return from Burma and India in 1934, they moved into their new home in Tanjong Tokong, a house by the sea where the waves beat against the back wall next to the kitchen.

She recalled the trips to many British ships docked at Penang to try and evangelize to the sailors and to hold evangelistic meetings. This was in the 1930's when Lucy was still in her teens. In an autograph book, she showed me messages written by sailors from the many ships she visited – HMS Diana, HMS Berwick, HMS Eagle and the list goes on.

Her plan to study medicine in Hong Kong was thwarted by the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese in 1941. She still recalled the first day of the bombing of Penang, 8th December 1941, about the same time as the attack on Pearl Harbor. She lived through the years of Japanese occupation

with air raid sirens, B24 and B29 British bombers flying overhead and saw the liberation of Penang and Malaya with the arrival of truck-loads of British and Australian soldiers.

In 1947, she went to Alor Star to be trained as a teacher at Sultan Abdul Hamid College and taught at Kampong Bharu Girl's School. She was married with a young son by then. In 1953, she transferred to Sultan Badlishah School and later served in Tengku Malik Primary School as senior assistant and then Chio Min Secondary School. While teaching, she was also on the National Language Board where together with the District Officer, she would interview people applying for their identity cards. Additionally, she was also a member of the Hospital visiting Board and made regular visits to inspect the Maternity, Female and Children's wards. In 1976, she retired after 3 years at Sekolah Menengah Kulim. Retirement was not a time of idleness for Lucy, she was appointed as a member of a Government Tribunal in 1982 to counsel couple with marital problems. She served in the tribunal for 29 years, into her 80's!

My first encounter with Mrs. Chinniah was in 1999. I met her at Bukit Mertajam Gospel Center (BMGC) where she was a regular. Prior to BMGC, she was in Fellowship with Butterworth Gospel Hall for quite a number of years.

Every Sunday, I would pick her up for Lord's Supper at Bukit Mertajam Gospel Center until age caught up with her and

she was unable to attend for health reasons. I would learn of her love for the Lord in the many conversations in the half hour journey to church and back every Sunday. She would tell of her adopted children and the children she had help, her family and her life in the Lord. The many children she had helped are all grown up now and her testimony in the Lord would no doubt have impacted their lives.

When there were believers in Kulim before they moved on elsewhere, she would come to the house meeting at my home every week. I met her more frequently then and every visit would be greeted by her dog and cats, up to a dozen of them at one stage. Her love for animals is evident. Today, she still looks after 2 cats.

Her fondest memories with the Assembly were the times she spent singing, sometimes the whole day with the sisters. She still maintains her collection of old hymn books with incredibly small text size. To my surprise she is still able to read them. She would recollect the time of the old missionaries, Mr. SS Adam and the work among the assemblies and the fellowship of the saints in those days.

Today, she lives alone with a regular helper that comes twice a day and a gardener and some members from BMGC and Butterworth Gospel Hall who visit on and off. Before COVID-19, members of her family would come once or twice a year for several weeks to be with her. She still manages her affairs with aplomb,



Butterworth Gospel Hall 1966

tithe regular and remains independent. Though persuaded to move to KL or Australia to be with her son some years back, she decided to stay put in Kulim in the house where she had lived for so many years.

In my visits to Lucy, to cheer and encourage her, I always feel encouraged by her fortitude in the various challenges she faces at her age. She tells me she is ready to meet the Lord and has “packed” and is ready to go. She will never fail to remind me to rely on and remain in the Lord, as she does. Once, when I was overwhelmed by many major illnesses of several members of BMGC among other things in my life, she quoted to me from Philippians 4:19, word perfect and King James of course, *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

This year, she shall turn 101 and we shall celebrate more than an average lifetime of testimony to the Lord. She will give us

cause to pause, and think about our own lives, as we reflect on her life of faith, hope and love. What comes through most impactfully is her love; her love for the Lord, love for the saints, love for those around her and God’s creatures. Truly, in her we can see, the greatest is indeed love.

Lucy loves to write and with her permission, a scanned copy of her book *Petals*, where her colorful and eventful life in the Lord can be found in this link <https://tinyurl.com/DiakoniaPetals>



Growth of Assemblies

Post 1950

The Diakonia Editorial Team

The arrival of the Brethren movement to Singapore and Malaysia is well documented (see references at the end of this article for examples). Briefly, the work in Singapore and Malaysia, or Malaya as we called in those days, was seeded by Bethesda Chapel in Bristol UK, with the arrival of Mr Philip Robinson and Mr & Mrs John Chapman in 1857 and 1859 respectively in Singapore.

Unbeknown to many, Robinson, the upmarket departmental store in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore had a Brethren connection. Philip Robinson was the founder of Robinson. However, it sadly went into liquidation in 2020 in both Singapore and Malaysia due to COVID-19.

Mr. Robinson's work birthed Bethesda Chapel at Bras Basah Road, Singapore in 1866. Mr. Chapman commenced the work at Farquhar Street in Penang in 1860. After he left for Australia in 1868 due to poor health of his wife, William Macdonald continued the work together with Philip J Hocquard. At Farquhar Street, they established a chapel and a mission house in 1876. Macdonald served for about 40 years and is buried in Western Road Cemetery in Penang.

From Penang, the work spread to Taiping where Taiping Gospel Hall was established in 1880 via Mr Hocquard and then to Kuala Lumpur through E. Eagger.

Eagger established the work in Davidson Road and Bluff Road in 1893 and 1897 respectively. The Davidson Road work survived today as KL Gospel Hall while the Bluff Road work seeded Jalan Imbi Chapel (1962) and PJ Gospel Hall (1959).

More than 80 foreign missionaries of the Assembly have contributed to the beginnings of the assemblies in this country. After Malaysia gained independence in 1957 and eventually achieved nationhood in 1963, the work of the assembly began to fall on the shoulders of local believers as government policies regarding foreign missionaries changed. The Brethren Assemblies have been prepared by the Lord's faithful servants to launch into a new phase of growth of the church of Jesus Christ.

The assemblies planted post 1950's are shown in the chart in page 11. In this chart, we tried our best to pin down the assemblies that planted the respective churches and compile the information as accurately as possible. However, we faced difficulties while gathering information, mainly due to the segregated and sporadic manner of the information sources. We put together the information we have at hand as best as we can for this publication but we expect revisions will be needed as more accurate information are obtained.

It is clear the growth of the Assemblies was the most rapid during the 60s till the mid-90s but slowed down from then onwards.

What could be the factors that contributed to this decline in church planting? Was it the rising affluence that made us lose the mission mindedness of the early founders? Could it be that the increasingly stressful work-life among more educated congregants leave little time for anything else other than the regular weekly meetings? Or is it that other churches have more attractive programs that presented assemblies with a challenge to retain members? Did the falling out among some church leaders and members over doctrinal or other disputes that divided the assembly members stymied our growth? Or have we simply have not kept up with the times and have become irrelevant in a fast-changing world?

A lot to ponder and act on as we consider the work of the assembly moving forward.

References for the beginnings of the Brethren Movement in Malaysia

1. My Church, A Brief History of the Christian Brethren Movement from Plymouth to Bandar Sunway Gospel Centre, ed. *Koh Gim Lam. Michael Fun Mun Sek and Ng Tieh Chuan.* 2001, Pelanduk Publications
2. Jalan Imbi Chapel 1962 - 2012, 50th Anniversary Archives, Editorial and Publications Committee
3. The Role of Leadership Training in the Development of the Chinese Brethren Assembly in Malaysia. *Lee Mee Onn.* Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of a Masters of Theology. 1994, SE Asia Grad. School of Theology
4. Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History, *Robert A Hunt; Kam Hing Lee; John Roxborough,* 1992, Pelanduk Publications

Editor's Note:

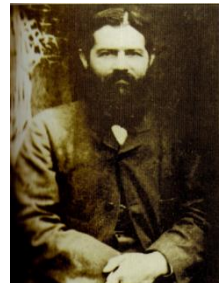
The 20 assemblies in Singapore owe their start to Robinson's department store founder Philip Robinson. Sadly, we were unable to locate a picture of Philip Robinson.

Likewise, we owe the beginning of the Assembly work in Malaysia to John Chapman but we were also unable to locate his photo.

William's Macdonald's died in 1911 and his grave can be found in Western Road Cemetery in Penang.



William MacDonald



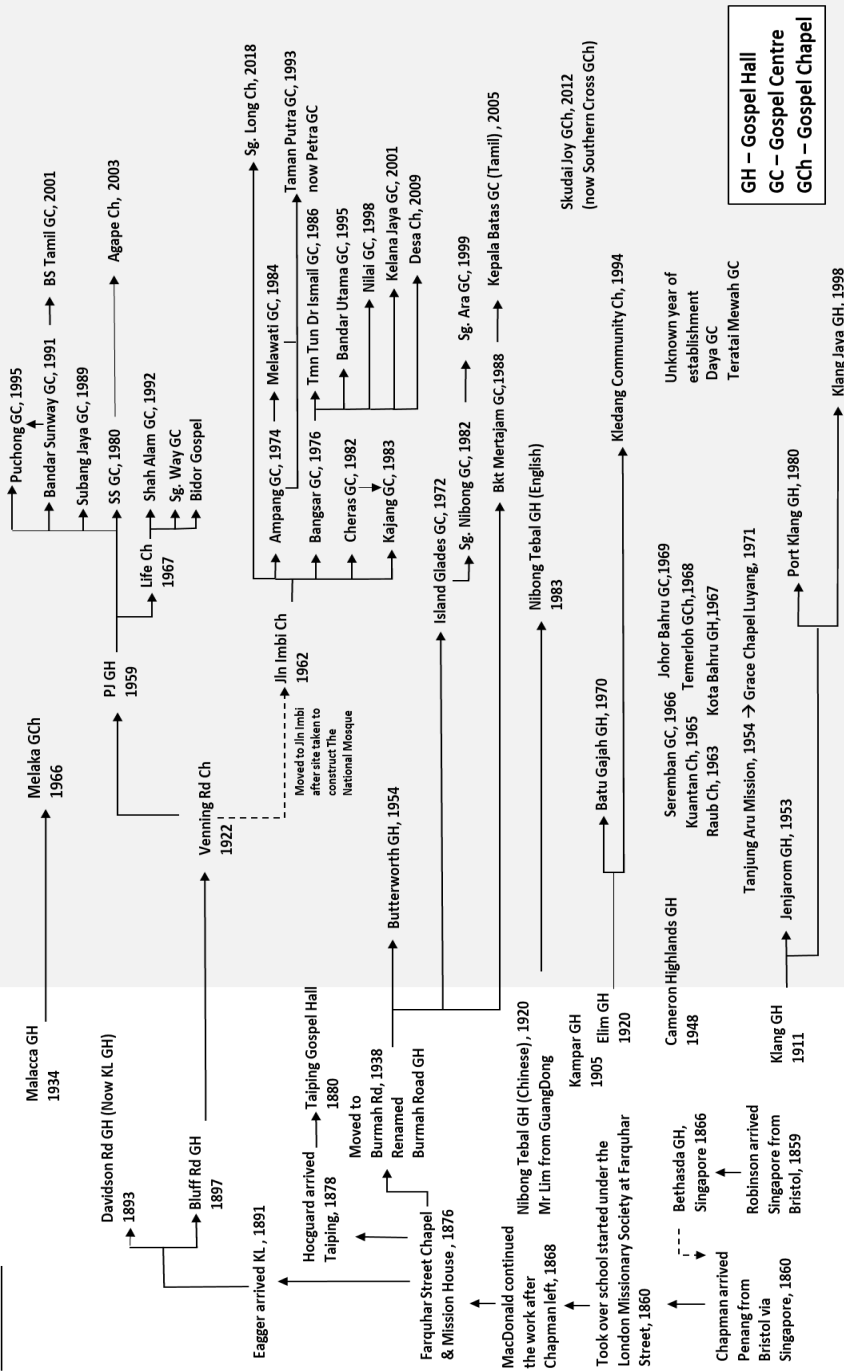
Philip J. Hocguard



Mr. and Mrs. E. Egger

Pre-1950

Post-1950



This chart shall be subjected to revisions as new information surface.

Brethren Agencies in Malaysia

Apart from serving the assemblies through administrative and secretariat services, CBSM also partners with groups and organizations that are based on assembly principles and led by assemblies. We have loosely called them **Agencies**. Their goals are Mission oriented and Church edifying (discipleship), or to enable these 2 goals. The following are Agencies currently in partnership with CBSM. Just as we do not govern or oversee assemblies, CBSM does not govern or oversee the operations of the Agencies,. CBSM aims to enable collaboration between the agencies and assemblies for the edification of the Body of Christ.

afc

**Assembly Fellowship
Camp**



LIFE IN THE NEW NORMAL
making a difference

What a year it was! Indeed, we can echo Proverbs 16:9, “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” Assembly Fellowship Camp (AFC) 2020 was *meant* to be a camp where brothers and sisters in Christ around Malaysia gather in Kuching, East Malaysia

for the first time to fellowship, just like we did every year in various location, within Malaysia and abroad. Detailed plans were made, speakers invited, accommodation reserved, flights booked, and it happened.

Before Malaysia was in a full lock-down, we faced the uncertainty to continue the camp or to cancel it altogether. We were given conflicting statements from the Sarawak Tourism Board and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Sarawak. It almost seems like everyone we talked to is shrouded in the ambiguity of the situation at that time. The Annual Rainforest Festival in Kuching that coincided with AFC 2020 was also cancelled only at the very last minute. With development of the COVID-19 situation and with a heavy heart, we finally cancelled AFC 2020.

We entertained the thought of postponing the physical gathering to the following year, but little that we knew the situation persisted through 2021. The Northern Committee has decided to pivot AFC 2021 into an online gathering of fellow believers on the 13th March 2021, with the aptly given theme “Life in the New Normal”.

This was a new experience for all of us, we have to figure out how to create a registration webpage, setup invitation links and disseminate information remotely. We thank God not only for technology but also for people who stepped up to the challenge and helped

make the first remote AFC possible. We had over 30 participants from around Malaysia and Cambodia (AFC campers from previous years) joining in our Zoom session. Our camp speaker, brother Gunaseelan, gave a thought-provoking message about how Christians can still make a difference even in times like these. We also thank the Lord for 2 sisters, Ms. Chua Say Yang & Dr. Esther Tan, who gave us a vivid account of how the pandemic has changed their ministry for the Lord and the challenges in the healthcare industry. Sister Stephanie Phang creatively put together games we can play remotely across different regions. We also had the opportunity for small group introduction, ice-breaking and discussions in break-out rooms.

We urge you to pray alongside with us. Pray that AFC will continue to serve its purpose, to bring like-minded saints in Malaysia to a warmer fellowship. Most assemblies have family camps for families, YP camps / youth camps, bible camps for youths, Sunday School camps for kids, and they serve their good purpose. Very often the neglected ones are the *singles* in our assemblies, especially when they start their journey into adulthood and the workforce. The journey can be a lonely and isolated one. Pray that AFC will continue to provide fellowship and mutual support for personal fulfilment in obedience to God's Will and God's Word to all Christians who are living single lives for one reason or another. Also, that AFC becomes a commonplace not only for the development of inter-assembly

friendship, but also for better cooperation among assemblies as they are potential leaders of the future.

Please also pray for AFC's Leadership. Our previous chairman, Daniel Ong, got married in 2019 and has stepped down after serving over 10 years. Wong Shih Shih (previously the Secretary) is now our new interim Chairman for the Northern Committee while Daniel continues to focus serving in various areas of ministry with Bethesda Depot Walk Singapore where he is now based. Pray that our Lord will strengthen the bond of committee members, put a purpose in our hearts, and raise up leaders to lead this effort further.

For more information:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/assembly-fellowship-camp/>

Christian Brethren Malaysia Property Trust Berhad (CBMPTB)

The primary objective of the formation of the Trust was:

To take over as trustees all those assembly owned properties previously held by Stewards Company Limited of the United Kingdom and to enable other properties to be vested in the Trust.

1. To help local assemblies safe-guard their properties.

2. To deal with the authorities on matters related to land–ownership.

3. To ensure that the properties vested in the Trust continue to be used for the furtherance of the Gospel and the teaching of the Word of God.

There are at present 113 titles lodged with the Trust. Some properties are in the process of transfer to the Trust while a few others have just been purchased. There are also a few assemblies whose properties are in the name of the Trust but have not submitted the property titles to the Trust for safe keeping. All assemblies are responsible for the maintenance, management and upkeep of their individual properties which are vested in the Trust. This includes ensuring adequate insurance is taken to cover the property for fire and flood, paying the yearly quit rents and assessments. The Directors of the Trust are not responsible for any financial obligations or undertakings of any property vested in the Trust.

For more information see:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/cbmptb/>

Christian Convention Centre Batu Ferringhi Penang

Blessings amidst the on-going Covid-19 uncertainties

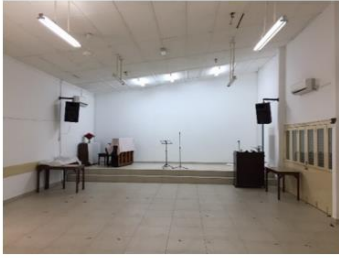


The Christian Convention Centre (CCC) saw God's blessings as the world moved towards a lock-down in 2020. However, it was also not spared a loss of revenue from the usual camps around the major school holidays in March, June, September and December. It was almost as if a Sabbatical year of rest was required of it, although it was not before major upgrades were brought about.



