

**A HISTORY
OF
THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST
IN
MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE**

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August 2024

To
all the
Men and Women
who because of Jesus Christ
have rendered service to the
Lord's Kingdom in Malaysia and Singapore.

And, especially,
to
the memory of
Kenneth Leroy Sinclair
(6 September 1942 – 2 December 2015)
missionary, along with his wife, **Estelle**,
to Seremban, Port Dickson (Malaysia)
Medan (Indonesia) & Bukit Panjang (Singapore)
Missionary-in-Residence (Abilene Christian University)
well-loved and much-respected
a true servant of Jesus Christ.

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PROLOGUE

Why (and how) this history? As a novice convert in the church of Christ in Penang in the very early 1970s, I was introduced to names like Jenks, Miles Cotham and sister Davis in small conversations overheard between the older members. I had never known these people, never seen their faces. And, I was curious. Who were they? What did they look like? More importantly, what did they do? Unbeknown to me at the time, these were the early seeds that became a growing and gnawing desire to discover the beginnings of the churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore, the people involved, the events that transpired; all of which, I believe, conspired to shape the destiny of the divided fellowship that is the Church of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore today.

These early seeds found a thin layer of soil to germinate when, as a graduate student at Abilene Christian University (ACU) in 1997/98, I found in the ACU library, a folio of reports from Ira Y. Rice, Jr., detailing his missionary work in Singapore and Malaya in the few years of his stay in Singapore from 1955 onwards. These reports, together with information from other sources gleaned over the years of my ministry with the churches in Kuala Lumpur and Seremban, led to a short (and very tentative) article “The Church of Christ in Malaysia” which was published in *Leaven*, 2009 (Vol. 17 : Iss. 3).

In the second half of 2014, as a recipient of the Hogan-Cate Sabbatical Grant, I attended Harding School of Theology (HST) in Memphis in the Fall Semester. In the HST library, in the archive room, I found boxes, files and bound volumes of reports of missionaries who had worked in Malaysia and Singapore from the 1960s to the 1970s. I was utterly delighted. The next few days saw me rooted in the archive room poring over the reports and hand-copying relevant sections from them. But this was

getting impossible. It was too time-consuming; and besides, my handwriting was becoming increasingly illegible, even to myself! I spoke to Don Meredith, the Head Librarian then. He pointed me to a copy machine that could make soft copies and send them to my Gmail account. For a second time, in a few days, I was delighted.

Those early seedlings from 1997/98 now had soil to grow and develop further. While still in the U.S., I interviewed Don Green in Memphis, Miles Cotham in Nashville and Gordon Hogan in Searcy, Arkansas. Back in Malaysia, I interviewed Ken Sinclair in Seremban, sister Baby Tan and David Chew in Singapore, besides enquiring from Henry Kong and a few other fellow ministers. But the work then stopped. Not a multi-tasking person, I found I was unable to pursue this history project further while still ministering with the church in Seremban.

Then on a respite from ministry for about six weeks between August to October 2019, while in Melbourne, Australia, I was able to look at the files of reports copied and I began to jot down notes according to each missionary and each place they had worked. I retired from the Seremban ministry in December 2020 and came to Melbourne in January 2021 in the thick of the Covid-19 pandemic. Locked in a quarantine hotel room (The Pullman Melbourne on Swanston) for two weeks (I was to learn that legally, my wife and I were in health detention under Victoria's Health Act) I was able to write, for the first time, the first few parts of this history on the churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore.

This history (in fits and starts) would be impossible without the contribution and assistance of many of my fellow ministers and brothers and sisters in Christ. To them I offer my most profound gratitude and thanks. They provided valuable information, suggestions and criticisms which helped to make this history more accurate and, hopefully, absorbing. Much care

has been taken to ascertain the truthfulness and factuality of the narratives, incidents and conversations found in this history. At the same time, I recognise my limitations, especially not being privy to all the events and conversations that had taken place over the years. There were occasions when I found myself helplessly in the blind to “the other side” – unable to find any information, written or otherwise, that would confirm, moderate, or contradict someone’s presentation of a happening (in particular, where there was an element of conflict). In this regard, I take sole responsibility for any inadvertent misrepresentation, inaccuracy or error that may have crept into this history.

Ong Kok Bin
Melbourne
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I also want to record a special word of thanks to Chang Tsyh Yong, a schoolmate at the Methodist Boys' School, Penang, back in the 1970s, for her proof-reading of the manuscripts; the corrections and suggestions she made to improve the readability of the texts. Of course, any remaining linguistic errors are solely mine and I take full responsibility for them.

PART ONE

THE FIRST CHURCHES

**Moulmein Road
Muar and Kluang**

PART ONE THE FIRST CHURCHES

MOULMEIN ROAD, SINGAPORE

Arrival of Ira Y. Rice, Jr. in Singapore

The story of the Church of Christ in Singapore and Malaysia began with the arrival of Ira Y. Rice, Jr. and his family (wife Vada, children Ramona, Lynette, Renee, and Ira III) in Singapore in March 1955. In his own account:

so it was after midnight 12:45 the morning of March 9, 1955 when our plane finally landed at the old Kallang International Airport, Singapore.¹

Waiting at the airport to receive the Rices were George Chung (baptised by George S. Benson in China²) and the Chens, Cecil and Lucienne. Ira Rice had high expectations of George Chung for mission work in Singapore. George had studied at Harding College and stayed with the Rices in Seattle in the summer of 1953. It was during that time that the two agreed “to work together as preachers”. In Singapore, George played host the night the Rices arrived. The next morning, over breakfast, George broke the news to Rice, “I no longer believe in God, Jesus Christ, heaven, hell, the church, or the Bible.”³

Devastated by this revelation, Rice moved in to stay with the Chens that very same day till he was able to rent his own place. About noon that day, Rice and Cecil were walking down

¹ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Pressing Toward the Mark, An Autobiography*, Vol. II, *Missionary Work: 1955 to 1965* (Dallas, G. T. Press, 2001), 70. The family departed from the States on 19 February 1955; in *We Can Evangelize the World*, 2d ed. (Nashville, Williams Printing Company, 1966), 5.

² Curtis A. Cates in his Introduction to *Pressing Toward the Mark*, Vol. II, 21.

³ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 72-73.

Raffles Place when they met a “tiny Chinese man” whom Cecil introduced to Rice as Tan Keng Koon. After Keng Koon had left them, Cecil remarked to Rice, “Remember that man, he’s important.”⁴ Rice was to write in his autobiography, *Pressing Toward the Mark*, Volume II,

Looking back, I detected nothing that *seemed* important about the man. Standing five feet tall and weighing only 82 pounds, he seemed inconsequential and quite ordinary to me. How wrong I was! This Tan Keng Koon (whom I would come to know as just “Koon”) one day would become the most influential member in the history of our Lord’s church in Singapore!⁵

Rice first came to know Cecil Chen⁶ while the latter was a student at the University of California, Berkeley. Cecil had stayed with the Rices for three years until he graduated with a degree in economics from the university. In a conversation with Cecil, Rice remarked how if he were to “find a city in the world

⁴ The writer had wondered how Cecil Chen had known Tan Keng Koon well enough to know that “he’s important”. This mystery was solved when David Lee, revealed in a WhatsApp conversation on 3 May 2021, that Cecil Chen had trained as a fighter pilot (on the P-51 Mustang) at the Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, (near Phoenix), Arizona. After his training, Cecil Chen joined the First American Volunteer Group (AVG) of the Republic of China Air Force in 1941-42. The AVG was nicknamed the “Flying Tigers”. Tan Keng Koon, according to Rice, “was the youngest captain in the Chinese army ... attached to the Fourteenth Air Force ... met and became intimate friends with many of the famous Flying Tigers under General Chennault” (see Rice’s *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 13 August 1961, 2). Rice had also described Cecil Chen as a “veteran of six years wartime in China” (*Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 146, reproduction of an earlier report in *Singapore-Far East*, May 20, 1956). David Lee knew Cecil Chen and his wife Lucienne in Sydney. He worked briefly for Cecil Chen in 1963/64.

⁵ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 73.

⁶ He was never baptised, as told by Hedy Tan, Cecil’s niece, to the writer when she visited Melbourne in November 2023.

where many languages were spoken, but where English was the common language, he would go there as a missionary” because he could then “preach the gospel in his own language, English, and it could be spread to many lands in other languages from there”. To which Cecil replied, “I know where that city is. My hometown, Singapore.”⁷ And that was how Ira Y. Rice chose to come to Singapore.

First Services

The first worship service of the church of Christ in Singapore and Malaya (before it became Malaysia in September 1963) in which bread was broken was in “mid-March, 1955, in the home of Cecil and Lucienne Chen at No. 4 York Place, in Serangoon Gardens Estate.” The following week, the worship was at “No. 51 Puay Hee Avenue in the more centrally-located Sennett Estate”, the first rented home of the Rices. There were two other locations (Woodsville Close and No. 8 Tay Lian Teck Road) where the Rices stayed and met for services before “the 131 Moulmein Road property was purchased in late 1957 and early 1958.”⁸

In May 1955, Singapore was wrecked by social unrest and riots “for almost an entire week”. The riots had begun with the Hock Lee Bus strike. It was in the midst of this social unrest that the first Bible classes were organized and taught though

⁷ As told by Curtis A. Cates, Introduction to *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 19-20.

⁸ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 74. On page 146 of the same volume, Rice reproduced his report first made in his *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, May 20, 1956, 7, on missing out the opportunity to purchase a mansion in Tanglin Halt for church use. In this report, he mentioned two other places, 22 Prince Philip Avenue and 19 Kreta Ayer Road, in which the church had met for services before moving back to the Cecil Chens’ home (“as a temporary measure”) because of noise disturbances at the Kreta Ayer place. Charlie Ng was left in Kreta Ayer “to carry on Cantonese services there on Lord’s Day mornings, when it is relatively quieter”.

circumstances were not favourable for this to occur. The Sunday morning assembly had an attendance of only 11; but Rice persisted to go ahead with the planned classes in the afternoon. Despite the unfavourable climate, a total of 72 “children and young folks” turned up “for our very first English-study classes that afternoon.” “Vada took the 51 children, eight years old and under; I took the 21, nine years old and over.”⁹

First Contacts and Converts

The first days of Rice’s effort to establish the church in Singapore were not easy or fruitful. In his own words, he described his work in those early days thus:

At first, I had a little black notebook in which I wrote down the names and addresses of everyone we met – our real-estate agent, the grocery man, the furniture man, clerks who waited on us at the bank and where we shopped – everyone. We invited all these incidental contacts to attend church services in our home; however, in the beginning, we seemed to be getting nowhere fast.¹⁰

Things changed when Cecil Chen introduced Rice to a man named John Wong. John Wong was preaching to a group of about 60 Chinese-speaking people in Queenstown. Rice soon learnt that this group of people “were trying to go just by the Bible”. They baptised by immersion for the remission of sins and observed the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week. Rice observed:

about the only discrepancies that Cecil and I could find between their doctrine and practice and ours was their use

⁹ Ibid., 102-104.

¹⁰ Ibid., 109.

of instrumental music in the worship and calling themselves “Christian Church” in English.¹¹

Rice had some lengthy discussions with John Wong, following which, John and his group agreed to forego “the use of instrumental music entirely in the worship” and to change the English signage at their ‘storefront’ from “Christian Church” to “Church of Christ”. As a result of these changes, Rice and company agreed to meet with John Wong’s group in the afternoons in Queenstown on each Lord’s day. At the same time, they continued to meet on their own in the mornings too. But note that Rice did not ask for John Wong or his group to be rebaptised (at least there was no indication to this effect).

Lye Hong Meng

John Wong later introduced Rice¹² to “two men from outside of Singapore – Lye Hong Meng, from Muar, Malaya ... and Charlie Ng Fock Lam, from Rangoon, Burma.”¹³ Lye Hong Meng was then preaching for a group who called themselves Jesus Christ Church in Muar. He had come out of the Methodist Church to establish this group which met in his house. He and his group had been sprinkled according to the Methodist teaching and practice, but not baptised by immersion.

One morning, Rice heard a motorcycle coming up into his front yard. It was Lye Hong Meng. He had ridden his motorcycle from Muar to Rice’s home in Singapore, a journey of some 130

¹¹ Ibid., 111. The group had their signage in Chinese which read, 基督教会, which could be translated as “Church of Christ”. For other information in this section, see 109-111.

¹² Rice and John Wong eventually parted ways over disagreements in connection with “the purchase and possible resale of property for church and school use in Singapore”. In *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 130.

¹³ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 111-112.

miles (equivalent to 210 km) in the night. Rice recalled these words from Lye Hong Meng, “I have come all the way from Muar to ask you to baptize me into Christ. I have been sprinkled, but never immersed.” That morning of June 30, 1955, Rice baptised Lye Hong Meng into Christ in “the South China Sea”. Lye Hong Meng became the “first one to obey the gospel” since the Rices arrived in Singapore in March of the same year.¹⁴

With Lye Hong Meng’s conversion, the rest of his Muar congregation were also converted into the church of Christ. Lye continued to preach to this Muar church until 1958 when Rice invited him to Moulmein Road to preach in the Chinese speaking services.¹⁵ When Rice returned to the States in August 1959 for 15 months, after the grand opening of the Moulmein Road building, Lye Hong Meng “was left in general charge of the Chinese-language side” while Henry Tan, John Lye (Lye Hong Meng’s son) and Charlie Ng “did the preaching for the English-speaking services”.¹⁶ Lye Hong Meng later left Moulmein Road to establish the Geylang congregation in July 1963 (see story on Geylang).

¹⁴ Ibid., 116-117. See also Rice, *We Can Evangelize*, in the caption below the picture of Rice baptising Lye Hong Meng. For a fuller story on Lye Hong Meng’s conversion see the section on Muar and Kluang, the early beginnings of the church in Malaya.

¹⁵ Moulmein Road at this time was running three different language services: English in the morning, Teochew/Cantonese in the afternoon and Mandarin at night. In a promotional newsletter, “What a Difference 4 Years Can Make!” by Ira Y. Rice, which pre-dated the official opening of the renovated Moulmein Road premises in August 1959. See also *Singapore-Far East*, December 30, 1959.

¹⁶ Caption under Lye Hong Meng’s photograph (before p. 71), in *We Can Evangelize*.

Charlie Ng Fock Lam

Charlie Ng Fock Lam was born in Singapore but grew up in Rangoon, Burma, where he lived for 10 years.¹⁷ He was studying at the Baptist Mission Seminary in Penang to become a preacher for the Baptist Church when he came into contact with Rice sometime in the latter half of 1955. Despite the Baptists' well-known doctrinal denial of baptism for the remission of sins, Rice initially accepted Charlie Ng's insistence that he was indeed baptised for that reason. Rice wrote:

... Brother Ng stoutly maintains he was immersed for that purpose [remission of sins, writer's], having first believed in Christ, repented of his sins, and confessed his faith in Christ before men.

If so, that would be sufficient to constitute him a Christian; although he still would have to repent going off after Baptist error, however unwittingly, following his Baptism.¹⁸

Charlie Ng was a Cantonese and he "was much distressed we had no gospel work going among people of this dialect, who are so outstanding in Singapore". Because of this, Rice agreed for Charlie to begin a work in Cantonese. This Cantonese work began on January 22, 1956, at the Kim Hong School at 19 Kreta Ayer Road.¹⁹

At the same time, Charlie was studying the Bible with Rice at the latter's home together with two others, John Chew

¹⁷ Ira Y. Rice, *Singapore Far East Newsletter*, 25 June 1961. (From henceforth, the footnotes will just mention *Far East*, whether it be *Far East/World Evangelism* or *Singapore Far East*.)

¹⁸ *Far East*, January/February 1956, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid*. The Cantonese services were in the mornings. But English services were also conducted at the same venue in the evenings.

and Albert Leong.²⁰ This went on for 14 months and Charlie “was finally baptized in 1958”.²¹

Besides his initiative to begin the Cantonese work at Kreta Ayer, Charlie also “did a year of mission work at Kahang (a mukim in the Kluang district in Johore)”.²² This work, however, never quite took off and was abandoned. When Lye Hong Meng left the work in Muar in 1958 for Moulmein Road, the Muar church went into a decline after three years without a preacher. Charlie Ng was then asked to go to Muar to try to salvage the work there (c. September/October 1961). But it was to no avail as the “people continued moving away from Muar”. Rice then asked Charlie to seek secular employment as of October 1962. Later, Charlie went back to work with the Moulmein Road church to minister to the Cantonese-speaking congregation once again.

²⁰ In *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 123, Rice mentioned Charlie Ng, John Chew and Albert Leong as having spent 14 months between 1956-57 studying under his personal instruction four hours a day in his home at Tay Lian Teck Road. But in *Far East*, 25 June 1961, 4, Rice mentioned the 14 month-period, “in personal preacher training”, as occurring between 1955-56. John Chew went back to Kluang and preached there, while running a printing press, until his untimely death in March 1982. Albert Leong went on to study at Pepperdine College (in *Far East*) but “has neither been seen nor heard from since” (in *Pressing Toward*). Charlie Ng was the one who had led Albert Leong to Christ.

²¹ *Far East*, April 1978, 6. In a report in *Far East*, May 20, 1956, which was reproduced in *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 146-147, Rice mentioned that “brother Charlie Ng Fock Lam” was left at Kreta Ayer “to carry on Cantonese services there on Lord’s Day mornings”. Rice had used 19 Kreta Ayer Road in 1956 to hold church services and activities but found it too noisy to continue there. He moved back to Cecil Chen’s house temporarily, but later found a place at No. 8, Tay Lian Teck Road.

²² *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 123.

He was also involved with Four Seas College, serving as its business manager and cook.²³

Tan Keng Koon

Tan Keng Koon, whom we met right at the beginning of this account, was not converted until February 1959 after a lengthy study of some three and half years with Ira Rice.²⁴ He went on to study at Freed-Hardeman College in August 1959.²⁵ Upon his return to Singapore in July 1961, he “was given the lead of the Moulmein congregation”.²⁶ Probably, by this, Rice meant amongst the local preachers because A. L. Harbin was with Moulmein Road then. Koon left Moulmein Road in 1965 to start new works at Changi and Serangoon in what eventually came to be the Upper Serangoon Road and later, Lim Ah Pin Road congregation (see story on Upper Serangoon/Lim Ah Pin).

The Quest to Purchase a Church Property

In 1955, Rice tried to raise funds for a church property, which would serve as “a missionary tool for establishing a church and preacher-training school”. But this failed because of a lack of response Stateside. Rice moaned, “IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”.²⁷ In 1957, “when a second opportunity presented itself”, Rice

²³ *Far East*, September 23, 1959, 1-2; 25 June 1961, 4; September 12, 1961, 5; February 19, 1962, 2; September 10, 1962, 3.

²⁴ See Ira Y. Rice’s account on Tan Keng Koon in *Far East/World Evangelism*, November-December 1978.

²⁵ Rice, Koon and Samuel Miao were aboard the same ship M. S. Madison that left Singapore on 7 August 1959. In *Far East*, 13 August 1961, 2; November-December 1978, 2. See also *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 212.

²⁶ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 309. In *We Can Evangelize*, Rice described Koon as “preaching to the Chinese-speaking section of our congregation at Moulmein Road”; in caption next to Koon’s portrait (before p. 135).

²⁷ *We Can Evangelize*, caption to photograph of the Tanglin Halt property (after p. 54).

“gathered courage to try once more”. This “second opportunity” was a property at 131 Moulmein Road, which Rice described as “an old fashioned Chinese mansion situated right in the heart of the city on more than 10,000 square feet of choice, freehold land”. The asking price was S\$78,000 (equivalent to US\$25,000 then).²⁸ This second opportunity proved good and the building was duly purchased with sufficient funds raised.

The congregation which was meeting at Rice’s rented residence in Tay Lian Teck Road started to meet in this Moulmein Road property on 31 August 1958.²⁹ Meanwhile, an architect, Ho Kok Hoe, was hired to remodel the building. Renovation work soon followed in April 1959. But because Rice and his family were due to return to the States on their first furlough, the “Grand Opening” was set for August 2, 1959 on a Lord’s Day. The renovation had to be quickened a pace and “Right up to the day before our opening, workers still were laying the beautiful tile floor. Members arrived early that Lord’s day morning to clean up and wash the floor and to place the 26 pews that had been delivered.” By the scheduled time, the place was ready for the “Grand Opening”. Parker Henderson from Bangkok was invited to grace the occasion and be the speaker in the worship service. Rice described the atmosphere in “that momentous morning”:

what a joy it was to see every pew filled hip-to-hip, Chinese fashion, besides all 58 of our folding chairs being taken, and still a few of our audience having to stand!

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

²⁹ *Far East*, not dated, but possibly December 30, 1959. In this report, Rice cited the price for the property as \$50,000 without stating the currency.

