



CCM News



IN THIS ISSUE

A UNITED MALAYSIA, VIGILANT & RESILIENT

CFM Merdeka Day & Malaysia Day Statement 2021 emphasises need for vigilance and resilience in working for the well-being of all during this time of pandemic.

A JOINT MESSAGE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CREATION

Leaders of Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican communions of churches urge everyone to choose life for the future of the planet in a rare joint statement.

MORE

Raising up the Malaysian voice of worship
Churches usher Malaysia Day with prayers
Condolences on the passing of the head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
MCCBCHST: No to bill on control and restrictions on development of non-Muslim religions
WCC calls for prayers for people of Afghanistan as fears of violence grow



Issue 3

JUL—SEPT 2021

FOREWORD

Moving forward with hope and confidence

OUR NATION HAS NOW BEGUN TO MOVE INTO THE endemic Covid-19 phase of gradually reopening the country, including places of worship, after going through horrifying weeks and months of lockdown and self-quarantine.

On one hand, there is a sense of relief. On the other hand, we know there is a new “normal” we are returning to; one that requires us to take seriously the “stop-the-spread” measures and practices. For churches, the question is: how do we resume in-person worship while the pandemic is still with us?

CCM President Archbishop Datuk Melter Tais recently made this remark: “We need to develop resources that would help churches proclaim the Gospel they profess in the face of extraordinary circumstances which have limited some of the ways we have grown accustomed to doing through public in-person worship services and fellowship.”

Taking up that challenge, CCM aims to offer advice and recommendations to help churches move forward from one phase to the next, as we learn to live with Covid-19 in our midst.

This issue of **CCM News** brings you some highlights of concern faced by our nation, even our world, for your informed reflection and prayerful action.

The Digital Age is upon us. Despite many physical limitations in past months, CCM has been in constant dialogue with authorities and interfaith leaders on issues of concern in our nation. We have witnessed the changing of Prime Ministers and cabinet members. We have seen the clout that Parliament once held greatly diminished. For that reason and others, CCM continues to engage with concerned religious groups and civil society organisations to keep urgent “reform agenda” on the radar.

In view of our present theme—“*A Renewed Nation: Called to Transform*”—CCM commits to promote ecumenical discipline that calls for churches to work together, pray together, and share together in the task of national renewal. Together, we shall overcome this pandemic. Together, we shall be transformed by the Holy Spirit as we seek to touch lives and impact communities.

Hebrews 12:7 says; “*Endure trials for the sake of discipline*”, and verse 11; “*...discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*”.

REV DR HERMEN SHASTRI
CCM General Secretary

OCTOBER 2021

CCM NEWS is a quarterly publication of the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) providing news about the life and work of the Council as well as the fellowship of churches in and around Malaysia.

FRONT IMAGE:
MDOP2021 reminds us to pray and remain confident in God's sovereignty in troubling times (Hebrews 10:35-37).

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The Council of Churches of Malaysia is a fellowship of churches from virtually all mainline Protestant denominations in the country. The highest governing body is the Assembly, which meets once every three years. CCM was formally inaugurated in 1948 in Kuala Lumpur. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member church but works cooperatively with CCM.

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A United Malaysia, Vigilant & Resilient

CFM Merdeka Day & Malaysia Day Statement 2021

ONCE AGAIN, all Malaysians come together to commemorate, this time, the 64th Merdeka Day and the 58th Malaysia Day. The celebrations this year will, however, be very much subdued, yet the significance of these national dates that unite the nation should not be ignored.

The virulent and unrelenting Covid-19 disease has been with us on our shores for much of 18 months now. Standing together, Malaysians have not been defeated by the ravages of this pandemic. On the other hand, it has brought us closer across all divides to bear each others' pain and losses. We have stood with frontliners who have put themselves in the forefront to meet the peculiar challenges. Many others have also worked tirelessly to bring relief and comfort to those in need. We thank God for all fellow Malaysians who have sacrificially rallied to the call of the times.

To control the spread of the deadly virus should be the foremost national priority, next to offset the impact that it has had on our economy and even personal livelihood of many. We must be committed to remain vigilant and resilient for the general well-being of all in our nation. Efforts

to vaccinate the whole population must be earnestly supported.

Christians have joined hands with people of other faith traditions and secular organisations to bring relief, in kind and financially, to lessen the burden faced by our fellow Malaysians during this unprecedented period.

We must be committed to remain vigilant and resilient for the general well-being of all in our nation.

As churches, let us continue to extend the love of God, especially to the less fortunate, the vulnerable, the migrants, in the localities and amidst the communities we are placed in (James 1:27; Mark 12: 30-31).

Our thoughts are at this occasion also with the many who have lost their dear ones and particularly with those children who have suddenly lost both parents.

Let us continue with our personal and collective prayers to the Almighty Triune God for His intervention and mercies to alleviate the sufferings and deprivations around us, for the blessings of His healing for all, and for the sooner restoration of relative normalcy in our lives.

Let us also uphold in our prayers our national leaders, including our new Prime Minister, all health personnel, and governmental agencies, that they may all be guided and protected by God. Together let us collaborate for the common good of all Malaysians.

Selamat Hari Merdeka & Hari Malaysia. ■



ARCHBISHOP DATUK MELTER TAIS
Chairman



ARCHBISHOP DR SIMON POH HOON SENG
Vice-chairman



COR EPISCOPA PHILIP THOMAS
Vice-chairman



REV DR EU HONG SENG
Vice-chairman

CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA (CFM)

AUGUST 30, 2021

Sabah Council of Churches statement on Malaysia Day 2021

AS we approach the 58th Malaysia Day, it is an opportunity for all Malaysians to celebrate 58 years of our nationhood as the Federation of Malaysia. We rejoice that fundamental tenets in the Federal Constitution have held us together in harmony, mutual respect and prosperity.

It is the spirit of the Federal Constitution, when adhered to, that brought us harmonious and peaceful living in this nation. The 1962 Report of the Cobbold Commission, which included members from Malaya, reflected the spirit in which the Federal Constitution is embedded, in their Recommendations on the topic of Religion, said as follows:

"Taking these points fully into consideration, we are agreed that Islam should be the national religion for the Federation. We are satisfied that the proposal in no way jeopardises freedom of religion in the Federation, which in effect would be secular." [See Chapter 4, paragraph 148(e)(ii)]

This solemn promise guaranteeing freedom of religion has also been enshrined in the Keningau Batu Sumpah. Without this foundation, the Federation of Malaysia would not have existed in the first place, nor would it long endure. It is therefore the sacred duty of all members of the Federal Government, regardless of their individual religious beliefs, to uphold this historical guarantee.

However, a recent statement made by the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (religious affairs) on 7th September 2021 was widely reported in the news, revealed that the government is planning to draft various new laws, including one to restrict the development of non-Muslim religions.

The Sabah Council of Churches is deeply saddened by such statement which was ironically released before Malaysians celebrate Malaysia Day

2021. We view such development with grave concern.

The Federal Constitution, which is the supreme law of Malaysia, guarantees the complete freedom of religion for all. Any restrictions, in whatever form, to limit the propagation of any faiths would be in total contradiction of the spirit of religious freedom.

The reality today is that Malaysians are witnessing extreme religious actors and religious bureaucracy pushing for the erosion of the secularity of Malaysia...

Religious freedom means all persons can freely exercise their right to freedom of religion and belief without interference by the state including the right to change one's religion. Any form of control by the state whether overtly or through backdoor means would fall short of the religious freedom guaranteed to the people of Sabah and Sarawak at the formation of Malaysia.

We are immensely grateful to the various leaders of Sabah, including the Chief Minister YAB Datuk Seri Panglima Hajiji Noor, for expressing their strong objections to such a plan, and their commitment to defending the religious freedom and ethnic harmony in Sabah.

The reality today is that Malaysians are witnessing extreme religious actors and religious bureaucracy pushing for the erosion of the secularity of

Malaysia and severely weakening the protection of Malaysians' fundamental liberty of complete religious freedom. The erosion of fundamental religious liberty towards a more fundamentalist religious ideology compromising the constitutional supremacy is a grave concern. This direction is in complete contravention of the Malaysia Agreement 1963.

In the past year and a half, Malaysia has experienced unprecedented political turmoil and an unprecedented global Covid-19 pandemic. All races and followers of all religions in Sabah, like our brothers and sisters in Malaya and Sarawak, have shed too much tears and suffered too much hardship.

Yet, by the grace of God, we have been spared from any ethnic or religious strife and civil unrest in Malaysia. This is a shining testimony to the resilience and harmony of the "Malaysian Family", built on the foundation of mutual respect, tolerance and kinship.

On the eve of this challenging Malaysia Day, we urge our national leaders to continue to cherish our common destiny, not to emphasize our differences; to bring hope and to guide Malaysia out of the pandemic, not to plant the seeds of division and hatred, and to direct significant focus and importance to address the many issues causing the suffering of the rakyat, for the sake of the well-being of all Malaysians and the future of the Federation.

May the peace and love of our Almighty God be upon the peoples of Malaysia. "Selamat Hari Malaysia". God bless Malaysia. ■

REV. DATUK IR JERRY DUSING

President

Sabah Council of Churches

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

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“Lord, Heal Our Land” prayer gathering

AUG 10: IN light of the present multitude of challenges facing the country, a day of fasting and prayer was jointly organised by the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) and Prayer United.

Hosted on the Zoom platform, the event brought together church leaders and concerned Christians from different churches to intercede for the well-being of the nation.

The event began with a call from Bishop Dr T Jeyakumar of the Methodist Church of Malaysia to all who joined the virtual gathering to pray wherever they are for the nation. Bishop Joshua Khong (Methodist Trinity Annual Conference) then opened with a word of thanksgiving to God, followed by Bishop Dr Hii Kong Hock (Methodist Sabah Annual Conference) who led the corporate prayer of confession.