Dormitories

By mid-May of 2019, a generous gift of RM 100,000 was endowed upon the Centre for upgrades deemed necessary. This was followed through in May 2020 with another donor who donated aluminum louvres to replace the old wooden ones that were falling apart. This enabled necessary image and



Newly tiled hall



Newly acquired piano



New louvres in place May 2020

functional upgrades to be done, upgrades which we often asked of the Lord.

2021 started with camp and wedding planners hoping for a break in the MCOs or Movement Controlled Orders under Malaysia's Emergency declaration. Physical gatherings rather than virtual ones are now well appreciated for camps that manage to materialize. The Centre is large enough for a group of 50 under the current Covid-19 restrictions for gatherings.

Upgrades to report

The Directors have set a cap of 50 live-in campers for the moment until the Covid-19 situation eases. A centralized hot water system and renovated air-conditioned 6 dorms and 2 rooms provide the minimal amenities for a comfortable stay during camps. The main hall is air-conditioned for the hot afternoons and evenings so meetings can go on in relative comfort. The hall also has a standard audio facility augmented with a piano, an electronic keyboard and LCD projector. A new signboard went up by 19th December 2019

Plans for the future

Plans are in the pipeline for renovating the site to accommodate more family rooms and other facilities.

1. The former plan to add a Mezzanine floor combining with 2 sets of toilets and 2

extra family rooms at the existing veranda area has made way for the addition of 2 family rooms complete with toilet and bathing facility. The cost to undertake this is estimated to be around RM 90,000 with furnishing to cost an estimated RM15,000.

2. The kitchen roofing area needs upgrading as the structure and roofing face wear and tear. A previous vendor quotation estimated this upgrade to cost around RM 25,000.



Family Room with attached bathroom

Your suggestions and donations are most welcome. Help make the site more of a home away from home while you gather for fellowship, good Bible teaching and a venue for sharing our most precious faith. Your fellowship and gifts towards these developments of the CCC would be much appreciated. Kindly make out your cheques in favor of Christian Convention Centre and receipts will be given in acknowledgement.

Alternatively, you may make a direct deposit to CCC's Maybank account # 007 068 100 598 . (Please inform us by e-mail attaching a scan pay-in slip if you opt to use this mode of deposit). Kindly pray with our committee for the Lord to stir up generous hearts.

For bookings and donation enquiries, kindly contact Mr. Dave Martin on 016-4592862.

The site caretaker may be reached on 04-8811940.

Address/Contact:

Christian Convention Centre

72-B Mukim 17

Batu Ferringhi

11100 Penang.

E-mail: dmmartin1212@gmail.com

For more info:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/christian-convention-centre/>

Emmaus Bible Centre

The WORD to the World



Mission Statement

ECS Ministries exist to teach and disseminate the Word of God through external education in the form of correspondence courses which are specially designed to be evangelical, educational and edifying in nature and consistent with the doctrinal statement of the assemblies.

Objective

To make Emmaus Bible Courses available to each and every member of our assemblies so that everyone can study the Word on a personal level. Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to use Emmaus courses to reach even many more in the coming weeks and months so that His great Commission can be fulfilled:

- i) To preach the Gospel and make disciples
- ii) To build up and to reach out

In 2004 the Emmaus Bible Centre was placed under the umbrella of GLO (Gospel Literature Outreach) and a committee was set up to revive the availability of the courses through our own Assemblies throughout the country. Thus, in the beginning of 2006, the distribution centre was relocated to its current location in Jalan Imbi Chapel. In the year 2015 another small outlet was set up in Bandar Sungai Long Cheras. Both premises can be visited with appointments made only.

In 2013, the Emmaus work also undertook the distribution of Everyday Publication Courses from Canada. With this step the correspondence courses became complete with the Old Testament Series and other Doctrinal studies. In 2014 the Bible Education Services which offers many online material became a part of our Sunday School resources. In 2016 we then coordinated the Mailbox Club which for many years was handled by the Child Evangelism Fellowship.

For more info on:

ECS Emmaus Correspondence School

www.ecsministries.org

Everyday Publications

www.everydaypublications.org

Bible Education Services,

www.besweb.com

CEF Mailbox Club,

www.mailboxclub.org

Emmaus Bible Centre,

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/emmaus-bible-centre/>

Contact

Emmaus Bible Centre

154, Jalan Imbi

55100 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: 011-3636 0984 Ms Chai

Email: emmaus_my@yahoo.com

Sungai Long Chapel

16, Jalan Seri Sungai Long 18

Bandara Sungai Long

43000 Kajang

Selangor

Tel: 018-6633 609 Titus

EVANGEL Book Centre

Strong in Spirit Sixty-six Years on



The Ministry

Sixty-six years since establishing itself as a ministry-based Christian bookstore in Malaysia, Evangel Book Centre (Evangel) remains strong in spirit. We are thankful for the foresight of our forebears who recognized the need to “to make available evangelical books, publications, Christian literature and other merchandise which present Christian truth and teaching in all aspects of the Christian Faith.” We have, by the grace of God, been able to carry on the ministry without losing focus and without compromising on the soundness of the literature we carry.

The Challenge

The challenge we face is the lack of footfall, that is, not enough people are patronizing the store. This has placed a strain on the model on which Evangel operates, which recognizes the continued need of a physical bookstore in the country.

A key strategy moving forward is to get our books to where the people who need them are already gathered. This plan builds on our outdoor sales strategy which has clearly borne results. The strategy involves outdoor sales, including participation via book tables at conferences, camps and church meetings. This has always proven to be successful. What we hope for moving forward is that more churches and para-church groups will share with us the platforms to bring these books to them at their gathering venues.

Along with this, given the shift to an online ordering culture, we hope to enhance our online ordering capabilities with a modest online system. We hope this will make it easier for people to get the books they need.

We have not been spared from the changes in reading culture. Long before the pandemic, we could already see the shift to an online book ordering culture. And the reality is that fewer people seem to be engaging in reading serious Christian literature, especially those without a populist bent. Too few people are getting their hands on our books despite they being of high quality from a content perspective and competitively priced too!.

Nevertheless, we remain focused on our quest to challenge all Christians of their need for relevant Christian books to help in their spiritual lives as well as in their ministries in the church.

Operations

It should be stated that our expenses are well managed and helped along by not having to pay rentals or loans since we own the buildings we occupy and there are financial reserves that we can draw on to keep the ministry afloat. But that is clearly going to be tested in the long haul and some changes will be necessary.

Our lack of profitability to maintain the viability of three bookstores (in Petaling Jaya, Penang and Kuantan) for the long term would stem from a lack of revenue from sales, which remains the key financial issue.

Staff

Due to our ministry model, those joining as staff need to be committed to the ministry in order to bear with the limited career growth prospects. By the grace of God, we have continued to manage with a small, highly committed and dedicated team of staff.

Conclusion

The ministry of Evangel continues to be relevant to the Malaysian public given the distinct role we play. To maintain our viability, churches can play a vital role by directing the necessary traffic to our stores by promoting the need for their members to expose themselves to sound evangelical Christian literature.

For more information about Evangel, click here

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/evangel-book-centre/>

Website: www.evangelbooks.org

Email: office@evangelbooks.org



**GLO TRAINING
SCHOOL**

The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions have forced the entire world to rethink and to adapt to new ways of going about their lives, businesses and activities. Just as education worldwide has been transformed, the delivery of biblical teaching and training to assemblies have to consider new realities and methods. The accessibility of online materials and resources at the click of a button poses a challenge to the viability of traditional Christian teaching and training institutions. Just as long-standing commercial entities closed down overnight, Christian institutions face the same dangers. How each Christian

institution respond will determine their relevance and ability to survive in the years ahead.

By God's grace, GLO was able to run an in-person program in Bidor Gospel Centre from 5 April to 16 May 2021. Most of the students and lecturers were from Klang Valley and Penang. Interstate travel restrictions posed uncertainties throughout the duration of the program. Police permits for interstate travel were obtained for all concerned and the opening Dedication Service and ending Graduation Service enjoyed full turnout of students, parents and GLO Council members. The full course including Bible Study methods, Old and New Testament, important doctrines and assembly distinctives were taught. However, the practical ministry elements were affected by the closure of youth fellowship and Sunday School in Bidor, orang asli churches and local old folks' homes. Certain assemblies stepped in to provide online training for the students. As a result, the students were able to take Sunday School classes via Zoom for the children of The Life Chapel in Petaling Jaya and the Balik Pulau Outreach in Penang. They also joined prayer meetings of assemblies in Petaling Jaya and Penang via Zoom.

Just as churches have to see how they will carry out their ministry when the world emerges into the new normal, GLO will also have to see how it can continue to serve the assemblies in view of changes that will form part of the new reality in Christian ministry.

GLO Training School is managed by a Council consisting of leaders from various assemblies: Lee Min Choon (chairman) of The Life Chapel, Alistair King (secretary) of Cheras Gospel Centre, Lee Kha Kooi (treasurer) of Sungei Ara Gospel Hall, Anthony Too of Jalan Imbi Chapel, Philip Ng of Port Kelang Gospel Hall, Adrian Low of Kelang Gospel Hall, Alan Low of Burmah Road Gospel Hall and Edwin Yapp of The Life Chapel.

For more info and contact:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/glo-training-school/>



**Gospel
Outreach
Worldwide**

Vision

To reach the unreached people groups in our own country and abroad.

Objective

To provide a suitable channel and environment to enable Assemblies to participate effectively in mission.

Strategy

By our Lord's leading, to participate in and also to network with Brethren Mission Agencies worldwide in order to play our part in World Mission:

1. To share our vision and experience with Assemblies.
2. To encourage Assemblies to plant churches in Malaysia and in cross-cultural situations.
3. To provide a mission resource centre for the use of Assemblies.
4. To provide advice on missions involvement to Assemblies if requested.
5. To advise Assemblies on the handling of potential mission work.
6. To facilitate/assist Assemblies to send out, supervise and care for their commended workers while ensuring that at all times the autonomy of the local churches is safe-guarded.
7. To be the agency for networking worldwide so as to maximize the use of Brethren resources worldwide.

Our Uniqueness

1. The organization is a Facilitator and a Faith Mission.
2. This is an extension of the Brethren missionary impetus of the past and its primary purpose is in the Brethren Assemblies to obey our Lord's Commandment to do Mission Works.
3. GOWW will adhere to the teaching of the Word of God in all matters and decisions.
4. GOWW will work with others who hold the same scriptural principles as stated in the organization's statement of faith

5. GOWW works with the Assemblies and will at all times respect the autonomy of the Assemblies.

For more information:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/gospel-outreach-world-wide/>



**Highlands
Christian Centre
Cameron Highlands**

The Vision

1. That the Highlands Christian Centre (HCC) will be fully utilized.
2. That HCC will be a place of peace and blessing to many.
3. That many will find God, be refreshed and be edified in their Christian life.
4. That HCC will have a spacious beautiful compound, tranquil surroundings with adequate facilities to meet growing needs and rising expectations.
5. That HCC will return to the time when it was able to contribute to the support of full-time workers, missions and other assembly projects from its income.

Mission House

The old Mission House was a single storey Building situated adjacent to the Gospel Hall Cameron Highlands. Both the Church Building and the Old Mission House were built in 1962.

Time took its toll on the old Mission House and the structure deteriorated with cracks on the walls and other defects to an extent where renovation was not economical nor feasible. The Assembly decided to rebuild the whole Mission House.

The first application to rebuild the Mission House that was submitted to the Local Authority was rejected. After a few years of waiting and by God's Mercy and Grace, the Plan of the second submission was approved on the 14th.December 2006. The actual construction of the New Mission House only started in the year 2008.

The main purpose of rebuilding the Mission House was for Churches, Believers and Christian Organizations from across Malaysia and Singapore to have access to a bigger and more comfortable Camp site apart from the Highland Christian Centre.

Through fervent prayer support, Offering and interest free loans from Assemblies around Malaysia and Singapore as well as individual believers, the New Mission House has become a reality. It is an ideal place to carry out Bible Camps, Retreats and Family trips while enjoying the cool air of the highlands and marvelling at God's wondrous creations.

Although during the process of construction, we encountered many disruptions and problems, with God's grace the building was finally completed. Finally, with the help of Brother Tiong Kian Boon from Malacca Gospel Chapel, the Certificate of Fitness for the building was obtained in 2014.

In November 2014, the New Mission House started its operation. At the moment, the New Mission House has the following facilities:

1. 5 Twin sharing rooms with attached bathroom.
2. 1 unit of 3 rooms apartment which can accommodate 15 persons.
3. 1 unit of 2 rooms apartment which can accommodate 9 persons.
4. 1 unit of male dormitory for 12 persons
5. 1 unit of female dormitory for 12 persons
6. 1 unit of attic dormitory for 18 persons.
7. A meeting room with capacity for 50 – 60 persons, currently used by the Tamil Assembly.
8. A meeting cum dining hall with capacity for 60 – 70 persons.

Challenges and Future Plans

There are future plans to extend the floor of the current dining hall to the back to serve as a better cooking area. The current dining hall will be extended to the kitchen which will increase the space for the Dining Hall. There is also the need to increase parking space. At the moment

both HCC and Mission House operate under one Management.

For more information:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/highlands-christian-centre/>

Inter-Brethren Assembly Youth Development

Vision

To disciple and develop the youth of Brethren assemblies for the work of evangelism, missions and leadership responsibilities.

Advisory Board of Elders:

Colin Kirton (SJGC)
Dexter Ng (SAGC)
Lee Hong Seng (BPGC)
Ritchie Tay (SSGC)
Staff Worker: May Lee Hilmy

Programme/Activities

- Residential Bible School (RBS)
 - 3 Holiday Camp
 - COPA IBA Evangelistic Rally (Evangelism through sports)
 - IBA Unplugged Evangelistic Rally (evangelism through music/creative art) *
 - Youth Leaders' Consultation
 - Young Leaders' Development
 - Mission exposure trips
- *currently suspended pending review / revamp

Address/Contact

Inter-Brethren Assembly Youth Development
c/o 33 Lorong Burhanuddin Helmi 11
Taman Tun Dr. Ismail

60000 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: 016-2406444 (May Lee)

E-mail: ibaydooffice@gmail.com

Malaysian Missionary Services Trust

Objectives

1. To facilitate Assembly Mission Work both locally and overseas.
2. To promote Assembly Commended Workers' (ACW) welfare
3. To challenge & encourage individuals to serve the Lord on a short or longer term.
4. To promote interest and prayer support for missions on part of individuals and assemblies

Programme/Activities/Plans

1. Publishing mission news and prayer letters.
2. Promoting the annual 'Assembly Commended Workers' Day
3. Promoting mission awareness and organizing short mission trips around South East Asia.
4. Operating an Education Fund to provide financial assistance to enable the children of ACW to pursue either vocational or tertiary education

The Board Members

Chairman: Ong Hock Chye
Secretary: Raymond Hoh
Treasurer: Chris Tay

Members:

Stephen Lew
Lee Kim Seong
Chun Sam Tuck
Lim Wee Leong

Advisor:

Wong Sai Weng

Address/Contact:

Malaysian Missionary Services Trust
 Unit 679 -2-2, Desa Kiara Condo,
 Jalan Damansara, 60000 Kuala Lumpur
 Tel & Fax. 03-77223680
 Email: mmstrust1@gmail.com

Pan Malaysia Orang Asli Mission (PMOAM)

Vision:

Becoming a godly and Christ- centred,
 disciple- making OA church

Mission:

To reach out to the OA community, to
 disciple the OA Christians to maturity and
 to equip them for service and missions.

Present Status

At present, the number of full-time OA
 workers is 16 (12 in Perak and 4 in
 Pahang), and part-time workers is 10 (6 in
 Perak, 4 in Pahang), serving about 13
 Sidang Injil Orang Asli (SIOA) churches in
 Perak, 19 in Pahang

Plans for the future

For the years ahead, we will continue to
 strive to empower the OA to reach out to
 the OA communities in line with our
 emphasis to “empower OA for OA works”.
 The process PMOAM follow consists of
 three approaches by empowering them
 for the following:

2. Education (Spiritual and Academic)
3. Economic enhancement and relief

Programme / Activities/Plans

1. Partnership with assemblies.
2. Exposure & mission trips by assemblies.
3. Special projects by assemblies.
4. Welfare & social concerns.
5. Tuition teachers from assemblies.
6. Provision of school uniforms, books, shoes, bags etc.
7. Youth & children’s camp
8. Provide assistance for improvement of the livelihood of the OA.

Gifts (cash, cheque, online transfer) to:
 Pan Malaysia OA Mission
 Public Bank Bhd A/C No: 3192916101
 Bandar Puchong Jaya Branch, Selangor.

Address / Contact

41-1, Jalan Bandar Enambelas,
 Pusat Bandar Puchong,
 47100 Puchong, Selangor

Email: pmoam1@gmail.com;

Tel: 012-2221762 (Ong Hock Chye)

For more information:

<https://www.cbsm.com.my/site/pan-malaysia-oa-mission/>

1. Evangelism and church planting

FROM AROUND THE ASSEMBLIES

Batu Gajah Gospel Hall *Wasu Kasimani*

It was once mentioned by Mr. Harold Cook that brothers used to travel to from Taiping GH to Batu Gajah (BG) by 'jumbo saga' i.e. by elephants for gospel work among the Indians, as BG then was the capital of the Kinta District due to tin mining.



In the 50's, Dr. Don Nickelson (GLO) who was the Medical Doctor in charge of the Kinta District began Bible studies among the Christian believers in his home for a few years.