By actual count, 340 people were in attendance that day – more than four times the largest crowd we had ever had for a Sunday service.³⁰

The renovation project was coloured by a tragic incident, though. During the process of selecting a contractor for the renovation, a member of the church, Douglas Ho, whom Rice described as “the No. 1 local leader”³¹ “best qualified to bear the responsibilities of the English-speaking services after we left”³², had recommended a friend for the job. However, Rice decided to have someone who “could do the job not only *cheaper* but also *better* than all the rest” (italics, Rice’s). Unbeknown to Rice at the time, Douglas Ho, though he had a wife and a family, “had fallen desperately in love” with a local singer known as Gina. Douglas Ho’s contractor friend had introduced Gina to him. The deal for Douglas Ho to “have Gina” was for Douglas to deliver the Moulmein Road renovation contract to the friend. When this failed to materialise, Douglas Ho and Gina, in a pact, took sleeping pills to commit suicide. A note was left for his wife. Upon seeing the note, Mrs. Douglas Ho immediately called Rice. They went to search for them. But by the time they found them they were unconscious from the sleeping pill overdose. Douglas Ho never regained consciousness and died. Gina, however, survived.³³

³⁰ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 205-206. Lye Hong Meng, “something of an artist in his own right – designed the pews” (Rice, 205).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

³² *Far East*, September 23, 1959, 3.

³³ This account is from *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 202-205. But see *Far East*, September 23, 1959, 3-4, for a slightly different account of Douglas Ho’s suicide.

Samuel Miao

Samuel Miao was not among “the first converts”, but his coming into the church of Christ bears special mention because of who he was; and also because he was involved in the first controversy that would divide the church at Moulmein Road (see section on “Controversies”). The significance of Samuel Miao to Rice at the time was borne out by the fact that Rice devoted an entire newsletter³⁴ to his conversion together with those of Keng Ban Ee and his two sons. Rice described Keng Ban Ee as “the Secretary-General of the Labor Front, Singapore’s ruling party” at the time the two met in April of 1956.

Keng Ban Ee (who later retired from politics) was training to be “a qualified Instructor” in Dale Carnegie under Norvell J. Brickell (a Christian brother from Memphis, TN) who had come to Singapore in June 1957 to teach at Dale Carnegie. Brickell invited Rice to associate himself with Dale Carnegie as “the way to win many people to come hear the gospel of Christ”. In October 1957, Rice and his wife Vada enrolled themselves in the Dale Carnegie Course. He quipped:

Oh, we were quite cold-blooded about it. Without a quibble we both had “ulterior motives”. As we saw it, not only should our taking this course put us on intimate terms with all the other students of the class we were in, but we should then be on “common ground” with other D.C. graduates throughout Singapore.³⁵

On his association with Dale Carnegie, Rice also made this observation:

The first two years Sister Rice and I were in Singapore and Malaya, we baptized many people; however, most of them were right on rock bottom socially, educationally, financial-

³⁴ This is *Far East*, January 26, 1959.

³⁵ *Far East*, January 26, 1959.

ly and in every way. They were wonderful people, no doubt, before God; for God has chosen the poor in this world rich in faith. Yet if a way to reach those a little higher had not been opened unto us, I am quite sure the cause in Singapore should have been decades, not just years, getting on its own.³⁶

To cut to the chase, Rice decided to run a 17-week Basic Bible Course in September 1958 in the newly acquired building at 131 Moulmein Road. He invited all his contacts that he had made in the three and half years he was in Singapore. About 25-30 people enrolled in the course. Among those who enrolled were Keng Ban Ee and his three children, Eileen (15), Jimmy (12) and Peter (10). Samuel Miao joined the course mid-way. He “made up with the back lessons, and finished the rest with the class”. Rice described Miao as “an extraordinary young man” who was

recently elected President of the Wesleyan Methodist Youth Fellowship of Singapore, held other high posts in the inter-denominational youth organizations here, had been earmarked by the Methodist Church for extensive training with the view to becoming a Methodist preacher!

Though Rice had impressed upon his class that he “had taken them up to the point of becoming simple Christians after the New Testament order” and to which they “seemed to agree” – they “did nothing” – none of them sought to be baptised. Rice reasoned that in the instance of the Kengs, it was the Chinese culture of filial piety, “which requires, ordinarily, certain acts of obeisance to dead parents and assorted ancestors, which seems a bit contrary to Christian teaching and practice” that had held

³⁶ In *We Can Evangelize*, under photograph with the caption “A GREAT DOOR AND EFFECTUAL IS OPENED UNTO ME”.

the Keng's back. In Miao's case, Rice thought that it was his positions in the Methodist Church and other youth organisations that were making it difficult for him "to forsake all for Christ".

Rice decided to give to each one who had come to his class, a "remarkable little booklet" *Why Not Be a Christian?* written by Ralph Brashears. On the inside of the booklet Rice would inscribe "In Hope". A few days later, on a Saturday night, Miao asked to be baptised the next night, i.e., the Sunday night of January 25. Rice enthused:

After all the long experiment I had been carrying on to see if the Dale Carnegie Courses might actually be fruitful as a source of contacts for the cause of Christ, I was about to baptize the first one! (underlined, Rice's)

Rice announced the baptism time and place in the Sunday service that Sunday morning. A group of Dale Carnegie students and graduates were present.

At the appointed time and place, 9:30 pm in the South China Sea [off Katong Park, author's], Keng Ban Ee and his sons, Jimmy and Peter, came too and all four were baptized that night.

With the four baptisms, Rice observed "that the number baptized to date [came to] 166, of whom 94 are in Malaya proper and 72 in Singapore."³⁷

Samuel Miao went on to study at Freed-Hardeman College (1959-1961) where he graduated "magna cum Laude" – finishing fourth in his class; stayed on at Freed-Hardeman for a third year to take the specialised course in preaching; then went on to Harding Graduate School where he obtained an MA in Bible. He returned to Singapore in 1965 and assisted Henry Tan

³⁷ All quotes and block quotes in this section are from *Far East*, January 26, 1959.

in the ministry at Moulmein Road. He also taught at Four Seas College and served as its Dean-Registrar.³⁸

Henry Tan Siak Siang

Henry Tan Siak Siang was Cecil Chen's brother.³⁹ He was baptised by Rice in November 1958. Rice wrote quite a lengthy but interesting piece on Henry Tan Siak Siang on the occasion of Henry Tan's leaving for Freed-Hardeman on 12 September 1961 to do a two-year preacher-training course.⁴⁰

Henry Tan, upon his completion of his two-year study at Freed-Hardeman, duly returned to Singapore in July 1963. On hand to receive him at the airport were "56 people from the Singapore church – including his wife, six children and aging mother". The very next Lord's day, Henry Tan preached at Moulmein Road. Rice noted:

we could scarcely recognize the same preacher! From having been a bit tentative and not quite certain of himself, when he went away, he had, in just two short years, developed poise, self-confidence, persuasiveness and that note of authority which comes only with the best kind of training enriched by experience. You could just feel the warmth with which the audience responded to what he had to say and the way he said it.⁴¹

Impressed by the positive development in Henry Tan, Rice decided to allow Henry Tan to replace him as "the principal

³⁸ *Far East*, August 61, 5; October 15, 1961, 8; 17 July 1963, 11; August 31, 1964, 4; November 30, 1965, 15; 20 January 1967, 13.

³⁹ Hedy Tan, one of Henry Tan's daughters (in WhatsApp message, 6 December 2023). She worships with the Pasir Panjang congregation. "Tan" and "Chen" are dialect variants of the surname 陈 (*chén*, in Hanyu pinyin, simplified).

⁴⁰ See *Far East*, September 12, 1961, 2-3.

⁴¹ *Far East*, 17 July 1963, 1.

preacher in the English-speaking work in Singapore” as of July 14, 1963.⁴²

Local Preachers Filled-In in the Interim (August 1959 – 1961)

When Ira Y. Rice returned to the States for the first time in August 1959 for a period of 15 months, the work at Moulmein Road was left to the locals as there was no other American missionary then. Lye Hong Meng, Rice’s very first convert, took charge of the Chinese-language services. Henry Tan, John Lye (Lye Hong Meng’s son) and Charlie Ng preached in the English services. However, the church went on a decline in this period. Many in the English-speaking group fell away and the number diminished to about 20.⁴³

A. L. Leroy and Fannie Harbin (February 1961 – April 1962)

Between August 1959 and November 1960, a “MILLION FOR THE BILLION” Campaign was launched to raise mission awareness amongst churches of Christ in the United States. This Campaign had two objectives: 1) to find sponsorships and missionaries so that they could be sent to 14 targeted countries in Asia, and 2) to raise a million dollars to launch the evangelism process that would reach out to the estimated one billion people in these 14 countries (hence, “Million-for-the-Billion”).⁴⁴

Ira Y. Rice had planned to start another congregation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, upon his return to the region in 1961. He was looking for someone to take over from his work in Singapore. Out of the “Million-for-the-Billion” Campaign, two missionary families stepped forward, in thus far as Singapore was concerned.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *We Can Evangelize*, story under the caption “LYE HONG MENG, OUR FIRST CONVERT IN SINGAPORE, accompanying picture of Lye Hong Meng (before p. 71).

⁴⁴ Recounted by Rice in *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, Chap. 22.

They were the A. L. Harbin family (wife, Fannie, and daughters, Rubye Lee (Bee) and Peggy) and the Gordon Hogan family (wife, Jane, and children, Beth, Dave and Julie).⁴⁵ The Harbins had agreed to go to Singapore while the Hogans were looking towards working in India.

The three families – the Rices, the Harbins and the Hogans – went on a road tour of Europe together, intending to pass through the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent, on their way to their respective mission destinations in the Far East. However, the Harbins left the party in Germany and went on their own way⁴⁶ before eventually arriving in Singapore via Beirut sometime in February 1961. The Rices and the Hogans continued on together. They arrived in Lahore, Pakistan. In Lahore, Gordon Hogan sought a visa to work in India but was denied⁴⁷ and that was how he remained in Lahore for the next seven years before moving on to Singapore in 1968.

Meanwhile, the Rices “pressed on” to India before flying to Singapore from Calcutta. They arrived on March 11 and the Harbins (minus Bee) were on hand to receive them.⁴⁸ The two families spent a month together for the Harbins to become more acquainted with the Moulmein Road work before the Rices left for Kuala Lumpur on April 6, 1961.⁴⁹

No information is known about the Harbins’ work in his first year at Moulmein Road except that he was not involved in

⁴⁵ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 234-235. Rice spelt Rubye Lee’s nickname as Bea.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 243, 291. According to David Lee in a WhatsApp conversation (23 April 2021), the Harbins left on their own because of a misunderstanding with Rice (Rice was keeping the correspondence between Rubye Lee (Bee) and her fiancé in the States) and a mix-up in the Harbins’ visas to enter Iraq. Bee returned to the States to marry her fiancé and did not make it to Singapore with her family.

⁴⁷ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 289.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 291. Also, *Far East*, February 19, 1962, 1.

⁴⁹ *Far East*, February 19, 1962, 1. Also, see *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 297.

the Bible correspondence course program.⁵⁰ However, he resigned from the work abruptly on the Lord's Day of 15 April 1962, and "left by plane for America the next morning".⁵¹ The reason for Harbin to leave Moulmein Road so suddenly was because he and Rice disagreed on how to run things at Moulmein Road. Rice wanted things done his way, but Harbin had his own mind. In March 1962, Ken Rideout (missionary in Bangkok, Thailand), at Rice's request, came to visit Harbin to tell him that he should follow Rice's way or leave Moulmein Road. The message also came with a threat that Rice would write to the States to have Harbin's support cut off if Harbin would not acquiesce. On this note, Harbin decided to "get out".⁵² It needs to be emphasised here that the conflict between Harbin and Rice was not over doctrine but over method on doing church.

With the abrupt departure of Harbin from Moulmein Road, Rice, who was in Kuala Lumpur, was in a dilemma and had to make a decision. But his children were in school in Kuala Lumpur and he could not immediately transplant his family to Singapore there and then. He settled on "a plan":

Working out a plan whereby I could be in Singapore with Moulmein Road nine days out of every two weeks, returning to K.L. the other five, I kept up this regimen for a total of nine months before turning the Kuala Lumpur work entirely over to the Pierces and moving the Rice family back to Singapore.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Far East*, 3 May 1962, 5.

⁵¹ In a letter to Frank H. Pierce and Ira Y. Rice in Kuala Lumpur and signed by Lye Hong Meng and Tan Keng Koon and seven others from Moulmein Road as reproduced in *Far East*, 3 May 1962, 7.

⁵² As told to the writer by David Lee (Harbins' son-in-law) in a WhatsApp conversation on 23 April 2021.

⁵³ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 306.

Pence and Janis Dacus (January 1964 – November 1966)

Ira Y. Rice returned to the States a second time on 3 May 1964.⁵⁴ It would mark the last of his located mission work in Singapore and Malaysia. But he remained heavily involved in the mission work in these two countries, especially at Moulmein Road and Kuala Lumpur, returning frequently on visits or when necessity demanded his presence. His “replacement” (as per Rice) at this time was Pence Dacus.⁵⁵

Pence Dacus and his wife, Janis, came to Singapore in January 1964,⁵⁶ via Bangkok, Thailand, prior to the departure of the Rices to the States. Rice himself, debatably, had a part in Pence Dacus’ coming to Singapore, not only as his “replacement” but also to establish a Bible school in Singapore,⁵⁷ which was one of Rice’s goals in Singapore.

Upon his arrival in Singapore, Pence immediately set to work on the two main tasks that were laid on him: ministering to the Moulmein Road congregation and setting up the Bible college. In the first six months of his work, he was reporting 38 baptisms (“33 in the last four months”) and 56 in his first nine months.⁵⁸ By October of 1964, he was already announcing the opening of the Bible college, which was set for January of 1965. He chose to name the college, the Malaysia Christian College

⁵⁴ *Far East*, August 31, 1964, 5.

⁵⁵ See story on “Education” on how Rice pursued Pence Dacus to come to Singapore as his replacement and to set up the Bible college.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, April 1965, 12.

⁵⁷ Dave Hogan raised this when the writer met him in Singapore in November 2022. He said that Pence Dacus, in a taped interview with him and Edwin Choy, gave a different perspective on how he and Janis came to Singapore and set up the Bible college. However, the writer has no access to the interview tapes or the transcripts of the interview as of this writing.

⁵⁸ *Singapore*, Vol. 1, No. 11, July 1964 and No. 14, October 1964.

(MCC; later, renamed the Singapore Christian College when Singapore seceded from Malaysia on 9 August 1965).⁵⁹

Pence was also instrumental in publishing and editing a monthly journal, *New Testament Christianity*, whose first issue came out in June 1964.⁶⁰ Frank H. Pierce was his associate editor.⁶¹ The first Bible Camp in Singapore was also organised under his watch, possibly in July 1964, and was held in a beach house owned by Baby Tan's father.⁶²

However, within less than two years of his stay in Singapore, there was an apparent fall out between him and Rice. Rice who had so enthusiastically pursued for Pence to come to Singapore, chiefly to set up the Bible college, and as his replacement in late 1963, was less than enthusiastic two years later. This was apparent when Rice on a visit back to Singapore sometime around August/September 1966 refused Pence Dacus' invitation for him to stay at his place. Instead he chose to stay with Tan Keng Koon and Baby Tan, giving Pence the excuse that he needed to spend more time with the local brethren.⁶³

In May of 1966, there was an exchange of letters between the elders of Hampton Place, Dallas, Texas (Rice's sponsoring congregation) and the elders of 7th Street in Texas City, Texas (Pence's sponsoring congregation) about bringing Pence Dacus back to the States at the end of 1966 (a year earlier than scheduled).⁶⁴ In all likelihood, this came about because of Rice's unhappiness with Pence on at least two counts: (1) over Rice's Basic Bible Course (BBC), and (2) over the Malaysia Christian College.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, No. 14, October 1964.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, No. 11, July 1964.

⁶¹ *Far East*, July 25, 1964, 12.

⁶² *Singapore*, Vol. 1, No. 12, August 1964.

⁶³ *Far East*, September 12, 1966, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, June 20, 1966, 1-4.

Rice accused Pence of not advertising his Basic Bible Course and failing “to have new stocks printed”, effectively sabotaging it. He wrote:

this effective course had been sabotaged by my replacement in Singapore, necessitating our finally taking it back out of his hands completely before he killed it entirely.⁶⁵

We have no certain measure to determine how true this was. But there was a discussion between Frank Pierce and Pence Dacus in 1964 about making “other courses available to the reading public”, besides the BBC, so that more teaching could be done (as per Pierce). The agreement between the two was that an “ADVANCED course, which would include a great deal of historical information about the “falling away”, the development of the Roman Catholic Church, Reformation and Restoration Movements, be prepared as soon as possible”. Pence agreed to write the course, having “done extensive research on this”. He later “isolated himself at Frazier’s (*sic*) Hill ... for about two weeks and did nothing but write from 8 o’clock in the morning to Midnight (*sic*)”. The result was a 25-lesson course, named the Advanced Course,⁶⁶ which would be offered to those who had completed Rice’s 27-lesson Basic Bible Course.⁶⁷

And this could have been the trigger for Rice’s unhappiness with Pence over the Bible college. He accused

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1966, 1-2, 8. See also August 18, 1966, 15-16.

⁶⁶ This course was later revised and reduced to 18 lessons and renamed A GREAT RETURN TO THE BIBLE. Pence Dacus, who returned to Singapore to work with the Pasir Panjang congregation in the late 1990s for a couple of years or more, personally told this writer that he spent two weeks in Fraser’s Hill to write “A Great Return to the Bible” or the Advanced Course as it first appeared.

⁶⁷ In *Singapore Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 14, October 1964. Pence Dacus reproduced Frank Pierce’s write-out of the Advanced Course in the latter’s own bulletin.

Pence (and his elders) of not sticking to “prior agreements” and not working “on a cooperative basis, with mutual consultations”. Instead, Pence, per Rice:

decided by himself to start the college, neither he nor his elders saw any reason to consult with us concerning either its planning, its constitution, its prospectus, its basic goals and policies, its beginning, administration or anything at all about it⁶⁸ (underlined, Rice’s).

This was in stark contrast to the situation in early 1964 when Rice was effusive about his wanting to have Pence come to Singapore to start the college (see story on Four Seas College in Education). Also, in his *Far East Newsletter*, October-November 1964, on pages 16-20, Rice had published in full the constitution and prospectus of Malaysia Christian College, indicating that even if he was not properly consulted beforehand, he had approved of them and by extension, of Pence Dacus’ work in regard to these matters.

As it happened, Pence Dacus returned to the States in November 1966, shortly after the first graduation exercise of the college on November 5, a year earlier than his scheduled return. With his departure, Rice took over the administration of the college effective December 1, 1966.⁶⁹ Henry Tan and Samuel Miao, who were the local ministers at Moulmein Road, continued in their roles as preachers in the church.

Henry Tan (July 1963 – January 1968) and Samuel Miao (August 1965 – June 1968)

As noted above, Henry Tan, upon his return from his studies at Freed-Hardeman in July 1963, was entrusted as the

⁶⁸ *Far East*, 3-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, December 28, 1966, 1.

“principal preacher” in the English-speaking work in Singapore, which was Moulmein Road at the time.

Samuel Miao returned from his theological studies in the States in August 1965⁷⁰ and immediately set about working along with Henry Tan at Moulmein Road. He also taught at Malaysia Christian College, becoming its Dean-Registrar when Rice took over the presidency of the college from Pence Dacus.⁷¹

However, within three years, Miao was disfellowshipped for sowing “seeds of error and doubt”. On this, Rice wrote:

His uncertainty of the truth of the gospel as well as his lack of conviction that we are the ONE TRUE CHURCH has so pervaded the hearts of several of the young would-be leaders in the congregation that a continuing stream of erroneous teaching was pouring forth, not only in the Bible classes and through our church bulletins but over the pulpit and in private conversations as well.⁷² (underlined, Rice’s)

Miao was formally disfellowshipped on 18 August 1968 by Rice and the other churches in Singapore.⁷³ But even before his disfellowship, a group of some forty-four members from Moulmein Road had left the congregation in June to meet at St. Thomas Walk. Later, they met at Thompson Road; before

⁷⁰ Ibid., August 25, 1968, 1.

⁷¹ Ibid., November 30, 1965, 15; 20 January 1967, 13.

⁷² Ibid., June 25, 1968.

⁷³ For Rice’s account leading to Miao’s disfellowship, see his *Far East Newsletter*, August 25, 1968, 1-4. The letter of disfellowship was dated 18 August 1968 and signed by Ira Y. Rice, Lye Hong Meng, Charlie Ng Fock Lam, Henry Kong, Tan Keng Koon, Pat McGee, Eddy Ee and Monty Lee. Rice was in Singapore as of November 1967 to preside over the second graduation exercise of Four Seas College (in *Far East*, December 31, 1967, 3).

moving onto Boscombe Road⁷⁴ and became the Boscombe Life Church.⁷⁵

About this time of the Samuel Miao controversy, Henry Tan was not at the Moulmein Road congregation any more. He was “working with the North Point congregation” in Hong Kong as of February 1968 as noted by Rice.⁷⁶

Samuel Miao (Chinese name, Sam Ming) passed away at the relatively young age of 46 on 24 March 1987.⁷⁷

Gordon and Jane Hogan (August 1968 – 1993)

Gordon Hogan arrived with his family (wife, Jane, and children, Beth, Julie and Dave) in Singapore from Pakistan on 14 August 1968 to take over the ministry at Moulmein Road as well as the administration of Four Seas College as its President from Ira Y. Rice. Rice went on to assume the role of Chairman of the Board of Directors of Four Seas.⁷⁸

When Hogan came, he came to a depleted church at Moulmein Road in the aftermath of the Samuel Miao controversy. Some forty-four members had left with Miao on 2 June 1968 to meet in St. Thomas Walk, “leaving just a handful – perhaps 12 or 13 – to carry on according to “thus saith the Lord”

⁷⁴ *Contending for the Faith*, May 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 5, p. 13. The writer sourced Rice’s *Contending for the Faith* online in PDF format from <https://falsedoctrinesofman.com>, which he downloaded on 15 April 2021.