Subsequently CCM president Archbishop Melter Tais shared a short devotion based on the text 2 Chronicles 7:14. In his sharing, he urged churches to look to God in light of the troubles facing the nation. “When we look at the present situation in our nation, we

face at least three crisis—health, economy, and politics,” he said. “As God’s people, we have both moral and spiritual obligations to seek the welfare of this nation.”

Affirming that God is not yet done with Malaysia, Archbishop Melter exhorted churches to come before God in humility and repentance. “I believe God in His own time will hear our prayer, forgive us, and heal our nation for His glory,” he said.

All CCM heads of churches representing Protestant and Orthodox churches in the country were present to lead the intercession, including guest minister Rev Stephen Baek from the Korean Methodist Church. Together, they prayed in various languages of the land—Bahasa, Iban, Semai, Lum-bawang, Mandarin, English, Tamil, Korean—for a myriad of concerns and challenges facing church and nation.

The prayer gathering also lifted up intercession for those affected by Covid-19—patients, victims, families, those struggling to make ends meet, those who lost jobs or business, and those caught in poverty and despair due to the pandemic.

In the midst of national strife, the church leaders also interceded for the ongoing healthcare and management of the pandemic, for rule of law and statesmanship to return to governance and political administration, as well as for the education system and generations of students affected by school closures and disrupted studies. They also brought various people groups before the Lord—women, children, migrants, refugees, oppressed groups in society, as well as neighbouring countries that included India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand.

Church concerns such as spiritual revival, indigenous churches, Christian youth, Christian families, seminaries and theological institutions, missions and church planting work, were also raised to the Lord in prayers and supplications.

A team of worship leaders and musicians as well as representatives from Boys and Girls’ Brigades accompanied the various prayer segments with heartfelt praise and worship songs. At 12pm, the event concluded with a prayer led by Major Francis Ng of The Salvation Army. ■

* Watch the event here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDBMM0mp-XI>

Real and visible unity of the church—still our hope?

SEPT 10: A series of ten conversational sessions on the topic of church unity will be organised over the next few months.

Envisioned as an ecumenical formation programme for church youth and young adults, each session seeks to explore and reflect on the broader theme “*The Real and Visible Unity of the Church—Still Our Hope?*”. CCM general secretary Rev Dr Hermen Shastri and CCM Youth coordinator

Rev Mathew Punnoose will host each session and lead participants to engage with sensitive and contemporary issues in today’s societies. Resource persons from different church denominations will also be invited to share insights.

The programme will also examine the biblical foundations for church unity, theological bases for ecumenical concern, history of the ecumenical movement in 20th century, and major breakthroughs. In addition, the pro-

gramme will also highlight and share new challenges facing ecumenists in the 21st century.

The first session was launched on Friday Sept 10. Upcoming sessions will be held every second Friday of the month from 8.00pm to 9.30pm on the Zoom platform. Youth and young adults from churches are welcomed to join the sessions. To register, please contact the CCM office. ■

* The conversational program is an initiative of CCM Youth.

Raising up the Malaysian voice of worship

SEPT 16: THE Malaysian Worship Collective is a group of worship leaders, songwriters, musicians, and intercessors from various denominations who came together in mid-2018 with a common vision to light up the nation with heart songs of the land.



Emerging songwriters (from top, right to left): Deborah Chan, Cray Maxwell, Christy Benedict, Desmond Lee, Eileen Ng, Nelster Suaib, Gavin Pang, and Wong Yue Ling.

In conjunction with Malaysia Day 2021 on Sept 16, the team of close to 60 creative folks launched eight brand new praise and worship songs written and produced by Malaysians from across the country and friends around the world. The songs are *You Are My Sun And My Shield* (Deborah Chan), *S'gala Hormat* (Cray Maxwell), *The Truth That Sets Us Free* (Desmond Lee), *Bapa-ku* (Irinda Toh & Eileen Ng), *You'll Carry Me* (Gavin Pang), *Engkau Lah Yang Layak* (Nelster Suaib), *Tadau Maino* (Elizabeth Lasim & Christy Benedict), and *Doa Bagi Kota Kami* (Wong Yue Ling).

These songs are the fruits of the group's *Song Maker* initiative which seeks to mentor aspiring songwriters and bring new Malaysian worship songs to churches in the nation. One of the group's core leaders, seasoned singer-songwriter Juwita Suwito, said at the virtual launch: "When we find great anointed Malaysian songs, we try to introduce them to the Malaysian Church and beyond because we believe it's about time we sing more Malaysian songs in our churches."

To be sure, there has been a general lack of appreciation for Malaysian worship songs among churches. It was only in recent years that a growing openness to worship songs in the languages of the land became evident, especially as churches began to connect virtually during periods of lockdown and movement restriction.

As God blesses the Malaysian Church with new worship songs, and as churches begin to worship in the heart languages of the land, it is hoped that spiritual revival will come to the nation. It is also hoped that more Christian songwriters will be raised up to write and produce worship songs that can greatly bless the wider Malaysian Church.

For Wong Yue Ling, one of the emerging songwriters, that is certainly her dream and aspiration—to write

songs that will be sung in churches across the nation and even abroad—turning the hearts of believers to God in repentance and leading many to Christ. A native Sabahan Chinese whose first language is Bahasa Malaysia, Yue Ling's *Doa Bagi Kota Kami* was born of a prayer to God during one of the pandemic lockdowns.



All eight songs are now available on major streaming platforms. Prior to this new compilation, the Malaysian Worship Collective had released two other worship songs titled *Doa Bapa Kami* and *Love Like You Love*. If you are interested to use these songs for your ministry or church, write to worship@fourtyrecords.com. ■

* Watch the Sept 16 launch program here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj_uiau_C6U

* Listen to the songs here: <https://bfan.link/emerging-songwriters-2021>

* More about the songs here: <https://www.komuniti-digital.com/malaysianworship>

* Find out more about the Malaysian Worship Collective here: www.facebook.com/MYWorshipCollective

Churches usher Malaysia Day 2021 with prayers

SEPT 16: THIS year's Malaysia Day of Prayer (MDOP) celebration to bless the nation was once again hosted on live-streaming platform from 8am till 11pm.

The 15-hour celebration began with a 2-hour pre-launch prayer and worship session led by a combined group of church women, followed by a mass led by Archbishop Julian Leow of Catholic Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

At 10pm, the main MDOP event was opened with a song and prayer by 24/7 Prayer Asia worship director Franklin Simon. MDOP chairman Bishop Emeritus Dr Ong Hwai Teik then gave a word of welcome. In his address, the former Methodist bishop urged Malaysian churches to remain confident in God's sovereignty, and continue to do His will during this time of economic, political and health crisis (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Following a scripture reading of Psalm 96 by Christina Jawat from SIB Semenanjung, CFM chairman and CCM president Archbishop Melter Tais then gave his exhortation.

Speaking in Bahasa, the Anglican Archbishop encouraged churches to pray for the peace and prosperity of the nation (Jeremiah 29:7). He also led a song of intercession to God for the healing and restoration of the nation,

including repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Christian leaders representing the evangelical community and Catholic Church, NECF chairman Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng and Catholic Archbishop Julian Leow, also lifted up words of intercession for church and country.

The 1-hour main session concluded with an interpretative praise dance led by Christina Jawat and Hineni Dancers from SIB Semenanjung. The presentation was based on a local worship song *Malaysia Dalam Hati-Mu*, written by Matthew G. Singh.

Throughout the rest of the day, various churches and groups from the Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak led the MDOP program—all celebrating and interceding for the nation with one voice and in various languages—English, Chinese, Bahasa, Tamil, Iban and Rungus. ■

* Watch the event here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7TAUVySTwg>

IN THE NEWS

We're becoming an Islamic state at a faster pace, warns ex-diplomat

SEP 9: A former diplomat fears Malaysia may lurch into an Islamic state at a faster pace with PAS controlling the Islamic development department (Jakim) under the current Cabinet

Dennis Ignatius said the country is moving towards Wahhabism and this process may soon be irreversible.

"With Jakim now under PAS, I anticipate, we will lurch into becoming an Islamic state at an even faster rate," he said during the launch of his book *"Paradise Lost: Mahathir & The End of Hope"* tonight.



PAS vice-president Senator Idris Ahmad is the minister in the Prime Minister's Department (religious affairs) while his party colleague Ahmad Marzuk Shaary is the deputy minister.

Ignatius said he also found it disturbing how Islam was being defined politically.

"It is intolerant of others and that view is being aggressively promoted."

According to Ignatius, PAS had been pushing for non-Muslims not to be appointed to senior positions in the government. "There are calls to impose Shariah laws on non-Muslims. There is so much intolerance towards other religions. When will it end?" he questioned.

He said he has no problems accepting Islam as the religion of the federation and the religion of the majority of Malaysians but was only

concerned over the growth of Islamic extremism.

Ignatius added that he wrote the book after the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government because he was stunned and disappointed that the great experiment in democratic change had come to an abrupt halt.

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much intolerance
towards other religions.
When will it end?

"Although there were many factors that led to the collapse of the PH administration but none was more pivotal than the role that Dr Mahathir Mohamad played," he said.

The more he studied Mahathir's policies and politics going back many years, he said it became clear to him that he was responsible for so much that has gone wrong with Malaysia.

"It has been destructive even to this day," Ignatius said. If no measures are taken to change the course, he said

the country will become a "failed state".

The book touches on corruption, racism, religious extremism, and abuse of power, among other things.

According to Ignatius, after the 2018 general election (GE14) Mahathir had everything going for him – a stable majority, the most multiracial coalition the country has known, and with various agendas for reforms.

"The level of support he had would be the envy of any politician in the world. But instead of leading us to a new dawn, he went back to being Mahathir. He played the same racial card, he went on with his race-based policies," Ignatius said.

He added that as a result, Malaysia has become a deeply divided nation even after six decades of independence. Years of racism has left the country deeply fractured.