In the 60s', missionary work was started by Mrs. Elfsen at No.7, Jalan Changkat, Batu Gajah. She was from Bethany Fellowship, USA. When she left, the work was continued by the Dickzers also from the same Fellowship. They started the Sunday school work at their home at no.

7, Jalan Changkat and later the Student Ministry every Friday after school at their residence too. Later the Sunday School was held in the Royal English School, when the number of children increased. The Dickzers together with brother Sinnappan, also went to the various estates, Government quarters and tin mining villages to share the Gospel especially among the Indians. Even though the Dickzers were Baptists, they were closely associated with Elim Gospel Hall, Ipoh. Brother Victor Doss and brother Rajoo from Elim Gospel Hall got involved with them in their Tamil ministry.

In late 1969, the Dickzers had to leave Malaysia due to Government ruling then and so the Tamil and English work were handed over to brother Thiran (who was working in Parit) and brother Fun Chen Cheong (an Elim Gospel Hall brother working in Tanjung Tualang).

In 1970, brother Koh Koon Yaw (from Taiping Gospel Hall) after studying in Emmaus Bible School, Australia, joined in the work as a full-time-worker but was mostly involved in the Chinese work which was started by brothers from Elim Gospel Hall Chinese section. The English Youth with about 25 people began to meet every Saturday in a wooden house at Jalan Erikson, Batu Gajah. In mid-1970, the Lord's Supper was instituted with about 15 believers and Batu Gajah Gospel Hall was born. It was independent and autonomous.

In June 1971, the believers moved to the new building at No. 86, Jalan Sulaiman.

Brother Koon Yau left for Australia and brother Lam Heng Fook from Taiping Gospel Hall joined Batu Gajah Gospel Hall as a full-time-worker. At this time, the leaders decided to have a combined Oversight. Since then, Batu Gajah Gospel Hall always had a combined Oversight.

Due to the large number of Indian believers, the English section decided to start a Lord's Supper service in Tamil every Sunday at 6.00pm. Brother Raju and brother Victor Doss from Elim Gospel Hall came over to share the gospel faithfully every Sunday evening. Most of the Tamil believers and their parents attended this meeting and many parents were saved and baptised. These meetings were however not sustained and they stopped in 1999.

In later part of 1971, the leaders of Batu Gajah Gospel Hall and Kampar Gospel Hall decided to have Inter Assembly games such as ping pong, captain ball, tennikoit, badminton, tug-o-war, carrom and Bible quizzes. It was so successful that in the following year, Elim Gospel Hall was invited and the games were held in Elim Gospel Hall grounds. Mr. Herald Cook of Jalan Imbi Chapel was invited to be the speaker. I believe this was the beginning of the first IBA games.

Brother Thiran and brother Fun were both instrumental in the growth of the English work with a very active Youth work and a very vibrant Sunday school work. They were pioneers in Family camps, camping in the church grounds,

camp fires and Christmas carolling in Batu Gajah.

When brother Thiran left for Seremban and brother Fun to Ipoh, there were about 25-35 believers meeting for the Lord's Supper every Sunday. The number dropped to 15 to 25 believers when many left for jobs in bigger towns- a fate of small town assemblies.



In 1983, the full-time-worker brother Lam Heng Fook was asked to leave the Assembly due to his charismatic views and many believers left with him. Thankfully, many of those who left returned to Batu Gajah Gospel Hall but the damage was done.

In 1984, brother Timothy Yong came to Batu Gajah Gospel Hall as a full-time-worker. During this period, brother David who left Batu Gajah in 1972 and Dr. Teoh Leong Chee a government medical doctor began to work in Batu Gajah, and together with brother Timothy, they managed to bring harmony and order into the assembly.

In the 1990s, many believers began to come and work around Batu Gajah and both the Youth work and the Sunday School began to grow. Such was the

increase that God poured funds into the church for the purchase of an extra building with 4 classrooms, a single story semi-detached house as a mission house and a piece of land adjoining the church. This was a period of many youth activities for e.g. Bible quizzes, memory verse competitions, hiking, in-door and out-door camps, half-yearly camp fires, cooking competitions, yearly Vocational Bible Schools, yearly sports and tele matches and family camps held in Penang, Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill, Pangkor and other places. Our youths attended short-term GLO classes, RBS in Cameron Highlands and youth camps held by Elim Gospel Hall and Burmah Road Gospel Hall.

The Tamil work was revived and began meeting at 6.00 pm. Due to some Orang Asli believers residing in Batu Gajah, a Bahasa Malaysia Lord's Supper at 8:00 a.m. was started with brother Sam Tatt and brother Chan, both from Elim Gospel Hall supporting the work.

Also due to many Myanmar Christian believers working around Batu Gajah, the Myanmar believers were allowed to meet for the Lord's Supper in the hall at 2.00 pm every Sunday.

Over the years, brother Timothy Yong our full-time worker and other brothers and sisters left for other towns and migrated. Many of our young people have moved to Klang valley as well. All the foreign workers have returned to their country of origin. The orang Asli families have moved back to their villages in Kelantan and Gopeng.



Currently we have about 20 people meeting weekly before the COVID-19 lockdown in the English Section and about 30 people in the Chinese section.

We look forward for year 2022, seeking God's grace and mercy to serve the Master well

BATU GAJAH GOSPEL HALL

36 Jalan Sulaiman,
31000 Batu Gajah, Perak

Elders

Dr Teoh Long Chee
Bro Hooi Kong Yew
Dr Wasu Kasimani

Deacons

Bro Rajendran
Mr Chan Pak Yong

Grace Luyang Chapel, Sabah

Elder Su Kiong

Not long after the communist government took over in 1949, many foreign missionaries left China. Among them were two British couples; the, George and Phylis Hanlon who returned to Scotland and Fred and Sybil Pucknell, who left for Australia for six months. The Pucknells spent about 29 years in China. It is understandable why the Pucknells chose to partnership with the Hanlons to continue the work among the Chinese in Tenom, in the interior part of North Borneo; a pre-dominantly Hakka speaking community who were mainly shopkeepers and farmers.

Armed with a letter of sponsorship from the home office of Christian Missions in Many Lands, in England and a personal letter from Dr. F. J. Harlow of London, the Pucknells were interviewed by the Chief Secretary on 2nd April 1952 and thence formally submitted their application. After waited for four months, formal approval was granted to them to work as missionaries.

The Pucknells came first and stayed in the Tenom rest house for a period of time before renting a wooden house at Simpangan, a village four miles south of Tenom. A year later, they decided to move to Tenom town itself and started Gospel meetings in a rented shop in town. Mr & Mrs Hanlon came to Tenom in 1953 to be co-workers with the Pucknells.



On 12th October 1953, another application was made to the Chief Secretary to work amongst the Chinese and English-speaking people in the Tanjung Aru area. Approval was given by the Chief Secretary on 16th November 1953. This then paved the way for Fred and Sybil to move north to Jesselton, whilst George and Phylis remained at Tenom to continue the work there.

5th January 1954 opened up a new era of Christian work in the suburb of Tanjung Aru. That day witnessed the arrival of Fred and Sybil Pucknell taking up residence at No. 38 Race Course Road which was later changed to Jalan Mat Salleh. It was here at this residence that the first Lord's Supper in Chinese was conducted. It was here the Pucknells would be affectionately known as the 'Pak Muk Su' or literally the 'white pastor' for years to come.

Once the foundation of Tanjung Aru Mission was laid, the work and the building associated with the work grew. After commencing the first Lord's Supper in Chinese on 10th January 1954, Bible Classes, both in Chinese and in English were introduced and the first Sunday

public service was planned for 7th February 1954.

30th October 1954 saw the first baptism being conducted for two new believers. The next day, Wilson Wang, one of the first missionaries to come out of China, came to Jesselton to conduct a series of special Gospel meetings, during which a number professed their faith.

On 28th May 1955, Mr D.H. O'Brien was baptized as he had professed faith in God at earlier meetings. 29th May 1955 witnessed the first observance of the Lord's Supper in English with Mr & Mrs Pucknell and Mr & Mrs D.H. O'Brien partaking.

Throughout this time, the Emmaus Bible Correspondence work which was started by Mr Pucknell developed very rapidly. Many young people were blessed through the study of the Bible with these courses. Arising out of this work the Emmaus Youth Circle was formed.

Having secured the foundations of His Church and with the increase of attendance, a larger premise with bigger capacity was required. A shop house at Tanjung Aru town was rented and proposed to adapt it into a hall. However, the Town Board did not approve the proposal. Later, a vacant tea shop was rented, further up the road towards the beach. Again, before any work could commence, the Public Works Department (JKR) condemned the building. So once again, the believers were left with the old house at Race

Course Road. Eventually the decision was to build an extension to the house enlarging the sitting capacity to 60-70 people. Extension work finished in February 1956 and the new hall was opened for services at the beginning of March 1956. Subsequently, Sunday School classes were organized, one of them in English and on 15th April 1956, the first meeting was held.

In August 1959, after five and a half years of faithful service, Fred and Sybil went on furlough and Mr & Mrs Geoffrey Bull from Scotland came to relieve them in the work. The Lord continued to bless the ministry and quite a few were baptized and others saved and were added to the Church. The Pucknells returned from furlough towards the end of 1960 and the Bulls went back to Scotland.

In 1960, with the increase of numbers coming for various meetings, there was a serious urgent need for a bigger space. An application was made to the government for a grant of a piece of land where a bigger hall could be built. However, difficulties were encountered and eventually rejected by the government.

In view of this, a building fund was launched with the initial contribution of RM1,400.00 which was entrusted to Fred and Sybil for the purpose of Church buildings in Sabah by the Christian Mission in Many Lands. In about ten years, this leap of faith bore fruit.

On 15th December 1961, the constitution for the Tanjung Aru Mission was drawn

up with a doctrinal statement which was duly adopted by the Assemblies and submitted to the Government for approval and registration. On 27th March 1962, the Certificate of Incorporation was given. In 1962 a piece of land at Mile 5, Likas was alienated to the Mission for burial purposes.

In 1969, the Oversight decided to purchase a piece of land in a fast upcoming residential cum commercial area along Reservoir Road, Luyang.

The Chapel was completed in 1971 and declared open in December 1971 by the founder Mr Pucknell when he and his wife came for a short visit. Henceforth, 'Tanjung Aru Mission' was changed to '**Grace Chapel**'.

The sixties were years of blessings as well as challenges both from internal and external sources with issues ranging from 'boy-girl relations', doctrinal to leadership. However, by the grace and abundance of God's love we managed to overcome the many challenges.

The sixties were also a time when British North Borneo underwent political changes. On 16th September 1963, Sabah together with Sarawak joined the Federation of Malaya to form Malaysia.

The change of government brought with it certain restrictions on the work of foreign missionaries in the State. They either had their extensions of visa refused or permanent residence permits withdrawn. So, they had no choice but to leave the state where their hearts were.

1969 signaled the end of foreign missionaries when the Pucknells went into retirement and settled down in Maryborough, Queensland, Australia. Nevertheless, God continues to shower His abundant grace by raising up local capable leaders for His works.

Into the seventies, we continue to see God's providences. We commended Wu Pau Wah and Pang Mei Mei into full-time service in the Chinese assembly and later Lee Yun On and Lee Thien Chin in the English assembly.

In 1976, a half-acre piece of land at Penampang, a fast-upcoming commercial cum residential area was purchased. A double storey church building was built and subsequently a multi-purpose hall was added. Dedication was carried out in 1981. (Refer article on Grace Chapel Luyang (Chinese) article for more details).

In September 2001, Grace Chapel Kingfisher was established by members from Grace Chapel Chinese Assembly, Luyang.

During the early part of the decade, we saw exodus of leaders to Taiwan, west Malaysia, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In spite of this, God out of His abundant grace and love has raised up leaders for His Church until this day. Truly he never leaves us nor abandons us.

To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sabah Grace Chapel Chinese Luyang (GCCL)

沙巴路阳恩惠堂（中文堂）

Pastor Hee Pei Lin

1971-2021 教会发展史

教会于 1969 年在亚庇市，路阳区购买了一块土地，坐落在现今路阳住宅区的中心。当时的一班弟兄姐妹着手教会建堂的工作，并在 1971 年完工建造。同年 12 月由教会的创始人白克能弟兄（Mr. Fred Pucknell）主持献堂典礼，取名为恩惠堂。神带领教会的人数逐年增长，神再次给教会领袖植堂的异象，于 1976 年在兵南邦区购地建堂。兵堂的建筑工程历时 5 年，于 1981 年完工和举行献堂礼。

History of Church Development (1971-2021)

In 1969, the church acquired a piece of land in Luyang District (which is located in the center of the current Luyang residential area), Kota Kinabalu. At that time, a group of brothers and sisters started to build up the church, which was completed in 1971. In December of the same year, the church's founder, Mr. Fred Pucknell, presided over the dedication ceremony and named it Grace Chapel. With God's leading, the number of congregants has increased year by year. Once again, the church leaders received a God-given vision-to plant another church. In 1976, another parcel of land was purchased in Penampang District to build the church. The construction of Penampang Grace Chapel lasted 5 years. It was

completed in 1981 and in the same year, the dedication ceremony was held.

由于路阳本堂礼堂狭小，限制了教会的发展，经过长执们的决定，将原有的建筑结构加以扩建装修，新礼堂于 2001 年完工并在同年举行献堂里。

2001 年，本堂也决定向翠鸟园区植堂，那是一个新而发展迅速的社区，邻近有沙巴大学（UMS）也是展开大学生福音事工的好机会。

Due to the limited space of the Luyang main assembly hall, the development of GCCL was restricted. For this reason, the church council had decided for the original building structure to be expanded and renovated. The new assembly hall was completed and dedicated in 2001.

In the same year, our Luyang church also decided to plant a church in Kingfisher Park, a new and rapidly growing community back then. The University of Sabah (UMS) nearby was also seen as a prospective opportunity for university students' gospel ministry.

2018 年 路阳本堂决定购置教会旁边的屋子，作为教会行政办公室和拓展青少年事工的用途，同时也整修及扩建原有的行政办公室为儿童主日学的活动场地。感谢神的带领及供应，儿童主日学的 5 间教室已全部完工，新屋子建筑也只剩下不多的工程。

In 2018, GCCL decided to acquire a house lot next to the church to serve as the church's administrative office and to expand the youth ministry. At the same time, the original administrative office was renovated and expanded as Sunday school activity venues as well. Thanks to God's guidance and provision, all 5 classrooms of Sunday School have been completed, and the new house construction has neared completion.

路阳恩惠堂中文堂现况

2020 年 3 月 18 日，我国因为新冠肺炎疫情严峻，全国进入行动管制令，教会也因此将实体聚会转为线上聚会，本堂的主日崇拜目前是通过脸书（Facebook）现场直播的方式进行。每月的祷告会，儿童主日学，少年团，青年团，成年小组，伉俪小组和乐龄团契目前都是使用 ZOOM 的线上方式进行。教会的社会关怀事工和宣教事工仍然积极回应在疫情下各方的需要。堂主任许佩玲传道也设定 3 年的主题方向，为【回应新维度】，【迈向新维度】及【突破新维度】。按神的带领及引导教会与神同行。

The current situation of Grace Chapel Chinese Luyang (GCCL)

On March 18, 2020, due to the severe COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia and the nationwide movement control order (MCO), the church switched its physical gatherings to online meetings. The Sunday service is currently held through

live broadcast on Facebook. The monthly prayer meeting, Sunday school, youth group, young working adult group, Friday cell group, married couples' group and senior citizens' group are currently conducted online using ZOOM.

The church's Charity ministry and mission ministry are still actively responding to the needs of all parties amid this pandemic. Pastor Hee Pui Lin has set a three-year thematic direction namely *"Responding to New Dimensions"*, *"Towards New Dimensions"* and *"Breakthrough New Dimensions"*, following God's lead and guiding the church to walk with God.

Grace Chapel Kingfisher Park (GCKFP), K.Kinabalu, Sabah

Deacon Norman Lie



Grace Chapel Kingfisher Park, (Top floor 4 unit shoplots)

While the nation is reeling under the weight of Covid19 global pandemic, GCKFP is gearing to welcome the dawning of a new era as she celebrates the 20th anniversary of God's ministry in Kingfisher Park, a relatively upscale Township north of the city center.

GCKFP was established as a ministry outpost by members from Grace Chapel Luyang Chinese assembly (GCLC) in September 2001. The conception of GCKFP was a result of the rapid growth of GCLC which was then facing increasing space constraint for ministry expansion and membership growth. Thus, an idea was mooted to commission a section of the congregation (about 20%) to voluntarily leave GCLC to set up another ministry outpost within the greater area of Kota Kinabalu City. The first batch of pioneers comprised 23 adults and 8 children from 6 families that formed the backbone of the early Church body.

Kingfisher Park, a relatively matured, well to do middle-upper-class enclave is surrounded by numerous iconic structures of State administrative agencies, commercial shop lots, hotels, hospitals, hyper malls and institutions of higher learning. The township is also accessible via Jalan UMS, an increasingly expanding busy 4 lane dual carriage bypass linking the City to Sepangar Bay and InanamLaut, Menggatal.

The Church during its infancy, rented for three years, a 2nd Floor corner unit shop lot of about 1300 ft2 at the Commercial center of Kingfisher Park. As the ministry expanded with increasing membership growth, GCKFP was blessed with God's provision to secure 3 lots units within the same vicinity in 2004, and we have added a 4th unit adjoining lot over the past 10 years. God has been faithful in answering to our need for space and other resources.