⁷⁵ See their website <https://www.boscombelife.church>. They currently meet at 248 Joo Chiat Road, Singapore 427503.

⁷⁶ In *Far East*, July 25, 1968, 11; August 25, 1968, 6. See also the December 31, 1967 issue, p. 2, in which Rice discussed at length plans to have Henry Tan move to Hong Kong to minister to the North Point congregation.

⁷⁷ *Contending for the Faith*, May 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 5, 13. He was survived by his wife Linda and two daughters, Karen and Laura.

⁷⁸ *Far East*, February/March 1969, 1; see also August 25, 1968, 1; July 25, 1968, 10-11.

at Moulmein Road”, as Rice had put it.⁷⁹ Hogan himself put the figure as at four: “The church here at Moulmein Road began from scratch (four members) in August 1968.”⁸⁰ Yet, in the more than two decades of his ministry at Moulmein Road, he would lead the congregation to phenomenal growth not only within the congregation itself, but also in the larger picture of the church in Singapore. Hogan set himself and the Moulmein Road church some very ambitious goals.

As my life relates to Singapore, and of course, assuming it is the Lord’s will, we expect, within the next two decades to fulfil at least three goals. One of these ... [is] to begin one new congregation each year for the next ten years in Singapore. At the same time we expect the Moulmein Road church to grow to a membership of at least 1600 by 1976 ... This project will be an ambitious one and I expect to be right in the middle of it. With a congregation of this size, at least 80 classrooms will be required, staffed with a teaching force numbering 240. It is my prayer that with this development, evangelism will continue to burn in our bones and we will be sending out and supporting a powerful army of Asian missionaries. Thirdly, as President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, I look forward to training that army of missionaries.⁸¹

Though these goals did not materialise as envisaged, they nevertheless contributed to very positive results respectively.

⁷⁹ Ibid., August 25, 1968, 3.

⁸⁰ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, November/December 1, 1975, 1. But in his May 1, 1975 newsletter, he put the figure as eight. This latter figure may have included the Hogans themselves, besides the four. In an interview with the author at Hogan’s home in Searcy, Arkansas, in October 2014, Hogan mentioned to the author that the four people were Alice Chua, the church secretary then, and three students. Hogan said that he decided to stay despite the odds.

⁸¹ Ibid., September 1, 1973, 1.

Moulmein Road grew to a size of two hundred and thirty by 1975.⁸² The congregation planted two churches, Jurong and Ang Mo Kio; and was significantly involved in a third, Siglap/Bedok, in the first decade of the setting of these goals. And Four Seas produced a batch of graduates under Hogan's watch who became preachers in Singapore and Malaysia. These include Kwan Tai Choom (Upper Serangoon), Raybestor Loke (Geylang), Dave Hogan (Moulmein Road), Richard Loh (Moulmein Road and later, Ang Mo Kio), Richard Chia, Kon Pak Fook (both at Siglap/Bedok), Edwin Choy (Ang Mo Kio and Moulmein Road), Paul Tan (Geylang), Foo Sek San (deaf ministry, Moulmein Road), Tony Yeung (Bedok, Pasir Panjang, Lavender (Chinese ministry)) and Andrew Ng (Ponggol/North-East); Seow Choon Leong (currently a leading Hebrew professor at Vanderbilt⁸³); and in Malaysia, Peter S. Oon (Penang), Francis Pavlas (Johor Baru and Ipoh), Lau Kin Fatt and Chrissie (Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Penang and Puchong), John Lachmana (Kuala Lumpur), Wong Yoon Mik (Ayer Tawar), Frank & Lily Leong (Malacca and Ipoh Garden East), Richard Lim (Moulmein Road Mandarin service, and Seremban), Annis R. Yankaya (Johor Baru), Ting Kong Eyo (Johor Baru), Ong Chong Fatt (Penang and Petaling Jaya), and Michael Cheah (Penang and Klang); besides other men and women who served in the churches in various capacities.

The church planting efforts were monumental tasks and their successes praiseworthy. But evidently, they could not be done at the rate of one per year as Hogan had envisaged. Nor was the goal of 1,600 members by year 1976, or an "army" of evangelists all across Asia realised (though there was a little army in Singapore and Malaysia as shown by the names listed

⁸² Ibid., May 1, 1975, 1.

⁸³ Owed this information to Dave Hogan.

above). But still, the “awesome task of evangelism”⁸⁴ had to continue. And Hogan was wise enough to tweak his ambition and goals to more achievable rates.

Goals selected must be those that can be achieved, yet faith in God, to make up the difference for our short-sightedness must be present.⁸⁵

He did this in 1980, working with the Moulmein Road congregation to come up with a five-year development plan, which was published in his June 1, 1980 *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*. The plans were quite comprehensive and divided into two parts: (1) physical and (2) spiritual. Under physical, there were plans to expand classroom space – “the purchase of the property next to the present church building” – and encourage an increase in the weekly contribution as well as pledges from members to enable negotiations to begin for the purchase of the next-door property (which, however, did not materialise). Under spiritual, they included a target of a net increase of fifty members per year over the next five years, support of evangelists and missionaries, soul-winning through Bible correspondence courses, gospel meeting and personal evangelism, expansion of the deaf work and the formation of a Mandarin language congregation.

In pursuing the “awesome task of evangelism” and church growth, Hogan worked hard and pushed hard. Personally, and along with Moulmein Road, he achieved remarkable success within the churches of Christ. Yet there was one goal (and, for the matter, possibly a few others) that eluded him. This was his effort to have elders at Moulmein Road. In his July 1, 1974 report, under the headline, EFFORTS TO APPOINT ELDERS FAIL, Hogan wrote:

⁸⁴ Ibid., June 1, 1980, 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Two years ago a proposal was made here at Moulmein to proceed with the appointment of elders. A committee was formed to search out those who might qualify. Since the congregation is made up largely of young, unmarried people, the field was quickly narrowed with the result that brother Don Green and myself were chosen. Time was given for scriptural objections. As is usual, there were some objections but not scriptural ones. However, rather than cause unnecessary difficulty at that time it was decided to shelve the matter to an indefinite time, giving opportunity for further study on the part of new members.

During May I reasoned that surely enough time had passed; therefore announced to the church that elders would be ordained. (Titus 1:5) This again caused a stir, and especially among some who seemed to count elders as a threat rather than a blessing. The event also resulted in interference from a man who is not even a member of the Moulmein congregation. Others who are unlearned and pride filled surfaced and have been sowing discord.

Needless to say, the efforts to bring Moulmein to maturity in this connection has failed for the time being. We believe that the brethren continue to grow and that as local men qualify elders will (*sic*) be appointed.

In fact, three men were proposed as elders. Besides Gordon Hogan and Don Green, the third was Herman Burrough, an expatriate with an offshore oil company.⁸⁶ According to one of the members present at the time, the larger majority of the Moulmein Road congregation objected to the eldership because they did not want to have American domination over them.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Per Dave Hogan in a conversation with the writer in Singapore in November 2022.

⁸⁷ Per Seah Siow Hwee in a conversation with the writer in Melbourne in 2022.

Don Green was in Singapore between 1971 and 1975. In the time he was there, he taught at Four Seas College and also worked together with Gordon Hogan and Eddy Ee at Moulmein Road. He also studied Mandarin at the Nanyang University and became “proficient enough to preach in Mandarin”; whereupon, he began a Mandarin congregation at Moulmein Road.⁸⁸ In this, he was assisted, in succession, by three Chinese-educated Four Seas students who were from Malaysia: Lau Kin Fatt (Ipoh), Frank Leong (Ipoh) and Richard Lim (Seremban).⁸⁹

Gordon Hogan must have been quite disappointed by his failure to have elders at Moulmein Road, given the choice of his words. To this day, Moulmein Road does not have elders when two others, Lim Ah Pin and Pasir Panjang, have appointed theirs. It is not known how this episode had affected the psyche of Moulmein Road or other congregations in Singapore over having elders. This writer recalled a time when he and a few of his fellow preachers from Singapore and Malaysia were discussing the “pros and cons” of having ‘elder-led’ and ‘minister-led’ churches during a meal at a hawker centre in Singapore. There was a palpable wariness on the part of some to have ‘elder-led’ churches even though all recognised that church elders are the biblical thing to have.

On February 1, 1985, Gordon Hogan resigned as President of Four Seas College⁹⁰; in his own words, “to devote full attention to the church at Moulmein Road”.⁹¹ But, there was an

⁸⁸ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, July, August, September 1975. See also, See Don Green’s *South East Asia Evangelist*, Vol. 1, No. 5, October 15, 1975, 2; and his *Singapore Mission Report*, January 1975, in which he proudly said, “It is great to be able to preach the Gospel in the national language of China. I could now preach to Chairman Mao of China, if he would listen.”

⁸⁹ *South East Asia Evangelist*, Vol. 1, No. 6, December 28, 1975, 1.

⁹⁰ *Far East/World Evangelism*, March 1985, 3-4.

⁹¹ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, August 1, 1987, 1.

undercurrent to his resignation. This was evident in Hogan’s remark that in the 17 years since his coming to Singapore, from 1968 to 1985, “Rice did not **meddle** (emphasis, writer’s) in the church or school affairs”.⁹² The reason for Hogan’s resignation was that Hogan and Rice had a fall-out over Hogan’s son, Dave, who was also teaching at Four Seas and preaching at Moulmein Road upon his return from Harding College in the early 1980s. Dave Hogan wrote three articles in the Four Seas’ student body publication, *The Evangelist*, in July of 1983 on worship⁹³ (which later led to the ‘All-Life-Is-Worship’ controversy, which incidentally, is still simmering to this day; (see story on Controversies). Also, Dave shared an article by Bruce Terry on Holy Spirit baptism,⁹⁴ most likely, with his Four Seas students, and with some other members of the church in Singapore and Malaysia. These met with the disapproval of Rice; and Dave was labelled a ‘false teacher’ and “asked to step down as a teacher” at Four Seas College “after consultation with him”.⁹⁵ Dave’s own account of this is that it was his father, Gordon Hogan, who advised him to resign from Four Seas College.⁹⁶

Hogan continued with his ministry at Moulmein Road until he returned to the States with his wife Jane in 1993 to care for his ailing father, William Hogan. He would make annual returns to Singapore for some years until his wife Jane passed

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ These articles were reproduced and dealt extensively by Rice in his publication *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 11-21.

⁹⁴ As per Rice in his *Contending for the Faith*, April 1984, Vol. XV, No. 4, 4. Rice reproduced, in full, Bruce Terry’s article, first published in *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 21: No. 4, Article 1.

⁹⁵ *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 16.

⁹⁶ In a conversation with the writer in late November 2022 in Singapore. Dave mentioned too that it was Pat McGee who wrote to Ira Y. Rice about Dave’s articles; and when he was doing it, he was staying with the Hogans.

away on 17 January 2016. Thereafter, he would return periodically.

Dave and Debbie Hogan (1993 -)

With Gordon Hogan's departure, the baton was passed onto his son, Dave Hogan. Strictly speaking, this may not be quite right since Dave had very much had an active role in preaching and ministering at Moulmein Road prior to his father's departure.

In the context of the conservative-fundamentalism planted by the missionaries in churches of Christ in Singapore and Malaysia from the very beginning, Dave Hogan became a lightning rod for controversy for his perceived liberal views. In the initial stage of the Rice-Hogan spat and as Rice called out Dave Hogan a 'false teacher' and asked him to step down from the faculty of Four Seas, the Moulmein Road congregation stood by Hogan and Dave.⁹⁷ But things took a different turn after Hogan returned to the States and Dave was left at Moulmein Road. As events happened, a group became disaffected with Dave Hogan. Things came to a boil during the 'Rice-Four Seas-Moulmein Road' tussle for the property at Moulmein Road.

This came about in the aftermath of the Singapore government's decision in 1985 to compulsorily take back the land in Punggol on which Four Seas College stood. Ira Rice asked for use of the Moulmein Road building, which was refused by the Moulmein Road leadership. This was the beginning of a conflict which eventually found its way to the law court. By about 1996, the church at Moulmein Road was divided over how to meet the demands of Rice. One group favoured Rice's demand (through

⁹⁷ See Rice's story on "Moulmein Road Church Violates II John 9-11 By Accepting Dave Hogan Without Correction" in *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 16-21.

Four Seas) for a sum of money in addition to two other conditions if Moulmein Road were to keep the property.⁹⁸ Another questioned the ethics of this decision. In the meantime, Moulmein Road put in a caveat on the property. Rice sued to remove the caveat and pressed further on his demands. Moulmein Road sought counsel from a lawyer; but at the same time, it also tried to raise funds to meet Rice's demands.⁹⁹

As it turned out, Moulmein Road failed to raise the sum required by Rice¹⁰⁰ and the conflict went to court for arbitration. But it became evident that Rice through Four Seas did not have a case and the judge (Justice Woo Bih Li) advised both parties to settle out of court on 2 January 2001. Both sides agreed on S\$250,000 + \$195,000 (for Bedok's loan) as settlement, with Four Seas accepting the sum but without Moulmein Road having to meet the other conditions including the transfer of the Jurong lease title to the Jurong congregation. However, Moulmein Road was gracious to voluntarily transfer the said title to Jurong subsequently.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ S\$1,508,000 (40% of the average between Four Seas' valuation and Moulmein's valuation of the Moulmein Road property) + S\$195,000 (loan for the Bedok property, this amount was to be settled by 31 December 1998) + transfer of the Jurong property title, which was held by Moulmein Road, to Jurong). From a Powerpoint presentation "History & Lessons, Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration", 6 August 2017.

⁹⁹ Most parts of this paragraph are based on a conversation the writer had with Dave Hogan at the Moulmein Road building in late November 2022.

¹⁰⁰ Per one account, there was a lot of posturing on the fund-raising; there were people pledging money but with no intention of fulfilling their pledges.

¹⁰¹ "History & Lessons, Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration", 6 August 2017.

David and Peggy Lee (1998 – 2000)

In the thick of this crisis at Moulmein Road, David Lee¹⁰², an elder of a church in Albuquerque in New Mexico was invited by certain members in Moulmein Road to minister to the congregation in 1998 as an intended foil to Dave Hogan.

David Lee had carved his name in the corporate world with Honeywell, having worked in China and Singapore. But he had a ‘feel’ for mission work. While in China, he had breakfast one time with his visiting CEO, Dr. James Renier, in a hotel in Shanghai in June 1984. In the ensuing conversation, David Lee formed the decision not to spend his entire life in the corporate world. His father-in-law, A. L. Harbin, had wanted him to be a preacher. But he knew he was not the “public-speaking-type”; more on the “one-to-one-teaching”. In 1985 he travelled through some of the so-called Third World countries in Asia and he developed the idea that he would be a vocational missionary. While in Asia, he had visited Singapore several times and had even worked in the country for one-and-a-half years (1987-88). In this time, he had occasions to meet and visit with several members from Moulmein Road, like Peter Ho (in Hong Kong) and John Ong (in Albuquerque), and they would ask him to come to Singapore and help the church. His reply was that Singapore was not a Third World country. In any case, they continued their pursuit on and off.

He retired from Honeywell in 1993 and went on to work for a small company helping with a native American (Indian) Reservation until April 1998.¹⁰³ And when Moulmein Road called again, he decided to give it a go. Part of this decision was

¹⁰² One of the sons of Polly Lee, a pioneer of the Queenstown church.

¹⁰³ He was given a year’s paid leave and “granted extra credit to qualify for retirement” from Honeywell, which allowed him to keep his retirement benefits. He left work on the Indian Reservation on his 55th birthday, which was on 7 April 1998.

that Peggy's mother, Fannie, had a stroke in 1997 and was not doing well health wise, especially with her memory. David Lee thought that bringing her back to Singapore might help her memory. He came first in June/July 1998 and Peggy came with her mother later.

When David Lee arrived at Moulmein Road, he was fully aware of the enveloping Rice-Four Seas-Moulmein Road crisis: that Rice had wanted to "take back" the property at Moulmein Road for Four Seas College.¹⁰⁴ Those who had asked him to come had asked him too to "lead an effort to find a solution to the crisis".¹⁰⁵ But they did not inform him that Rice had offered them the property if they "got rid of Dave Hogan".¹⁰⁶ David Lee tried to stay neutral in his effort to guide the congregation through all this. He met with the Steering Committee at the time (Stephen Chang, Wat Tat Chuen, Peter Ho, John Ong and one other person). A task team comprising Justin Chan (a lawyer),

¹⁰⁴ Rice thought he could do this because the property was bought and registered in his name, albeit with funds raised from churches and individuals in the States for church purposes. Rice on a return visit to Singapore, had on 27 May 1987, met with his lawyer to discuss "how best to nail down the trusteeship of the 131 Moulmein Road, Singapore property". He named Bill Cline, Pat McGee, Ernest Underwood, David Chew, Eddy Ee, Kwan Tai Choom, Lim Cher Yam and John Goh as being present also in this meeting (in *Contending for the Faith*, July 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 7, 10). In a board meeting of Four Seas College on August 27, 1983, three additional names were added as trustees of the college in addition to Ira Y. Rice; namely, Archie W. Luper, Dalton P. Ellis and Vada Rice (in *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 15). But in 1992, the Singapore government banned foreigners from owning landed property in Singapore. Rice then transferred the Moulmein Road property to a trusteeship comprising Eddy Ee, Kwan Tai Choom and Ng Seok Lan (sister Baby) for a paper value of S\$300,000. In "History & Lessons, Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration", 6 August 2017.

¹⁰⁵ In a clarification from David Lee made via email dated 3 June 2021.

¹⁰⁶ David Lee, in WhatsApp conversation on 3 May 2021.

Chan Kim Kai (an engineer) and Joseph Lee Jong Wah (a real estate agent) was formed to forge a solution to the crisis.

But even David Lee's personable skills and efforts were not enough to bring peace to the congregation. He came to believe the Moulmein Road property was not the problem. The problem was "spiritual warfare" as he put it. The property was only "a symbol of the warfare". The camp that had grown disenchanted with Dave Hogan walked out from the main congregation to meet in the afternoon at the Moulmein Road premises. This was about April 2000. They later called themselves the Shrewsbury Church of Christ¹⁰⁷ while still at Moulmein Road. However, they subsequently moved to meet with a group from Lim Ah Pin, who had disagreed on an issue of the Holy Spirit with the Lim Ah Pin leadership and left the congregation to meet at the Pico Centre in Lavender Street. This came to be known as the Lavender church.

David Lee left Moulmein Road to return to the States in 2000 somewhat disappointed and burnt by the whole episode. In his own words, he was "heartbroken", "felt like an abject failure", with "both sides mad at me".¹⁰⁸

Others Who Ministered

Besides the persons discussed above, there were a few others who ministered at Moulmein Road too.

¹⁰⁷ The road behind the church property was Shrewsbury Road. The Shrewsbury group actually registered themselves with the Registrar of Societies as the Shrewsbury Church of Christ with 131 Moulmein Road as its address. Amongst those in the group were Stephen Chang, Chang Chee Wee, Wat Tatt Chuen and Lee Hock (who later moved to worship with the Pasir Panjang congregation). Per Dave Hogan, in conversation with the writer at Moulmein Road, November 2022.

¹⁰⁸ David Lee, in WhatsApp conversation on 3 May 2021.

Eddy Ee

Eddy Ee was trained at the Korea Christian College in Seoul, Korea. Upon his graduation and return to Singapore in February 1968, he first preached at Upper Serangoon for about two years together with Tan Keng Koon. In 1970 he moved to minister at Moulmein Road. He was in Seremban, Malaysia, to serve with the congregation from February 1971 to August 1973 when Ken Sinclair was on furlough in the United States. Subsequently he returned to Moulmein Road and resumed his ministry with the congregation. But when Moulmein Road planted the Jurong congregation in 1974/75, Eddy left Moulmein Road to spearhead the new Jurong work where he has remained since.