"Today we are a nation of divided races. Divided by both visible and invisible barriers. We understand less and less," Ignatius said.

He lamented that nothing is being done to reverse the situation and to forge real understanding among Malaysians of all races. ■ By Minderjeet Kaur/FMT

* <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/09/10/were-becoming-an-islamic-state-at-a-faster-rate-warns-ex-diplomat/>

Condolences on the passing of the head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

IT is with great sadness that we received news of the demise of His Holiness Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, the supreme head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

He was a highly respected leader in the ecumenical circles in the world. He will be remembered for his meaningful leadership and his significant role in building the ecumenical witness in India and beyond. With his passing, the churches in India have lost an ecclesiastical leader of great integrity and conviction for the moral ideals of the nation.

On behalf of the CCM, I wish to convey our deepest condolences and sympathies to you and all the members of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church as they mourn the passing of their much beloved Catholicos. May the grace and love of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit sustain you and your congregations in this time of grief. ■



REV DR HERMEN SHASTRI
CCM General Secretary

JULY 14, 2021

* This letter was addressed to Cor Espiscopa Rev. Philip Thomas and members of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

ACS rejects “RUU kawalan dan sekatan pengembangan agama bukan Islam”

THE Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS) has been greatly alarmed by the news reported on *FMT* 6th September 2021 that “Four new Shariah laws that were being drafted by the Federal government, including a bill on control and restrictions on the development of non-Muslim religions.”

It was reported that YB Ustaz Ahmad Marzuk Shaary, a deputy minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Religious Affairs), had said that a Wakaf Bill, Mufti Bill and Shariah Court Bill were the other new laws that are being planned.

On 16th August 2021, when our Yang di-Pertuan Agong appointed the 9th Prime Minister, a clear mandate to focus on the current pandemic was given, so that the people of Malaysia should not be burdened with endless political turmoil at a time when the country is struggling with health issues and economic depression, brought about by the pandemic.

On 22nd August 2021, our newly appointed Prime Minister YAB Dato’ Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, in his maiden speech, presented the concept of “Keluarga Malaysia” where all Malaysians can be united regardless of religion and race. He pointed out that Malay-

sians are all a part of a family despite their diversity in religion, race and ethnicity, with all of them complementing and needing each other as different parts of a single body. We are a “Malaysian Family.”

...any future attempts
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of Malaysia...

In Sarawak, in conjunction with Malaysia Day, Inter-faith Harmony Walks have been organised since 2017. In pre-pandemic years, thousands of

Bahais, Buddhists, Christians, Hinduism, Muslims, Sikhs, Taoists and people of goodwill have walked together as friends on the streets of Kuching and other major towns to promote mutual respect, acceptance, harmony and unity as Malaysians. This is an integral part of the social fabric of Sarawak.

As Malaysians come together to celebrate our 58th Malaysia Day, ACS considers such or any future attempts to introduce Shariah bills affecting non-Muslim religions, as directly contravening the very spirit of the formation of Malaysia—where Sarawak, Sabah and Malaya are equal partners. Furthermore, the Federal Constitution clearly states in Article 11(1): “Every person has the right to profess and practise his religion”. Such bills to control and restrict the development of all non-Muslim religions should never be allowed to be tabled in our multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysia.

ACS reiterates the stance of our YAB Chief Minister of Sarawak, our Sarawak political leaders and Members of Parliament, UNIFOR, that have consistently rejected any introduction of

such laws that would undermine and destroy the harmony among races and communities in Sarawak and Malaysia.

As Malaysians, let us work together and assist one another to overcome this pandemic.

The Heads of Churches of ACS wishes all Selamat Hari Malaysia. ■

ARCHBISHOP DR SIMON POH

Chairman

Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS)

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

* Media contact: Christian Ecumenical Worship Center, 2701, Lorong 10, Jalan Stampin, 93350 Kuching, Sarawak | Tel: 082-411 500 | Email: acs.cewc@yahoo.com

INTERFAITH

MCCBCHST: No to bill on control and restrictions on development of non-Muslim religions

THE Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) welcomes the Statement by the Law Minister yesterday (07/09/2021) that there were no proposals to enact law to restrict or control the development of non-Muslim religions and neither was the matter brought to the cabinet yet.

Thus this statement clearly contradicts with the earlier statement made by the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (religious affairs), Ahmad Marzuk Shaary who had stated that the government was drafting four new Syariah laws "including the control and Restriction on the Propagation of "Non-Muslim Religions Bill." This Deputy Minister's statement had caused great anxiety amongst the Non-Muslims and thus the clarification by the Minister helps to calm things down.

Since the Deputy Minister has not withdrawn his statement, the MCCBCHST wishes to point out that there are many flaws in his statement, and wishes to remind that Article 11(1) of the Federal Constitution clearly gives the right to every person: "to profess and practise his religion and, subject to clause (4), to propagate it". **This means every person has the fundamental right to practise and propagate** his religion, subject to clause (4).

The MCCBCHST therefore wishes to remind the Deputy Minister that the basic structure of the Constitution will not allow for a Theocratic Islamic State for Malaysia.

What then does the clause (4) of Article 11 provide? It only deals with a very narrow area and provides that federal law may control or restrict **PROPAGATION** of other religious doctrines to Muslims, that is: "...federal law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam". Thus, where there is no **PROPAGATION** of other religions doctrine or belief to Muslims, clause

(4) will not apply. Where there is practise and propagation of non-Muslim religions amongst themselves only, clause (4) will have no application again.

In fact, the right of freedom of religion is so fundamental that it cannot be curtailed even during an Emergency. This is provided for Article 150 (6A).

The MCCBCHST therefore wishes to remind the Deputy Minister that the basic structure of the Constitution will not allow for a Theocratic Islamic State for Malaysia. In our case all religions are subject to the Constitution. In view of the apparent contradictions between the statement by the Law Minister and the earlier statement by the Deputy Minister, the MCCBCHST calls upon the YAB Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakub to clarify the issue before causing further anxiety among our citizens. ■

SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

* Statement released and endorsed by Sardar Jagir Singh Arjan Singh (Malaysian Gurdwaras Council, MCCBCHST President), Dao Zhang Tan Hoe Chiew (Federation of Taoist Associations Malaysian, MCCBCHST Deputy President), Datuk R.S. Mohan Shan (Malaysia Hindu Sangam, MCCBCHST Vice President), Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim (Christian Federation of Malaysia, MCCBCHST Vice President), and Venerable Seet Lee Terk (Malaysian Buddhist Association, MCCBCHST Vice President).

MCCBCHST: RUU 355 enabling Hudud offences is not a constitutional reality

THE Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism & Taoism (MCCBCHST) is greatly alarmed by the statement of the YAB Prime Minister Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob that the Government is intensifying efforts to draft the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) (Amendment) Act 1965, commonly known as RUU 355 to increase the Criminal Jurisdiction powers of the Shariah Courts.

Presently, Section 2 of the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355) imposes limits on the punishments that can be meted out by the Syariah Courts, that is imprisonment of up to three (3) years, fine up to RM 5000.00 and whipping up to six lashes. Any proposal to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 to provide for higher punishments will enable the Shariah Courts to impose punishments for Hudud offences. Thus, the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 is being promoted to enhance the Criminal Jurisdiction powers of the Shariah Courts is in effect aimed at introducing Hudud Laws.

A similar Bill was introduced by Pas President Abdul Hadi Awang in 2017 in Parliament as Private Member's Bill. In earlier years it was referred to as Hudud Bill but over the years it was rebranded and promoted as enhancing the Shariah Courts sentencing powers and upgrading the Shariah Courts. There was tremendous opposition to the Bill including from Sabah and Sarawak State Governments and MPs; from MCA, MIC, Gerakan and SUPP who openly rejected it at a press conference; opposition parties like DAP, Multiple NGOs, 284 Malay NGOs under the Malay Consultative Council, G25 Group – all of these openly rejected the RUU 355 Bill. A poll conducted showed that only 10.4% Muslims in Malaysia supported the Bill [Source: RUU 355: A bill to Talibanize Malaysia? dated Sept 19, 2021, Sunday (Malaysiakini)].

In view of the rejection of the RUU 355 Bill earlier, it is beyond compre-

hension why is this Divisive RUU 355 Bill being introduced again.

According to the Constitutional scheme of things, the Federal Constitution does not allow a parallel Syariah Criminal System to operate side by side with the General Criminal Law System. This matter was put to rest by the Federal Court in the case of *IKI PUTRA BIN MUBARRAK V. KERAJAAN NEGERI SELANGOR & ANOR* [BKA-3-11/2019 (W)] and the Federal Court ruled in a unanimous decision of 9 Judges that:

“...It can be postulated that having regard to the preclusion clause in item 1 of the State List, when the two legislatures (Federal and State) legislate a Law concerning the subject-matter of Criminal Law, and the two laws touch on the same matter, the said Laws cannot co-exist even if the said Law is said to be against the precepts of Islam...”

...the subject matter upon which section 28 of the 1995 Enactment was made falls within the preclusion clause of item 1 of the state list. As such, it is our view that the said section (28) was enacted in contravention of item 1 of the State List which stipulates that the State Legislatures have no power to make Law in regards to ‘matters included in the Federal List’. To that extent, section 28 of the 1995 Enactment is inconsistent with the FC and is therefore void.”

Chief Justice Tengku Maimun Tun Mat when reading out the full Judgment of the Court also stated:

“It is because the subject matter of section 28, touching on the criminalisation of unnatural sex, is one that only Parliament is empowered to enact”.

...Parliament has already enacted a Federal Law criminalising unnatural sex via Section 377A of the Penal Code.” [Malaysiakini 25/02/2021 under heading ‘Selangor Syariah Law against unnatural sex is invalid: Federal Court’].

The Hudud offences of Theft, Robbery, Adultery, Rape, Sodomy etc., are already offences included in the Penal Code. Thus, any Act such as RUU 355 enabling such offences to be tried by the Shariah Court would be void as there is already a Federal Law criminalising them.