The initial resolve of the GCKFP ministry committee was to outreach to nearby residents, notably the many students of the University of Sabah (UMS). Over the past two decades, the Church has been faithfully and incessantly targeting campus ministry as one of the core emphases whereby hundreds of freshmen and returning students are reached in each academic year. Many of these impressionable young lads were from all over Malaysia. During their pursuit of academic credentials, many have had their first encounter with Christ through GCKFP and responded to the Gospels. We witnessed scores of students embraced Christ and were baptized,

discipled, actively served the Lord during their 3-4 years in KK. There were also some who had answered calls to continue serving in Church ministries in their respective places of domicile.

While GCKFP remains relatively small in membership, she has served the Lord well in using two separate languages that comprise believers from both the bigger Chinese/Mandarin speaking group of about 70/80 members and a smaller Bahasa Malaysia group of about 25, until today. English was also spoken intermittently during worship and other ministries throughout the ensuing years whenever the need arises. Our brethren have stayed the course in faithfully planting seeds that have grown, matured, and continued to flourish throughout Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and beyond.

GCKFP today is still staying close to the first Vision of “To Become an Intentional Disciple making Church in Leading Believers to Christian Maturity”, and to uphold the core Mission of “Glorifying God by producing and developing disciples in obedience to God’s Words through worship, teaching, nurture, fellowship and evangelism.

The unexpected onslaught of COVID-19 with no end in sight, has presented a formidable challenge to churches worldwide and no single entity is spare. However, GCKFP shall continue to charter and sail through the current rough water with the Grace of God, the unity of all

brethren in Christ and the Holy Spirit that binds us as one.

May we also continue to remain steadfast and to encourage our brethren in Christ during this period of great many uncertainties.

Philippians 4:19. “And My God Will Meet All Your Needs According to His Glorious Riches in Christ Jesus”. Amen!

Chinese Assembly, Penampang, Sabah

Elder Voo Yun Chiang



In 1976, a half-acre of land was purchased from a developer for an upcoming housing area at Penampang. The 1st Pastor was Rev. Chang Chai Heng who started serving the Lord full time on 1st August 1989, and his wife, Pastor Chok Siaw Moi also served the church full time at a later date.

Praise the Lord, the Penampang Grace Chapel was successfully established at Taman Hiburan, Ph 1, Mile 3.5, off Jalan Penampang and dedication service was held on 21st Nov. 1981. First Sunday Service was held on 17th January 1982 and around 40 over members attended.

Later, a 70' x 35' multi-purpose hall was completed on 18th July 1986 with a badminton court inside. Another 4-storey building was completed in December 1995 to cope with the rising need for Sunday worship, youth fellowship, meeting room, library, pastor quarter and office.

11 Cell groups were formed and started in the year 2000. The respective cell groups were having their usual weekly worship/gathering with around 70 members each week. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all cell groups started having their worships via Zoom or Google Meet from March 2020.

Three elders were appointed in Grace Chapel Penampang Chinese Assembly, namely, Voo Yun Chiang, (from April, 1997), Kuo Yin Tet and Tan Guan Soon.

Apart from preaching the Gospel in nearby areas, a Mission Fund was set up to assist more than 10 gospel / mission organizations for funding the respective mission works locally and internationally. A total sum not less than RM70, 000 was distributed annually for the past 30 over years

This year the Penampang Chinese Assembly celebrates her 40th anniversary. Pastor Liew San San was engaged to work from 1st June 2021. Pastor Chok Siaw Moi retired in June 2021 and Rev. Cheng Chai Heng was officially retired in December 2020 but re-engage for one more year.

At the present more than 130 members are attending the Sunday Service.

FEATURES

The Tamil Assembly in Malaysia

Raju Kasimani

There are four Tamil speaking assemblies breaking bread in Malaysia. The first Tamil assembly in Malaysia was started in Cameron Highlands. Initially, the Tamil work was started by an OMF Missionary by the name of Don Cormack. At that time, he was working as a teacher at Chefoo School where he came into contact with the many Chinese and Indian staff working in the school and OMF Bungalow. He had a great passion and burden to share the Gospel with the Chefoo School's Indian staff, their families and their many Chinese and Indian friends. Although Mr. Cormack could not speak Tamil, he opened up his rented house in Brinchang, and invited the Tamil speaking believers from

Cameron Highlands Gospel Hall to help in Bible studies and Gospel meetings. Brother Sinnappan would travel up to Cameron Highlands from Kampar, also assisted the believers with the work.

Finally, in 1976, the Breaking of Bread service began among the Tamil speaking saints of Cameron Highlands Gospel Hall.

In the four decades since it started, the Cameron Highlands Tamil assembly has had a rich heritage and has experienced the many blessings from our Almighty God. About 30 believers gather regularly for the Remembrance service. God has richly blessed their fellowship meetings, prayer meetings, Gospel meetings, and the children's work.

At the moment, our God is wonderfully using the dedicated leaders who are responsible for the Tamil work in Cameron Highlands: Brother Selvam Kasimani, Brother Vijayan, Brother Radakrishnan, Brother Velu, and Brother Segar Kasimani.



Muar Tamil Assembly

The work in Muar began from a Sunday school work done by our dear sister miss Daphne King. There were many Indian children. We did visitation and Bible study for the parents. Quite a few neighbors joined the Bible study. The first baptism was conducted in 1984. The number grew to about 23 adults in fellowship. We met in one of the believer's home. The Lord enabled us to buy a house through a loan given by a sister in Singapore. The numbers are reduced due to circumstances beyond our control. Three of our believers have been called home. Two families have moved to Kuala Lumpur, three have got married and moved. Currently there are 13 adults in fellowship and 4 children. Sunday school is conducted for these children.

Recently we had a baptism for 3 believers .



Skudai Christian Assembly (Tamil)

The work started as a result of Sunday school work in Johor Bahru Gospel Chapel (JBGC). We made regular visits to the



homes of the Sunday school children. As the Lord opened the way, we started simple Bible study for the children and the parents. More homes were visited. And soon, a group of people requested for baptism. In 1984, we began breaking of bread in JBGC. Our visits were extended to Kulai. Thus, another meeting was started in Kulai in a rented house. One of the Christian family in Singapore gave their semi-detached house for the Lord's work. So, we combined the two meetings into one. We had nearly 40 believers and their children. Our believers came from various nearby towns like Ulu Tiram, Pasir Gudang, Johor Bahru, Skudai, and Kulai.

Our number has been reduced due to various issues. Now we have 26 adults in fellowship and 9 children. Currently, due to the pandemic, meetings are conducted through Zoom. We have a Sunday school mainly for the children of our believers.

Kepala Batas Gospel Centre

Kepala Batas Gospel Centre is an extension work of Bukit Mertajam Gospel Centre. This assembly is located the furthest north amongst all the brethren assemblies. The work in Kepala Batas started in 1996 as a small Bible study group. Over the years, under the leadership of Brother Martin Anbalakan and Brother Raju Kasimani, the Lord has blessed this little assembly in the north and it has grown to about nine families who are meeting to break bread virtually. The assembly plans to gather about 20 of their young adults and youth for face-to-face meetings in December 2021. They prayerfully are planning to train and equip them to share the Gospel using the XEE method in Tamil. It is going to be an exciting year 2022 for Kepala Batas Gospel Centre.



Yi Sheng Ministry

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

George Santayana in *The Life of Reason: Reason in Common Sense*

Forward

Yi Sheng Resources Berhad (“Yi Sheng”) expresses with much joy at the invitation of Diakonia to share its ministry amongst the Assemblies in the country.

Yi Sheng Ministry

Yi Sheng was established in the early 1990’s by the Chinese Assemblies of West Malaysia, primarily with the vision and aim of biblical training and spiritual development of our Assemblies’ youths and to establish them on the Assemblies’ core practices such as the priesthood of all believers; and commitment to the Great Commission.

And upon completion of their training in Yi Sheng, these youths would go on further to be equipped for full-time ministry and/or to return to their home Assemblies to serve and be developed as the next generation of leaders over time.

Yi Sheng also aims to provide our Assemblies’ leaders a platform to continuously grow in the Lord’s Word and care for the flock by keeping

abreast with the contemporary issues and challenges of an ever-changing world.

Yi Sheng Protem Committee

In September 2019, the Chinese Assemblies Secretariat of Malaysia ("CASM") entrusted the Yi Sheng Protem Committee to carry out the work of Yi Sheng's ministry.

Currently, the following brethren are members of the Pro-tem Committee:

Chairman: Dato' Dr. Tan Chong Tin,
Elder (Jalan Tiga Gospel Hall)

Treasurer: Pastor Anson Lim
(Setapak Gospel Centre)

Teachers/Co-Workers:

- Pastor Tneh Seng Kong
(Setapak Gospel Centre)
- Pastor Calvin Tan
(Bukit Mertajam Gospel Centre)
- Pastor Cephas Liu
(Faith Gospel Centre)
- Brother Mah Yong Xin
(Staff-In-Training, Setapak Gospel Centre)
- Pastor Chen Tack Wei
(Administration, Setapak Gospel Centre))

Committee Members:

- Jacob Chia, Elder
(Burmah Road Gospel Hall)
- Choo Chee Choy, Elder
(Setapak Gospel Centre)
- Dr. Ng Keong Chye, Elder
(Bentong Gospel Centre)
- Dr. Khong Yoon Long,
Elder (Bukit Mertajam Gospel Centre)
- Justine Liew, Committee

(Jalan Tiga Gospel Hall)

- Sister Miki Yuen, Committee
(Faith Gospel Centre)
- Castor Hii Committee
(Daya Gospel Centre)
- Sister Chan Swee Heng, Committee
(Ampang Gospel Center)

Yi Sheng's Courses for Leaders and Adults

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a challenge to Yi Sheng's ministry. Notwithstanding that, throughout 2020 and until recently, Yi Sheng has managed to conduct a series of topics (via Zoom) targeting the Assemblies' leaders and young adults. Such topics include:

- (a) Youths and teenagers; the challenges and nurturing needs faced by the Youth ministry leaders;
- (b) Christian music in Church/Youth ministry and Church worship;
- (c) Challenges in Education and Assemblies' Response;
- (d) Christian Education and Practical ministry through "Education" as a tool for the development of Youth and Teens Ministries in the Assemblies;
- (e) Science, Technology and Christian belief; and
- (f) COVID-19 and the Christian Response

Youth Camps

In May 2020, Yi Sheng had conducted a one-week Youth camp (via Zoom), targeting on Youths "migrating" to the

cities for studies or for jobs, with subjects covering:

1. Christian vs secular world view; Christ and culture

To explore the concept of 'world view'. The Biblical world view emphasizes God as Creator and man as created in His image, which forms the basis of the dignity of man. The cultural mandate means that man's earthly work has eternal value. On the other hand, the worldview of 'naturalism' that denies God's sovereignty deprive man of his dignity, basis of ethics and meaning of existence.

2. Science and technology; scientism and technicism

Man being created in God's image, is able to comprehend the wisdom of God through science, and has the mandate to manage the world at large. Unfortunately, man has placed science and technology (or 'scientism' and 'technicism') on the pedestal, becoming an idol or a false god. The Nazi rule and Auschwitz camp during WWII are warnings of human calamities of such a misplacement.

3. Christian view towards finance and stewardship; Market economy and spirituality

In the Christian world view, material wealth is a blessing from God, and is under man's stewardship. Unfortunately, wealth and 'economism' have become modern man's chief aim.

4. Secular calling and Christian attitude to leisure

To explore the Christian work ethics and motivation of work; and to find the relationship between work and "play". Work is best inter-related with the free spirit of "play". Sabbath teaches us that man's response to the Creator should be to worship Him with an attitude of dependency.

5. Definition/meaning of love and justice

These two key attributes of God and man being created in His image needs to reflect these Godly characters.

6. Individualism, community, and responsibility to the community

God's call to man to be part of a community.

Classes also cover general advice on coping with urban life and studies overseas; choosing courses/careers/work; leisure activities, media and online activities; seeking new friendship; choosing a church; and developing life's habit such as reading and saving.

It is expected that such topics are likely to be repeated from time to time in order to equip our Assemblies' leaders and Youths in this ever-changing world.

“Practical theology” classes

Background:

In 2020, some members of CASM (Chinese Assemblies Secretariat of Malaysia) and Yi Sheng visited a number of smaller Assemblies in the country. The observations during the visits were, the lack of leadership training and succession; lack or absence of youth work, and the lack of road-map for evangelism and church growth into the future. The Lord forbids, that if such situation continues, many of the smaller Assemblies may soon cease to exist. The writing is on the wall!

In light of that, Yi Sheng wishes to design and conduct a series of on-going seminars/courses to encourage Assembly leaders, youth workers and young adults to come on board to learn together. We prayed that, with the Lord’s help, Assemblies may reconnect and help each other to continue and/or to revive the Assemblies’ works within their local setting.

Proposal:

To emphasize Biblical studies and practical theology. That is to say, to faithfully study and understand the original text of the Scripture and its relevance to our current situation. The aim is to encourage leaders and young adults to cultivate the habit of Biblical study.

The basis of practical theology is that all theologies, when we look at church



Visit to Kuala Kangsar Gospel



Visit to Gopeng Gospel Hall



Visit to Sedenak Gospel Hall

history, had been responses to the issues that the historic churches faced in their time. In this same spirit, we want to reflect upon such history and to understand the time we are in, in order that we may contemporize and practise our Faith in the present time. We intend to emphasize on topics that are seldom touched upon in the pulpit.

For the first half of 2022, the topics which Yi Sheng proposed includes Church Renewal in the face of Challenges; The Theology of Christian Worship; Early Church History (with Reference to Acts); The Church and Society (Achieving a Balance); The Teachings and Messages of the 7 Churches (Rev 2 -3) to the Assemblies; Pastoral Care of the Flock, including the Marginalized and the Sick and Aged;

The topics above will be conducted by speakers/teachers competent in their respective fields. The sessions will be conducted in a bi-monthly basis. Each session will be followed by discussion on Q&A.

End notes

Currently, Yi Sheng has a number of co-workers (full and part-time) as mentioned above.

It is Yi Sheng's earnest prayer and desire that you will travel with us on this fresh journey together, all in the hope and trust that the Lord will refresh and revive His works amongst our Assemblies in the country.

We also appreciate your Assembly and brothers and sisters' prayers and the financial assistance towards the Yi Sheng ministry.

Our bank details are:

Name of Bank and Acc. No: Public Bank Berhad (3206 7310 08)

Name of Acc. Holder

Setapak Gospel Centre (CASM Account)

"I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now." (Paul, Phi 1:4)

May the Lord bless the works of our hand for Him.

Yi Sheng Protem Chairman
Elder Dato' Dr. Tan Chong Tin,

Elder Choo Chee Choy,
CASM Chairman

The Plight of Small Assemblies in Malaysia

Peter Tan

The History of Assembly Work

The history of the assemblies of the Lord's people in UK makes for the most part, exciting reading. Starting with the godly exercise of a few to meet together to worship and to remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread in the way the early disciples had done, as recorded in the New Testament. The movement developed and grew, in spite of early division, until there were, 100 years later, assemblies meeting in all parts of UK. By the mid-20th century, there were probably nearly 1800 assemblies, with as many as 100,000 members,

By the end of 2003, the number had reduced to around 1158 assemblies (705 in England, 195 in Scotland, 173 in N. Ireland and 75 in Wales) with perhaps about 40,000 members between them a huge drop of 36% in assemblies and 60% in members in 40 years! But, alarmingly, in the last few years assemblies have been 'closing' at the rate of about one per week, and the numbers in some of those remaining are very few indeed. Some assemblies apparently just faded away. - *By Roy Hill, Bristol, What is Happening to UK Assemblies? – 2005*

Assembly Work in Malaysia

The history of the brethren movement has much to teach us today and provides

examples of responses to the what has taken place and is taking place to in the assembly work where it all started. Many of us are not too familiar with assembly work history in Malaysia. So, when did assembly work start in Malaysia? A Missionary John Chapman arrived in Penang in early 1860. With his arrival Brethren work was commenced in Farquhar Street and this led to the work at Burmah Road Gospel Hall, the first assembly established Malaysia in 1860.

Since the establishment of the assembly witness in 1860, many churches have been planted with the vision to reach the people in the cities and towns of Malaysia with the gospel. Our CBSM directory has 59 English speaking Assemblies registered with the Assemblies Leadership Conference. Our short history recorded 66 assemblies planted by various missionaries and assembly church planters (*Source: The Role of Leadership Training in the Development of Chinese Brethren Assembly, Lee Mee Onn – 1994*).

The assemblies which were not sustained in various parts of Malaysia amounted to 23, a 35% drop in number of assemblies, thus we had 43 functioning assemblies in 1994.

The majority of the 23 unsustainable assemblies above were primarily located in small towns and a possible trend is a continued decline in these type of churches in the future. Are these assemblies sustainable and capable of being revitalized? Do we allow them to finally fade away? CBSM through the ALC has commissioned a task force which will

explore the possibility of revitalizing these assemblies and grow the gospel witness in these locations.

At the Elders Meeting held during the 2019 Assemblies Leadership Conference (ALC) in Ipoh on 29 November 2019, it was brought to the attention of the elders, the need to assist smaller assemblies in Malaysia. The elders felt that we should pay serious attention to assemblies, especially those with less than 20 members. CBSM was tasked to explore possible ways to assist these assemblies. It was suggested that assembly leaders consider these smaller local assemblies as mission ground and to establish partnerships with them.

The establishment of the Task Force

At the ALC 2021, the elders had commissioned a task force of leaders specially tasked to study, facilitate, equip and provide resources to the smaller assemblies, in partnership with CBSM trustees.