Richard Loh

Richard Loh was a graduate of Four Seas College. He “succeeded Eddy Ee at Moulmein Road”. In 1978, the church began its second church planting effort (after Jurong) in Ang Mo Kio, initially with a “regular Bible study group”. A year later, this Bible study group “became a full-fledged congregation” in its own right. Richard Loh was sent and supported by Moulmein Road to minister to this new Ang Mo Kio congregation.¹⁰⁹

Chang Chee Wee

Chang Chee Wee (baptised by Gordon Hogan on 26 August 1973) served as the minister of the church from June 1986 to 1989. He was the result of more than a year’s search “for one among us to serve full-time in the ministry”. Gordon Hogan described him as “a careful student of the Bible and has served the Lord faithfully in many, many areas ... giving up a

¹⁰⁹ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, February 1, 1980.

promising career, by the way men reason”.¹¹⁰ With Chee Wee serving full-time, it allowed Gordon Hogan to be away from Moulmein Road for extended periods. For example, Hogan taught for the academic year 1987-88 at Freed-Hardeman College as missionary-in-residence.¹¹¹

Eric Tan Yew Ngee

Eric Tan Yew Ngee preached for the Mandarin congregation from July 1986 to 1988 as its full-time minister. The Mandarin service was another effort on the part of Moulmein Road to meet with the spiritual needs of the Chinese-speaking members (mainly, the older generation) who had little or no understanding of the English language. There had been Teochew, Cantonese and Mandarin services before; but these would wane off after some time. This latest effort began as a Sunday evening service in July 1980 with the assistance of Tan Gan Ou, Kwan Tai Choom (from Upper Serangoon) and Eric Tan himself (he was at Ang Mo Kio then). The service grew and it was shifted to the mornings. In 1996, the Mandarin congregation moved to meet at the Bedok premises because Moulmein Road was undergoing renovations. It decided to stay there even after the renovations were completed. In 2003, Eric Tan left Moulmein Road and placed his membership with the Pasir Panjang congregation.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ibid., April 1, 1986. Also, in WhatsApp message from Chang Chee Wee, 27 June 2021. Chee Wee went on to study at Harding University in 1992.

¹¹¹ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, June 1, 1987; *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 11.

¹¹² *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, June 1, 1986; also June 1, 1980. Eric Tan provided much of information for this piece on the Mandarin congregation. He continues to preach for the Mandarin congregation in Bedok from time to time and has visited China several times on mission trips under Pasir Panjang’s mission work to China programme (in notes provided by Eric Tan through e-mail dated 21/7/2022).

Foo Sek San

In July 1986, a deaf ministry was started. Foo Sek San worked with this deaf ministry translating the sermons into sign language in the English worship services.¹¹³

Edwin Choy

In January 2003, the Ang Mo Kio (AMK) congregation merged with Moulmein Road.¹¹⁴ The name Moulmein Road was retained for the merged entity. Edwin Choy, who was ministering at AMK (after Richard Loh left the ministry for the corporate world), became co-ministers with Dave Hogan at Moulmein Road. He voluntarily went on half-pay in 2015 and two years later, he became fully self-supporting but still maintaining his ministry with the congregation.¹¹⁵

Chan Kim Kai

Chan Kim Kai, an engineer by training, joined the staff on a part-time basis in April 2014 to act as a facilitating liaison for the new building project which began in 2010 (see below). He took on a full-time role in January 2015 and has remained since.

¹¹³ Ibid., August 1, 1986.

¹¹⁴ In "History & Lessons, Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration", 6 August 2017.

¹¹⁵ Edwin Choy, in WhatsApp messages, 8 April 2021. He co-founded Centre for Fathering in the late 1990s (possibly, 1999, as noted by Dave Hogan) with two other members of Moulmein Road. Centre for Fathering served to promote better fathering practices to improve the bond between fathers and their children. Edwin now runs his own company, Resourcefull, which provides coaching on life relationships.

Thellak Mithiran

In June 2019, Thellak Mithiran (from Seremban) joined the staff at Moulmein Road as its youth minister. He was a chemical engineer by training (National University of Singapore) but went on to do graduate Bible studies at Oklahoma Christian University in the States.

Rebuilding

In 2010, the congregation embarked on a project to have a completely new facility built on its present site to meet its expanding attendance and needs. The church had its last official worship service at the old building on 10 January 2015. Gordon Hogan came from the States to preach in this service. The building which had served Moulmein Road for more than six decades was demolished on 30 July 2015. A new sparkling building stands in its place today. It was completed in 2017 and the official opening service was held on 11 June 2017. More than 450 people were in attendance.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ During the time the new building was being constructed the congregation met at the Oasia Hotel Novena for its services. In “History & Lessons, Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration”, 6 August 2017.

MUAR AND KLUANG, MALAYSIA

The story of the early beginnings of the churches of Christ in Malaysia is closely intertwined with Ira Y. Rice's early efforts to establish the Lord's church in Singapore. As we saw in the story on Moulmein Road, it was through Cecil Chen that Rice was introduced to John Wong who, in turn, introduced Rice to Lye Hong Meng. Lye Hong Meng was to play a pivotal role in the establishment of the first churches in Malaysia, Muar and Kluang, even before he became Rice's first convert.¹¹⁷

Lye Hong Meng, upon his acquaintance with Rice, introduced Rice to one Chew Seng Teck from Kluang. Chew Seng Teck was an educationist. He was headmaster of the Chung Eng Primary School (run by the Presbyterian church). He later started his own school, the Holy Light School in 1956.¹¹⁸ He was also a Presbyterian and acted as 'pastor' to the Hokkien Presbyterians in Kluang. But he could not quite understand, and was rather unhappy, why the Presbyterians in Kluang were not allowed to decide matters on their own but had to refer to higher Presbyterian authorities elsewhere. When Rice came to Kluang, he explained to Chew Seng Teck that churches of Christ had local autonomy everywhere: every local church made their own decisions on their own affairs. This caught Chew Seng Teck's attention and interest. He invited Rice to teach and preach to his group. "Practically every week over the next three months", Rice would do this. However, Rice had a handicap. He could not teach and preach in the Chinese language and neither

¹¹⁷ The material for this story on Muar and Kluang, including quotes, unless otherwise indicated, are from Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Pressing Toward the Mark, An Autobiography*, Vol. II, *Missionary Work: 1955 to 1965* (Dallas, G. T. Press, 2001), chapter 9.

¹¹⁸ Per David Chew, in interview with the writer on 6 August 2015.

could Chew Seng Teck and his group understand English. Thus, Rice roped in Lye Hong Meng to act as his translator.

The first result of this ‘Rice-preaching-and-Lye-translating’ co-operative effort was that the group decided to call themselves the Kluang Church of Christ (as evidenced in their signage on their “new frame, thatched building”, which was opened on 21 June, 1955). Harder to accomplish for Rice was to convince them “to give up their piano – but they finally did so”. However, what baffled Rice was that each time he preached, he would, in his own words, “bore down on the necessity of their being baptized ... but none responded for baptism”.

Then one day, Henry Tan accompanied Rice to Kluang and heard Lye Hong Meng’s translation of Rice’s preaching. On the way back to Singapore that night, the two talked about sprinkling, pouring and immersion. It dawned upon Henry Tan that Lye Hong Meng was translating baptism as “*swye*” (“to wash”), instead of “*bai chong*” (“to bury”).¹¹⁹ “*Bai chong*” or “*mái zàng*” (in Hanyu pinyin) is close enough to the nuance of immersion as the proper mode of baptism. Henry Tan suggested to Rice that he should talk about this with Lye Hong Meng.

At the same time, Lye Hong Meng, upon his return to his home in Muar, “studied all that night about baptism using his Chinese concordance”. He had thought that Rice was mistaken about baptism “being immersion”; and that was why he was translating it as “*swye*”, “to wash”. Through consultation with his Chinese concordance, Lye Hong Meng came to “realize that baptism *really was* immersion”. Convinced of this, he took his motorcycle early in the morning and rode it all the way to Rice’s

¹¹⁹ Rice’s own phonetic spellings: “*swye*”, probably, is a phonetic sound for the Fujian or Chaozhou dialect word, which means “to wash” (‘*xǐ*’ 洗, in Hanyu pinyin). Similarly, too, for “*bai chong*”, “to bury” (“*mái zàng*”, 埋葬).

house in Singapore to have Rice baptise him into Christ. This was on 30 June 1955.

Lye Hong Meng was once a preacher in the Methodist Church. Disagreeing with some doctrine in the denomination, he broke away to establish his own Jesus Christ Church, which met at his rented house in Muar. His conversion and baptism led to 38 other baptisms from the Jesus Christ Church into the church of Christ; thus, making Muar the first of the Lord's church in Malaysia.

Rice recounted his "thrilling experience" one day when "13 people [were] baptized all on the same occasion" in the Muar River:

They were of all ages – all Chinese – including a school teacher, a Chinese doctor, two mechanics, two aged people, a foundry worker, and several students.

Kluang followed soon after. With Lye Hong Meng's mistranslation on baptism cleared, the path was open for the right teaching to reach the hearts and minds of the Kluang folks. They began to request for Rice to baptise them and the baptisms took place in the Mengkibol River, "just a couple of miles south of the town". Among those baptised were three sons of Chew Seng Teck, Peter Chew, John Chew and David Chew. But Chew Seng Teck, for reasons known only to himself, held back for a long while. He was not baptised until more than a year and a half after Rice first came to Kluang. The elder Chew "finally surrendered in December, 1956" and preached for the Kluang church in his Hokkien dialect.¹²⁰

John Chew went to live with the Rices in Singapore and studied under Rice for fourteen months "to become a gospel preacher". He went on to share the preaching duties with his

¹²⁰ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*, January 1973, 3.

father in Kluang until his (John's) "untimely death on March 6, 1982". He was not supported by the church, but self-supporting through his work as the chief printer of Ming Seen Press in Kluang.¹²¹ In this, he was possibly the first "tent-maker" in Malaysia or Singapore.

David Chew went on to study at Abilene Christian College in the States and upon his return, he was involved in the preaching work at Moulmein Road in the early years. He, too, taught at Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, becoming its Registrar; and later, President. On top of his teaching and preaching duties in Singapore, he would return on weekends to preach in Kluang for many years. He retired in 2011.

A Later Unhappy Episode in Kluang

The Kluang church had a rather unhappy history later on. After Look Yu Sang had left the Seremban ministry, he came to preach in Kluang in 1978. At first, he served with the existing church which, at this time, was meeting at X-19, Jalan Nenas. But disagreements and doctrinal differences with Chew Seng Teck¹²² soon led Look Yu Sang to establish another congregation at 32 Jalan Limau. Things came to a head in April 1980 when Look Yu Sang issued a letter marking the X-19 congregation and Chew Seng Teck in particular, "after much patience and months of preachings (*sic*)". The X-19 congregation was marked for "harboring (*sic*) to themselves a false teacher, Chew Seng Teck, rather than listening to the truth", as Look Yu Sang alleged in his

¹²¹ Rice, *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 122. Also, *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*, May-June 1982, 1.

¹²² David Chew, in interview with the writer, 6 August 2015.

circular letter to churches in Malaysia and Singapore.¹²³ Of Chew Seng Teck, he wrote:

Brother Chew had no training in the truth. His teachings and convictions are that of the Presbyterians for he himself was one. Having so many erroneous views (that is, he himself does not know the way), how can he leads (*sic*) the listeners to heaven.

The “erroneous views” that Chew Seng Teck was accused of having could be grouped mainly into two sections:

- (1) relative to the Holy Spirit – direct operation of the Holy Spirit, miraculous gifts existing, God still spoke in dreams and visions; and
- (2) relative to church and salvation – fellowshipping with denominations and baptism not essential for salvation.¹²⁴

Chew Seng Teck and the X-19 congregation were subsequently disfellowshipped by Look Yu Sang.¹²⁵

¹²³ This circular letter to churches in Malaysia and Singapore was dated April 10, 1980.

¹²⁴ The letter listed eight “erroneous views” of Chew Seng Teck, with point 8 extended to four sub-points.

¹²⁵ Chew Seng Teck passed away on 17 November 1980. His wife, Loh Chee Seen, was also disfellowshipped by Look Yu Sang on December 29, 1980. These disfellowships came to the fore again in the aftermath of the Tai-Pan Incident, when Look Yu Sang accused David Chew and Kwan Tai Choom of being inconsistent as the two continued to preach in the X-19 congregation even after it was disfellowshipped. David Chew was even accused of fellowshipping with his disfellowshipped mother! See Look Yu Sang’s letter dated May 5, 1987, “Issue: Exposing The Inconsistency And Hypocrisy Of The Trio: David Chew, Kwan Tai Choom and Eddy Ee”.

Not much is known of the church started by Look Yu Sang. It probably ceased to exist after he left Kluang when he and his wife, Phyllis, were divorced.

As of the X-19 church, its last known address and meeting place was at 26 (First Floor) Jalan Teoh Siew Khor, 86000 Kluang. Teo Hock Heng was said to be the person preaching for this congregation after David Chew was unable to travel to Kluang from Singapore due to health issues.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ David Chew, in interview with the writer, 6 August 2015. The writer has since been informed by Phua Choon Huat that the Kluang church no longer exists (in email dated 29 July 2024).

PART TWO

CHURCHES IN MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur

Penang

Seremban, Port Dickson

Ipoh

Ipoh Garden East

Klang

Johor Baru

Kuching and the Interiors

Petaling Jaya

Others

PART TWO OTHER CHURCHES IN MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR

Ira Y. and Vada Rice (1961 – 1963)

After Muar and Kluang, the next church to be established in Malaysia was Kuala Lumpur.¹²⁷ Ira Y. Rice, having established the Moulmein Road church in Singapore and the two churches in Muar and Kluang in Malaya, began to set his sights on Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of the Federated States of Malaya then.¹²⁸ His plan was to have the A. L. Harbins take over the work in Singapore and he and Vada would go up to Kuala Lumpur after the Harbins were properly introduced and settled in Singapore.¹²⁹

The Rices arrived in Kuala Lumpur in April 1961 to begin the definitive mission work in the city. After several weeks of preparation, Ira Rice was confident enough to open the doors for

¹²⁷ Kahang, in Johor, was historically the third place where an attempt was made to establish a church. But the work under Charlie Ng Fock Lam never really took off despite a year's effort put into it. The work was subsequently abandoned. Muar and Kluang were serendipitous opportunities opened to Ira Y. Rice through Lye Hong Meng. Rice did not know about these places before his encounter with Lye Hong Meng and thus, he could not have intentionally wanted to evangelise these two small Malayan towns in the first place. Thus, Kuala Lumpur would be his first planned place to evangelise in Malaya/Malaysia.

¹²⁸ In his *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, July 15, 1960, he made a case to purchase a building in Kuala Lumpur for church purposes in his "Million-for-the-Billion" Campaign when he was back in the States to raise a million dollars for mission work in Asia and Australia indicating his plan to be in Kuala Lumpur. In an untitled newsletter dated October 15 1961, he positively stated this intent.

¹²⁹ *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, September 1, 1960.

the first worship service. This took place on 21 May 1961 in their rented residence, 8 Jalan Terap, Sentul. Of the more than hundred and twenty invited, seventeen came, with two children in tow, and together with the Rice family, there were twenty-six in attendance in this first worship service.¹³⁰ As Rice put it, the work in Kuala Lumpur did not start “cold-turkey” in contrast to Singapore. In the several years he was in Singapore, Rice had made some “lively contacts” through his Dale Carnegie (DC) connection.¹³¹

Rice was invited by the Methodists (most probably his DC students) to speak in their fellowship meetings. On two occasions, June 17 and 24, he spoke to the Methodist Youth Fellowship. He also had opportunity to speak at the Methodist Boys’ School. This led some of their young people to attend the Bible classes at Jalan Terap. No doubt, these contacts with the Methodist groups were the reason that a large number of the early converts were Methodists.¹³²

¹³⁰ *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 22 May 1961. In comparison, there were only eight in attendance at the inaugural meeting on 9 March 1955 in Singapore. Rice also listed the names of those who were in attendance (and their occupation). But in his book, *Pressing Toward the Mark*, Vol. II, pp. 299-30, Rice gave a variant account of the beginnings of the KL church and the first service. In this account, he listed 35 (out of 40 DC students invited) as being present for the first Sunday service (date not mentioned).

¹³¹ Rice was influenced by Chiu Nang Yang, head of Dale Carnegie in Singapore and Malaya to be trained as a DC instructor, which Rice duly did when he was in the States in 1959. And this was to have an impact in his mission foray into Kuala Lumpur. The 17 who came for the first service were all his DC students (see his untitled newsletter dated October 15, 1961). However, Rice’s association with Dale Carnegie came to an abrupt end when Chiu Nang Yang told him to stop “proselytizing Dale Carnegie students to Christianity”, in *Pressing*, Vol. II, p. 305.

¹³² Rice had ruminated, “To be honest, brethren, I do not know where all this is leading – and I’m very sure the Methodists don’t know either!” in *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 22 May 1961.

The first two converts were a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lingam, who were among the seventeen that were in attendance at the first worship service in May. The Lingams, not surprisingly, were Methodists and also former DC students of Rice. He was a “top salesman for Borneo Motor Company” and she a “teletypist”.¹³³ Their baptisms took place on the night of 10 September 1961, some four months after their initial attendance.

On making converts and baptising people, Rice boasted: “to get people out here just to be baptized can be astonishingly easy”. But his experience in Singapore made him realise that baptising someone and truly converting them were two different things. Thus, he decided “to engage in a steady, thorough, longer-range teaching program, planting and watering and waiting upon God to give the “increase” in his own good time”. But he admitted, “To do this required a great deal of patience and self-control, neither of which qualities have ever been my strong forte.” And soon, his patience grew thin. Weeks turned into months and despite the strong interest and good attendance at the services, “no one had “responded” in K.L.” He was beginning to wonder whether he was “pacing my preaching too much” (underlined, Rice’s).¹³⁴

The Lingams were baptised. But Rice wanted advice. He invited a local person, “one of the more influential ones” but “not as yet been baptized”, to lunch. Over lunch, he asked the person (not named) whether he (Rice) was going “too slow, too fast, or how, as far as getting others to obey the gospel is concerned”. The person responded:

¹³³ *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, September 12, 1961. Also, in untitled newsletter dated October 15, 1961.

¹³⁴ Untitled newsletter dated October 15, 1961.

You must realize that although many of us may be convinced already intellectually, we cannot bring ourselves to do anything about it as yet emotionally. We have loyalties to our respective denominations which go back for many years. If you press too hard just yet, instead of winning us, you will scare us off. You must give us time. Be patient. It takes longer this way, but in the long run it will be worth it.¹³⁵

Rice recognised the wisdom in the advice and accepted it. He determined to let his prospects to “volunteer when they have made up their own minds” and not to “over-persuade”.¹³⁶

In 1956, Rice wrote a Bible correspondence course (BCC), the Basic Bible Course (BBC), which he had put to good use in Singapore. The course was “designed to carry the rank beginner all the way through from his first introduction to the Bible to the Restoration Movement (*sic*)”. Rice decided to offer the same course in Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere in Malaya. The first promotional advertisement for the BBC appeared in the *Sunday Mail* on September 17 and this brought in 34 enrolments from all over Malaya. Subsequently, more advertisements were placed in the sister paper, the *Malay Mail*, and within a span of four weeks, there were more than 170 people enrolled.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid. Teaching the gospel through Bible correspondence courses was one of the primary methods of evangelism in the three decades since the first missionaries entered the region. At its height, it brought in many contacts and a sizeable number of them were converted. Its use, however, declined from the 1990s onwards, in part, due to technological and social changes; and also because Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) was used as the medium of instruction in the schools instead of English from the 1970s onwards. Consequently, many young people were not conversant in English.

The Rices were joined by the Pierces, Frank H. and Joan, and their children, Nita, Bobby and David¹³⁸, on 24 July 1961. On the arrival of the Pierces, Rice observed:

[B]rother Frank is beginning to make an indelible impression. He had hardly got to Kuala Lumpur than he was ready to go to work teaching and preaching the gospel of our Lord. And just as rapidly as possible, he is fitting himself into the overall pattern of things and already has spoken in Singapore and Kluang as well as getting underway with his work in K.L.¹³⁹

The church, which had grown to about 50, moved out of the Rices' residence in early 1962 when they rented the fourth floor of the Hui Hong Building along Ipoh Road in Kuala Lumpur. The address was 123-D, Ipoh Road.

Kenneth Rideout, missionary to Thailand, was invited to speak in the first gospel meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 18-25 March 1962. This meeting produced 19 baptisms, among whom were Chan Kim Foh, his future wife, Doris Danker, and M. Mailvaganam.¹⁴⁰ Prior to the meeting, intense preparation was made in the form of personal visits to contacts, mail invitations to Bible correspondence students, hand-to-hand cards distri-

¹³⁸ The Pierces, sponsored by the Electra congregation in Texas, were to adopt three more children into their family, Jonathan, Lisa and Rebecca Ann.

¹³⁹ *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 13 August 1961, 1.

¹⁴⁰ In an article, "Our History", written by Chan Kim Foh and published in the Kuala Lumpur church's website:

<http://klcc.faithsite.com/content.asp?CID=16664> (now defunct). The article was printed out on 29 March 2002. In this article, Chan Kim Foh mentioned the length of the gospel meeting as 15 days. This agrees better with Frank Pierce's mention of the meeting as having taken place from 17 to 31 March in his *Malaya-Far East Newsletter*, April 6, 1963.

buted and advertisements placed in the *Malay Mail*.¹⁴¹ This *modus operandi* of having gospel meetings and pre-promotional work to win converts became the norm for the next three decades in churches of Christ throughout Malaysia and Singapore.