Finally, we appeal to the YAB Prime Minister not to go ahead with the proposed amendments to Act RUU 355. These were rejected earlier and it should not be reintroduced for possible political expediency. The Constitution does not allow for a Theocratic Islamic State including Hudud. Let us all abide by the Constitution and the consensus contained in the Reid Commission Report and the Cobbold Commission Report.

The MCCBCHST categorically rejects any unconstitutional effort to introduce any Hudud offences in Malaysia which will also definitely affect the Non-Muslims although claims are made to the contrary. We should educate the Public and inform them the true position of the Law and that RUU 355 enabling Hudud offences is not a Constitutional reality. ■

SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

* Statement released and endorsed by Sardar Jagir Singh Arjan Singh (Malaysian Gurdwaras Council, MCCBCHST President), Dao Zhang Tan Hoe Chiew (Federation of Taoist Associations Malaysian, MCCBCHST Deputy President), Datuk R.S. Mohan Shan (Malaysia Hindu Sangam, MCCBCHST Vice President), Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim (Christian Federation of Malaysia, MCCBCHST Vice President), and Venerable Seet Lee Terk (Malaysian Buddhist Association, MCCBCHST Vice President).

Is Christian Ecumenism a model?

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca

“Is Christian Ecumenism a Model? – Three answers”, message of Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, World Council of Churches acting general secretary at the G20 Interfaith Forum in Bologna, Italy, 12-14 September 2021.

In relation to church relations

If the question “Is Christian Ecumenism a model?” is raised in relation to the developments within Christianity and relations among Christian churches, then my answer is “yes”. Christian ecumenism is a model for Christian communities that find themselves in relationships of indifference, conflict or competition with each other.

...despite of the fact
that we did not agree
theologically on
everything, we have
committed ourselves
to walk, pray and work
together rather than
alone and in separation.

I speak about Christian ecumenism as a model, indeed as an imperative for Christians and churches, because according to the Scriptures, this is God’s will in Christ for the unity and reconciliation of ALL (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:10). Furthermore, Christ Himself, before crucifixion, prayed “that they all may be one, that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

Ecumenism is therefore not a choice but an imperative for churches despite – or because of – the counterwitness of their longstanding divisions. Churches have lived for centuries in isolation, or in conflict. Only in the last century have many of them agreed to begin addressing together the causes of their separation. Divisions among Christians impact negatively their witness to the world and the very credibility of Churches. But we still have a long way to go on the ecumenical road.

Theological agreements have been achieved on many of the age-old sensitive topics; yet, work has to continue on other topics which still need reflection and debate on the way towards full unity in faith. However, since the last WCC Assembly in Busan, a new ecumenical paradigm has been adopted and this has been embraced by the majority of Churches: the common pilgrimage. That is, despite of the fact that we did not agree theologically on everything, we have committed ourselves to walk, pray and work together rather than alone and in separation. And on the way, moving together, there is more chance to better know one another and grow into fellowship and understanding.

In relation to other faiths

If the question “Is Christian Ecumenism a model?” is raised in relation to other faiths such as Islam, for instance, then my answer is “no”.

First, because Christian ecumenism emerges in response to ecclesial division within Christianity or to other forms of division that affect Churches. The fact that other faiths exhibit within themselves a diversity of streams or traditions or even conflicts, comparable to those that characterise Christianity, does not mean necessarily that they should address their relationships in the same way as Christianity does through ecumenical dialogue.

...we have to intentionally
refrain from arrogantly
prescribing to others
the medicine of unity
that we did not fully
reach for ourselves.

We are called to witness with courage and humility to our faith and let God do God’s mission in the world. God is the only one who can change hearts; God is the Source; God is the Great Teacher. Therefore, in deep humility, we have to intentionally refrain from arrogantly prescribing to others the medicine of unity that we did not fully reach for ourselves.

In relation to interfaith solidarity

If the question “Is Christian Ecumenism a model?” is raised in a practical way in relation to the central theme of this year’s G20 Interfaith Forum, namely “A Time to Heal”, then it is possible to say that the values, virtues and principles that undergird Christian ecumenism are shared by other faiths and should be the basis for interfaith solidarity with the sick, the vulnerable and the oppressed regardless of their religious belonging.

One year ago, the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue published together, ecumenically, a timely and meaningful response to the pandemic, calling for interreligious solidarity in the service of a wounded world. (Cf. *Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity*, Rome and Geneva, PCID/WCC, 2020). This call was followed, in December 2020, by a joint initiative with the World Jewish Con-

gress, in which we jointly invited religious leaders of all traditions and places to reflect on and engage the ethical issues related to global vaccine distribution.

...our Christian faith calls us to interreligious solidarity in this time of healing...

In a global context in which the pandemic has catalysed inequalities and injustices, our Christian faith calls us to interreligious solidarity in this time of healing – a solidarity sustained by hope nurtured by widely shared ethical and spiritual values such as the

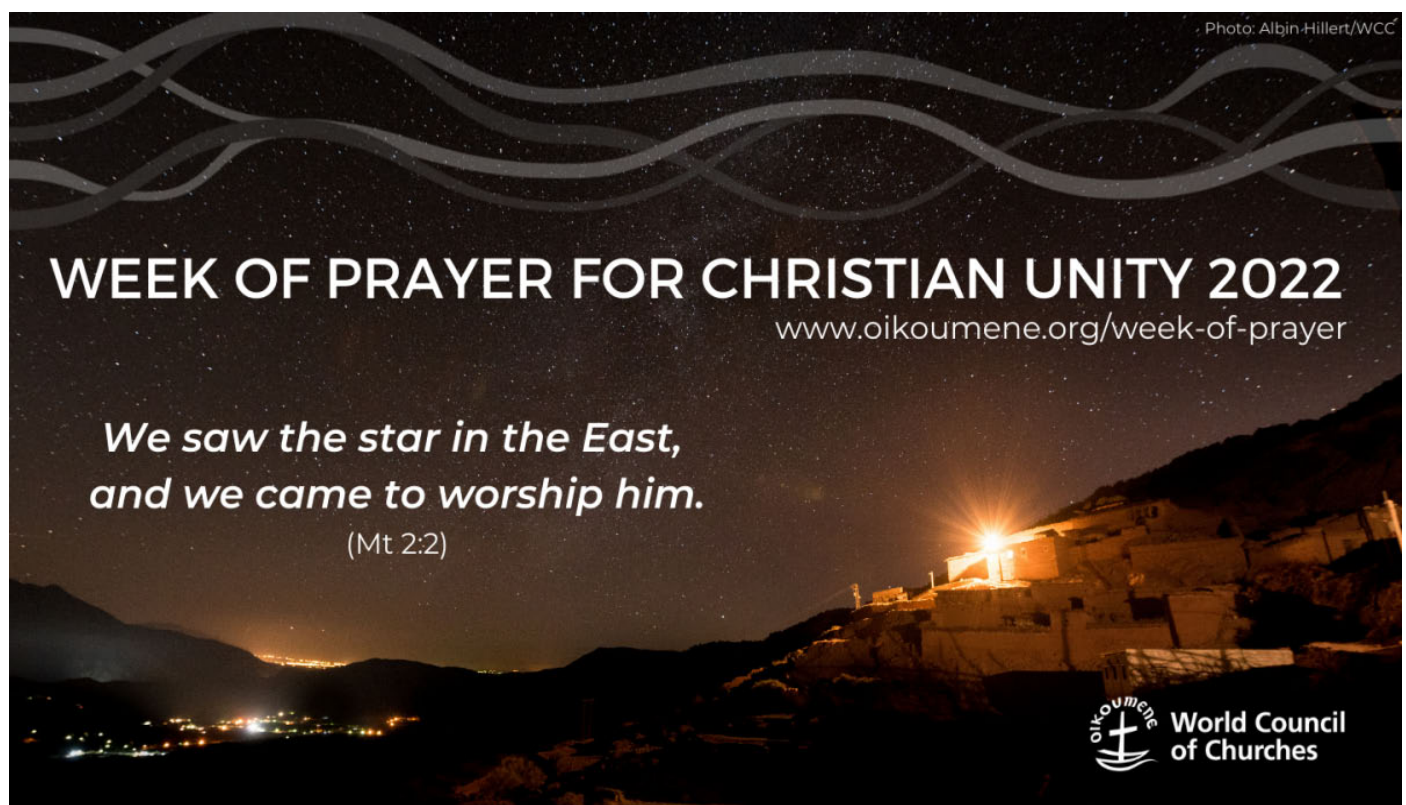
unity of the human family, and guided by principles such as humility and vulnerability; respect; community, compassion and common good; dialogue and mutual learning; repentance and renewal; gratitude and generosity, and love.

The ecumenical calling extends to encompass our economic relations with each other, as well as – of vital importance in this time of climate emergency – our relations with the environment, God’s creation, of which we are all part.

Semantically, ecumenism shares a common root with economics and ecology – the ancient Greek notion of the household, *oikos*. All three disciplines are concerned with the ordering of the ‘household’ and its resources – financial, environmental, and moral and spiritual. The economic, the ecological and the moral are deeply intertwined and cannot be considered separately. ■

Message of Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC acting general secretary at the G20 Interfaith Forum 2021 in Bologna, Italy being held 12-14 September.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/message-of-rev-prof-dr-ioan-sauca-wcc-acting-general-secretary-at-the-g20-interfaith-forum-2021>



Oikos, our home, our family



A HOME FOR ALL? Renewing the Oikos of God is the theme of this year's Season of Creation, which will be an opportunity to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation.

During the Season of Creation, the Christian family unites in prayer and action for our common home to renew the Oikos of God.

But... what is Oikos?

Well, in an etymological sense, the root of the word *Oikos* comes from ancient Greek and can be attributed to two meanings: "house" or "family".

In this way, both concepts are integrated in a very meaningful way for us since the word house refers to the physical inhabited place, our common home, the planet Earth, and the family are those who inhabit the home, all the species that inhabit our common home.