This task force will include the General Secretary and Chairman of CBSM, who will induct other leaders of the assemblies willing to provide time and effort to revitalise the small assemblies who need assistance. CBSM will explore the funding for the revitalizing the small assemblies which may include equipping, training and provision of full-time workers assigned to these assemblies.

To revitalize the small assemblies, we need to also explore sending workers into the harvest field. The task force will coordinate partnerships with the assemblies, from the English, Chinese and Tamil speaking assemblies. This is the time to work together in unity of Spirit and purpose for the gospel.

The vision and goals

Our vision is to maintain and grow the assembly gospel witness in Malaysia through the existing small assemblies and explore church planting initiatives through small assemblies in Malaysia. We will train, equip and fund full-time workers (short term and long term) for church planting and revitalizing small assemblies in Malaysia in partnership with CASM and Tamil assemblies.

We believe that once the Malaysian assemblies work together, we will be able to revitalize every existing small assembly in Malaysia. Our goal is to encourage and equip small assemblies in Malaysia in church planting initiatives with small assemblies and to plant at least ONE new assembly every year in Malaysia. With God's help and the partnership of the assemblies in Malaysia, we believe that the Gospel witness once brought to our shores will be reignited and move through this land of Malaysia again. To God be the glory.

Getting into Gear for the Lord .. in a Kancil

YL Khong,

Tales about the “*kancil*” or the mousedeer is aplenty in the Malaysian folklore. It is one of the smaller mammals in the forest and live by its wits in order to survive from being devoured by tigers, crocodiles and avoid mischiefs of other animals in the forest. *Kancil* is also the name of the model of one of Malaysia’s national car some time ago. It is the cheapest car you can get at that time. It is small and basic, hardly worth a glance on the road but it does its job.

Bukit Mertajam Gospel Center (BMGC) like most small assemblies sometimes feel like we are “*kancils*”. Lacking in resources, skills and motivation, it is easy to descend into a mindset of the one talent servant of Matthew 25 i.e. to bury the talent. To encourage the smaller assemblies, this article shall share the Lord’s leading in our bumpy journey to come up to speed in missions thinking and action in the context of a small local assembly.

Firstly, Paul wrote

²⁰ *But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.*

²¹ *And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”*

²² *No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.*

1 Corinthians 12 (NKJV)

The word for *necessary* in the passage above is also translated as *indispensable* in some versions. So, it is good to keep this in mind if you feel insignificant or incapable in a small assembly. You are **necessary** and **indispensable** in the body of Christ. You are placed in a unique location with a unique mission God has prepared that only you can fulfil.

Secondly, sometimes you may feel you are doing things for the Lord but discouragement sets in when the outcome expected usually in terms of numerical growth does not occur or is slow. Worse, people in the assembly start to move out to bigger towns for studies, seek their fortunes or just move to live with their children working in bigger towns. Meanwhile, age catches on for those remaining behind. And the many work in progress or plans on the drawing board for the assembly gets stalled. So, the tendency to bury the talent becomes a tempting proposition – just do the regular meetings of believers. Basically, let the witness drift or in the words of Jesus, hide the lamp under a bushel. Let’s be reminded that growth is NOT our job but the Lord’s. Our job is to be faithful in planting and watering. In the same epistle, Paul wrote:

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you

came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, **but only God, who makes things grow.** 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 3 (NKJV)

1st Gear

In the familiar Acts 1: 8 passage, Jesus said this just before his ascension,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

After that, as we know, they waited for the empowerment of the Spirit, in Jerusalem, before going into their mission field. We learn a few things as they waited to go out before they were empowered in Acts 1. Firstly, they prayed and made supplications of God (v14). How important this is before we go out, to ensure all our provisions for missions are from Him. What better way for us to realize that than through prayer.

The second thing we observed is they got organized and ensured a leadership structure was in place and Peter stood up as their leader (v15 - 26). We also know

they have 120 people ready to go (v15) and we can assume they are committed to go otherwise they would not be there with the apostles. One other thing we can surmise is some and perhaps many, are already trained by the Lord (see for e.g. Matt 10; Luke 10) to do the work.

I can also see the development of a **plan** in Acts 1:8. First there is a **purpose** “you shall be my witnesses” then there is a **progression** “witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria” and then there are future **possibilities** “to the ends of the earth.

So, to summarize, at the start of their mission, the Church at Jerusalem i) prayed, ii) had a leadership and team, iii) had the training and skills and the commitment and iv) a plan. Using this model, these seem to be the ingredient necessary to get going in the 1st gear for missions.

Looking back, I think what kept BMGC in 1st gear for over a decade is the lack of leadership and people trained for missions during the church planting stage. There were committed people but a lack of a clear leadership means a clear plan of what needed to happen was not in place on how to move forward. It was over a decade after the assembly was planted that elders were appointed. Once the elders were installed, the assembly was pretty much left to its own devices and took a while for her to find its way with some plans to move forward.

2nd Gear

After many stops and starts doing various things that began and fizzled out with time, there was a realization we needed to have a way of thinking and working that will allow some form of sustainability in what we do. One evening, we sat down and drew up what we thought were essential elements for what we do with regards to missions moving forwards.

Firstly, it must fulfil a need of the community. Secondly, there must be resources with the relevant capability or skills necessary to do the work. Thirdly, the resource should be available. Lastly, do we have the necessary finances?

Upon reflection, this is akin to a cost counting exercise for missions. As Jesus said in Luke 14,

²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”

The first idea where we applied the above essential elements was the student drop-in center. What was the need? We noticed students milling around after and before school starts around our shop lot – waiting for their transport, tuition class or school activities to start. So, we

thought instead of the students hanging around in the five-foot way outside the shop lots, we could open our premise to provide a safe and comfortable place for them.

Then, do we have the necessary resources to do this? It appears that we don’t need any special skills to do this. It turned out we were wrong, as shall be explained later.

Are the resources available? If we plan to open the place from 10 am to 6 pm, can we have people there all the time given we are a small assembly? By God’s grace, from commitment of several hours a week to a couple of days a week, we were able to fill in all the time slots with members in attendance.

In terms of financing, the initial outlay was for renovation to do up the place with study tables, computer cubicles and also a big screen TV and sofa set. We also installed some security devices like cameras and an electronic lock for the entrance door. We also made provision to reimburse members for travelling to church for this work if they needed it.

With all the 4 essential elements mentioned above aligned, we started **Students’ Haven**. It was slow at the beginning with only a handful of students but by the third year in 2019, before COVID-19 struck, we were hosting between 20 to 40 students on a daily basis with the peak of 60 students on several occasions.

With a **plan**, we found our **purpose** for the work. With a plan, we also found ways to **progress** by increasing our services which included provision of snacks and refreshments which the student could purchase from us at a reduced rate, birthdays celebration for students, special activities during the holidays and also a camp. We now consider the **possibility** of partnering with Agape Counselling to use the Students' Haven to provide counselling services for students.

Initially we thought not much skills are needed for this work but it turned out we were wrong. While we were able to bring the students in, we were not able to connect with them very well. Not surprising since those doing the work are mainly in the sixties; BMGC was left with no young adults and hardly any youth at that stage. So, we partnered with Scripture Union. On the few occasions when the younger SU worker came, the atmosphere lit up. So, we learnt to **partner** when we are not able to go it alone and the Lord provided the opportunity to partner via the Scripture Union.

Having a plan got us into gear 2 and helped us move forward a bit more.

Gear 3

We know the first thing to do in the Great Commission is to GO. While individuals were meeting with their non-Christian friends and we had events and occasional

Gospel initiatives, we were not really engaging the community and going out in a meaningful manner as an assembly. The Lord used the flood to teach us how to go out together.

Late Nov 2017, there was a great flood and BMGC was at the epicenter of the disaster. We were totally clueless as to what to do and yet the great opportunity was there to GO. We are a small assembly, what can we do anyway? The Lord had a different idea. He brought 7979, a Christian relief and community care NGO to show us the way. We just had to say YES for our premise to be used as the operation center for relief work and so we did. So, I guess the first step to GOing is to say yes to Him.

For two weeks, our church was turned upside down when about 180 volunteers descended upon us from different churches from all over Malaysia. All in all, we helped cleaned about 80 homes and many others dropped by our assembly to collect other aid items.

The verse that characterized our sentiments at that time was Psalm 121:1,2

¹I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?

²My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. "

We learn an important lesson, if we are to GO, it cannot be business as usual and disruption will be the norm.

It was a heady two weeks and we learnt how to interact with the community. Funds were pouring in from the assemblies all over Malaysia. We distributed the funds first to assembly members whose homes were affected by the flood and then we used the funds to reach out by providing cash assistance to the needy families affected by the flood.

After the relief operation was over, we organized a trip for about 200 children affected by the flood to a local science center. As it was nearing Christmas, we organized a Christmas cum appreciation dinner for all the people who volunteered for the flood relief work. Both a state EXCO member and also an MP turned up for the event as did two assembly contingents all the way from Bandar Sunway Gospel Center and Seremban Gospel Center who came and assisted which was a great support and encouragement for us.

Once we had a taste for GOing, the Lord just kept us going, by continuously engaging the community with various activities including lantern making for Chinese New Year, karaoke sessions, baking sessions and even a facial session for ladies among others. It was heartening that the people who used to just go past us with nary a glance at our premise now waved at us. I think they see now us as the little church that extended a hand of help to them in their hour of need.

Through all these, the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16 started to make sense

*“¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that **they may see your good deeds** and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Up to today, we are still in touch with those we helped via the resident WhatsApp group hosted by us and some continue to receive food packages in the Manna Food program which we partnered with 7979 whom we learnt a lot about connecting with the community.

So, Gear 3 for us was learning to GO.

Gear 4

As for gear 4, we are not there yet. I think the Lord has brought us to the stage of GO in the Great COMmission. Now we are looking to Him as to how to make disciples. We know how to GO now, but how do we bring the Gospel? That would be our next step. There are hurdles with the main one being, how do we even approach people with the Gospel especially when the majority of the community speaks Mandarin and Hokkien. With our brother Calvin who is a local boy and able to speak Mandarin, Hokkien and English coming onboard as our commended worker, we are making better traction and several people have come to know Christ and can be followed-up using a language they understand well.

The other thing we did was to have five of us signed for the Evangelism Explosion program as trainers. We commit the deployment of this to the Lord and pray

that a systematic and structured evangelism program will allow us to make disciples. If we are able to make disciples consistently, perhaps operate beyond Bukit Mertajam into our Judea and Samaria and if faith allows, even to the ends of the earth then we would be in Gear 4. But we are not there yet.

Summary

Small assemblies can make an impact in their local communities and the above is how we were led. Individual members must play their roles, if not, the assembly after making gains and having moved to a higher gear can switch back to a lower gear. Below is a summary of how BMGC, a small assembly view mission and hope that it will be helpful to other small assemblies.

BMGC’s MISSIONS FRAMEWORK

GEAR 1 & 2	Pattern of Acts 1 1. Prayer 2. Leadership & Team 3. Skills/Talents/Training 4. Commitment 5. Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Purpose- Progress- Possibilities- Partners	JERUSALEM
GEAR 3	GO	
GEAR 4 & 5	MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES	JUDEA/SAMARIA ..ENDS of THE EARTH

Survey of the Brethren

Assemblies 2021

Diakonia Editorial Team

Introduction

The purpose of this survey is to get some insight into the makeup of the assembly in Malaysia. With the information gathered, we were hoping to surface areas where we could consider to help us move forward to be more effective in our work and witness for Him.

In Luke 14:26-33, Jesus talked about counting the cost before committing to following him. While the context is about discipleship, we believe the same principles apply in our witness as assemblies i.e. our existing situation informs our future directions. In the illustrations, Jesus used the word “count” for a builder building a tower and the word “consult” for a king going to war. Some versions use the words “estimate” and “consider” for “count” and “consult” respectively. Either way, it appears the point is to properly evaluate the available information so what needs to be done can be completed successfully.

We trust that the information gathered would be helpful for us to count, estimate, consult and consider as we work our way forward with the Gospel, into a world very different from the past.

Survey Background

This survey was opened to the existing 58 English-speaking assemblies in the CBSM directories of assemblies. Of these 58 assemblies, we received responses from 55 assemblies. 1 of the assembly is actually a Bahasa Malaysia speaking assembly with English Service. We originally had plans to include the Chinese and Tamil assemblies but were unable to acquire the data on time for this issue. We believe the CBSM list of assemblies covers most except for a handful of assemblies. These assemblies not in the CBSM list are believed to be Brethren in character but they are not affiliated with the group of assemblies in the CBSM directory for historical and other reasons.

The survey instrument is an online form and respondents submitted the responses online except for one respondent who copied the question from the online form and did a manual submission.

The data is then compiled and shared with 8 elders from Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Pahang, Penang and Sabah who provided inputs and comments helpful for the reporting of the survey data in this writeup.

Post survey, the raw data shall be kept by the Secretary General of CBSM.

Survey Data

1. Number of Assemblies

Figure 1 shows the distribution of 55 assemblies in the various States who responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 54 were out of the 58 existing assemblies in the CBSM list and one not yet in the CBSM list.

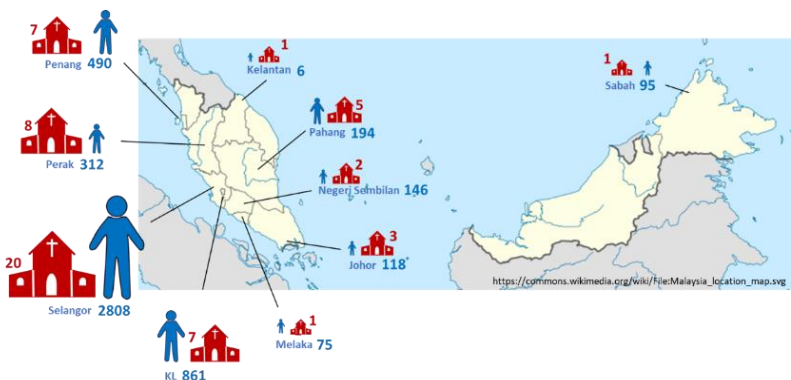


Figure 1. Number of Assemblies (in red) and Population of Assemblies (in blue) by State

** Sabah has 4 assemblies under the Grace Chapel umbrella but only the single English-speaking assembly is represented here in this survey*

The assemblies in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur comprise close to half of the assemblies in Malaysia and they are all located in the municipalities within the Klang Valley¹.

In 1994, Dr Lee Mee Onn did a similar survey² which showed a total of 43 assemblies. Of the assembly in the 1994 list, one ceased operation and another one ceased to be in fellowship with the wider assembly after adopting the Reform teachings.

The 2021 CBSM list shows 59 assemblies but it was discovered that one was reabsorbed into the mother assembly and ceased operation. In this work, it was found there were two other assemblies not in the CBSM list i.e. Kamunting Gospel Centre and Sungai Long Chapel³. The survey in this work includes information from the former assembly. Hence among the

English-speaking assemblies, there are 60 known assemblies in fellowship with the wider assemblies in Malaysia.

However, it must be noted that there are a handful of assemblies though Brethren in character are not in fellowship with the wider assemblies for various reasons.

From the work in this survey, it was found there were 18 new assemblies from 1994.

Table 1 shows where the number of assemblies in the various states in 1994, 2007 and 2021. The 2007 data is from the work of Yap Kok Keong et al (reference 4 below)

References

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klang_Valley
2. Private Communication, Wong San Tosh.
3. Lee Mee Onn, *The Role of Leader Training in the Chinese Brethren Assembly in Malaysia*, South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, 1994
4. Yap Kok Keong, Wong Sai Weng, Stephen Lew, *English-Speaking Assembly Work in Malaysia, Facing the Challenge*, 2007

Table 1 Number of assemblies by State in 1994, 2007 and 2021

* Note for 2021 this include assemblies not covered in the survey.

	1994	2007 ⁴	2021
Johor	1	3	3
Kelantan	1	1	1
Kuala Lumpur	7	9	8
Melaka	2	2	2
Negeri Sembilan	1	2	2
Pahang	5	5	5
Penang	5	7	7
Perak	5	7	9
Sabah	1	1	2
Selangor	14	19	20
Total	42	56	60

2. Population Size of the Assemblies

Figure 1 and Table 2 also shows the population of the members in fellowship with the Assembly in the various states. Table 2 also show the change of population by the years from which data was available. It appears most assemblies do not have detail records of their members hence the numbers in fellowship are an approximation but we believe that they are close to the actual figures.

From 1994 to 2007, collectively we grew about 38% but this growth has slowed significantly to 2% between 2007 to 2021.

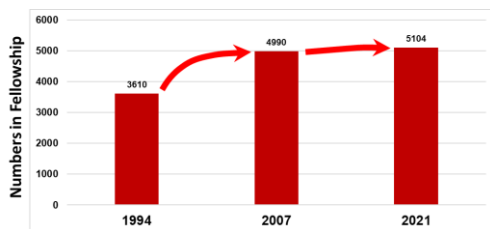
However, as can be seen in Table 2, the population changes over the years are not even across the board. Figure 3 shows the same data more clearly in graphical form. Numerically, the bulk of the increase in population arose from the Klang Valley. This is in-line with the generally faster population growth of the region with data on this to be discussed later.

This high-level data begs the question, are we doing enough to go out with the Gospel and are we effective in what we do?

However, as can be seen in Table 2, the population changes over the years are not even across the board. Figure 3 shows the same data more clearly in graphical form.