Chan Kim Foh, who was a former and prominent member of the Methodist Church, provided strong leadership to the Kuala Lumpur church for many years, especially during the first split in 1964; and later, the one-cup controversy, the fall-out between Rice and Gordon Hogan, and the threat of Crossroadism, all of which, transpired in the 1980s.

Rice's work in Kuala Lumpur was interrupted when A. L. Harbin abruptly resigned from Moulmein Road on 15 April 1962 and returned to the States the next day.¹⁴² Rice did not immediately return to Singapore as his children were in school in Kuala Lumpur. He arranged with Frank Pierce for the latter to take up the bulk of the work in Kuala Lumpur while he would be down in Singapore for nine days out of every two weeks and the remaining five in Kuala Lumpur. This arrangement was to continue for the next nine months before Rice moved his family back to Singapore in January 1963.¹⁴³

Frank H. and Joan Pierce (1961 – 1964)

As noted above, Frank Pierce arrived with his family in Kuala Lumpur in July 1961. With his arrival, the work in Kuala Lumpur was shared between him and Rice. In particular, the Bible correspondence work, which was having more than 700

¹⁴¹ *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 13 April 1962. Rice even arranged for a local reporter (“all cocked, primed and ready with background information”) to interview Ken Rideout. In the next newsletter, 3 May 1962, the dates listed for the gospel meeting were 18 March to April 1.

¹⁴² *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 3 May 1962, 5.

¹⁴³ *Pressing*, Vol. II, 306.

students by early 1962, was carved into two: Rice taking all the students from Kuala Lumpur to Penang and Thailand in the north, and Pierce taking the southern sector down to Singapore.¹⁴⁴

Of the conversions made during these first two years through gospel meetings, Bible correspondence courses and other means of contact, one in particular stood out. Pierce described this as “one accomplishment that shall long be remembered: namely the conversion of T. Victor, the main pillar of the Tamil speaking Methodist Church in the Sentul section of Kuala Lumpur”.¹⁴⁵

T. Victor, or, Victor Thasiah, deserved a place in this history of the church in Malaysia by virtue of the person he was and by the fact that he was among the first local persons to play a significant role in the preaching and teaching work of the church.

Pierce was invited by the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) to speak in their fellowship meeting one day around Christmas in 1962. At the end of his talk, Pierce handed out enrolment cards for the Bible correspondence course to all who were present. Among them was Victor Thasiah, 20 years old at the time, and who had completed his first year of training at the Technical Teachers College. Pierce described him as having a “winning personality”. Victor was invited by the Methodist Church to be trained to become a preacher in the denomination, but he turned it down “because of a heart condition of his father”. In the process of taking the Basic Bible Course and through personal discussions with Pierce, Victor was convinced of the one church in the will of God and the necessity of baptism.

¹⁴⁴ *Far East Newsletter*, February 19, 1962. Also, in Frank Pierce, “Beginning of Church of Christ in Seremban”, written in 1996 at the request of the writer.

¹⁴⁵ *Malaya-Far East Newsletter*, April 6, 1963.

He was duly baptised on 20 March 1963. For this, he was dismissed from the Tamil Methodist Church in Sentul.¹⁴⁶

The Bible correspondence course programme continued to attract more students. By this time, 1,700 were enrolled and Pierce was complaining of being “literally covered with work”¹⁴⁷, grading lessons and answering questions sent in by the students. Rice himself felt the same way too: “we did not have enough time to do the personal follow-up teaching so sorely needed”.¹⁴⁸

As a result of a report by Rice in one of his newsletters on the matter, Thelma Eubank of Pontiac, Michigan, left her job with Pontiac Motors. Largely supporting herself with her own savings, she came to Kuala Lumpur in November 1962 to take care of the Bible correspondence work.¹⁴⁹ Later, she moved down to Singapore to assist in the Bible correspondence work at Moulmein Road; but, returned to Kuala Lumpur during Jud Whitefield’s tenure there.

First Conflict and Break-Up of the KL Church

Sometime in March 1964, Howard Merches and his family arrived in Kuala Lumpur to assist in the mission work. His coming was initially welcomed by Pierce as it relieved the latter of some of the preaching and teaching responsibilities as well as

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ *Pressing*, Vol. II, 305.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 304-5; and *Malaya-Far East Newsletter*, August 8, 1963. Dennis Cady, however, had a slightly different account of how Thelma Eubank learnt of the need and decided to come to the Far East. In 1962, Kenneth Rideout, then a missionary to Thailand, spoke at Perry Street church in Pontiac “on Asian missions and the fact that the laborers are few”. It was then that Thelma Eubank decided “she could help” and Rideout “suggested she contact Ira Rice”. See Dennis Cady, *Go Ye Meant Go Me, The Missionary Experiences of Dennis Cady* (Winona: World Evangelism Publications, 2011), 130.

the Bible correspondence work. Pierce, who had also started services in Penang because a couple who were baptised in Kuala Lumpur had moved up there, “felt more at ease to take off for a few days and give the work in Penang a real boost”.¹⁵⁰

However, this ease of peace soon turned into conflict. Dennis Cady in his book, *Go Ye Meant Go Me*, asserted:

They [Merches and Pierce] did not get along, and local people chose sides. The conflict between Frank and Howard resulted in an exchange of blows on one occasion.¹⁵¹

Ira Y. Rice, in a rather scathing account of Howard Merches, wrote:

No sooner had the Merches’ (*sic*) got to Kuala Lumpur than the anticipated fireworks began. The week was not out before here a letter came from brother Pierce indicating that instead of waiting and listening and trying to learn, Howard already was raising his contentions not only with himself personally but also with the local brethren!¹⁵²

The “one occasion” referred to by Dennis Cady most probably was related to a church service, at the end of which, one member by the name of J. B. John, asked a female member to lead in the closing prayer. Howard Merches did not object to this; instead, he kept quiet.¹⁵³ Rice in his April 1965 *Far East*

¹⁵⁰ Frank Pierce, *Malaysian Newsletter*, March 31, 1964.

¹⁵¹ Dennis Cady, *Go Ye*, 11.

¹⁵² *Far East Newsletter*, August 25, 1965, 6. But see pp. 4-8 for Rice’s full account of this conflict.

¹⁵³ This account was told to the author by Eddy Yong (now Eddie Young and residing in the States) when the latter was a guest at the writer’s home in Seremban in October 2019 while on a short visit back to Malaysia. Ira Rice also stated that Howard Merches agreed “it was all right for women to lead in publicprayer (*sic*)”, in *Far East Newsletter*, August 25, 1965, 7.

Newsletter, accused Merches of undermining the work of Pierce and sowing seeds of discord. In an effort to resolve the conflict, Mabrey Miller, an elder of the York church in Nebraska, Merches' sponsoring congregation, and John Lee, an elder of the Southside church in Electra, Texas, Pierce's sponsoring congregation, came to Kuala Lumpur to "straighten it" as Rice put it. This was in August 1964. But the conflict was too deep for any amicable solution for the two missionaries to work together in the same place again. Pierce, whose term of service in Malaysia was due in July 1965,¹⁵⁴ was asked to go to Seremban to begin a new work there. Merches was allowed to remain in Kuala Lumpur until a replacement could be sent.¹⁵⁵ Eventually, he was called back to the States not too long after.

The Kuala Lumpur church split into two as a result of the conflict: the larger group, whom Rice labelled as the "Merchesite group", stayed at the Hui Hong building at 123-D Ipoh Road, while the smaller group of about 20, which included Chan Kim Foh, Doris Chan, Victor Thasiah, the Yong siblings (Susan and Eddy), moved to the home of the Yongs' to meet ("off a back-alley behind Ipoh Road", per Rice). But within a year or so, the larger group broke up too and the smaller group returned to the Hui Hong premises.¹⁵⁶

Jud and Pansy Whitefield (June 1966 – February 1972)

With the departures of Frank Pierce and Howard Merches, the Kuala Lumpur church was without a foreign missionary for the first time. In the interim, it was left to Chan

Incidentally, Eddy Yong was baptised by Howard Merches, in *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, August & September 1966, 2 (Eddy was spelled as Eddie by Don Green).

¹⁵⁴ *Malaya-Far East Newsletter*, August 8, 1963.

¹⁵⁵ *Far East*, August 25, 1965, 7-8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

Kim Foh and Victor Thasiah and other local brethren to conduct the services. Jud Whitefield who was stationed in Seremban, shuttled between the two places to help with the teaching and preaching from July 1965 until he made the move permanent on June 15, 1966 at the request of the Kuala Lumpur congregation.¹⁵⁷ But it is more likely that Jud had wanted to make the move himself also since he had expressed the thought that “it does not seem right for 3 families to work in one town”.¹⁵⁸ At the time, besides Jud Whitefield, Richard Matlock and Phil Wright were also in Seremban.

Jud organised the very first Campaign for Christ in either Malaysia or Singapore on August 6-13, 1967 at the Chinese Assembly Hall in Kuala Lumpur. M. F. (Mid) McKnight was the invited speaker, but he fell ill before he could make the trip. Stanley Shipp spoke in his place. The campaign was sponsored by the Southside church, Electra, Texas. Its preacher at the time, Lemuel Phillips, and one of its elders, T. L. Harris, came to support the campaign.¹⁵⁹

Earlier, we mentioned Victor Thasiah. Jud Whitefield made several references to him in his newsletter reports. We reproduce one such reference to indicate Jud’s estimation of the man:

T. Victor, preacher and school teacher, has done most of the preaching and teaching since Frank Pierce moved from K.L. about 17 months ago, following internal trouble in the congregation. Victor, a former Methodist and lay-preacher wrote, and with the help of Pence Dacus and Frank Pierce, published a tract “Why I Left The Methodist Church”. It is a very good tract and we feel that it

¹⁵⁷ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, June 15, 1966. Also, in the newsletter dated January 5, 1967. In this, Jud Whitefield reported “17 faithful members in the Lord’s church at K.L.”.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1966.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, May 3, June 15, August 1 & September 5, 1967.

has done much good. This tract was distributed among his former friends of the Methodist church and quite a bit of persecution started as a result. Victor received his schooling with Government aid and is under a five year contract as the result. Pressure was exerted, possible (*sic*) by his former church, and he was moved 90 miles north to a Malay compound to teach under almost unbearable conditions for a Christian. Without Victor's leadership and zeal the church at K.L. has lost some of its spiritual vigor. The only way that Victor can break his contract is to take more schooling in a Technical school in America. He, seemingly with God's help, has obtained a scholarship and additional government aid, and is to leave for America in September of this year. He is to attend school in Fresno, California. One of the churches there has, and will continue to assist him in this. He is to spend 4 years there, then come back to Malaysia and continue teaching and preaching. Brethren, let us pray hard that this young man will stay faithful, grow in the power of the Lord, and return to Malaysia to continue preaching the gospel. He wants to support himself in the preaching of the gospel. I am disappointed in that I will not get to work with this young and talented Christian as I had planned.¹⁶⁰

Victor duly returned to Malaysia after obtaining a Master's degree in Industrial Education¹⁶¹ from the Fresno State University, Fresno, California, on 4 May 1970. Upon his return, he preached "several powerful sermons" in Kuala Lumpur and in Klang, as well as taught in some special classes.¹⁶² He married

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. The "Malay compound" was a school in Sabak Bernam in Perak (August 10, 1966).

¹⁶¹ *Newsletter from Malaysia*, A Report from Kenneth and Estelle Sinclair, July 15, 1970.

¹⁶² *Malaysian Newsletter*, February 26, 1970 and May 19, 1970.

Gladys Khoo on 3 October 1970.¹⁶³ The couple left for Fresno, California, to take up residence there. Jud observed:

Victor was given no recognition of his Master's degree in his teaching profession here. Young people from the eastern hemisphere who school in the States usually always return to the States. In order to have workers in the church here, they must be trained locally.¹⁶⁴

Jud had always in mind to have a Bible training school in which local brethren "who show abilities towards being able to take the gospel to the people of this country" could be taught more in depth in the Bible or trained to be gospel teachers and preachers. He and Don Green, missionary to Ipoh, had spent some time "talking and planning toward the daily Bible Training School".¹⁶⁵ Although such a school like the Malaysia Bible College started by Pence Dacus in Singapore (later, Four Seas) never materialised in Kuala Lumpur, nevertheless, there were periodic classes conducted daily to teach the Bible, such as the one held on December 11-16, 1967 during the school holidays.¹⁶⁶

Jud and his wife were planning to return to the States on 4 March 1972¹⁶⁷ on completion of their second three-year term. They were waiting for the arrival of Ron Warpole in February to take over Jud's place. But they had to make a hasty return on 21

¹⁶³ Ibid, September 22, 1970 and October 20, 1970. They were the third couple to be married in the Kuala Lumpur church after Chan Kim Foh & Doris Chan and Krishnan & Devi.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, April 1971.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, October 15, 1967.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, November 5, 1967. Other classes, styled as Bible Training Schools, were organised from time to time in Kuala Lumpur and in Klang too when a church was established there. See also report in April 28, 1970 issue.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, December 1971 and January 1972.

February upon receiving news from home that his mother was dying.¹⁶⁸

Some Interesting Anecdotes from Jud Whitefield

Through the course of his regular reports to Stateside, Jud made some interesting observations, some amusing, some reflecting his American bias.

“Missionaries Not Exempt from Being Robbed”

Missionaries are not exempt from being robbed. Parker and Donna Henderson were staying with the Wrights during the meeting [this was in Seremban, mine]. Monday night of the meeting, at 2:30 A.M., armed robbers broke bars on windows, smashed the glass and came into the house. They then tied the Henderson (*sic*) and Wrights up, taking the rings, watches and money. They fired shots into the landlord’s house nearby, grazing the side of their daughter, entered their house and robbed them also.¹⁶⁹

Dennis has purchased a Honda 65 Cub to use as transportation.¹⁷⁰ [A month later, mine] but it is no more in his possession. He worked late one night at the building and when he came down to go home, no Honda.

The Don Greens were down from Ipoh for a few days and upon returning to their home found that it had been broken into and most of the valuables taken and also sheets and pillow cases and other things.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, February 1972.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, September 7, 1966.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, October 15, 1966; November 15, 1966.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, November 1966.

Pansy, my wife, was down town shopping and while in a crowd a pick-pocket opened her purse and took her bill-fold containing money and identity card. The bill-fold and the I.D. card were found by the police shortly after but the thief and money remain at large.¹⁷²

On Lyndon Johnson's Visit to Kuala Lumpur (This is both hilarious and serious.)

President Johnson and Lady Bird did not get to see us while here in Kuala Lumpur. They were taken to the Parliament House during the time we were having our morning Bible study and worship. We tried to get a glimpse of them downtown but as a result were caught in a mob demonstration in which one of the leaders was shot. We were trying to get out of town but for some reason the traffic police kept turning the traffic right into the demonstration. We regret that one of the demonstrators was killed, as his companions will seek revenge until death.¹⁷³

On Benevolent Work

To give you an insight into the problems we face in attempting to do benevolent work, I will explain this one case. There are many boys both small and large, (urchins) Indians and Chinese, who beg in order to stay alive. Some of these boys have no home, some are run off (*sic*), and some run away themselves. There is one Indian boy, Michael, 13, that I have been watching for some time, feeding occasionally and trying to determine how I could help him in a more permanent way. He developed sores all over his arms and his legs that started from mosquito bites that got infected. He was agreeable, so I took him to a doctor and had him cleaned up and medicine applied. Also he was given a hair cut. The Doctor was Indian so I had him to talk to the boy and find out what he could and if he wanted a job of some kind. Michael had learned that he could get by and not work so it turned out that he does not want

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

a job of any kind. He seems to appreciate what was done, but brethren, the problem has not been solved. We are still searching for ways to do benevolent work and do it properly. Do you have any workable ideas? The only solution I have come up with, but as yet have not applied, is to start with orphaned babies.¹⁷⁴

On the May 13, 1969 Riots

The 15th of May, in Kuala Lumpur, I saw a man die for his cause. He was a Red-Terrorist, one of three that had just stopped a motorist, and tossed in a gasoline bomb. As the car burst into flames, they fled. Seven or eight soldiers who were rushed to the scene, started shooting. One of the three went down, dying for what he thought was right. We are over here to give these people the right cause to stand for, by teaching the Word of God (underlined, JW's).

Tensions were created during recent National election between Chinese and Malays. The Reds took advantage of the situation and incited a very serious riot which lasted for about 4 days. It was a planned effort by the opposition party, Red Terrorists (and local thugs) to take over the country.¹⁷⁵ (*This is grossly inaccurate, mine.*)

Dennis Cady (1966 – 1968)

Dennis Cady, a young graduate of York College in Nebraska, came to Kuala Lumpur to work alongside Jud Whitefield sometime in the last quarter of 1966¹⁷⁶ for a two-year term. He was sent by the York church under its missions

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, January 5, 1967.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, June 17, 1969. This reflects Jud Whitefield's own biased understanding of the incident, which most likely was influenced by the McCarthyism in America. His reference to red-terrorists (communists) is inaccurate. The riots actually began on May 13, 1969 in the aftermath of opposition gains in the states of Selangor and Penang in the 1969 Elections. The incident has gone down into Malaysian history as the May 13 Riots.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, October 15, 1966.

programme which came to be known as the Master's Apprentice Program (MAP). Originally, he was to go to Vietnam, but after a short visit there, during which he witnessed the devastating effects of the Vietnam war, including the destruction caused by Agent Orange, he decided to come to Malaysia.¹⁷⁷

In Kuala Lumpur, besides assisting Jud in teaching and preaching, Dennis was chiefly occupied with the Bible correspondence course (BCC) programme. He was assisted in this work by Thelma Eubank, who came back to Kuala Lumpur for a second stint after spending three years in Singapore. A short time later, Melba Bennet, who was also a graduate of York College, came and assisted in the BCC, which had close to 2,000 students enrolled at the time.¹⁷⁸

The Bible correspondence course programme led Dennis to establish a nascent church in Port Klang which later developed into the Klang church. We shall pick up this story under the chapter on Klang.

Thelma Eubank helped to shape Dennis Cady's outlook as a missionary in some significant ways. Dennis acknowledged this:

No doubt Sister Eubank's greatest contribution to my life was a respect for other people, especially in her case, Asians, as equals. In all my dealings with them since, I have taken a fraternal, as opposed to paternal, approach. I do not talk down to them because they are different. The Asians I have worked with, I have worked WITH. I have

¹⁷⁷ Dennis Cady, *Go Ye Meant Go Me, The Missionary Experiences of Dennis Cady* (Winona: World Evangelism Publications, 2011), 7-10.

¹⁷⁸ *Malaysian Newsletter*, February 15, 1967; March 20, 1967. She probably arrived around February/March and was supported by a congregation in Norwich, Kansas. She returned to the States October 1968, having completed two years of service; in *Malaysian Newsletter*, August 5, 1968. Jayletta Glaze arrived in November 1968 as Bennett's replacement. She did not stay too long though, returning home in April 1969. (*Malaysian Newsletter*, November 22, 1968 and March 19, 1969).

contributions I could make that they couldn't, but the reverse was also true.¹⁷⁹

Another influence Thelma Eubank had on Dennis was in regard to eating local food. Dennis had remarked that the Whitefields considered A&W as one of the safest places to eat and that they were troubled by the places (the street stalls) Dennis would eat at after Thelma Eubank had got to Kuala Lumpur. Dennis recounted this little story:

This started when Sister Eubank and I were standing on the open 4th floor balcony waiting for the elevator (called lift in Malaysia) to take us from where the church met, down to ground level, so we could go to eat. "Where are we going today?" she asked. I said, "A & W again, I guess." She looked across the river at a very "average" restaurant where at that moment a dog was drinking out of the dishwater and asked, "Why don't we eat there?" I asked, "Can you do that?" We did, and we went back fairly often.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ *Go Ye*, 12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 13-14. Dennis Cady had a very high regard for Thelma Eubank. He devoted five pages (pp. 130-134) in his book, *Go Ye Meant Go Me*, to pay tribute to her and her work in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. Abilene Christian University honoured her in its 85th Annual Bible Lectureship on February 2, 2003. Inscribed on her honour plaque were these words: "With appreciation to Thelma Eubank, unsung hero of Asian missions. Known for sleeping on a mat, using a Bible as a pillow; for answering God's call for missions at the age of fifty-three; for fourteen years of self-supporting missionary work in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines; for teaching and instilling faith in thousands of students through Bible correspondence courses and classes; for quietly challenging younger missionaries to live up to their teaching. In gratitude and love, we thank you. At the age of ninety-three you are still an inspiration." She passed away in her home on November 2, 2006, aged 97.

It can be surmised (not seriously though, but in good humour) that Dennis' newly developed fondness for the local flavour led him to fall in love with Susan Yong, one of the early converts, and the oldest of the Yong siblings. When he announced his engagement and intention to marry Susan, he met with some stiff disapproval Stateside, including his elders at the York church and Jud Whitefield too. Dennis mentioned that it was because of his marriage to Susan that York college introduced a rule later in the Master's Apprentice Program forbidding its missionaries from marrying when in the field.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, the marriage went ahead on March 2, 1968. Ken Sinclair performed the ceremony¹⁸² and the newly-wed couple left for the States, via Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 26.¹⁸³

Ron & Judy Warpole and the Transition to Local Preachers

After the departure of the Whitefields, Ron Warpole arrived with his wife, Judy, and daughters (Tammy, Natalie and Becky)¹⁸⁴ on February 28, 1972 to take over from Jud and Pansy. Ron was a Seventh-Day Adventist and was taught and converted by Parker Henderson and Tommy Allison when he was in Bangkok. Upon his return to the States, he entered Sunset School of Preaching to prepare himself for mission work in the Far East. Together with Bob Scott, he made an explorative trip to Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur sometime around mid-1970. He returned to Kuala Lumpur a second time in 1971, this time with Charles Bishop and two others. When he made the move to

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 19.