Our family is made up of the whole of humanity and each of the species that inhabit this planet form our home, our common home, a home for all.

Our home is in danger. The climate crisis is causing the loss of habitats and ecosystems that are home to millions of species. This also includes us, humans. Our home is endangered by climate disasters and conflicts, so it must be renewed.

Our baptismal call urges us to renew the whole Earth, so that life can flourish.

Other concepts related to Oikos contemplate the interconnectedness of life that exists on the whole Earth

(oikoumene), where the Church calls all homes (oikos) to a conversion of our political, social, and economic systems (oikonomia) toward just and sustainable economies of life that respect the vital ecological limits and boundaries (oikologia) of our common home.

Thus the Season of Creation renews in our hearts the call to ecological conversion so that we may also renew the Oikos of God, knowing that the Earth and all that is in it belongs to the Lord. (Psalm 24:1)

Renewing the Oikos of God is returning to the initial desire of the Creator, a home for all. ■

<https://seasonofcreation.org/2021/08/24/oikos-our-home-our-family/>

A Joint Message for the Protection of Creation

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Pope Francis
& Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby

THE leaders of the Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican communions of churches have issued a rare joint statement on the need to protect creation. Their statement, in full, is published below.



For more than a year, we have all experienced the devastating effects of a global pandemic – all of us, whether poor or wealthy, weak or strong. Some were more protected or vulnerable than others, but the rapidly-spreading infection meant that we have depended on each other in our efforts to stay safe. We realised that, in facing this worldwide calamity, no one is safe until everyone is safe, that our actions really do affect one another, and that what we do today affects what happens tomorrow.

These are not new lessons, but we have had to face them anew. May we not waste this moment. We must decide what kind of world we want to leave to future generations. God man-

dates: *“Choose life, so that you and your children might live”* (Dt 30:19). We must choose to live differently; we must choose life.

September is celebrated by many Christians as the Season of Creation, an opportunity to pray and care for God’s creation. As world leaders prepare to meet in November at Glasgow to deliberate on the future of our planet, we pray for them and consider what the choices we must all make. Accordingly, as leaders of our Churches, we call on everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to endeavour to listen to the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the

sake of the earth which God has given us.

The Importance of Sustainability

In our common Christian tradition, the Scriptures and the Saints provide illuminating perspectives for comprehending both the realities of the present and the promise of something larger than what we see in the moment. The concept of stewardship – of individual and collective responsibility for our God-given endowment – presents a vital starting-point for social, economic and environmental sustainability. In the New Testament, we read of the rich and foolish man who stores great wealth of grain while forgetting about his finite end (Lk 12:13–21). We learn of the prodigal son who takes his inheritance early, only to squander it and end up hungry (Lk 15:11–32). We are cautioned against adopting short term and seemingly inexpensive options of building on sand, instead of building on rock for our common home to withstand storms (Mt 7:24–27). These stories invite us to adopt a broader outlook and recognise our place in the extended story of humanity.

But we have taken the opposite direction. We have maximised our own interest at the expense of future generations. By concentrating on our wealth, we find that long-term assets, including the bounty of nature, are depleted for short-term advantage. Technology has unfolded new possi-

bilities for progress but also for accumulating unrestrained wealth, and many of us behave in ways which demonstrate little concern for other people or the limits of the planet. Nature is resilient, yet delicate. We are already witnessing the consequences of our refusal to protect and preserve it (Gn 2:15). Now, in this moment, we have an opportunity to repent, to turn around in resolve, to head in the opposite direction. We must pursue generosity and fairness in the ways that we live, work and use money, instead of selfish gain.

The Impact on People Living with Poverty

The current climate crisis speaks volumes about who we are and how we view and treat God's creation. We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the earth's resources than the planet can endure. But we also face a profound injustice: the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them. We serve a God of justice, who delights in creation and creates every person in God's image, but also hears the cry of people who are poor. Accordingly, there is an innate call within us to respond with anguish when we see such devastating injustice.

Today, we are paying the price. The extreme weather and natural disasters of recent months reveal afresh to us with great force and at great human cost that climate change is not only a future challenge, but an immediate and urgent matter of survival. Widespread floods, fires and droughts threaten entire continents. Sea levels rise, forcing whole communities to relocate; cyclones devastate entire regions, ruining lives and livelihoods. Water has become scarce and food supplies insecure, causing conflict and displacement for millions of people. We have already seen this in places

where people rely on small scale agricultural holdings. Today we see it in more industrialised countries where even sophisticated infrastructure cannot completely prevent extraordinary destruction.

Tomorrow could be worse. Today's children and teenagers will face catastrophic consequences unless we take responsibility now, as "fellow workers with God" (Gn 2:4-7), to sustain our world. We frequently hear from young people who understand that their futures are under threat. For their sake, we must choose to eat, travel, spend, invest and live differently, thinking not only of immediate interest and gains but also of future benefits. We repent of our generation's sins. We stand alongside our younger sisters and brothers throughout the world in committed prayer and dedicated action for a future which corresponds ever more to the promises of God.

The Imperative of Cooperation

Over the course of the pandemic, we have learned how vulnerable we are. Our social systems frayed, and we found that we cannot control everything. We must acknowledge that the ways we use money and organize our societies have not benefited everyone. We find ourselves weak and anxious, submersed in a series of crises; health, environmental, food, economic and social, which are all deeply interconnected.

These crises present us with a choice. We are in a unique position either to address them with short-sightedness and profiteering or seize this as an opportunity for conversion and transformation. If we think of humanity as a family and work together towards a future based on the common good, we could find ourselves living in a very different world. Together we can share a vision for life where everyone flourishes. Together we can choose to act with love, justice and mercy. Together we can walk towards a fairer and fulfilling society with those who are most vulnerable at the centre.

But this involves making changes. Each of us, individually, must take responsibility for the ways we use our resources. This path requires an ever-closer collaboration among all churches in their commitment to care for creation. Together, as communities, churches, cities and nations, we must change route and discover new ways of working together to break down the traditional barriers between peoples, to stop competing for resources and start collaborating.

To those with more far-reaching responsibilities – heading administrations, running companies, employing people or investing funds – we say: choose people-centred profits; make short-term sacrifices to safeguard all our futures; become leaders in the transition to just and sustainable economies. "To whom much is given, much is required." (Lk 12:48)

This is the first time that the three of us feel compelled to address together the urgency of environmental sustainability, its impact on persistent poverty, and the importance of global cooperation. Together, on behalf of our communities, we appeal to the heart and mind of every Christian, every believer and every person of good will. We pray for our leaders who will gather in Glasgow to decide the future of our planet and its people. Again, we recall Scripture: "*choose life, so that you and your children may live*" (Dt 30:19). Choosing life means making sacrifices and exercising self-restraint.

All of us – whoever and wherever we are – can play a part in changing our collective response to the unprecedented threat of climate change and environmental degradation.

Caring for God's creation is a spiritual commission requiring a response of commitment. This is a critical moment. Our children's future and the future of our common home depend on it. ■

1st September 2021

* The message was released during the Season of Creation, which runs from 1 September – designated as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation – to 4 October – the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. It looks ahead to the UN climate change conference taking place in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.

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Online spiritual dialogue fulfils growing needs

JUL 15: IN times of involuntary isolation due to lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, online ecumenical retreats have emerged as an alternative place for spiritual dialogue.

In Sweden, a series of four so-called “Quiet Days” retreats, where participants join online in a digital room to share a moment of stillness and reflection, were launched on the Eve of Pentecost. Initiated already last year under the headline “A spiritual dwelling for God”, by Lutheran Bishop Karin Johannesson from the Diocese of Uppsala, Sweden and co-hosted by Cardinal Anders Arborelius from the Roman Catholic Church in Sweden, the retreats have been expanded this year with English subtitles to also attract international audiences.

Built on dialogue and conversations between the two church leaders under the theme of “A Pentecostal Retreat for the Life of the World”, the retreats are meant to provide an opportunity for spiritual reflection in search of God.

“We saw a growing need last year for people to come together under alternative forms for reflection and contemplation. Now, a year later, the need for comfort, hope and fellowship

is perhaps even greater and we see more people go online to fulfil those needs,” explains Johannesson.

This year’s retreats are between 15 and 20 minutes long each and are accessible online for all, without any registration requirements. The first was held on the Eve of Pentecost, 22 May, under the theme “The Arrival of the Helper” (John, 14:25-29), followed a week later by theme “The Temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:12-20) and themes “The Gifts of the Spirit” (1 Cor 12:1-11) on 5 June and “Mary the Mother of the Church” (Luke 1:46-55) on 12 June.

“Unprecedented times like these, when more people feel lonely and forgotten, and aren’t able to gather in church to worship, make us realize what is important in life. We discover that God is actually far more present in our lives than we can comprehend. People feel a need to pray and strengthen their Christian fellowship. To some extent, our retreats may have

helped them do that,” Arborelius hopes.

Next year, these two Swedish church leaders plan to further develop their cross-denominational collaboration. In June they will hold a sermon together during the International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism and in August 2022, they will host a conference together on how Carmelite spirituality and evangelical Lutheran traditions can enrich one another. Both events take place in Sigtuna, Sweden.

Overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants in the two series of online retreats that have been held so far, has thus encouraged Johannesson and Arborelius to explore new forms of collaboration to help people find God.

“The conclusion is that spiritual dialogue and reflections are key elements in people’s search and that there is an accumulated and growing need for it,” they agree. ■

* <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/online-spiritual-dialogue-fulfils-growing-needs>

Tokyo Olympics launch with few spectators but plenty of prayer opportunities

JUL 26: THE Tokyo Olympic Games have begun one year late in one of the world’s biggest cities. There are no spectators—and little of the usual spiritual support from churches and no official Olympic Village prayer room.

The Olympics are usually when local churches roll out events, evangelistic outreach and chaplaincy for competitors and spectators.