Table 2 Population Change by Year of Members in Fellowship

States	1994	2007	2021
Johor	50	200	118
Kelantan	50	30	6
Kuala Lumpur	860	1030	861
Melaka	50	50	75
Negeri Sembilan	50	130	145
Pahang	300	170	194
Penang	510	650	490
Perak	370	420	312
Sabah	80	130	95
Selangor	1290	2180	2808
Total	3610	4990	5104

**Figure 2 Population Trend of Assembly Members in Malaysia**

This high-level data begs the initial question, are doing enough to go out with the Gospel and are we effective in what we do?

We tried to correlate the trend of the assembly member population with external data available for increase of population in the main centers as shown in figure 4. While all

centers showed an increase of population, the increase are not even. Between 1980 to 2000, the Klang Valley area showed 100% increase each decade growing from about 450,000 in the start of the 70's to 4.1 million by the year 2000 and 8 million by 2020. This would account for the growth in the number of

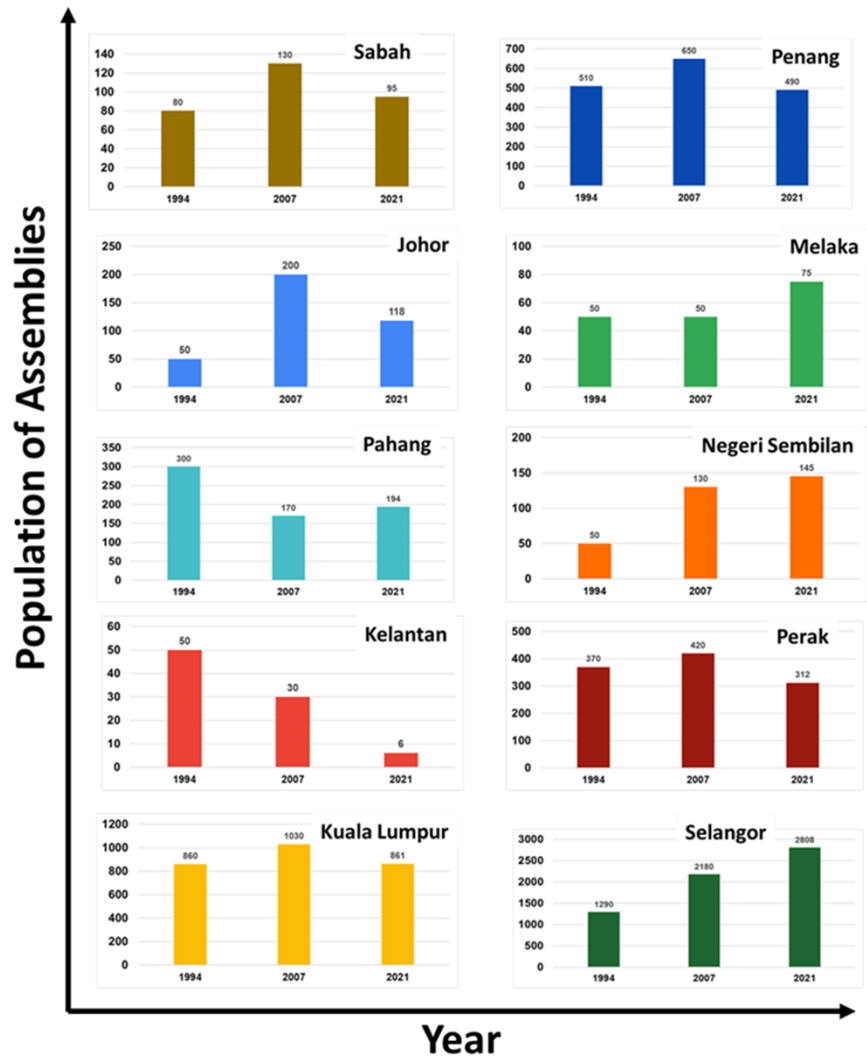


Figure 3 Trends of Population of Assembly members by State

assemblies and also members of assemblies in the Klang Valley in particular Selangor.

Between 1980 and 2020, most centers showed a steady decline or roughly status quo in the percentage change of their populations except for the Seremban and Kota Kinabalu areas where they had each had a significant spike in percentage increase between 1990 to 2000 and Ipoh area between 1980 to 1990. The Kota Bahru area had a healthy increase in population of 90% between the 1970's to the 1980's but steeply decline to less than 10% in the decade between 1990 to 2000. Its increase rate remains less than 20% ever since. So we can see the effect of this on the assembly in Kelantan.

This external factor of percentage population increase would very likely contribute to the increase or decrease in members. This is something to consider moving forward, especially with all centers showing marked decrease in percentage increase in population over the last decade. There would be some momentum due to population increase from the last decade for centers having benefitted from the net population increase of the last

couple of decades through young people having migrated to these centers and settling there with families. However, the trend suggests that the strong population increase of the 1970's to 2000 (Fig 4) would be absent to fuel growth in the coming decades.

Figure 5 shows the number of assemblies in given range of sizes according to the number in fellowship. The breakdown according to percentage is given in figure 6. 23 assemblies or 42% of the assemblies have less than 50 people with 7 or 13% having less than 20 people.

For those interested in further details, a more formal graphical display of number of members in assemblies by states can be found in this link:
<https://tinyurl.com/NumAssmMembers>

The majority of the smaller assemblies are in the smaller centers. These smaller assemblies now face some headwinds. Among these are an aging population, migration of its youth to main centers, not having enough skilled hands to do the work within the assembly, trying to stay relevant as English-speaking assemblies

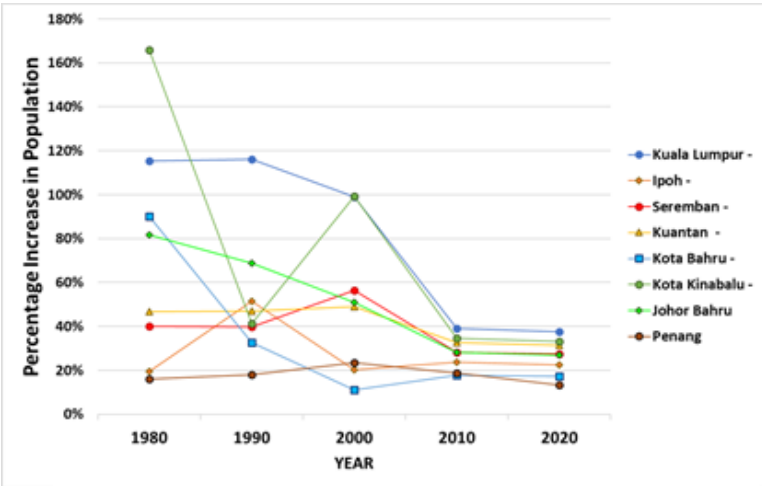


Figure 4. Trend Percentage change of main centers.
Data compiled from <https://www.macrotrends.net/>

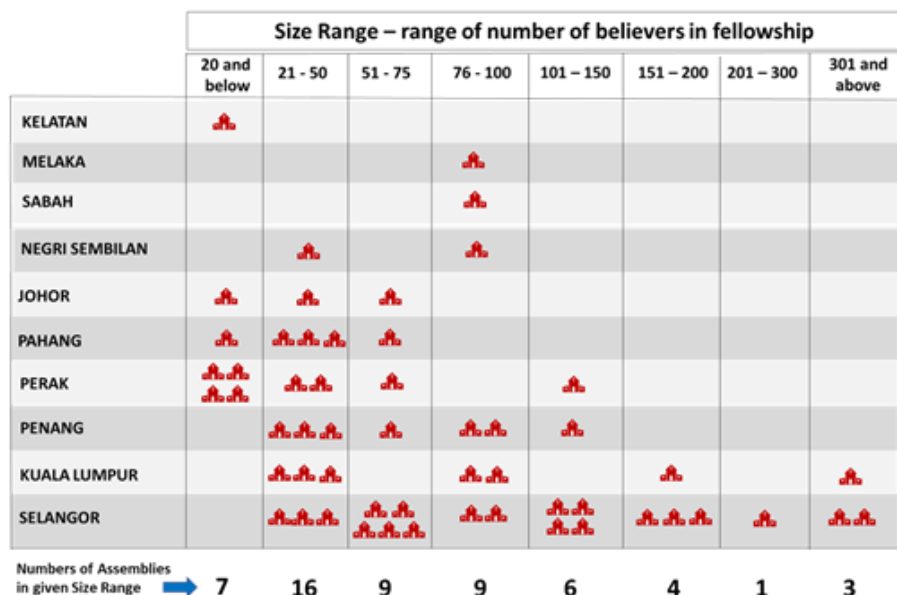


Figure 5. Number of Assemblies according to Size Range

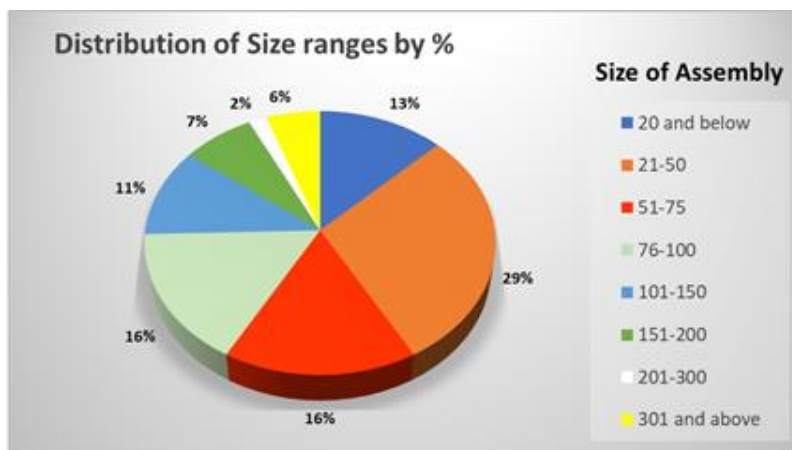


Figure 6. Percentage of Assemblies according to Size Range

in small town environments where Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia are used more.

There is a task force initiated by Peter Tan stemming from the Assembly Leadership Conference 2021 to address support for smaller assemblies under the purview of CBSM. There is also a mission framework proposed at PITH 2021 where smaller assemblies can adopt. You can find write-ups for both of these in this issue of the Diakonia.

3. Distribution by Race

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the races among our assemblies. Not surprisingly, the Chinese population makes up the majority of the English-speaking assembly. There are 45 out of the 55 assemblies have 75% or more of its member being Chinese with 12 assemblies comprising solely Chinese members. There is only in 1 BM-speaking assembly in the Klang Valley where the Chinese is the minority.

38 out of 55 assemblies surveyed have less than 10% Indians with 13 assemblies having no Indians. There are 2 assemblies with more sizeable representation of Indians. One of them is in Selangor and other in Negeri Sembilan. Assemblies with moderate representation (between 10 – 25% of population) of Indians are found in Johor (1), Pahang (1), Penang (2), Perak (5) and Selangor (6)

In spite of the strong Orang Asli work and assemblies in the interior, only a handful can be found in the English assemblies. They are distributed in 6 assemblies with 1 assembly each in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Perak, Penang and 2 assemblies in Selangor.

The Eurasians is a small minority in the Peninsular. Their small presence is in 6 assemblies in the Selangor and 1 assembly

each in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Penang, Perak. In Sabah, they have a stronger presence in one assembly there, with between 10 – 25% of its members being Eurasians.

The “others” minority race groups not covered above are mainly concentrated in 11 assemblies in Selangor and 2 in Kuala Lumpur. The pre-dominantly BM-speaking assembly in Selangor has the strongest presentation of between 25-50% members of its members not in the majority racial groups above.

The distribution of race by State in Malaysia can be found in this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/MalRacebyState>

At the moment, ethnic-specific work is present with work in the Chinese, Tamil and Orang Asli assemblies serving their respective communities. There are two articles related to the Tamil and Chinese assembly work in Malaysia in this issue of the Diakonia where the reader can learn more about the Tamil and Chinese work. The past issues of the Diakonia already highlighted the Orang Asli work.

In Lee Mee Oon’s 1994 thesis, the Chinese work has 46 assemblies and close to 3000 members. We are not able to obtain the data in time from the Chinese Assemblies for this issue. However, based on the 1994 data, if the Chinese Assembly work progressed at the approximate pace of the English Assembly, the English and Chinese assemblies should be roughly equal in strength.

It appears that the segregation of assembly work is more on linguistic grouping rather than by race. It is noteworthy that increasingly, among the Chinese young people, Mandarin is replacing English as the main language for communication among themselves especially in smaller centers. In fact, there is one assembly we found out that started as an English-speaking assembly many years ago are now conducting their meetings in Mandarin.

Another church planting effort by an English Assembly also has to be conducted in Mandarin. If the work proceeds for this church-plant to be an independent assembly, would this be an English or Chinese assembly? Is this the writing on the wall for the English-speaking assemblies of things to come and should we prepare ourselves to meet this changing tide?

It appears each linguistic grouping is comfortable in their own setting and generally ignorant of the work outside their own grouping. Should there be more inter-linguistic grouping effort to maximize the potential of each grouping in executing the Great Commission?

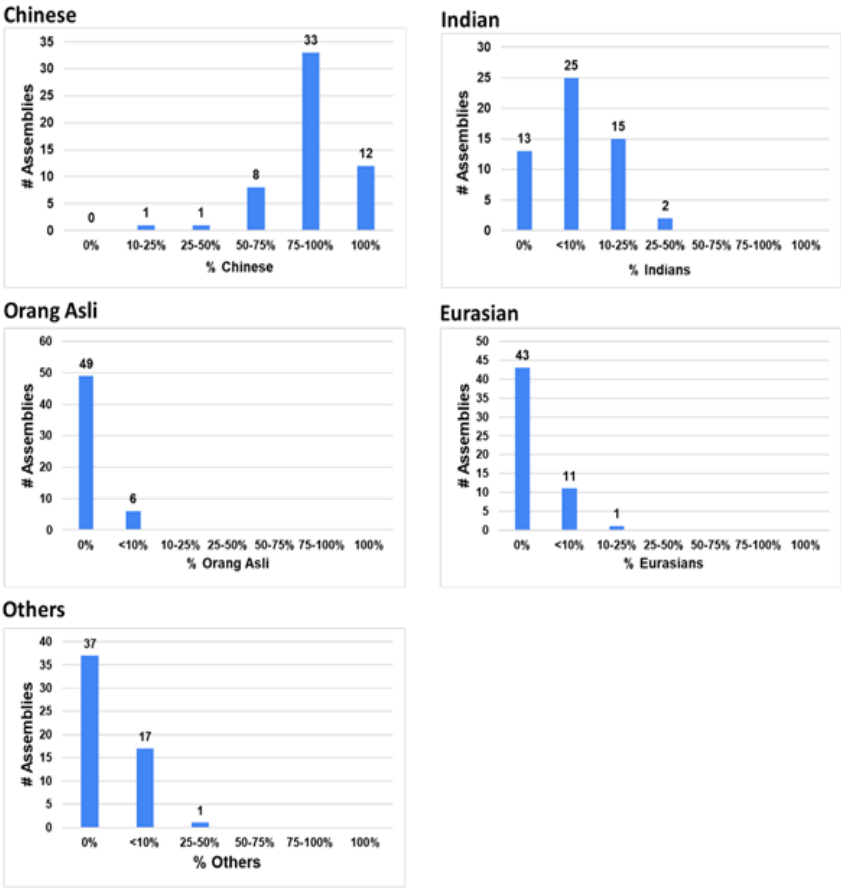


Figure 7 Distribution of Ethnic groups among the Assemblies

4. Distribution by Gender

From figure 8, it can be seen that 36 assemblies have male/female ratios of 40/60 or better in favor of the female population, 8 assemblies of equal male to female and 10 assemblies with higher male population. Based on this data, we estimate the male and female population is roughly 2200 male to 2900 female.

It was brought up by an elder that perhaps we have not paid enough attention to work that targets the sister for their benefit. He further added that perhaps this is due to the Assembly leadership being traditionally male dominated and this aspect was overlooked. Would this be a legacy situation for us to address?

5. Distribution of Leadership.

In figure 9, we can see that nationally, the English-speaking assemblies have at least 137 elders, 142 deacons and 55 deaconesses. So, it appears for the moment, there is no shortage of leadership in terms of numbers in the assemblies. The leadership bench strength is concentrated in Selangor where the majority of the leadership resides. However, there is one assembly that registered no elder, two assemblies that have one elder to 200 members and one assembly that has one elder to more than 100 members.

The feedback from some elders we talked to is that it is increasingly difficult to find saints to take up position of responsibilities and leadership. We are not sure if this is true across the board. Further work is required to establish this and if true, then this has to be addressed otherwise the leadership impact will be felt further down the road.