¹⁸² Ibid, 20.

¹⁸³ Dennis Cady's report dated March 1, 1968. Also, in *Malaysian Newsletter*, April 10, 1968.

¹⁸⁴ These names were obtained from Ron Warpole's letter to his elders as reproduced in *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, April 1974.

Kuala Lumpur in February 1972, he was under the oversight of the Whites Ferry Road church in West Monroe, Louisiana.¹⁸⁵

The Warpoles returned to the States sometime before or in October 1974.¹⁸⁶

Lau Kin Fatt (September 1972 – August 1982) and Other Preachers after Him

The first local preacher to serve in Kuala Lumpur (on a full-time basis) was Lau Kin Fatt. He served as the associate minister to Ron Warpole when he came in September 1, 1972.¹⁸⁷ But when the Warpoles left in 1974, Kin Fatt became the congregation's minister.

Kin Fatt was taught and baptised by Don Green in Ipoh in 1967. He was training to be a timber-grader when he decided to study at Four Seas College to become a gospel preacher. He graduated with a Master of Post Graduate Studies (the third-year program at Four Seas then). On his entry into the ministry at Kuala Lumpur, Gordon Hogan wrote:

In addition to academic work [at Four Seas] he served as student body president, regularly taught an English Bible class and preaches every Sunday for a Mandarin Chinese congregation. He has also served as one of the regular song leaders for the Moulmein Road church and was a member of the Four Seas College A'Cappella (*sic*) Chorus.

Lau Kin Fatt was born October 8, 1948 in a small village near Ipoh, Malaysia. Through contact and study with Don Green, former missionary in Ipoh ... he learned the truth and obeyed the Gospel in 1967. Kin Fatt is fluent in English,

¹⁸⁵ *Malaysian Newsletter*, August 27, 1970; July 1971; February 1972.

¹⁸⁶ As indicated in Lau Kin Fatt's letter dated October 30, 1974, to John Lee, elder of the Southside church, Electra, TX; reproduced in Jud Whitefield, *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, December 1974, 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, December 1974, 1.

Mandarin, Malay and speaks several other dialects of the Chinese language.¹⁸⁸

John Lachmana, also from Ipoh and a graduate of Four Seas College too, followed Kin Fatt into the ministry in Kuala Lumpur. He came in January 1973.¹⁸⁹ But he did not remain long as he left for Canada (possibly in the second half of 1975) to study in a school of preaching in Beamsville, Ontario.¹⁹⁰

Timmy Choy who also graduated from Four Seas College worked as a printer for the church.¹⁹¹ When the Bible correspondence programme was at its height, the church purchased an offset printing machine to print tracts and Bible correspondence courses. However, when financial support from the States for John Lachmana was cut off in December 1973, the Kuala Lumpur leadership decided “that Timmy be asked to leave and the printing work suspended until the necessary funds became available”. The leadership’s rationale for this decision was “that John’s services are of a higher priority than Timmy Choy’s”¹⁹² and whatever remaining funds coming from the States could be diverted to support John Lachmana’s salary.

Under Kin Fatt’s watch, a Mandarin-cum-Cantonese service was started. This service was in the afternoon. He was assisted in this Chinese work by Seow See Lim and David Ting (a graduate of Four Seas).¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, August 1, 1972.

¹⁸⁹ *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, December 1974, 1.

¹⁹⁰ Jud Whitefield and Frank Pierce, correspondents, *Malaysian Messenger*, February 1976, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ He had also worked as a printer for the Moulmein Road church while studying at Four Seas.

¹⁹² In Lau Kin Fatt’s letter to John Lee, Southside elder, as reproduced in *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, December 1974, 2.

¹⁹³ White and Pierce, *Malaysian Messenger*, July 1978, 1.

In August 1974, a Tamil family (the Santiagos) in Batang Berjuntai was baptised. John Lachmana would go to Batang Berjuntai to conduct services with this Santiago family on Sunday afternoons.¹⁹⁴ Later, Lau Kin Fatt and some of the men took turns to go to Batang Berjuntai after John Lachmana left Kuala Lumpur. When the Santiagos subsequently moved to Kuala Lumpur some two years later, a Tamil service was started in the Kuala Lumpur church. This suited the church rather well too as the church building was located in the Sentul area where a large majority of the residents were Tamil-speaking Indians.

In addition, there was also a deaf ministry. Joseph Lee, who had four siblings who were deaf, initiated this ministry in 1975. Chan Kim Foh, in reporting on the progress of the work in Kuala Lumpur to Jud Whitefield, mentioned that the church was “having services in both English and Chinese, and now a class for the deaf and mute”.¹⁹⁵ At its peak, the deaf ministry had some fifteen members. Joseph Lee was assisted in this work by Gary Lye, and for a short while too, by Ong Kok Bin. Gary Lye took over when Joseph Lee left about the middle of 1978 to study in England.¹⁹⁶ After Gary Lye left to work in Johor Baru, Lim Beng Guan took over the deaf work.

For some years in the 1970s, Kin Fatt also did a prison ministry. This had its beginning when one of the inmates (a certain Anthony) at the Pudu Prison took the Bible correspondence course and was baptised. Kin Fatt then sought permission from the prison superintendent to conduct services within the prison precincts. This was granted and for several years he would go to the Pudu Prison on Saturday afternoons between 2-3 p.m. and preached to the prison inmates. He would

¹⁹⁴ *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, December 1974, 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, September 1975, 2.

¹⁹⁶ White and Pierce, *Malaysian Messenger*, July 1978, 1.

have around fifty to a hundred in attendance in these services; “not that they were interested in the gospel, but they had nothing else to do,” as Kin Fatt quickly pointed out to this writer in a WhatsApp conversation. “Several...obeyed the gospel”¹⁹⁷ but none remained faithful for long.¹⁹⁸

The church which was meeting at 123-D Ipoh Road at the Hui Hong Building for a good number of years, bought its own premises in 1974 when several blocks of flats were constructed in the Jalan Perhentian area, off Ipoh Road. The purchase of this four-storey residential-cum-shop-lot unit was made possible through local funds raised as well as financial assistance from the Southside Church of Christ, Electra, Texas, which was the sponsoring congregation for Jud Whitefield’s mission work. Jud Whitefield was on hand to speak at the dedication service of the building on 2 May 1976.¹⁹⁹

The church held a city-wide Campaign-for-Christ, “Journey to Eternity”, on June 11-16, 1978 at the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur, DBKL). The speaker was Colin McKee, who was the missionary in Medan, Indonesia, at the time. Thirty thousand invitation flyers²⁰⁰ promoting the event were printed and distributed in the streets and from house to house in the housing estates. Advertisements were placed in the local newspapers. A fibreglass pool was placed on the stage of the hall to serve as the baptistry. The attendances in the nights when Colin McKee preached were above 180 with a high

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., February 1976, 1.

¹⁹⁸ As recounted to this author by Lau Kin Fatt in WhatsApp conversation on 26 August 2023.

¹⁹⁹ *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, June 1974. Also, in *Malaysian Messenger*, June 1976, pp. 1-2. Also see September 1975 issue.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., July 1978, 2. The rest of the story in this paragraph came from the writer’s own memory. The writer was the Director of Evangelism in the Kuala Lumpur church in 1978 and acted as the Campaign’s co-ordinator.

of about 220. Members from sister congregations from around the Klang Valley, Seremban, and other places came to assist in the Campaign. Eighteen accepted the gospel and were baptised. However, only a few of them came to attend the services with the church on a few Sundays after the Campaign. Regrettably, none of the eighteen became members of the church at all.

Lau Kin Fatt left Kuala Lumpur in August 1982 to restart the church in Petaling Jaya.²⁰¹ But before he left, he had to deal with the one-cup controversy which surfaced when an American expatriate, Bill Page, tried to introduce the practice to the Kuala Lumpur congregation. Kin Fatt was succeeded by Jairus M. Joseph. However, Jairus Joseph was later attracted to the one-cup doctrine and he went over to join the group from Petaling Jaya who were disfellowshipped by Klang. This group left to worship on their own in Kuchai Lama.

Ong Kok Bin came in May 1986. He was a science graduate of the National University of Singapore. The membership which suffered somewhat after Jairus Joseph left, recovered to a degree, and grew to a high of eighty plus in the Sunday attendance. However, the Crossroads controversy raging at the time undermined Kok Bin's support and trust from the church leadership. At the time, the Central London Church, a Crossroads church, was planning to extend their mission outreach to Singapore and Malaysia. Churches in Malaysia, including Kuala Lumpur, resisted this. To convince the church of the dangers and false doctrines of the Crossroads Movement, Jim Dearman, who was then Director of the Malaysia School of Preaching in Klang, was invited to preach one Sunday morning in December 1987. At the end of Jim Dearman's sermon, Chan Kim Foh, who was Chairman of the steering committee, and the *de facto* leader, went up to the pulpit and asked the members to

²⁰¹ Lau Kin Fatt in WhatsApp conversation 26 August 2023.

stand up if they were against Crossroadism and would not have fellowship with its followers. All stood, save for a few; and Kok Bin, the church minister, was one of them.²⁰² Several months later, seeing that he no longer enjoyed the trust and confidence of the top leadership, he resigned in June 1988.

After him, Mark Devan, a relatively young Christian from the Kuala Lumpur church, Richard Lee (who was originally from Malacca) and still later, Christopher Lopez (from Klang) stepped in and served as ministers of the church. Christopher Lopez stayed on for quite an extended period (2003-2016).²⁰³

As of this writing, the Kuala Lumpur church does not have a full-time preacher. Its membership has also declined to a certain extent; largely, due to “bleeding” of members to other congregations like Petaling Jaya, Section 17 (formerly Daman-sara Utama) and Cheras.

²⁰² He did not stand up because he thought that that was not the correct way to handle the Crossroads threat.

²⁰³ Christopher Lopez in WhatsApp conversation, 24 August 2021.

Christopher also served with the Subang Jaya congregation between 1997 to 2002 prior to his coming to KL. He also assisted in the work in Kuantan (1997-2007) and when Cheras was formed in mid-2005, he also went over to assist the new work there (from Leow Yew Chong, WhatsApp, 17 September 2021).

PENANG

Frank H. and Joan Pierce (1963)

Frank H. Pierce was instrumental in establishing the first rudimentary church in Penang in the early 1960s. At the time he was based in Kuala Lumpur. The Basic Bible Course through correspondence was attracting a lot of people throughout Malaysia, especially, young students in school. One such student from Penang wrote to Pierce in 1963.²⁰⁴

Dear Sir:

I am a graduate of your Basic Bible Course. A few months ago you informed me that you wanted to built (*sic*) a church in Penang; namely 'The Church of Christ.'

But since then I haven't heard about the good news. I sincerely hope that you would keep me informed about the progress of the churches of Christ from time to time.

At present I do not have a real church to call my own. You know that some of the teaching of some church differ from the other (*sic*). Some pastors told me that baptism is not very essential. Is it necessary to be baptized to become a Christian? If so why did Jesus promise the two thieves in the cross that they shall be with him in paradise without baptising? How I wish the Lord would direct me to a real church; the church which really belongs to Christ.

Seeker in Christ,
Henry Oh

About the same time, there were two young girls who were baptised in Kuala Lumpur but had moved to Penang. Pierce had instructed them "on how to conduct their worship services prior to their move". But he bemoaned, "But how long will a thirteen and fifteen year old girl (*sic*) continue in the faith

²⁰⁴ Frank H. Pierce, *Malaysian Newsletter*, November 4, 1963.

without someone to nurture them along” (underlined, Pierce’s).²⁰⁵

Meanwhile, a couple, Mr. & Mrs. Yee Peng Sung, also baptised in Kuala Lumpur, were transferred to Penang. He was an Assistant Superintendent of Police. As with the BBC student, Henry Oh, he, too, asked Pierce when he was going to “start a church of Christ” in Penang. This prompted Pierce to act: “I decided to make February 23rd the date for the official beginning of church services in Penang.”

Eleven persons were in attendance in that first service,²⁰⁶ which was at the Yees’ residence, 26-D, Green Lane. Frank Pierce noted:

My wife showed sister Yee how to bake the unleavened bread. For that first service I showed them how to conduct services on their own, giving them each an outline of the things essential in the public worship of the church.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ira Y. Rice gave further information on the eleven, other than the Pierce family, “six or seven baptized believers”, who included the Yee couple, one artist “baptized by brother Lye three or four years ago”, one “ex-convict whom we taught in Changi Prison”, “two girls about 14 or 15 years old, named Foo”, and Tan Chin Ai, “a young man, very zealous who has just finished his Senior Cambridge and is awaiting his result”; in *Far East Newsletter*, 2 April 1964, 13, 16-17. In this same newsletter, Rice provided further details on this early beginning of the Penang church through his correspondence with Tan Chin Ai – the names of the two girls were Pauline and Annie Foo, and the ex-convict, Charles Sudatha, was working as a teacher in Butterworth. Rice also mentioned that he and Pierce were considering having Samuel Miao, who was at the time studying at Freed-Hardeman College in the States, to come to preach in Penang upon his graduation. But as things turned out, this never materialised as Miao chose to preach and teach in Singapore after obtaining his Masters from Harding.

In a correspondence with Ira Y. Rice, one of the participants in that first worship service, Tan Chin Ai, gave this report:

The meeting of the church here took place (yesterday) at Brother Yee's house ... Brother Pierce started the meeting for the worship. He lead (*sic*) the first three hymns and then prayer was said. He then taught us on some part of the Bible on Christian life. We then broke bread, offering thanks, then the last prayer was said ... After the service, we then stayed back for some discussion bout (*sic*) what we were to do with the collection. It was decided that Brother Yee is to be the treasurer. The time for the worship will be at 10 a.m. every Sunday, was agreed.²⁰⁷

It was most likely that Pierce arranged to go up to Penang to conduct service one Sunday a month, and as for the other three (or four) Sundays, the local brethren had to do it themselves. Pierce wrote:

I determined ... to train the few brethren that we have in that congregation to carry on for themselves. For this is exactly what they are having to do three Sundays each month. Hence, even the most minute things must be explained: 1) How to express thanks for the bread and fruit of the vine, 2) How to sing as a group in public worship, 3) How to handle the business aspect of keeping records on their finances etc. ... None of those in the church at Penang have been Christians for more than about one year.

Tan Chin Ai, mentioned above, was from Singapore. He had just completed his Senior Cambridge and moved to Penang.²⁰⁸ In Pierce's absence, he was the one "doing the teaching ... working very closely with brother Henry". Henry (full

²⁰⁷ Ira Y. Rice, *Far East Newsletter*, 2 April 1964, 16-17.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

name, Oh Soo Oon), the BBC student mentioned above, was baptised by Pierce “in the Indian Ocean” (actually, the Penang Channel), when Pierce made a further trip to Penang on March 20, 1964.²⁰⁹

This was the beginning of the church in Penang, a house church in the biblical sense of the expression.

Hayden O. & Marilyn Jenks, Jr. (1965 – 1969)

Though Frank Pierce began the church in Penang, he could not be considered as the first resident missionary in Penang since he was based in Kuala Lumpur. The honour belonged to Hayden O. Jenks, Jr., who was a Technical Sergeant in the United States Air Force, based in Tachikawa, Japan.²¹⁰ He was to retire from the Air Force and was keen on doing mission work upon his retirement. He wrote to Ira Y. Rice of his plans and Rice pointed him to Penang. In his mission work in Penang, he was supported by the Central Avenue church, 922 South Central Avenue, Fairborn, Ohio.²¹¹

Jenks came to Penang about the end of June 1965 with his family, wife Marilyn, and children, Bonnie, Gary, Cathy and Kelly.²¹² The church that Pierce began was in disarray when the Jenks family arrived. Frank Pierce, because of his conflict with Howard Merches, left Kuala Lumpur for Seremban in February 1965, and in May the same year, Malaysia. Thus, he could not travel to Penang to teach and conduct services in the island any further. The church, barely a year old and comprising mostly young students, could not survive long without proper

²⁰⁹ Other than the footnoted information on the composition of the eleven, the material and quotes in this section are from Frank Pierce’s *Malaysian Newsletter*, March 31, 1964.

²¹⁰ Rice, *Far East*, 2 April 1964.

²¹¹ See Hayden Jenks’ report for September 1967 (but otherwise undated).

²¹² *Ibid.*, November 30, 1965 & October 31, 1967.

leadership and spiritual nourishment. Tan Chin Ai, whom Pierce mentioned as “doing the teaching”, had returned to Singapore and was with the Moulmein Road church.²¹³ As Jenks put it, “Without a teacher the group of students in Penang found it very hard to continue and finally there was only the Yee family left.” One went over to the Methodists; the BBC student, Henry Oh, wrote to the Yees before the Jenkses came that he was “resigning from this church”; others had moved and were not traceable. Later, even the Yees left too. Jenks wrote:

I haven't been able to move brother Yee to take any part in the work here at all. He and his family came to our house on Sunday to worship with us and haven't been back since. ... A few days after the Sunday they met with us, he brought some song books and Bibles that Frank Pierce had left with him ... and a communion set. I've been to his house so many times I'm embarrassed, and each time he says he'll come and worship with us the following Sunday, but they never show up.

In the gloom of this, Jenks was able to find a ‘bright spot’ to cheer him on in his infant mission in Penang.

A bright spot in our lives has been brother Chong. He was converted in Australia while he was there attending school. He is a teacher in Butterworth, stays in Penang during the week and spends weekends in Kulim with his parents. He has been coming back to Penang on Sunday afternoons in time to come to our house for Bible study and worship. We

²¹³ Ibid., November 1966. In a letter dated October 18, Henry Tan had mentioned that he and Tan Chin Ai were to be in a survey team to Sarawak prior to a proposed campaign in the state in December 1966 by the Moulmein Road church.

feel that he will grow spiritually and will be of some help to us.²¹⁴

Almost a year later, Jenks was able to turn things around so much that Rice, on a visit to Penang in 1966, was able to report home later:

[W]e found that the work was moving rather well, that Lee Ming Paul was working at the direction of Jenks, and that sister Anna Klyde Davis had moved up to Penang from Ipoh to work with brother Jenks in grading the Basic Bible Course. All parties to the Penang effort appeared to be in good spirits, settled down to serious effort and working hard.²¹⁵

Jenks himself wrote to his sponsoring congregation sometime in July 1967 that he and his family, Lee Ming Paul, Anna Davis and twenty-five young people from Penang would be going down to Kuala Lumpur to support the first-ever Campaign for Christ “in Asia” August 6-13 with Mid McKnight as the scheduled speaker. He also reported “29 baptisms this year” and a monthly Youth Fellowship between the young people of Penang and Ipoh was ongoing. The Penang youths went to Ipoh in June and the Ipoh youths came to Penang in July.²¹⁶ In his November 1967 report, he listed nineteen in average attendance for the Sunday Bible class and eighteen for the general assembly (which would be the worship service) in October.

²¹⁴ This and other quotes and material, except for two prior footnoted material in this section, were from Jenks’ correspondence with Rice, which was reproduced in Rice’s *Far East Newsletter*, November 30, 1965.

²¹⁵ *Far East*, September 12, 1966.

²¹⁶ From an otherwise undated letter/report by Jenks to his sponsoring congregation.

Lee Ming Paul

Lee Ming Paul was from Muar and was most likely baptised in the early beginnings of the Muar church in the late 1950s. He attended York College in 1961²¹⁷ and later, Oklahoma Christian College in the States.²¹⁸ Upon his return to Malaysia, he was called upon to work with Jenks in Penang and most likely came to Penang in late 1965.²¹⁹ But he emigrated to Canada in 1970.

Anna Klyde Davis

Anna Klyde Davis, like Thelma Eubank, came to assist in the Bible correspondence programme in 1966. She was sponsored by the Madill congregation in Oklahoma, U.S.A.²²⁰ She returned to the States at the end of May 1968.²²¹

One of the converts made by Jenks was Chrissie Khaw sometime in April/May 1967. Jenks had this little interesting report on her conversion:

Chrissie was baptized about seven months ago and has not told her mother about it yet. It was a difficult task to answer a question she sent in with one of her Bible lessons, "What should a child do if her parents forbid her to become a Christian?" I must admit that I don't think I can decide this for anyone so I listed some scriptures for her study and left the decision to her. Chrissie made her decision for Christ and because she can't get away from home on

²¹⁷ Report from Rice dated October 15, 1961.

²¹⁸ *Far East*, 17 July 1963.

²¹⁹ See *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, January and February Report (year not mentioned, but must be 1966). Don Green mentioned that Jenks and Ming Paul "were only a few months into their work"; 5.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, March, April, May and June 1966.