However, Tokyo has a state of emergency and increasing COVID-19 cases, and the local Roman Catholic archbishop told churches to avoid having visitors and planned activities for the Games.

Protecting lives

The Catholic Archbishop of Tokyo, Rev. Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, had regretfully called on Olympic athletes and other visitors to avoid visiting churches as part of restrictions to curb the spread of the pandemic.

“The archdiocese had originally been considering preparations so that each parish may be able to address the

spiritual needs of the many people who will come to Japan for this international event,” Kikuchi said.

Kikuchi said those visiting the metropolitan area of Tokyo and Chiba with nearly 20 million people will be requested to refrain from visiting churches. He said the archdiocese had made a commitment that “we will not be infected, nor will we allow others to be infected.”

“Let us keep in mind that it is an important duty for us to protect not only our own lives but also to protect all those who have received God’s gift of life,” said Kikuchi.

The archdiocese has issued guidelines over services. A limited number of people can enter churches while maintaining a one-meter (three feet) distance. Churches must have sufficient ventilation, and all service attendees must leave churches promptly after they finish and refrain from talking to one another.

While the pandemic has constrained bigger church groups from pulling Olympic attendees into their flocks, some Christian athletes have formed more flexible chaplaincies such as Beyond Gold.

Sports chaplains

“As Sports chaplains, we see ourselves as trustworthy and discrete partners who take the worries and fears of athletes seriously. At big sports events as well as online, we conduct chapel services, offer a place of peace and prayer and provide pastoral care,” said former Swiss Olympian diver Jacqueline Schneider and Austrian professional snowboarder Jörg Walcher on the Beyond Gold site.

Christian athletes usually are well-represented at the Olympics. They include the likes of Jamaican track and field sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, the USA’s T44 Paralympic sprint runner Jarryd Wallace, South African world-record holder in the 400-metre sprinter, Wayde van Niekerk and Australian high jumper Nicola McDermott. They

are among athletes who have dedicated their performances to God.

Groups such as the Japan International Sports Partnership and Japan Evangelical Missionary Association lead Christians in Japan and ask the world for one million hours of prayer for their nation throughout the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. They call on churches, individuals and families across the globe to unite in prayer for Japan from the Opening Ceremony.

“While the opening ceremony marks the beginning of sporting glory, we want to open the Olympics in prayer and give all glory to God,” said Akira Mori, a Japanese pastor. ■

* <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/tokyo-olympics-launch-with-few-spectators-but-plenty-of-prayer-opportunities>

WCC calls for prayers for people of Afghanistan as fears of violence grow

AUG 16: THE World Council of Churches (WCC) expressed concern and called for prayers for the people of Afghanistan as fears of violence and oppression grew.

“People who have already suffered for decades from armed conflict, displacement, oppression, corruption and bad governance have once again been cast into fear and uncertainty as a result of the dramatic developments over the past few days,” said Marianne Ejdersten, WCC director of communication, on behalf of Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC acting general secretary and currently on vacation.

“We pray especially for the women and girls of Afghanistan, that their dignity, rights and aspirations will not be

denied again, but that they may have the access to education and to the rights and freedoms that they have been promised both by those in power and by the international community.”

The Taliban must respect the dignity and rights of all people in the territories they now control, said Ejdersten. “We appeal to all relevant authorities—in Afghanistan and elsewhere—to ensure the safety and security of all Afghan people, including those who are fleeing the country in fear of violence, oppression and persecution.” ■

* <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-calls-for-prayers-for-people-of-afghanistan-as-fears-of-violence-grow>



A Prayer for Afghanistan

Gracious and Holy God,

We come to You with the situation in Afghanistan heavy on our hearts. It is a situation so complicated and so fast moving that it is difficult for us to know what is going to develop next.

We hold before You the people of the country; those who stay and those who flee; those living with terror and afraid for the future; those who because of this latest turn of events will never be able to live without the threat of continued conflict and violence.

Guide the world leaders with a role in shaping what happens next; the many who are becoming refugees and the people who will be called upon to offer them safety and a future; and bless those involved in humanitarian aid.

Grant us in all our perplexities Your guidance, in all our dangers Your protection, and in all our sorrows Your peace through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Climate Sunday: an opportunity for churches to act for creation

SEPT 6: THE Climate Sunday initiative is inviting local churches across Great Britain, Ireland and across the world to hold a climate-focused service on any Sunday before the United Nations climate change conference (COP26) begins in Glasgow on 31 October-12 November.



By participating in worship services, churchgoers can explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care and action on climate. They can also pray, and commit to action.

More than 1,600 churches have already joined the initiative, which aims to leave a lasting legacy of thousands of churches better equipped to address this critical issue as part of their discipleship and mission, and to make a significant contribution to civil

society efforts to secure adequate national and international action at COP26.

The collective action and commitments from local churches across Great Britain and Ireland were presented to the UK government at an ecumenical Nations' Climate Sunday Service in Glasgow on 5 September.

Lord Wallace, moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said: "As we look to the

COP26 taking place later this year, it was an honour to join with ecumenical friends from England, Wales, and Ireland, as well as here in Scotland, to mark Climate Sunday at Glasgow Cathedral."

Lord Wallace noted that the service fell on the first Sunday of Creation Time. "I would encourage people to take part by watching online as we seek to engage with the immense issues facing our planet together through prayer and worship," he said.

The event was organised in partnership with Glasgow Churches Together and Churches Together Britain and Ireland, and also featured contributions from different groups including Christian Aid and Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Mary Sweetland, treasurer of Eco-Congregation Scotland, said: "We need to take action as Christians who care for God's creation, tackling the climate emergency with urgency now and for future generations." ■

* <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/climate-sunday-an-opportunity-for-churches-to-act-for-creation>

In first-ever joint appeal, Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop of Canterbury urge care for future of the planet

SEPT 8: IN the appeal, Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Justin Welby urge everyone to play their part in choosing life for the future of the planet.

The Christian leaders call on people to pray, in the Christian Season of Creation, for world leaders ahead of the United Nations climate talks (COP26) in November.

The statement reads: "We call on everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to endeavour to listen to

the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the earth which God has given us."

The joint declaration strikes a clear warning: "Today, we are paying the price... Tomorrow could be worse,"

and concludes that: "This is a critical moment. Our children's future and the future of our common home depend on it."

The three Christian leaders speak against injustice and inequality, saying: "We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degrada-

tion and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the earth's resources than the planet can endure. But we also face a profound injustice: the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of

these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them."

The statement calls on people to pray for world leaders ahead of COP26, make meaningful sacrifices for the

sake of the planet, work together to take responsibility for how we use our resources, choose people-centred profits, and lead the transition to just and sustainable economies. ■

* <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/in-first-ever-joint-appeal-pope-francis-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-and-archbishop-of-canterbury-urge-care-for-future-of-the-planet>

* The full statement is available on pages 14-15 of this issue.

WCC presents message at major international "Faith and Science" talks ahead of COP26

OCT 4: THE World Council of Churches (WCC) presented a message at a major international gathering of world religious leaders and scientists ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference.



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, Archbishop Justin Welby, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, Pope Francis, and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar. (Photo: Judge Abdelsalam)

The gathering, "Faith and Science: Towards COP26," held 4 October, brought together some 40 leaders from the world's major religions and 10 scientists, who issued a joint appeal for COP26. The event was promoted by the Embassies of the United Kingdom and Italy to the Holy See, along with the Holy See.

The event's program explains that the talks occurred in a time when there is urgent need to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero.

Faith leaders have long raised awareness of the dangers of climate change.

"Faith leaders have a special part to play as the repositories of our moral values, the guides of our ethical action, and pioneers of change to make the management of their land, buildings and investments sustainable," stated the program. "Faith leaders have long raised awareness of the dangers of climate change."

His Holiness Pope Francis addressed the global gathering, reflecting in part on the state of the climate emergency a year after the publication of *Fratelli tutti*, his encyclical on fraternity and social friendship. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote an encyclical on the need to protect the environment, reduce wasteful lifestyles, stem global warming and protect the poor from the effects of climate change.

The 4 October talks also featured a public reading of the executive summary of Faith Leaders' Appeal to COP26.

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca's message focused on how people of good will need to bring their voices and commit to an ecological conversion.

"As people of faith, we have to be prophetic and tell the truth of the state we are in," said Sauca, stressing that the affirmation of one humanity and the value of human dignity within and with creation is at the heart of the search and aspirations of the WCC.

Sauca closed his remarks saying that we have an obligation to care for each other and for our common home. "Creation is not for some to consume and leave others behind," he said. ■

* <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-presents-message-at-major-international-faith-and-science-talks-ahead-of-cop26>

Myanmar's ravaging hit of COVID-19 along with human rights violations is a matter of serious concern

AUG 16: AS the people of Myanmar face a critical situation and when they need protection from systematic human rights violations and brutality by the military junta wielding political power illegally, how can the Asian churches be engaged in a coordinated action for effective international advocacy? This was a major concern raised by the members of the Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) during its two days' deliberations.

The Executive Committee of the CCA which met online on 9–10 August 2021 discussed the catastrophic situation in Myanmar, as well as the wide spread and uncontrolled community transmission of COVID-19.

The members of the Executive Committee representing churches across Asia during a discussion expressed their anguish and grave concern at the alarming situation of a protracted potential for massive insecurity and threat to peace in the country.

They pondered on questions such as what is to be done in addressing the disastrous developments in Myanmar, and how to deploy advocacy to pressurise the military to retract from its continuing attacks on the people and return to democracy, as per the will of the people.

CCA general secretary Dr Mathews George Chunakara, in his report to the Executive Committee said, "The people of Myanmar are facing the ravaging hit of COVID-19 along with battling an unstable political situation created by the military junta."

"Myanmar faces one of the world's highest fatality rates relative to its population, yet it is probably an undercount, something which the military junta has implicitly acknowledged," said Chunakara.