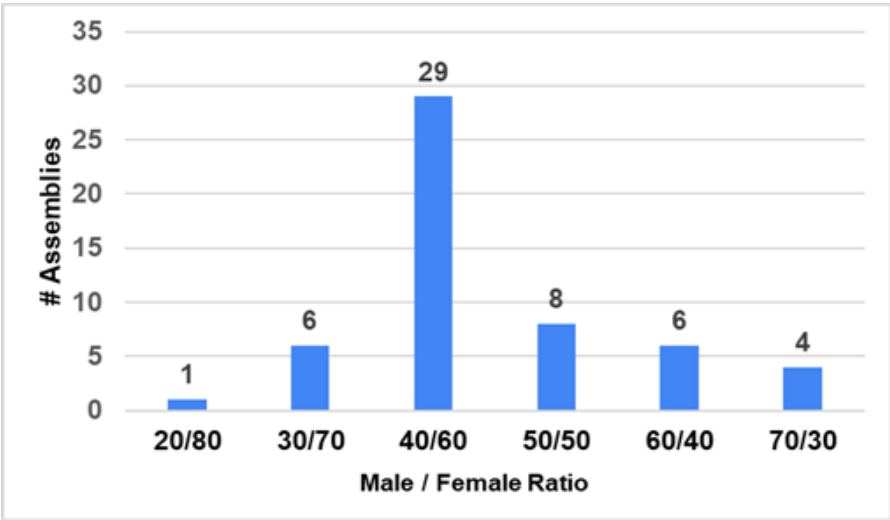


Figure 8 Distribution of Male/Female Ratio in the Assemblies

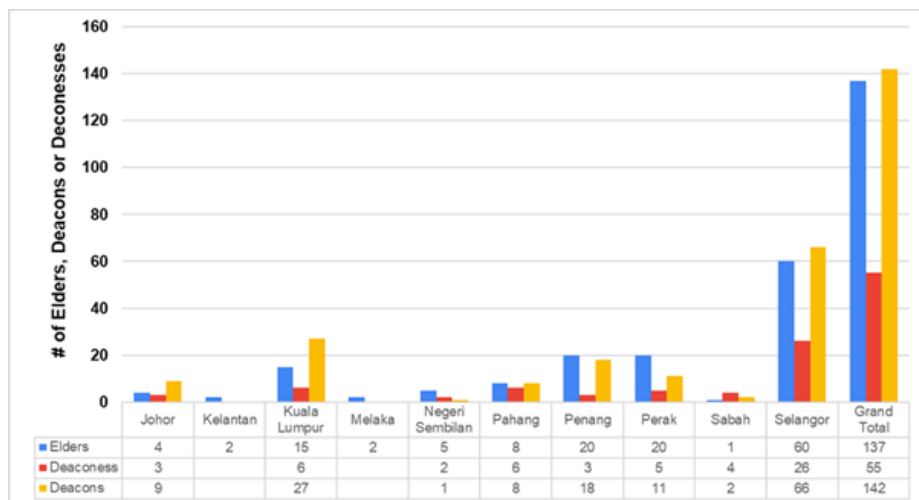


Figure 9 Distribution of Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses by State

Figure 10 shows the distribution of the leaders in the various ministries. It is interesting that departing from the traditional Brethren leadership structure, there is now a position of Pastors. This designation has already been used (in Mandarin terminology) by the Chinese assemblies for the equivalent of some

of their commended workers. This is also true for the position of deaconesses.

The highest number of leaders are in the areas of cell groups and also youth. While this is encouraging, one area that is less clear is how are the leaders are trained. The assumption is better leadership would lead to more



Figure 10 Distribution of Leaders in various Ministries

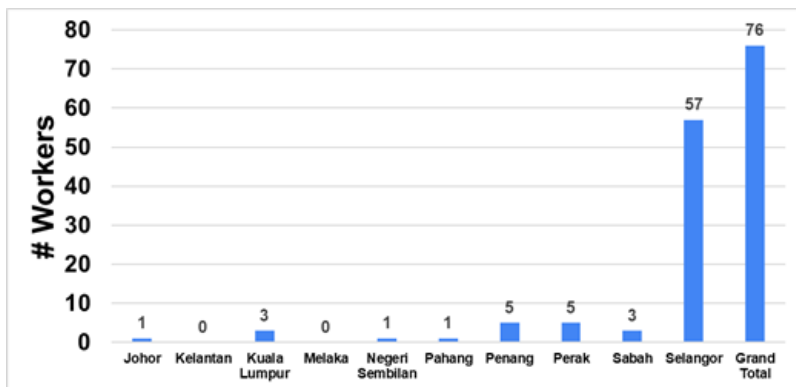


Figure 11 Distribution of Assembly workers by State

effective work on the ground. Would a common leadership training platform be beneficial for the assemblies?

6. Distribution of Assembly Workers

In Figure 11, we show the data collected for number of assembly workers in the various States. The survey input requested was that these are workers are to be supported financially by the assemblies. As can be seen, we have a total of 76 workers from the 55 assemblies who responded. Selangor has by far the largest with 57 workers. However, we did not capture the exact roles of these workers but we understand some are employed as administrative staff and some are involved in various ministries in church.

Due to information and communication technologies and globalization, a 9 to 5 job is rare. The line between work and personal life is blurred. The mobile phone and computers make those in the professions constantly connected to their work. In this new reality of a constantly switched-on world, the time of the saints becomes increasing scarce. It seems that it is increasingly difficult for those in the work force to properly commit to assembly work on a constant basis.

Would having workers paid for by the assembly to take up the slack of work usually distributed between the members of an assembly be a solution?

7. Meeting at the Assemblies

This survey attempted to find out what type of meetings are held in the assemblies. Per the survey questionnaire, these meetings that are to be counted in this survey should be held at least once a month. The data collected for this is shown in figure 12.

There was a time when Gospel Meetings were held weekly in assemblies. The recollection was that the Gospel meetings are attended mainly by believers. From the data, only 17 assemblies now hold regular Gospel meetings. It appears regular Gospel meetings are not so favored now by the assemblies. In interview with elders, the responses generally were other activities have supplanted the Gospel meetings. These include cell groups, fellowship meetings and other activities for outreach.

In section 4 of this article, the lack of focus on ladies work among the assemblies was alluded to. As shown, half the assemblies do not have regular ladies' meetings. Does this

mean that there is a defocus from the work among ladies? Given the higher proportion of ladies in the assemblies, would this be something that needs be addressed?

Rather, a conscientious effort to reach out to bring children into the work would be required moving forward.

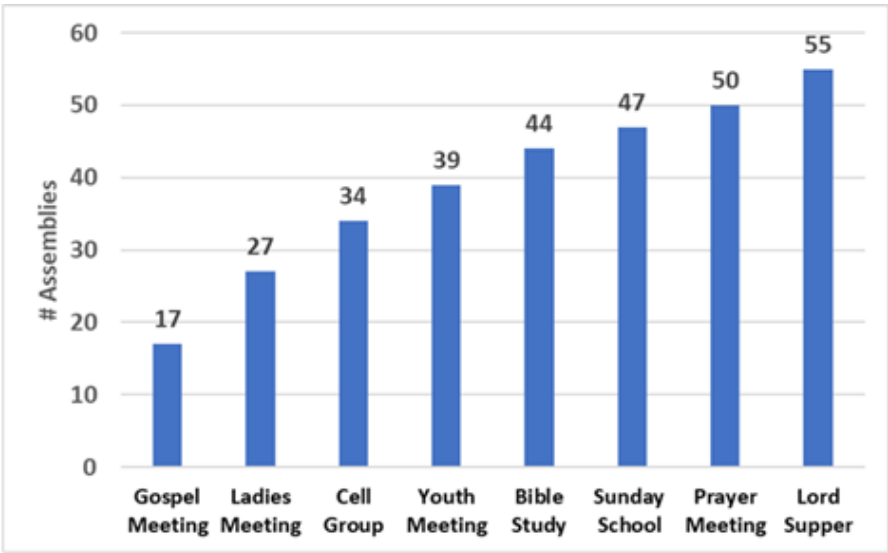


Figure 12 Types of Meeting held in the Assemblies

It is also interesting to note that 16 out of the 55 assemblies survey do not have youth meetings. This is aligned with the data collected on the age distribution of our assemblies in the subsequent section in this report. At the time of writing, a Youth Task Force is being formed after ALC 2021 to address the issue of the declining youth population in the assemblies. This is led by Michael Fun.

Sunday Schools used to be the staple of the Assemblies. As can be seen 8 assemblies do not conduct Sunday Schools at the moment. This is in-line with the declining trend in the national population growth, declining youth population in the assemblies and also couples with fewer children. Hence, unlike the situation in the past, Sunday Schools can no longer be sustained by organic growth through the children of assembly members.

Like the Gospel meetings, Bible Study and Prayer Meetings are also not held on a regular basis by all assemblies. It appears from conversation with some elders, the Cell groups carries the activities of the Bible Study and Prayer meetings.

Other meetings held were cited by the participating assemblies and these include: *Home Fellowship, Senior Fellowship, Adult Fellowship, Tamil Devotion, Orang Asli, Bible Knowledge Class, Young Adults, Night Worship in Villages, Bible Knowledge Classes.* However, details of these meetings were not captured.

Tied to the meetings are what each assembly sees are the immediate needs of its members and its community. What is the set of meetings that are necessary to maintain a healthy Body of Christ? Then there is the issue

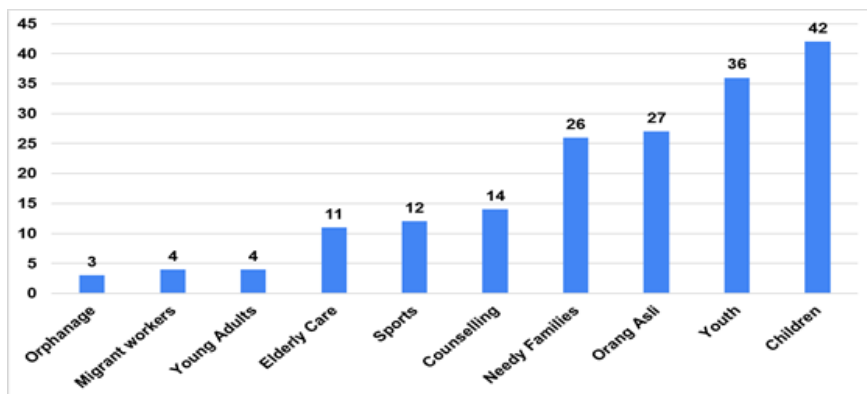


Figure 13 Distribution of Assembly workers by State

of time, as the life of the saints are quickly filled today, thanks to the social media and work pressures. How can these meetings be more effective? These are relevant questions that surface through conversations

8. Type of Outreach Work

Figure 13 shows the different areas the assemblies are involved in in terms of outreach. The emphasis on children and youth appears to be the right one given the need to address this declining demographic in our assemblies.

Many assemblies consider their Sunday Schools as avenues of outreach. It is unclear if there is any emphasis to develop resources and skills for Sunday Schools and work related to children. Given the number of assemblies citing children and youth as their means of outreach, this might be an opportunity for assemblies to put some joint effort to enhance our collective capabilities in this ministry.

27 assemblies in this survey are involved in the Orang Asli work. It would appear the Lord is better able to use us through a united effort in the Gospel. This is a good model of

collaborative effort and mutual support among the wider assemblies that has been sustained for a few decades with a good outcome.

26 assemblies are involved in outreach involving needy families. Some assemblies have found this a meaningful way to connect with their communities through meeting their needs. In the process, the passage of the Gospel is smoothened through good deeds. As Jesus said in Matt 5:16

"Let your light so shine before men, that **they** may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

The modern-day living has brought about stress and rise of mental illnesses (*Mental disorders in Malaysia: an increase in lifetime prevalence, Cambridge University Press, 2021*) especially among the youth and young adults. The statistics show that suicide is on the rise. Hence, this poses an opportunity for outreach through counselling in which 14 assemblies are currently involved in.

Sports has been used successfully for outreach by a few assemblies and appears to be able to attract a following from the youths. At the moment, 12 assemblies are engaged in

this ministry. Can this be proliferated to the other assemblies and can there be cooperative effort by the assemblies around this ministry?

As Malaysia will be an aging population by 2030 when 15% of its population will be aged 60 and above (The Problems and Challenges of the Aging Population of Malaysia, Malays. J. Med Sci, Jan 2000), the care for the elderly is an outreach opportunity for the assemblies. At the moment, 11 assemblies are involved in this work.

Other outreach work cited once include Student Drop-in, Soup Kitchen Young Adults, Tamil Outreach, Mandarin Outreach, Kindergarten, Special Kids.

9. Age Distribution

The overall age distribution of the assemblies is displayed in Table 3. Of the 55 assemblies surveyed, 10 do not have any children under 13 years old and 9 assemblies do not have any youth. This trend would be concerning if over the years, other assemblies start to face a similar situation. As it is, 36 and 24 assemblies indicate they have less than 10% of their population under 13 and between 13 and 20 respectively. This could have an impact on children and youth work down the road.

By segregating the Klang Valley (KV) (27 assemblies) and non-Klang Valley (NKV) (28 assemblies) assemblies, it is clear this lack of children and youth occurs more in the latter. The situation of totally no under 13's occurs for 7 NKV assemblies and for 3 KV assemblies. 7 assemblies outside the KV indicate the total absence of youth while 2 assemblies indicated this for the KV assemblies.

In the Young Adults age range from 21 to 40 years old, 7 NKV assemblies indicated more than 20% of their members in this age group and no assembly has more than 40% of their

members in this age group. In the KV, there are 19 assemblies that indicated more than 20% Young Adult population with 6 assemblies indicated they have more than 40% Young Adult population with one indicating as high as 70%. This age group is important as the Young Adults can fill in many roles in the ministries and also to be prepared for future leadership roles within the assemblies. They also provide life to the assembly.

In the Middle age group from 41 – 60 years old, the majority (46 out of 55 assemblies) of the assemblies have between 20 to 50% of their members in this age range, with this being true for 19 assemblies and 13 assemblies in the KV and NKV respectively. The differentiator for this age group between the KV and NKV assemblies being the KV have 13 assemblies with more than 40% in this age group while the NKV assemblies have only 5. If this age group can be said to provide the maturity, stability and are a source of leaders for the assemblies, then, it appears the KV assemblies would benefit more from a larger population in this age group than those in the NKV assemblies.

Lastly, for the seniors age group i.e. more than 60 years old, 43 assemblies overall have more than 20% of their population in this age group and 21 assemblies have more than 40%. Comparing the KV with the NKV assemblies, the NKV assemblies have 20 out of 28 assemblies with more than 30% seniors while the KV have 14 out of 27 assemblies with this percentage. Note that 72% of the total assembly population i.e. approximately 3700 resides in the KV (see Table 2). Those in the NKV assemblies would have a lower population with a higher percentage of seniors. This means it is important for the seniors in the NKV assemblies to step up to the plate more to sustain the ministries for the NKV assemblies.

Table 3 # Assemblies with percentage of members in given age

		Age Range (Years)					
Percentage Range		<u>< 13</u>	<u>13-20</u>	<u>21-40</u>	<u>41-60</u>	<u>> 61</u>	
	0%	10	9	2	1	0	ALL ASSEMBLIES
	0-10%	36	24	8	2	2	
	11-20%	9	18	19	15	10	
	21-30%	0	3	15	20	9	
	31-40%	0	1	5	11	13	
	41-50%	0	0	3	2	8	
	51-60%	0	0	2	1	2	
	61-70%	0	0	1	0	8	
	71-80%	0	0	0	3	3	
Percentage Range		<u>< 13</u>	<u>13-20</u>	<u>21-40</u>	<u>41-60</u>	<u>> 61</u>	KLANG VALLEY ASSEMBLIES (SELANGOR & KL)
	0%	3	2	0	0	0	
	0-10%	17	9	2	2	2	
	11-20%	7	12	6	4	8	
	21-30%	0	3	11	9	3	
	31-40%	0	1	2	9	6	
	41-50%	0	0	3	1	4	
	51-60%	0	0	2	0	1	
	61-70%	0	0	1	0	2	
	71-80%	0	0	0	2	1	
Percentage Range		<u>< 13</u>	<u>13-20</u>	<u>21-40</u>	<u>41-60</u>	<u>> 61</u>	NON-KLANG VALLEY ASSEMBLIES
	0%	7	7	2	1	0	
	0-10%	19	15	6	0	0	
	11-20%	2	6	13	11	2	
	21-30%	0	0	4	11	6	
	31-40%	0	0	3	2	7	
	41-50%	0	0	0	1	4	
	51-60%	0	0	0	1	1	
	61-70%	0	0	0	0	6	
	71-80%	0	0	0	1	2	

10. Epilogue

While we admit the data collected is incomplete, we believe they do present the current situation of our assemblies. We can ask some pertinent questions. Where are our strengths that we can build on and how do we build on those strengths? What are the gaps we should address? As we move into a landscape that is fundamentally different

from our past, both internally within the assemblies and externally in the environment in which we are to be witnesses, may the Lord give us the wisdom and clarity on how we should proceed for His glory.

Through the Lenses of our Elders

Diakonia Team

What is it like to be an elder? What are their perspectives on various matters related to the assemblies? To get an idea, we communicated with 17 elders from all regions in Malaysia and obtained their responses. We summarize the responses according to the questions as posed to them.

1. When is/was the tenure of your eldership?

The shortest is 3 years and the longest is 39 years and counting!

The range of tenure-ship are as follows:

10 years & below—4 elders;

11 years to 20 years—4 elders.;

21 years to 30 years—4 elders;

31 years to 40 years—5 elders.

2. What is your professional background and training?

The elders we talked to come from a diverse background ranging from accountants, pharmacists, engineers, doctors and even a pilot!

3. What is your marital status currently?

All of them are married with children except for one elder.

4. How long (approximate) after accepting Christ before you became an elder?

The earliest was 15 years and the longest is 37 years. The ranges are as follows:

11 years to 20 years – 4 elders;

21 years to 30 years – 8 elders;

31 years to 40 years – 5 elders.

5. When was your involvement (positions of responsibilities) in the assembly before you became an elder.

All respondents actively were involved and serving in various roles including Youth Leadership, Deaconship, Assembly Treasurer, Sunday School superintendent, Church Planter, Missions Director, Bible School teacher, Secretary of the Working Committee and Counsellor.