²²¹ *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, May 1968, No. 3.

Sunday mornings, she attends the afternoon meeting so she will not miss the Lord's supper.²²²

Chrissie proved resolute in her faith in Christ. She went on to study at Four Seas College where she met Lau Kin Fatt; and the two married when he was ministering in Kuala Lumpur and she serving as a secretary in the Bible correspondence department.

In their time in Penang, the Jenkses stayed in three different rented places: 12 Nunn Crescent, 219 Bukit Glugor and 18 Free School Road. Jenks wrote home, possibly to his supporters, about how he was having to move again and how he disliked moving. He complained:

The Governor of Penang has just retired and decided of all the houses on this island, and in spite of his owning two houses in Kuala Lumpur which is his home, ours was the one best suited to his needs. Now that we have lived here six months and no bad luck has descended upon us, the house is once more safe and desirable.

Earlier, he had mentioned that the house was very large and beautiful and he could afford the rent because it was vacant for nearly a year as it had a "reputation of being a bad luck house".²²³

The church first met at the Jenks' residence in 12 Nunn Crescent. Sometime in 1967, it rented a shophouse at 564 Ayer Itam Road for church meeting purposes.

²²² Hayden Jenks, November 1967.

²²³ In a letter addressed, "Dear Friend", dated September 11, 1967. It is not known which house he was referring to, but it is most likely to be the Bukit Glugor house.

Peter S. Oon

Jenks mentioned that his first convert was Peter Oon (baptized on 27 December 1965²²⁴) and described him as a “devoted and tireless worker”.²²⁵ Peter, or Peter S. Oon (S. for Steven) as he is better known to this writer²²⁶, helped Jenks in teaching and preaching in the services of the church. “Among the young people who make up the church in Penang, the only one who possesses strong qualities of leadership is Peter Oon,” Jenks wrote in September 1968 as he was reflecting on his imminent departure from Penang.²²⁷ Peter Oon went on to study at Four Seas College and upon his graduation he took over the ministering responsibilities after Jenks left on April 15, 1969²²⁸.

Miles Cotham

In the interim, Miles Cotham, a student from David Lipscomb College, took time off from his studies to visit Penang from January to March 1968. He had befriended Lee Ming Paul when still a high school student in Gallatin in 1963 and the latter was painting house boats in the town to earn extra pocket money on a holiday break from Oklahoma College. The friendship grew through correspondence exchanges over the next few years and it was because of this that Cotham came to

²²⁴ Report dated December 1966.

²²⁵ *Report from Penang*, undated but most likely October 1967.

²²⁶ The writer was baptised by Peter S. Oon on Friday evening, 19 December 1970.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, July-September 1968.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, March 1969. Peter received support from the Kingston church in Oklahoma when he was at Four Seas and possibly too when he was ministering in Penang.

Penang when Ming Paul was already in the island.²²⁹ On Cotham, Jenks wrote:

Miles has almost completed college and has taken out one quarter to work on a “mission field”. The main reason he chose Penang is his friendship with Ming Paul whom he knew and worked with in the U.S. Since his arrival here his youthful zeal has helped us all to be revived again in the Lord. His best idea so far, I think, is to hold a “group dynamics discussion” class every evening. He encourages everyone who desires to attend to study I and II Timothy and James and then come to class prepared to discuss these books and/or any questions that come up. Several nights these classes have gone on until midnight and a great deal is being done to increase the spiritual depth of the congregation.²³⁰ (underlined, Jenks’)

Miles Cotham went back to Nashville and completed his studies at David Lipscomb. But upon his graduation from Lipscomb in August 1968, he was unsure what to pursue next. This uncertainty was resolved when his uncle, an elder at the North Marshall Church of Christ in Calvert City, Ky, called him and said, “We’ll like for you to be a missionary in Malaysia and we’ll support you if you would go.” Miles thought and prayed over the offer and he finally decided to go. In January 1969, he left home for his destination. But he had to land in Singapore first in order to obtain a visa to enter Penang as a missionary. This took almost four months, during which time he taught at

²²⁹ This information was provided by Miles Cotham in an interview with the writer when the latter was on a Hogan-Cate Sabbatical grant at Harding School of Theology in Memphis from August to December 2014. The writer and his wife Esther visited the Cothams in Nashville and took the opportunity to interview him on his involvement with the work in Penang.

²³⁰ From Jenks’ *Report from Penang*, January 1968.

Four Seas College of Bible and Missions until he left for Penang in April.

Miles stayed on as a missionary in Penang for close to two years. He returned to the States in the latter half of 1970. In his time in Penang, he counted thirty-two baptisms. On Peter Oon, Miles opined, “not exactly the most inspirational person, because he’d expected the church to support him. There was never any promise that that would happen,”²³¹ in contrast to Jenks (see above).

Frank H. Pierce’s Return to Penang (1971 – 1975)

Frank Pierce returned to Malaysia a second time when he was refused a visa extension in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in early 1971. He and his family arrived in Kuala Lumpur on 31 March and then applied for a missionary visa to work in the country. Frank determined:

Once we have received our visa we plan to locate in Penang ... It is the consensus of the missionaries here that we should locate in Penang. We have a great many contacts there already via the correspondence courses. In any case we need your prayers in a special way as we begin from scratch.²³²

When his Malaysian visa was granted, Pierce went up to Penang sometime in mid-May and subsequently rented a bungalow lot at 1 Kennedy Road, off Green Lane. On the renting of the place and its cost at US\$116.66 per month, Pierce reasoned:

²³¹ Interview with Miles Cotham.

²³² *Frank H. Pierce Newsletter*, April 30, 1971. In this second stint in Malaysia, Frank Pierce was sponsored by the East Main church in Tupelo, Mississippi.

Although the cost of rental is a major consideration when renting a house, it should not be the major consideration. Our aim was to find a place in a middle class community which was accessible by bus, since the church will have to meet in our home until we form a small nucleus of New Testament Christians.²³³

It should be noted that Frank Pierce failed to acknowledge or take into consideration the church that was already in existence at 564, Ayer Itam Road. Or, if he had taken it into consideration, he chose to ignore it. In his early reports since his coming to Penang, he failed to mention the existing church altogether.

Though Pierce came to Penang in mid-May 1971, he did not begin a public service until towards the end of September.

It seemed unwise to us to begin public meetings immediately after our arrival, hence we waited until we had had contact with a group long enough to gain their confidence before attempting any public meetings. When we scheduled our first assembly for September 26th, I was at somewhat of a loss to know how to plan from the standpoint of knowing how many to expect for the first meeting.²³⁴

Pierce had built a base of contacts through “the printed page” (most likely, advertisements for the Basic Bible Course – his “primary means of contact”) and out of the “little more than three-hundred invitations” sent out, forty-seven came for this first “public meeting” making a total of fifty-one in attendance with the inclusion of the Pierces.

²³³ *Malaysian Newsletter*, May 31, 1971.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, September 30, 1971.

September also marked the first baptism for Pierce. Cheng Sin Lai (Robbie) was a Bible correspondence course student, 18 years old at the time. Pierce described him as having “unusual diligence from the very beginning”. After 32 lessons and “two systematic private studies”, he was baptised by Pierce on September 4. However, he met with the Pierces for worship once only, on September 5, as he had signed up for “six years of military service in Singapore”. He left Penang the following Sunday, September 12, by train and stopped over in Kuala Lumpur upon which he “took a taxi to the Church of Christ building at Ipoh Road” to attend the evening worship service. The next Sunday, when he was in Singapore, he “went to the Church of Christ at Moulmein Road to attend the services” at the end of which, he met “Brother Gordon Hogan” who introduced him “to all the members present there”. On both occasions, he expressed how happy he was to receive greetings of welcome and to be introduced to the members. He enthused to Pierce on his experience in Kuala Lumpur: “You can imagine how brotherhood (*sic*) was the members of the Church of Christ down there”.²³⁵

In his newsletter of October 31, 1971, Frank Pierce reported “a high of 51 and a low of 32” “for our public meetings”. It is also at this time that he surfaced the need to find “proper facilities for the Lord’s work in Penang”.

For the time-being we are meeting at our home but the town council does not like this arrangement ... Penang has a rather strict zoning code which does not permit the usage of homes for offices or public meetings unless prior approval is given by the town council.²³⁶

²³⁵ Ibid., in letter from Robbie Cheng to Frank Pierce.

²³⁶ Ibid., October 31, 1971.

A few months later, in anticipation of objections from “our anti-building brethren”, Pierce argued:

We understand very well that the church is not the building, but I want to hasten to assure you that the building does have a decisive influence on whom we attract to our meetings. “Where is your church?” is a question that is continually being asked.²³⁷

Three months later, Pierce was able to report that he had secured a place for church meetings; and in the tenancy agreement, Pierce had it inserted that he “shall have the right to terminate the tenancy in the event of any Rural District Council ruling prohibiting the premises to be used for religious meetings”. The landlord, in turn, insisted that a special clause be included: “The Tenant shall not bring any human corpse or coffin into the premises for religious or funeral ceremony”. With both sides satisfied they were well protected, the agreement was signed and the church moved into their new premises at 60-T Jalan Matang Kuching (Off Ayer Itam Road) sometime in May of 1972.²³⁸

In the meantime, the church meeting at 564 Ayer Itam Road under Peter S. Oon had to give up the rented premises as financial support from the U. S. had stopped. They moved to meet in the home of a sister Theresa in the Rifle Range Flats in Boundary Road, not too far off from 564. However, they did not remain there for long. Gradually, some of the members stopped attending; some fell off, others like the Lim sisters (Nellie, Nancy & Molly) and sister Lee (as she was always called) and the Theresa family, went over to worship with the Pierce group at

²³⁷ Ibid., January 31, 1972.

²³⁸ Ibid., April 30, 1972.

60-T Jalan Matang Kuching. Peter Oon, however, did not move with the group.

Pierce, who believed very strongly in Bible correspondence courses, wrote an 18-lesson course on the book of Acts. Expectedly, he called it “A Correspondence Course on Acts of the Apostles”.

As with most other missionaries at the time, Pierce and his family had to leave Penang on May 5, 1975, when his visa, which was extended by a year in 1974, was not renewed.

Ong Chong Fatt (May 1975 – October 1992) and Others

When Pierce knew his service in Penang was ending, he prepared the congregation to search for a local Christian to be the preacher in Penang. Two brethren, Vincent Venugopal and Ong Chong Fatt, both from the Seremban congregation applied for the position and were invited to preach a Sunday each in Penang sometime in November or December 1974. Chong Fatt, who was a graduate of Four Seas, was selected and he came to preach in Penang on 1 May 1975. He was to remain in the Penang ministry for close to seventeen years before he resigned in October 1992 to study at Abilene Christian University in 1993. This made him the longest serving minister with the same congregation in Malaysia at the time. At his farewell given him by the Penang church on November 15, 1992, several of his fellow preachers came to bid him farewell and to honour his services in the kingdom of God. These included Lau Kin Fatt (PJ), Frank Leong (Ipoh Garden East), Ong Kok Bin (Seremban), Edwin Choy (AMK) and Dave Hogan (Moulmein Road). Dave Hogan, in his speech, described Chong Fatt as “a beacon 500 miles up

north” “upon whom he constantly looked up to as a source of inspiration and sustenance.”²³⁹

It was during Chong Fatt’s watch that the Penang congregation purchased its first property in 1985 for church services. This was a double storey house (61-H Jalan Matang Kuching, Ayer Itam) a few doors down from where the church had been renting and meeting at 60-T since the time of Frank Pierce.

In December 1977, Michael Cheah (from Klang and just graduated from Four Seas in November) was appointed the associate minister to Ong Chong Fatt.²⁴⁰ In 1979 he left Penang to return to his home congregation where he became its minister.²⁴¹

In early 1993, the congregation appointed one of its own members, Theophilus Teh Hock Wah as its evangelist. Hock Wah introduced a Hokkien service.²⁴² But he did not remain in his role with the Penang church for long.

Lau Kin Fatt & Chrissie (June 1998 – September 2006)

Lau Kin Fatt, who had ministered in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya previously, came to Penang to serve with the congregation as its minister in the middle of 1998²⁴³ upon completing his theological studies at Abilene Christian University.

²³⁹ On Chong Fatt’s term of service in Penang, sourced from Seremban’s weekly bulletin, *The Proclaimer*, 18 October 1992, Vol. 23, No. 40; 22 November 1992, Vol. 23, No. 45.

²⁴⁰ Jud Whitefield and Frank Pierce, correspondents, *Malaysian Messenger*, July, 1978, 2.

²⁴¹ This information is teased from the legend to a photograph, “THE THIRD ANNUAL BIBLE CAMP...” in Ira Y. Rice, Jr., ed., *Far East/World Evangelism*, July 1980, 6.

²⁴² *The Proclaimer*, 7 March 1993, Vol. 24, No. 10.

²⁴³ See *The Proclaimer*, 26 July 1998, Vol. 29, No. 30.

In February 1999, Anthony Beh, another local-born member, was appointed as Kin Fatt's associate.²⁴⁴

In 2002, Kin Fatt, together with Ong Chong Fatt (Petaling Jaya) and Ong Kok Bin (Seremban), organised the 41st Asian Mission Forum, which was held on 15-19 June at the Bayview Resort in Batu Ferringhi in Penang. The theme of the Forum was "Making Disciples, Building Churches". Dr. Evert Huffard (Harding School of Theology) and Dr. James Thompson (Abilene Christian University) were the two feature speakers.²⁴⁵

The Penang church sold its property in 61-H Jalan Matang Kuching and moved to Taman Pekaka in Gelugor²⁴⁶ in 2005 with the vision and hope of reaching to a wider constituency. Taman Pekaka is close to Universiti Sains Malaysia and the area around it has a relatively large student population.

However, around September 2006, Lau Kin Fatt and his wife left Penang to establish a new congregation in the new township of Puchong in Selangor.²⁴⁷

Current

After Lau Kin Fatt's departure, the running of the services and the administration of the church were taken care of by the men, principally, Alvin Neoh, Mak Ngai Leong and Lee Chee Keong.²⁴⁸ The church used the funds obtained from the earlier sale of the 61-H property in Ayer Itam to purchase a shaplot unit

²⁴⁴ *The Proclaimer*, 14 February 1999, Vol. 30, No. 7. However, it is not known how long Anthony Beh remained in this role.

²⁴⁵ See *The Proclaimer*, 10 February 2002, Vol. 33, No. 6.

²⁴⁶ The full address is 28, First Floor, Jalan Pekaka 1, Taman Pekaka, 11700 Gelugor. In *The Proclaimer*, 26 June 2005, Vol. 36, No. 26.

²⁴⁷ This is inferred from a piece of news in *The Proclaimer*, 8 October 2006, Vol. 37, No. 41.

²⁴⁸ Mak Ngai Leong and his wife Maggie have since left the church in 2020 over some personal differences with someone in the leadership.

in the same Taman Pekaka area in 2008. After some renovations, the church moved to meet at this newly acquired property: 9 Jalan Helang, Taman Pekaka, 11700 Gelugor, in May 2008²⁴⁹ and has remained there since.

²⁴⁹ Alvin Neoh, in WhatsApp message, 15/1/2024.

SEREMBAN AND PORT DICKSON

Frank H. and Joan Pierce (February 1965 – May 1965)

Frank Howard Pierce and his wife Joan, along with their children, Nita, Bobby and David, first arrived in Kuala Lumpur in July 1961 to work alongside Ira Y. Rice in the Kuala Lumpur church.²⁵⁰ Rice later returned to Singapore in January 1963 to resume his mission work with the Moulmein Road church because of the abrupt departure of A. L. Harbin from Moulmein Road.²⁵¹ In March 1964, another missionary, Howard Merches, came to join Frank Pierce in Kuala Lumpur. However, the partnership between the two did not last too long. A conflict over the issue of women leading prayers arose between them. The conflict was severe enough to divide the fledgling church. But of pertinence, Frank Pierce was asked by his elders in the Southside church in Electra, Texas, to relocate himself to Seremban. This was sometime in or around August 1964.

In his *Malaysian Newsletter*, February 9, 1965, Pierce introduced his coming to Seremban with these words:

You will observe from the address in the above that we are no longer residing in Kuala Lumpur. As of this past Saturday we took up residence in Seremban, a town some 40 miles to the south of Kuala Lumpur.

Many of you may wonder why we decided to move so near unto the time of our departure from Malaysia. First, and foremost, it was not because of any joy that one might experience in packing up for the move ...

Uppermost in our thoughts at this time is that of getting a strong congregation planted in this city, which is the capital of the state of Negri Sembilan. (underlined, Pierce's)

²⁵⁰ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 13 August 1961, 1.

²⁵¹ Rice, *Singapore-Far East Newsletter*, 3 May 1962, 5.

Pierce did not refer to the conflict he and Merches had for his going to Seremban. Neither did he reveal the conflict and its attendant aftermath in his own account for the beginning of the church in Seremban²⁵² for his “move so near unto the time of our departure from Malaysia” as he put it himself. In this account, Pierce gave the Bible Correspondence Course contacts, “the young people in the Seremban area”, as the principal reason for his coming to Seremban so close to his scheduled departure from Malaysia. He wrote: “In early 1964, Pierce began to give serious consideration to establishing a congregation in Seremban.” He had baptised a young girl, Mary George, in Kuala Klawang and “several members of the family of M. Mailvaganam” in Port Dickson²⁵³ (both places, though in the same Negri Sembilan state, were quite far away from Seremban). In “mid 1964” he made a visit to Seremban with A. L. Harbin and “spent several days visiting Bible Correspondence Course students in Seremban, especially in the Temiang Road area”. He learnt that “working out of a hotel room did not demonstrate to the community that we were serious about establishing a congregation of the Lord’s church”; and thus, he leased “a duplex in October of 1964, at No. 49, Jalan Templer” to do “follow-up work”, “conduct Bible classes”, and “socialize with those who were interested in spiritual things”.

In the few months that followed, he would bring along “[m]any of the young people from the K.L. congregation” for “periodic visits to Seremban” and often he “rewarded them with a meal at Tong Fong Restaurant”. On one such trip, Pierce

²⁵² Frank H. Pierce, “Beginning of Church of Christ in Seremban”, written in 1996 at the request of this writer.

²⁵³ These were “the mother, wife, brother and sister of Malavaganam (*sic*)” and a 19-year-old boy, a BBC graduate; in Ira Rice’s *Far East Newsletter*, November 30, 1965, 9, citing Pierce’s letter of January 4, 1965.

recounted, “A 12-year-old boy became car-sick, and vomited all over my back, making it necessary that I go shopping for a shirt upon arrival.”

We do not know whether Pierce was conducting worship services in this time of his shuttling back and forth between Kuala Lumpur and Seremban. But it is more likely that he did. He wrote (in his January 7, 1965 newsletter):

Getting things all set to have our first service was a time-consuming task. Several trips had to be made to pass out circulars and get all things in a state of readiness. In order to get the work off in the way we felt it should, we rented the Youth Club for the night of December 26th.

He related how he had borrowed a projector to show a *Herald of Truth* film that night and had hoped for a large crowd, but it rained half an hour before the start of the film and as a result only about thirty people came. He continued:

Not allowing this to discourage us, we met the next morning for worship at No. 49, Templer Road. Quite a number of young people had come down from Kuala Lumpur and we just spread our bedding out on the floor and spent the night at our newly rented quarters. The young people worked very hard to spread the news to the people of the town and we are sure that in a few weeks more and more people will be attending our services.

Going by the above, 27 December 1964 would mark as the first time a worship service was held in Seremban, though there was at least one baptism in Seremban as far back as in 1963.²⁵⁴ Pierce mentioned that he was expecting Mailvaganam

²⁵⁴ This was John Loh Kiang Wee, who was a BBC student then. He was baptised by “someone from Singapore”, most likely Henry Tan, as he

and his family to worship “with us”, but they had a “20-mile journey” to make each Sunday morning. Then, there were “6 Christians in Port Dickson”; and “4 in Kuala Klawang, just 22 miles away ... 138 corners on this (*sic*) 22 miles”.²⁵⁵ Pierce continued to write:

For the present time there are only three baptized in Seremban proper ... Last Sunday we had a good crowd of some 25 or 30 persons for the morning service ... We are writing several letters this week in hopes of getting several new ones out this coming Sunday.²⁵⁶

Pierce wrote of his eventual coming to Seremban:

Since the brethren in Kuala Lumpur were now able to conduct their own meetings, Pierce resolved to spend the last few months of his fourth year in Malaysia doing evangelistic work in Seremban. Thus the Pierce family moved from Kuala Lumpur to Seremban immediately after Chinese New Year, in 1965. From No. 49 Jalan Templer, I was able to operate a Bible Correspondence Course office and become better acquainted with the people of the area. The large sign board, bearing the name CHURCH OF CHRIST, was prominently displayed on the balcony, and could be clearly seen from the main road.

He organised a Gospel Meeting during the April school holidays. It was held at the Gurney Boys’ Club and the speaker was Pence Dacus from Moulmein Road, Singapore. Pierce obtained permission from some headmasters of the local schools to distribute “printed materials advertising the meeting”.

recalled to this writer. John Loh still worships with the Seremban church as of this writing.

²⁵⁵ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, November 30, 1965, 9-10.