The overall human rights situation in Myanmar deteriorated since the military coup in February this year, with heightened restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Military and police abuses were amplified with arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, and killings in custody.

Fighting between Myanmar's military and several ethnic armed groups continued, with government forces committing increased abuses against ethnic Kachin, Karen, Rakhine, Rohingya, and Shan minority populations. Nearly 900 people have been killed and more than 200,000 people forced to flee their homes because of violent military raids and harassment of people even in villages. The situation is further aggravated by the worsening COVID-19 situation, which risks overwhelming health and medical services across the country.

In response to a question raised by Dr Sawako Fujiwara, representing the Japanese churches in the Executive Committee, about ecumenical responses to the Myanmar crisis, Chunakara shared information about the joint initiatives of CCA together with the World Council of Churches thus far.

Myanmar borders countries that are home to about a third of the world's population. According to a UN expert on Myanmar, the country risks becoming a COVID-19 "super-spreader state". Several reports confirm that testing, contact-tracing, and treatment of COVID-19 have all ground to a halt since the military coup. Public hospitals were emptied of medical workers, thousands of whom joined protests against the coup. Shortages of oxygen have been exacerbated by a rule banning the sale of the life-saving gas to residents of Yangon unless they got permission from local officials appointed by the junta. ■

* <https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/myanmars-ravaging-hit-of-covid-19-along-with-human-rights-violations-is-a-matter-of-serious-concern-declares-cca-executive-committee-2/>



Coping with
the Coronavirus

www.oikoumene.org/corona

■ JULY

WCC extends condolences, expresses concern over flood disaster in Europe

JUL 19: In a letter of solidarity to churches and all people throughout Germany, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands, the moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee Dr Agnes Abuom and WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca extended condolences and concern for those who lost loved ones during the severe flooding that struck the region in mid-July.

WCC expresses concern, extends prayers to millions affected by flooding in India

JUL 27: The World Council of Churches (WCC) expressed concern and extended prayers for those who continue to be affected by severe monsoon-related flooding and landslides in India. More than 150 people have perished in western India, and there is extensive damage.

■ AUGUST

As UN releases climate change report, WCC urges “the signs of the times have never been clearer”

AUG 12: As people in many regions suffer from the effects of record-breaking heat, devastating wildfires and extreme flooding, World Council of Churches (WCC) deputy general secretary Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus lifted up those suffering in prayer while, at the

same time, urgently reacting to the latest scientific evidence that the global temperature is rising.

As fires rage across the world, WCC expresses solidarity with churches and survivors

AUG 12: As wildfires continue to rage in Greece, the USA, Albania, and Russia, the World Council of Churches (WCC) reached out in solidarity to churches and communities that continue to be evacuated as well as those who have lost everything.

WCC expresses solidarity with churches in Jerusalem in wake of wildfires

AUG 19: World Council of Churches (WCC) acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, in a letter to heads of churches in Jerusalem, reached out with prayers and solidarity in the wake of wildfires near the city of Jerusalem and throughout the region. “It is becoming more and more obvious that the fires this year all over the world are not of the same scale as in previous years,” wrote Sauca. “They are part of the extreme phenomena increasingly observed as a consequence of climate change.”

Ethiopian Lutheran church appeals for support after sudden flood destroys seminary, claims lives

AUG 20: Days after sudden floods claimed lives and destroyed buildings at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, worldwide calls for solidarity and support have continued to register. The

floods on 17 August submerged buildings, swept away roads and displaced families in the theological institution of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

Christians, pastors and churches bear brunt of bandit attacks in Nigeria’s Kaduna State

AUG 18: In Nigeria’s northwest state of Kaduna, Christians are bearing the brunt of insecurity and violence, as bandits attack homes, villages and churches, killing Christians and kidnapping others for ransom. At the centre of the communal violence is religious persecution, territorial ambition and ethnic cleansing in the region where communities have settled along religious lines, according to Rev. John Joseph Hayab, the country director for the Global Peace Foundation, Nigeria.

■ SEPTEMBER

Geneva churches gather to celebrate Season of Creation

SEP 21: On 21 Sept, representatives of the Rassemblement des Eglises Chrétien-nes de Genève (Ecumenical Assembly of Churches of Geneva) promoted a prayer service at the chapel of the Ecumenical Center to celebrate Season of Creation, a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. Led by Aurélie Ethuin Lanoy, the prayer service focused on the theme of caring for God’s creation as a major responsibility of humankind.

* News excerpts from WCC News <https://www.oikoumene.org/news>



News highlights from local media on religion, interfaith concerns and other current developments related to peace and justice issues in and around the country.

■ JULY

10 years after Bersih 2.0, we can still march

JUL 9: Ten years on from the Bersih 2.0 rally in downtown Kuala Lumpur in 2011, Malaysians have been urged not to hesitate to take to the streets peacefully to display their dissatisfaction over any situation. Former Bersih 2.0 chairman Ambiga Sreenevasan said Malaysians should never forget that peaceful assembly was their constitutional right, especially since they had few other ways to display dissatisfaction against the government between general elections. *[FMT]*

Hospitals turn 'black' to support contract doctors on final day of campaign

JUL 12: The final day of the Code Black movement in support of contract doctors is now in full swing. The initiative, organised by the Malaysian Medical Association's (MMA) Section for House Officers, Medical Officers and Specialists (Schomos), encouraged people to change their social media profile pictures to monochrome from July 1 to today. *[FMT]*

Cops probing healthcare workers who show solidarity with contract doctors

JUL 13: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) today questioned the police for investigating healthcare workers backing its solidarity campaigns for contract doctors and suggested it was a form of harassment. While noting the police have a right to investigate, MMA president Prof Datuk Dr Subramaniam Muniandy condemned the way the investigation appeared to target doctors who were simply championing the rights of healthcare workers in the country. *[MMO]*

'Regular families' among people calling food bank

JUL 16: COVID-19 | For the first eight years of their existence, the Food Aid Foundation mainly catered to underserved communities like the urban poor

living at low-cost flats, those at shelter homes, refugees and the Orang Asli communities around the Klang Valley. Since the start of the pandemic, however, the team has been inundated with calls from people they never expected to hear from: regular families in need. *[MMO]*

Doctors repeat calls for undocumented migrants to be immunised to stem Covid-19

JUL 19: COVID-19 | The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) echoed today calls for the government to inoculate undocumented migrants whose protection is key to fighting Covid-19 amid the race to contain the spread of more contagious variants in the country. "Hundreds of workers can be infected if any one worker is confirmed positive with the Delta variant. If this happens, hospitals may not be able to cope," MMA president Dr Subramaniam Muniandy said in a statement. *[MMO]*

Why allow Sinovac to be sold, Rafidah asks vaccine committee

JUL 21: COVID-19 | Rafidah Aziz is demanding that the committee overseeing the vaccine supply explain the decision to allow the sale of 14 million Sinovac doses to states and private entities. The former international trade and industry minister said the people should not be made to pay for "what should be free". "Is not vaccinating the population a healthcare service to the rakyat?" she said in a statement. *[FMT]*

Covid-19 cases in Malaysia top one million

JUL 25: COVID-19 | The number of Covid-19 cases recorded in Malaysia has passed the one million mark as the country registered a whopping 17,045 new cases today, breaking yesterday's record of 15,902. Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said that today's 17,045 new Covid-19 cases bring Malaysia's cumulative total to 1,013,438. *[MMO]*

Churches in Sarawak advised to remain closed

JUL 24: COVID-19 | Churches in Sarawak have been advised not to rush to reopen due to the high number of Covid-19 cases detected involving Delta variant. Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS) President Archbishop Simon Poh said they appreciated the state's The Unit for Other Religions (Unifor) for allowing non-Muslims houses of worship to open at a 50 per cent capacity under Phase Two of the National Recovery Plan (NRP) effective today (Saturday). *[NST]*

Churches in EMCO areas are not allowed to open

JUL 25: COVID-19 | Churches in areas placed under Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) are not allowed to open, said Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS) chairman Archbishop Simon Poh. He said that churches within EMCO areas are strongly urged not to open due to common social circles of contact by people in those affected areas. "I call on all Church leaders to be prudent by monitoring and to first ensure that the cases are contained before rushing to reopen," he said in a memo sent to all the head of churches. *[BPO]*

Contract doctors go on strike, walk out of hospitals

JUL 26: Groups of contract doctors in several major hospitals today delivered on their promise to stage a walkout as part of the Hartal Doktor Kontrak strike. The strike, to demand a fair career path and for contract doctors to be offered the same benefits as medical officers in permanent positions, among others, began at 11am. *[FMT]*

Malaysian youth converge on Dataran Merdeka for #Lawan protest

JUL 31: Hundreds of people consisting mainly of Malaysian youth gathered in the heart of Kuala Lumpur today to take part in the #Lawan protest... Some also brought mock corpses wrapped in kapas

cloth to symbolise the high number of daily deaths from Covid-19 in Malaysia as well as the country's collapsing health-care system. [MMO]

■ AUGUST

Stop probe into #Lawan protest, Suhakam tells cops

AUG 1: The #Lawan rally held yesterday was peaceful without any untoward incident and thus all probes against the protesters should be stopped, says the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam). Contrary to what police had said, its seven-member observation team said the protesters, numbering about 1,000, had taken every effort to comply with the health and safety SOPs in place. [FMT]

Latest Covid-19 deaths put Malaysia's toll at over 10,000 dead

AUG 5: COVID-19 | Malaysia's Covid-19 death toll rose to 10,019 today, after another 164 patients died in the past 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry... Malaysia's death toll from Covid-19 has accelerated sharply in the past two months, rising from 2,867 on June 1 when the country went into a "total lockdown" to today's grim marker of over 10,000 deaths. [MMO]