6. Can you share how you became an elder?

I. what made you decide to become an elder?

II. who approached you?

III. what preparation did you make or the church made for you?

The elders shared their decision were made based on a calling, a need in the Assembly and to obey the voice of the Lord. They were mostly approached by one of the elders at the time or a member of the Church. Some of the ways they were prepared for their service to the Lord including prayer, mentorship and guidance from the existing elders, their experience in serving at their other various roles in the Assembly and courses on Biblical Studies. One indicated there was no preparation whatsoever; he was just handed a letter from a sponsoring assembly.

7. What was your most memorable experience as an elder?

Their memorable experiences included setting up outreach work, witnessing fellow believers grow in Christ, mission trips, planting churches, and the warm fellowship in the Assembly.

8. What was the greatest crisis you had to deal with during your tenure?

Some of the biggest crisis the elders shared revolved around people issues—difficult, divisive and demanding individuals, immorality, indiscipline, issues around keeping the congregation encouraged and close to the Lord.

9. What do you see as the greatest needs of your assembly currently and/or what is your greatest concern for your assembly presently?

The respondents indicated these needs include members discipling others and fulfilling their purpose, more members to be trained and mentored to take up leadership roles, providing a strong foundation in faith, and reaching the community during this COVID-19 pandemic.

10. Questions regarding the wider assembly

a. What do you see as the Strengths of the Assembly in Malaysia

- i. love for one another,
- ii. good sound Bible teaching and family-oriented churches,
- iii. concern for Biblical truth and desire for building up the youths,
- iv. faithful leaders who have taken up leadership in the Assemblies,
- v. sound teaching and interpretation of the Word,
- vi. commitment to missions.

b. What do you see as the Weaknesses of the Assembly in Malaysia

- i. lack of young, capable and godly leaders trained to lead the next generation,
- ii. closed or narrow-mindedness in the congregation,
- iii. absence of intentional discipleship,

- iv. lack of networking among Assemblies,
- v. being too conservative and not open to positive changes that are not in conflict with Scripture,
- vi. complacency and division among the congregation in the Assembly,
- vii. lack of cooperation among assemblies for bigger tasks.

c. What do you see as Opportunities for the Assembly in Malaysia

- i. growth and having a strong foundation in knowledge of the Word,
- ii. finances and legacy,
- iii. the Assembly's distinctive structure and lay leadership suitable for church planting,
- iv. working with other Kingdom-minded Assemblies, effectively build up youths,
- v. learn from growing assemblies and implement what they do well,
- vi. repurpose and refocus unused assets like property to support and hire more full-time workers,
- vii. to reach out effectively the Orang Asli community, foreign workers, the homeless and lonely,
- viii. better inter-assembly communication to encourage one another.

d. What do you see as Threats for the Assembly in Malaysia

- i. our Assemblies being inward looking and self-serving,
- ii. inability to progress beyond our present state caused by lack of dynamic yet godly leaders,
- iii. younger generations leaving the Assemblies for churches in other denominations,
- iv. an ageing congregation,
- v. leadership that are unwilling to change for the better,
- vi. disunity, dilution and compromise of doctrines.

11. What are some of the differences (e.g. practices, teaching, emphasis, etc.) you see in the Assembly between now and 20 years ago and/or from the time of your youth.

- i. Some Assemblies have been dynamic in form while maintaining their foundation in Christ while others are unable to adapt with the times and the new generation,
- ii. More conveniences now compared to the past - musical instruments, audio visuals and air conditioning which are necessities now.
- iii. the Assemblies in Malaysia are generally more open compared to 20 years ago,
- iv. Lord's Supper from one cup to individual cups.
- v. control of information for members more challenging with the internet

12. What are your key responsibilities and/or areas focus in your assembly now as an elder? Has that changed over time?

- i. shepherding the flock, spiritual growth of the congregation,
- ii. preaching the gospel within and beyond the borders of Malaysia,
- iii. Christian Education, Evangelism, Counselling and Pastoral responsibilities,
- iv. administrative tasks,
- v. teaching and providing direction for the Church,
- vi. mission work,
- vii. preparing and encouraging the next generation of leaders.

13. Are you active in other Christian activities outside your assembly e.g. involvement in Brethren agencies, NGO's, inter-D work etc.?

The elders interviewed are also involved in assembly and inter-denominational related groups for example the KVAEC,

CBSM, MAP, PJ North Pastors Fellowship, BSF, CMCT, MMS and GLO.

14. Approximately how much time do you spend a week in your role as an elder?

On average, they spend approx. 15 hours a week on their elders' responsibilities but as one elder said, "an elder's hours cannot really be quantified because they are on 24 hours standby ever ready to help or be there for a member of their congregation". The range of hours spent per week are as follows:

10 hours & below – 4 elders; 11 hours to 20 hours – 3 elders; Others expressed it is difficult to quantify the hours spent with the current COVID-19 situation as currently more time spent online and calls to communicate with assembly members.

15. Other comments and remarks

- i. A more national focus on the Assembly of Malaysia as a whole. we need to move at a national level to be more impact in the future.
- ii. Suggestions include to strategically challenge and place believers in small towns or come together and set up an organised effort to impact the communities.
- iii. An elder shared that Mission Schools have a great impact and he himself as well as his wife were saved through Mission Schools.
- iv. They see the Assemblies of Malaysia having great potential to reach our community with the Gospel. Now is the time! With God nothing is impossible!

Thoughts of Assembly Saints through SWOT

Diakonia Team

Diakonia Editorial team recently conducted facilitated discussions with Brethren Assembly saints & elders using the SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) template. The discussion groups were segregated into the Young Adults (21-34), Adults (35-49), the Seniors (50 and above) and 14 elders. We share their responses here.

What are the key STRENGTHS of the Assemblies in Malaysia?

Young Adults: They feel that expository preaching is prevalent in the Assembly. Sermons are not just structured to the “feel good” type but should also be realistic, timely and based on the congregation’s needs. They also think the fact that fellowship over meals being commonplace is a strong point and that it builds strong fellowship. Because the assemblies are mostly smaller in size, one doesn’t feel left out and it is easier to feel like one belongs. The Young Adults also feel that messages are well planned and focused on the Cross. They also think that because their Elders have secular jobs, it is easier for the congregation to relate with them. They also find it a key strength to be autonomous, not needing to take instructions from a central body.

Adults: They also see that expository preaching with emphasis on God’s word as a key strength of the Brethren Assemblies. They also recognise that there has been good community work done for food distribution and in the Orang Asli ministry. Similar to the Young Adults, they perceive a smaller congregation as a strength because the congregation gets to engage with everyone. The Assembly is also autonomous and was able to adapt to have various ministries online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seniors: The Assembly is warm towards guests, especially as they are small in size and close knit. The congregation is not status conscious and has a solid base in teaching God’s Word. The Assembly being autonomous is also a key strength to them and the Assembly is fairly united. The breaking of bread and worship style is also a high point for them.

Elders: They see the love for one another is strong in the Assemblies. There is sound teaching of Biblical truths from the pulpit. Another strength is that it is family-oriented, therefore we see the building up of faith among the youths. There are many faithful leaders who have taken up leadership in the Assemblies. There is no lack of commitment to supporting missions and outreach in foreign lands.

What are the key WEAKNESSES of the Assemblies in Malaysia?

Young Adults: They find that while there is a lot of good teaching, there may be some of the congregation that are unable to absorb the teachings. Some also learned only through second-hand knowledge and not thinking or researching on their own. This group also feel not learning about other denominations is a weakness as it is good to be aware of others and network with other denominations. The Young Adults also share that sometimes prayers at the Assembly can be very mechanical, having no heart. Perhaps we need to take a cue from the charismatics and find a good balance. It was also highlighted that the congregation sometimes lacks forgiveness and tend to socialise in cliques. It is also a struggle with manpower as the Assembly is small. Perhaps the sisters should also be given more opportunity to teach, outside of SS or Youth Ministry. They also see not staying up to date with social issues a weakness because the congregation is unable to relate to non-Christians. It is also a struggle that there is a sense of hierarchy in the Assembly where the younger ones are not able to correct their seniors. They also sense that the discipleship is very weak. While they study the Bible, it is left to each individual to feel called to disciple. The Assemblies also seems to shun external training such as counselling, training and seminars related programs.

Adults: They see Assemblies shrinking in numbers and many young people leaving for Charismatic Churches. They recognise that there needs to be stronger preaching on the Word of God with emphasis on the Cross and discipleship. There is also a gap in a lack of full-time workers which causes burnouts among the Elders. They have also highlighted that there is a lack of participation from the congregation during worship time.

Seniors: There is a lack of outreach and evangelism. They also recognise the high proportion of seniors in Assemblies as a weakness. There is also a sense of complacency and lack of enthusiasm in the Assembly. They also find that there is a competing interest arising out of affluence.

Elders: They see a lack of young, capable and godly leaders who are trained to lead the next generation an apparent closed/narrow mindedness in the congregation and the absence of intentional discipleship. Other weakness expressed by some elders included lack of networking among Assemblies, being too conservative and not open to positive changes that are not in conflict with Scripture, a sense of complacency and divisions among the congregation in the Assembly, the autonomous structure of each Assembly contributing to some extent the difficulty for cooperation among assemblies for bigger tasks.

What are the key OPPORTUNITIES of the Assemblies in Malaysia?

Young Adults: They feel Assemblies should approach organisations outside of their own circle including food banks, NGOs or helping the Orang Asli of Malaysia. They also see a room for growth in the Youth Ministries because while some assemblies has many Young Adults, not many other Assemblies in Malaysia do. There is also room of the sisters of Assemblies to grow, especially to teach the younger women, to speak and lead in corporate prayer, and build relationships in ministries outside of Bible Study.

Adults: They see an opportunity in incorporating full-time workers to evangelise in surrounding communities and bring in more members. It would also be beneficial to create more inter-Brethren Assembly activities focusing on community work. They feel that more awareness should be created via social media platforms so more will know of the Brethren Assembly.

Seniors: They see the potential to do more outreach work and working together between Assemblies. Perhaps in the conduct of cell groups, non-believers could be involved too. They also see room for growth in being open with each other in the congregation, confessing their sins to one another.

Elders: There is a potential for growth since assemblies possess a strong foundation in knowledge, finances and

legacy, the Assembly's distinctive structure and to lay leadership suitable for church planting, working with other Kingdom-minded Assemblies, effectively build up youths, learn from growing assemblies and implement what they do well, repurpose and refocus unused assets like property to support and hire more full time workers, to reach the Orang Asli, foreign workers, the homeless and lonely, better inter-assembly communication to encourage one another.

What are the key THREATS of the Assemblies in Malaysia?

Young Adults: The Assemblies comprise mostly older people but the concerns and needs of the young are different with issues of concern to them are things like human rights and feminism. There is also a great risk of receiving doubtful or wrong teachings in which the Assembly will need to mitigate by engaging in conversations and counselling. Elders also need to be up to date to protect the flock, especially on controversial issues such as politics, LGBTQ, doctrinal related issues so as to prevent the church from splitting. There is a real threat in the lack of theological discussions on several hard but relevant topics related to our modern society.

Adults: The Assemblies population is ageing and the young people are leaving to Charismatic Churches. As liberal theology is on the rise, they also feel the

need to educate and guide the young people on the truth. There is also concern that if the Movement Control Order is extended, many young people will continue to leave as they can't meet and fellowship in churches.

Seniors: The existing internal conflicts within the congregation and the Assemblies are a threat. There is also a rise of doctrinal issues that impact the Gospel. They also see dogmatism and arguments in Bible Study as a threat.

Elders: Our Assemblies tend to be inward looking and self-serving, inability to progress beyond our present state caused by lack of dynamic and godly leaders, younger generations leaving the Assembly for other denominations, an ageing congregation and a leadership that is unwilling to change for the better, disunity, dilution and compromise of doctrines.

We hope the results of this facilitated discussions have provided you with an insight and a glimpse into the thoughts of saints in the assembly in Malaysia. May this provoke us to think through the state of the wider assemblies and our own local assembly and through this spur us into action.

Meditations from a Pandemic Lockdown

YL Khong

I remember the evening of March 17th 2020 quite clearly. It was about 10 p.m. when I was on my way to KLIA to catch a late AirAsia flight back to Penang after some meetings in Putrajaya. The GRAB driver informed me the whole country is going into lockdown at midnight to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. It did not sink in immediately, but had my schedule been shifted just an hour, I would be stuck in KL and not being able to go home for months. Talking about the Lord's timing!

More than a year and half now into the pandemic, there is much to reflect on. The disruption to our normal routine, the pain of separation and on the professional front, how we were affected as companies and businesses, struggling to keep afloat with layoffs and salary cuts. And in church, we had to adapt to keep as many together as possible in church.

For the first month of so, like many people and organizations, I was feeling my way and still thought maybe a few months tops and everything should be back to normal. It was like a forced break from work. I took the opportunity to clear out some physical clutter and tidy documents in my PC from my years at various jobs and also church stuff. Looking at all the documents, bits of notes and tons of computer files, over

200,000 of them, digital and hard copy photos and other bits of mementos, knick-knacks and paraphernalia, it just dawned on me I am looking at about 20-25 years of my life that had passed. Then the words of Moses in Psalm 90 came to mind regarding our days in this world - *"they quickly pass, and we fly away."* One advice he gave in the same Psalm was to *"number our days"* and so I did.

Let's see, I will be hitting 60 in a year and assuming by God's grace I live till 80 (Malaysia's average lifespan for man is 76 year), then I would have... gasp ... about 7300 days left. Wait, if I minus 8 hours for sleep and maybe 2 hours for meals, ablution etc, then I will have...big gasp...about 4300 days left, to do anything useful in my life for Him. Maybe less if God wills my health to fail prematurely or God forbid, we are hit by another pandemic in this lifetime.

The first thing the Lord brought for me through COVID-19 was to pause and take stock, with a sobering effect. Something I don't do enough due to the extreme busyness of my life.

The second thread of thoughts during the early days of the pandemic was something in what Jesus said in Rev 22:12 *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.**"* and what Paul wrote in Corinthians 3:13-15 regarding our works being assayed (KJV "manifest" and "revealed") by fire. The tone of "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12) has changed key for

me somewhat. "Works" is almost a dirty word in evangelical Christianity but the more I dig, the more I realized this is God's expectation of our useful life on Earth. In fact, Ephesians 2:10 says this works are "prepared in advance for us to **do**", by God himself! What a wake-up call during a pandemic.

We got into the online meeting act pretty quickly in church. In fact, one week following the announcement of the lockdown, we had our 1st online Lord's Supper. We had a brief period when we went "hybrid" i.e. running the online and physical meeting late last year and early this year when the restrictions were briefly lifted and then went full online again when the Movement Control Order was reinstated as COVID-19 rages on.

It is interesting how when there are no other options, the difficult becomes doable. I recall the resistance and reservations towards meeting via video conferencing tools among church folks prior to the pandemic. Anything to do with technology will be avoided and approached with a ten-foot pole. At the end, to those who will adapt, Zoom, Skype and the myriads of other video conferencing tools became lifelines and a blessing for many saints to stay connected and carry on their associations with the various assemblies in various forms.

Looking back at all the activities related to our life in the Body transacted via technology, it just dawned on me what effective means modern technology have

provided for us to progress out faith. Apart from all our meetings transferred online, our assembly had planned and participated in an inter assembly Easter conference, completed a 3-day Evangelism Explosion (XEE) trainers' course, shared the gospel to a dozen or so folks, attended the PITH conference 2021 among others and collaborated with other assemblies on various projects.

I have had the opportunity to have numerous one on one discussions via Zoom with a few dozen elders from various assemblies as we put this issue of the Diakonia together and conducted more or less weekly meetings with team members. We also did 2 camps, all online and one more to go before the year is up for Christmas VBS. Indeed, the lockdown is not an obstacle for doing the Lord's work. In fact, the opposite, new opportunities keep surfacing.

On the other hand, saints are also being "sifted" (Luke 22:31) through these extraordinary times. The measure of our faith is in certain ways tested and revealed for what they are. There are now good reasons for being tardy about our life in the Body in the new abnormal normal.

Bad internet connections, don't know how to connect, screen on phone too small etc. All good reasons for forgoing Bible Study, Prayer and other meetings. But the faithful will try all means so as to "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb 10:25). When I see 70- and 80-year olds struggling and making it online to be present and be an encouragement to those present, I

wonder aloud what is the excuse for the rest of us?

The online meeting formats allow us some invisibility. Perhaps our true standing in our relationship with the Lord is revealed when we are not being watched. Easy – switch off the video and then you can attend the Lord's Supper in your pyjamas or view social media and web contents on your handphone when a meeting is in progress. I am guilty! It is good then to be reminded of Paul's exhortation about life in the Spirit in Galatians 5:15,16, that **we are NOT to do whatever we want**. Do how we present ourselves and our attention to the Lord matter? Malachi seems to suggest it does. There is an expectation of approaching the Lord with the best we can bring.

I wonder what came through Satan's sift for each of us during the pandemic? Was it the fire of determination that the Lord will be honored in what we do even when we are not being watched or did the lackadaisical fleshly nature take over so we ignore our commitments to Him and to one another?

Hopefully, the pandemic has given us the opportunity to take stock of our lives, reveal gaps in our faith and show us how to use technology meaningfully as tools for our faith. With some end in sight through the vaccines and the resumption of physical meetings, let's hope these lessons are not the type we "give back to the teacher" but the ones that we will take to heart and spur us on to greater faith, works and love for the Lord and one another.