Ismail Sabri is the new prime minister

AUG 20: Ismail Sabri Yaakob has been named the country's ninth prime minister, succeeding Muhyiddin Yassin who resigned from the post on Monday. Ismail was Muhyiddin's deputy, a post he was appointed to on July 7. He was also the defence minister. [FMT]

On 64th National Day, Malaysia sees 20,897 new Covid-19 infections

AUG 31: COVID-19 | The Health Ministry registered 20,897 new Covid-19 cases on Malaysia's 64th National Day... This also brings Malaysia's cumulative Covid-19 cases to 1,746,254. Malaysia also recorded 282 Covid-19 related fatalities over the last 24 hours... Today's figure meant that Malaysia's cumulative Covid-19 death toll stood at 16,664. [MMO]

■ SEPTEMBER

Four new shariah laws in the works, says deputy minister

SEP 6: Four new shariah laws are being drafted by the federal government, including a bill on control and restrictions on the development of non-Muslim religions, a deputy minister was reported to have said... The new laws are part of a 5-year plan by the federal government in which 11 changes will be made to strengthen shariah laws, which will include amendments to existing legislation and eight subsidiary shariah laws, as part of the government's 'Empowerment Plan.' [FMT]

Prepare now to fight the new Mu variant, says virologist

SEP 7: COVID-19 | A virologist has called for a detailed study to be made of Covid-19 variants in Malaysia, given the threat of the deadly new Mu variant which is said to be resistant to vaccines. The Mu variant was declared as the fifth variant of interest last week by the World Health Organization after it was detected in 39 countries. [FMT]

ACS in Sarawak 'greatly alarmed' by Bill to control, restrict non-Muslim religions

SEP 9: The Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS) has been greatly alarmed by the news of four new Shariah laws being drafted, including a Bill on control and restrictions on the development of non-Muslim religions, said its chairman Archbishop Simon Poh. "Such Bills to control and restrict the development of all the non-Muslim religions should never be allowed to be tabled in our multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysia," he said in a statement. [BPO]

We're becoming an Islamic state at a faster pace, warns ex-diplomat

SEP 10: A former diplomat fears Malaysia may lurch into an Islamic state at a faster pace with PAS controlling the Islamic development department (Jakim) under the current Cabinet. Dennis Ignatius said the country is moving towards Wahhabism and this process may soon be irreversible. "With Jakim now under PAS,

I anticipate, we will lurch into becoming an Islamic state at an even faster rate," he said during the launch of his book "Paradise Lost: Mahathir & The End of Hope" tonight. [FMT]

Group chides Censorship Board's 'arbitrary moral policing'

SEP 10: The Centre For Independent Journalism (CIJ) today condemned the actions of the Film Censorship Board's (LPF) instruction restricting local broadcasters from displaying innerwear in their home shopping programmes. CIJ executive director Wathshlah G Naidu said LPF's decision to call for the removal of the particular segments came off as arbitrary, and urged it to justify what exactly it saw as the potential damage that would come from advertising undergarments. [MMO]

With Covid-19 impacting mental health, society must play role in identifying depression

SEP 10: COVID-19 | The community in Malaysia is not exempted from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their mental health, said Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah... "If the depression failed to be identified and treated properly, there is a risk of suicidal behavior," he said in a statement in conjunction with World Suicide Prevention Day today. [MMO]

Malaysian mothers start petition to ask govt to stop appealing historic court recognition of their children's citizenship

SEP 13: Malaysian mothers today expressed their deep disappointment at the Malaysian government's decision to appeal against a landmark court ruling which finally recognised their children born abroad as Malaysian citizens too, and launched an online signature drive to stop the appeal. [MMO]

King tells politicians not to 'gamble' with nation's future for self-interest

SEP 13: Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah told the country's elected representatives today not "to gamble with the future of my nation" for political self-

interest, delivering a royal address that reminded politicians to honour their sworn duty to put the people first. [MMO]

Govt, PH ink historic MoU

SEP 13: Government and Pakatan Harapan (PH) leaders today created history by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Transformation and Political Stability. Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the MoU would form strong bipartisan cooperation based on the spirit of the “Malaysian Family”. [NST]

Sarawakians urged to reclaim religious freedom accorded in MA63

SEP 15: The Sarawak Evangelical Christian Association (SECA) is urging Sarawakians to stand up and reclaim the unique religious freedom accorded in Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63). SECA, in a statement on Monday (Sep 13), said that it was obvious that a few rebuttal state-

ments from various religious bodies and politicians would not stop restricting religious freedom in the country. “The ongoing and persistent attempts at the encroachment of religious space by certain quarters have proven the futility of such efforts.” [New Sarawak Tribune]

PM Ismail Sabri confirms controversial RUU 355 on track for tabling in Parliament this year

SEP 16: The federal government is currently in the midst of drafting the Shariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) (Amendment) Act to increase the criminal powers of Shariah Courts. Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob gave the latest update in a parliamentary reply yesterday to Shah Alam MP Khalid Abdul Samad who wanted to know about the government’s plan to strengthen the Shariah courts by way of amending the Act this year. [MMO]

RUU355 is prelude to Taliban country, says ex-Sabah think tank head

SEP 18: A former CEO of a Sabah think tank contends that the passing of the Shariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 amendment bill, better known as RUU355, is the beginning of an Islamic state and implementation of hudud laws. “If implemented, Malaysia will be like another Taliban country. There is no rationale to introduce new shariah laws as the current ones are sufficient,” said Johan Ariffin Samad, who headed the state-funded Institute for Development Studies two years ago. [FMT]

Immunisation programme for adolescents kicks off today

SEP 20: COVID-19 | The National Covid-19 Adolescent Immunisation Programme (PICK) officially kicked off today targeting the involvement of 3.2 million teenagers



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MISSION STATEMENT

*“Called into Unity by Christ,
and empowered by the Holy Spirit,
we seek to be the salt of the earth
and a light to the nation
through the servant ministry of Jesus Christ.”*

aged 12-17, said Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin. He said the programme would be carried out through several methods such as outreach to schools or institutions on a scheduled basis, injections at health clinics and hospitals as well as walk-ins at selected vaccination centres (PPV) nationwide. [MMO]

80pc of adults in Malaysia are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19

SEP 21: COVID-19 | Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin today said that Malaysia has reached the 80 per cent fully vaccinated rate among its adult population. In a tweet, he said that Malaysia hit its target of 80 per cent at 1pm today, adding that the Special Committee on Ensuring

Access to Covid-19 Vaccine Supply (JKJAV) would continue its efforts to ensure the remaining 20 per cent of the adult population are inoculated. [MMO]

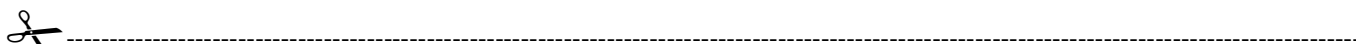
More than 400,000 children in Malaysia caught Covid-19 in 2021

SEP 23: COVID-19 | A total of 410,762 children in Malaysia, aged 17 and below, contracted Covid-19 this year, compared to 12,620 children in 2020, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH). During a media sharing session today, MoH and its representatives said that due to the increasing trend of Covid-19 infections among children, the public should not assume that vaccinating adults will adequately protect children. [MMO]

Penang sets up private Covid-19 quarantine centre for low-risk B40 patients

SEP 28: COVID-19 | A private low-risk Covid-19 treatment and quarantine centre (PKRCS) has been set up at Hotel Mei along Abu Siti Lane in George Town to cater to Category One and Two patients from the B40 group, said Tanjung MP Chow Kon Yeow. Chow, who is the Penang chief minister, said the PKRCS will be open to Covid-19 patients in the B40 group at no cost to them. He said the PKRCS was a collaboration between the state government and the Crisis Relief Services and Training Berhad (CREST) non-governmental organisation. [MMO]

Materials sourced from various online news portals— *Borneo Post Online (BPO)*, *Free Malaysia Today (FMT)*, *Malay Mail Online (MMO)*, *New Straits Times (NST)*, and *New Sarawak Tribune*. Materials do not necessarily represent the views of CCM.



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CCM Day of Fasting & Prayer: “Lord, Heal Our Land”

Tuesday August 10, 2021, 9am – 12pm



▲ CCM heads of churches together with worship leaders and musicians gathered for the 3-hour CCM Day of Fasting and Prayer on Aug 10.

Malaysia Day of Prayer (MDOP) 2021

Thursday September 16, 2021, 8am – 11pm



▲ **Malaysia Day of Prayer (MDOP)** is an annual gathering of churches to pray for the nation on Malaysia Day. This year's theme verse is Hebrews 10:35-36. *From top, left to right:* 1) CFM chairman/CCM president Abp Melter Tais gave the exhortation at the main opening; 2) Hineni Dancers from SIB Semenanjung performed a praise dance; 3) 24/7 Prayer Asia worship director Franklin Simon led the opening song and prayer; 4) MDOP chairman Bishop Emeritus Dr Ong Hwai Teik gave the word of welcome; 5) Catholic Archbishop Julian Leow interceded for various needs in the nation; 6) NECF chairman Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng prayed for church and country.

Doing Our Part During the Pandemic



▲ Food bank at CCM premises.

▲ Distribution of goods and essential items to migrants at Pantai Dalam, Kuala Lumpur. Tamil church youths helped with the food distribution. (July 15, 2021)



We pray for Your righteous purpose in Malaysia, O God!

Matthew 6:9-10

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Psalm 33:10-11

*The LORD foils the plans of the nations;
He thwarts the purposes of the peoples.
But the plans of the LORD stand firm for ever,
the purposes of His heart through all generations.*

Lord, we know that in the midst of this time,
You have Your righteous purpose and will for our nation.
You have brought our country to its knees.
Nothing that is happening is a surprise to You.
You see the big picture and
You are at work in ways that we cannot see.

Please guide the direction of our nation at this time
as we seek the transformation of our nation
in order to contain the further spread
of the pandemic for economic recovery
and to restore people's confidence in political leaders
that govern with honesty, accountability and justice.

Amen.