²⁵⁶ In Ira Rice’s *Far East*, November 30, 1965, 10. Rice was citing Pierce’s January 7, 1965 newsletter.

“As a result,” Pierce wrote, “the attendance averaged approximately one-hundred each night²⁵⁷, which was the highest attendance that I had witnessed at any gospel meeting in Malaysia.”

Though “there was only one baptism”, Pierce regarded the Gospel Meeting as “one of the best meetings in Seremban”. He reasoned:

because two families (the Gnanams and Daniels) became intensely interested in our plea for a RESTORATION of New Testament Christianity. In due course, all adult members of these families obeyed the gospel, and in 1971, brethren S. Gnanam (*sic*) and Daniel were appointed by the church in Seremban to serve as ELDERS” (caps, Pierce’s).

The Pierces left Seremban on May 27, 1965.²⁵⁸ Pierce sentimentalised, “But we left a part of ourselves in those places that we labored for the Master in Malaysia.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ However, the attendance given in a May 5 (1965) report/letter, “ranged from 50 to about 80 persons each night”, though it still “exceeded our greatest expectations”; in Ira Rice’s *Far East*, November 30, 1965, 10. Pence Dacus, the speaker at the meeting, stated that “the nightly attendance ranged from 45 to 64” and that “There is only one member of the church in this city besides the missionaries” (Pence Dacus, *Singapore Newsletter*, Vol. 2, Nos. 4 & 5, April & May 1965).

²⁵⁸ *Far East*, November 30, 1965, 11. However, in Pierce’s own recollection in his “Beginning of Church of Christ in Seremban” he stated: “In early July of 1965, the Pierces returned to America.” This apparent discrepancy could be due to the possibility that after Seremban, the Pierces might have travelled through other countries before returning to the States in July.

²⁵⁹ All quotes in this section, unless otherwise indicated, are from Frank H. Pierce’s “Beginning of Church of Christ in Seremban”, 1996. The large sign-board, “CHURCH OF CHRIST”, was removed and placed at 318, Lobak Road (or, Jalan Lobak 11, as today), when the church moved there under Jud Whitefield and the property was purchased by the church under Ken Sinclair. The sign-board still sits in the same place, above the front car

The Whitefields, Matlocks and Wrights (1965 – 1967)

About this time as the Pierces were preparing to leave Malaysia, three families arrived in Seremban within a short span of three months. This was (and is) unprecedented. Jud and Pansy Whitefield came about the last week of April 1965 (on or before April 23), “Right in the midst of this gospel meeting”²⁶⁰ (the one described above). Phillip and Kay Wright (and children, Harold and Darold) came in May; and Richard and Wanema Matlock (and children, Cindy, Greg and Leslie in early July (6 July, to be precise).²⁶¹

Jud Whitefield provided a synoptic snapshot of the condition of the churches and Christians then when he travelled around Malaysia in 1965:

A tour was made of Malaysia, visiting most every place where there are converts. We are thrilled that the church in Kuala Lumpur is doing well. This group is self-supporting. T. Victor and Chan Kim Foh are doing a splendid job of teaching, preaching and furnishing leadership. We met and visited with an Indian family at Port Dickson, five of whom are members of the church. There are 3 members in Kuala Klawang. One of these, a young Indian girl, is truly

porch, having been repainted and repaired several times over the years (three times by this writer himself when he was ministering in Seremban between October 1988 and December 2020).

²⁶⁰ In Ira Rice’s *Far East*, November 30, 1965, p. 10. Pierce reported of how Jud Whitefield was so excited about the attendance he saw that he requested “that we try and rent that building the following Friday night (April 30) as he wanted to speak to that same audience again”. Thirty-three were in attendance when Jud spoke on the ‘CONSEQUENCES OF BEING LOST’ the following Friday.

²⁶¹ *Far East*, November 30, 1965, 10, 12. The Matlocks were sponsored by the Lake Jackson church. Jud Whitefield related that a newspaper reporter, a friend of Victor Thasiah’s, was at the airport to interview Richard Matlock upon his arrival.

trying to be faithful to the Lord. We visited the church in Mentakab, Pahang. This group of 7 are Tamil speaking. They reported 5 baptized 30 miles south of Temerloh, Pahang. The church at Mentakab are carrying on by themselves, with Francis Pavlas, an Indian, doing the preaching. In Penang we met the Yee family. Mr. Yee and his family are members and they meet each Sunday A.M. in his home. You can see that most of these converts are widely scattered and need someone to work with them (underlined, Jud Whitefield's).²⁶²

He also provided an account of the trouble he and Pence Dacus (who was visiting) took to drive to Jelebu (or, Kuala Klawang) to baptise a BBC graduate, only to find out he was in Seremban after all.

A Chinese boy, Lim Cheong Chai, a graduate student of the Basic Bible Course and the Advanced Course, wrote Pence stating he desired to be baptized according to the N.T. pattern. We drove to Jelebu, a town 24 miles over the mountain to locate him, and found that he was here in Seremban in school. We located him, talked with him and then went to the Boy Scout Camp grounds and in a creek there baptized him into Christ. He will worship with us here in Seremban. This will give us 3 members in Seremban. This boy had been studying for two years before making his decision.

Yet, in little of a month, Jud was to write of “those things that are so disheartening to the man on the field”. One of “those things” concerned this boy Lim Cheong Chai.

The young man Lim Cheong Chai who was baptized June 3 is not attending worship services. He is occupied heavily

²⁶² Ibid., 11-12.

with his studies and examinations. We are praying that we can help this boy to learn and grow.²⁶³

If Frank Pierce's physical legacy to the Seremban church was his signboard, CHURCH OF CHRIST, then Jud Whitefield's would be his leasing of "an extra large dwelling house ... built in 1963" as a "meeting house". Both are united in the same place and both continue to be used by the church. On the leasing of this house, Jud wrote:

We are excited and so thankful that God has blessed us with a new and spacious meeting house (new to us). The rent is very reasonable. It is an extra large dwelling house which was built in 1963. It has 5 bedrooms, back room with private entrances for a study, kitchen, and a 46'x24' living room that we use as an auditorium. The yard is large enough for recreational facilities ... We are using 3 of the bedrooms for classes that are well-attended.²⁶⁴

In June 1966, Jud and Pansy Whitefield moved up to Kuala Lumpur at the request of the congregation meeting at 123-D Ipoh Road. He had been teaching and preaching there regularly since July 1965. Jud gave this rationale for his move to Kuala Lumpur: "The need in Malaysia is so great that it does not seem right for 3 families to work in one town."²⁶⁵

Phillip and Kay Wright oversaw the Bible correspondence programme in Seremban. They were sponsored by the Highland Church in Abilene, Texas. He was not a gospel preacher when he

²⁶³ Ibid., both quotes, 12.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 12. The house was built by a construction contractor for his own dwelling. While it was being constructed, one of the workers was fatally injured. The contractor refused to stay in it when it was completed, thinking it was "sway" or cursed. It was left vacant for some time until it was rented and used as a nightclub before Jud Whitefield leased it.

²⁶⁵ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, June 5, 1966, 2.

came, but a Safeway Store Manager in Wyoming. He had attended a lectureship in Abilene and learnt that Seremban was in need of someone to grade the Bible courses.²⁶⁶

The Matlocks' coming to Seremban and Malaysia was told in an article by Wanema Matlock herself. They were teachers (article written in the editorial 'we') "enjoying the comforts and security of material things too much when 'Herrican Carla' hit". The experience "changed our outlook on life a great deal". Wanema Matlock wrote:

but it wasn't until the next summer (1962) that we really realized that 'Life is but a vapor that appeareth a little while and then vanisheth away! It was a real blessing when we had the opportunity to go on a CAMPAIGN FOR CHRIST in Idaho. It was on this trip that turned our lives upside down and shook them about never to be the same again! We determined then to look for a job overseas where we could help establish New Testament Christianity, and if this don't (*sic*) materialize within three years, we would go to the Northwest to work.

Between 1963 and 1964, the Matlocks met Jud Whitefield twice (at least), each time Jud asked them to consider coming to Malaysia. It was on the second meeting in November 1964 that they "decided to 'Go' where the Lord should lead us" and be "full-time workers for the Lord". Wanema wrote:

I feel that my greatest decision was that of leaving my Mother, not knowing if we will ever see each other again in this life. I keep thinking of our duty to her, but then I remember Matthew 10:37 – 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.'

²⁶⁶ Don Green's *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 1, June and July, 1966, No. 3, 2.

Wanema's reference to life being but a vapour and her words about leaving her mother "not knowing if we will ever see each other again in this life" had a tragic ring of prophetic fulfilment in them. The Matlocks were in Seremban for a little more than a year when tragedy struck. On 2 November 1966, Wanema was electrocuted while plugging in a table lamp. Her husband, Richard, and the two older children were away in Port Dickson on the day. She stayed behind because their younger daughter, Leslie who was five then, was unwell.

All the American missionaries in Malaysia, the Jenkses from Penang, the Greens (Ipoh), the Whitefields (who by then were in Kuala Lumpur), Dennis Cady and Thelma Eubank (both from Kuala Lumpur) descended on Seremban to commiserate and comfort Richard Matlock and the children. The Matlocks left Seremban for Lake Jackson, Texas, on 4 November; and the remains of Wanema were shipped home the next day.²⁶⁷

With the departure of Richard Matlock, Phillip Wright took on the added responsibility of preaching in addition to his role in grading the Bible correspondence courses. Jud Whitefield mentioned that he and Kay "had been Christians less than a year, when they left the states (*sic*) for work over in Malaysia." Jud Whitefield added:

They [the Wrights, author's] suffered much sickness and several severe shocks while here. They have been responsible for many conversions not only in Seremban, but in several surrounding towns.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Don Green gave an extended account of this tragic death of Wanema Matlock in his *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 1, October, November & December 1966, No. 5, 2-3. For other reports, see Jud Whitefield's *Malaysian Newsletter*, November 15, 1966, 2; and Dennis Cady, *Go Ye Meant Go Me, The Missionary Experiences of Dennis Cady* (Winona: World Evangelism Publications, 2011), 13.

²⁶⁸ Jud Whitefield's *Malaysian Newsletter*, October 5, 1967, 2.

The Wrights left Seremban in September 1967²⁶⁹, having been in the town for about two and a half years.

In the interim, before the arrival of the Sinclairs, Jud Whitefield came back to preach in Seremban every Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. Jud Whitefield made this observation of the Seremban church at the time:

There are three families who largely make up the membership. This is unusual as usually young people only are reached with the gospel. The possibilities look real good in Seremban for the developing of a strong church.²⁷⁰

Kenneth Leroy and Estelle Sinclair (November 1967 – 1977)

Kenneth (Ken) and Estelle Sinclair arrived in Seremban on 11 November 1967.²⁷¹ They were sponsored by the Lake Jackson church in Texas, U.S.A. Ken described his first Sunday service in Seremban:

The first Sunday in Seremban was quite impressive. The brethren conducted the entire church service. Brother Gnanam taught the Bible class, brother Daniel gave the sermon, and Anthong (*sic*) Teh led the singing. Some of the younger boys helped with the communion services. All the members have been so friendly and helpful to us.²⁷²

One of the ‘younger boys’ introduced by Ken in the same newsletter was Robert Too, who was 13 years old and in Form 1. His schoolteacher asked him what he wanted to be and he replied that he wanted to be “a preacher in the Church of Christ”.

²⁶⁹ Don Green’s *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, October, November, December 1967 and January 1968, No. 1, 1. See also Jud Whitefield’s *Malaysian Newsletter*, October 5, 1967, 2.

²⁷⁰ Jud Whitefield’s *Malaysian Newsletter*, November 5, 1967, 2.

²⁷¹ *Newsletter from Malaysia*, A Report from Kenneth and Estelle Sinclair, November 20, 1967.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, December 15, 1967.

The teacher did not quite understand this and put it in her record as 'priest'. Robert never became a preacher or 'priest' in the church in the vocational sense of the word; but for many years, he was a faithful member in Seremban, doing the teaching and preaching when called upon.

Estelle told "A MOST INTERESTING EXPERIENCE OF THE MONTH":

Early this last Thursday morning we had quite an experience. Kenney had gone down stairs. Suddenly I heard him call out that there was a snake on the stairs. We got a stick and tried to kill him. It was then we found that we had an 18" King Cobra in the house. We threw an old boot at him but missed and he crawled inside it. We kicked the boot downstairs and outside. To get him out we filled the boot with water. A garden hoe finished the job when the Cobra came out.²⁷³

One ministry that stood out in Ken's mission work in Seremban was his prison ministry. Sometime around April of 1969, Ken was allowed to visit and speak to the inmates of the prison in Seremban.

The Lord has opened up another door for the gospel in Malaysia. Each Saturday at 2:30 in the afternoon, I am allowed to preach to the inmates in our prison in Seremban. There are over 200 prisoners and all are political prisoners. Most of them are Communist (*sic*) and are serving life sentences. I have twelve that come every week to my class.

²⁷³ Ibid., March 15, 1968. Ken Sinclair would relate this incident many times over to his visitors to humour them. Snakes, especially cobras, were quite a common feature in the place as it was surrounded by woods in those days. Even this writer, in the years he served in Seremban, had encountered quite a few cobras in the church compound.

Most of these are Chinese but there are some Indians and Indonesians also.²⁷⁴

In time to come, he was considered as the “Christian Chaplain” by the prison officials.²⁷⁵ It is likely that this prison ministry stood well for Ken in his visa extension applications later on. While others were rejected in 1974/5, Ken’s visa was extended twice for a year each until 1977. The prison ministry produced about a dozen or more converts. But none stayed faithful for long, except one. This was Armand Chan Woon Mun, who was a victim caught in the 1963-66 Malaysia-Indonesia Confrontation. Imprisoned in Seremban since 1965, he was baptised by Ken on 5 September 1973, “after 4½ years of weekly study”.²⁷⁶

Campaigns and Growth

On August 3-10, 1969, a town-wide Campaign for Christ was held at the Seremban Town Hall (Dewan Bandaraya Seremban). As with other campaigns for Christ, groups of Christians from sister congregations in Malaysia and Singapore came to assist and support in the Campaign. Two big groups from the United States came too. Lake Jackson sent thirteen, including the campaign speaker, Clifton Rogers, and Joe Talbot, an elder of Lake Jackson. Abilene Christian College (ACC) sent eighteen, which were known as the Mission Seminar Group. They were led by Dr. George Gurganus, who was professor of

²⁷⁴ Ibid., May 15, 1969.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., October 1969.

²⁷⁶ *Malaysia*, A Report from the Sinclairs in Seremban, September 30, 1973. Armand Chan was subsequently “buanged” (banished) to Balik Pulau, Penang, under restricted movement control. But he was later allowed to attend services on Sundays with the church in Ayer Itam, Penang. He emigrated and now resides in Canada.

missions at ACC (now, ACU) and at Harding Graduate School of Religion (now, Harding School of Theology). Classes were conducted in the mornings by various teachers from these two groups. Ten were baptised during the Campaign, while another eight were added in the post-Campaign follow-up teaching.

A result of this Campaign were the contacts made with “a group of young Chinese people who work at one of the local shops” and some Chinese-speaking children. For the first time in Seremban, most probably, classes in Chinese were organised. A Bible class, taught by Gan Tian Seng, was held on Sunday mornings; while classes for various age groups of children were held in the afternoons. These classes were taught by Dorothy Too, Leong Lai Keng, Ng Yoke Ying and Chu Lai Peng (baptised the week after the campaign).²⁷⁷

The Chinese Bible class became a morning Chinese worship service when a couple, Mr. & Mrs. Ong Kim Swee were baptised in April 1970. They were the parents of Ong Yek Len (baptised during the Clifton Rogers campaign) and Ong Soo Huat (baptised in the December Pat McGee campaign).²⁷⁸ With the introduction of the Chinese worship service, the church was now running three worship services on Sundays in addition to the English and Tamil services.²⁷⁹

There would be other campaigns for Christ in the years that followed. Most of them were sponsored by Lake Jackson,

²⁷⁷ Ibid., August 1969 & September 15, 1969. Gan Tian Seng was one of the first converts of Jud Whitefield in Seremban. He went on to attend Four Seas College and was awarded a Certificate of Achievement. Ng Yoke Ying was baptised by Frank Pierce when he was in Seremban.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., May 1970.

²⁷⁹ The Tamil worship service was added in August 1968 as there were a number of Tamil speaking members in the church. See *Malaysia, A Report from the Sinclairs in Seremban*, September 15, 1968.

which had been a primary supporter of the mission work in Seremban (and in Klang as well).

In 1969 alone, Ken reported a total of forty-four baptisms, many of whom, were teenagers and young school-going children. Among them were Ong Chong Seng, Sherman Wong and Ong Eng Koon, who were leaders in the Methodist Youth Fellowship.²⁸⁰ As a result of these 'snatchings' and several others, the Methodist Church became wary of the church in Seremban.

Purchase of Church Building

As early as January 1968, a building fund was launched "with high hopes that some day the Church in Seremban could purchase property to use as a tool in the Lord's work".²⁸¹ In February 1970, a building committee comprising M. A. Daniel as chairman, Anthony Teh, secretary, Ken Sinclair, treasurer, and S. M. Gnanam and Theresa Leong, committee members, was formed. This led to the eventual purchase of the Lobak property, first leased by Jud Whitefield in 1965, for a sum of \$11,333.34 (most likely, in US dollars; in local currency it would be \$34,000.00) in April 1971. The church in Seremban itself raised more than 50% of the sum through direct contributions and pledges. The remainder came from Lake Jackson (\$3,500.00), churches and individuals throughout Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Ceylon. Interest free loans from the Moulmein Road church and the church in Bangkok were extended to Seremban for the pledges that were not made good yet. On the sacrificial efforts made by the local members to raise the sum, Ken wrote:

²⁸⁰ *Malaysia*, A Report from the Sinclairs in Seremban, January 15, 1970.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, March 15, 1971.

The agreement has been signed with the owner to make the transaction on April 30, 1971. We are anxiously waiting that date when the property will belong to the Lord and His workers in Seremban. How is this possible? Some members are selling their bicycles and books. Others are doing odd jobs. One man went deeply into his savings. May the Lord bless each one who made sacrifices for the Lord.²⁸²

With this purchase, the Seremban church became the first in Malaysia to have a property of its own.

Elders Appointed

On June 13, 1971, in conjunction with the dedication service of the church building, the congregation appointed S. M. Gnanam and M. A. Daniel as elders, making it the first in Malaysia and Singapore to have elders.²⁸³ The eldership, however, lasted for slightly more than a year only. This came about when M. A. Daniel and his family left for India in December 1972,²⁸⁴ which automatically brought the eldership to an end.

Eddy Ee (24 August 1971 – 1973)

On August 24, 1971, Eddy Ee, who was ministering with the Moulmein Road church, came to Seremban to serve as its preaching minister. This was in preparation for the Sinclairs' planned return to the States in September on furlough.²⁸⁵ Eddy Ee continued with the prison work and baptised quite a few.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Ibid., April 15, 1971. See also May 15, 1971.

²⁸³ Ibid., June 15, 1971.

²⁸⁴ In Seremban's weekly bulletin, *The Proclaimer*, Vol. 3, 13 December 1972.

²⁸⁵ *Malaysia*, A Report from the Sinclairs in Seremban, September 15, 1971 and September 26, 1971.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., October 11, 1971.

He and Theresa Leong (of the Leong siblings in Seremban) were married on May 27, 1972, at Moulmein Road,²⁸⁷ having been engaged in December 1970.

Eddy Ee served in Seremban until February 18, 1973 when he returned to preach at Moulmein Road.²⁸⁸

The Sinclairs' Return and Port Dickson (January 1973 – May 1977)

The Sinclairs returned to Malaysia on 6 January 1973, this time with an addition to the family, David Sinclair.²⁸⁹ In this return, Ken took an inventory of the health of the Seremban church.

The records show that of the 184 Christians who have been members here only 59 are faithful, 46 are unfaithful still living in Seremban, and 79 have moved away to other places for schooling and jobs.

And he, perhaps rather ruefully, asked, “How about that for a turnover?”²⁹⁰

Self-Reliance and Transition to Local Preachers

Another milestone was reached when the church became financially self-reliant on April 1, 1973. This meant that the church was responsible for all its expenditures without having to rely on external funds.

²⁸⁷ *Newsletter from Malaysia*, Charles and Cloyce Bishop reporting from Klang, Eddy and Theresa Ee reporting from Seremban, undated but marked June '72.

²⁸⁸ In report from Ken Sinclair, untitled, but dated February 28, 1973.

²⁸⁹ In 1975, the Sinclairs adopted a local baby girl, Kyna Marie, to add to their family (November 30, 1975).

²⁹⁰ *Malaysia*, A Report from the Sinclairs in Seremban, January 31, 1973.

On April 1 the Seremban Church will become fully self-supporting. A realistic budget of \$32 U.S. has been endorsed by the congregation per week. Our weekly contribution [i.e., Sinclairs', writer's] will also be given in Lake Jackson each week so the local brethren will not become dependent on it. Many members doubled and tripled their giving so they could accomplish this goal.²⁹¹

To nudge the church further into self-sufficiency, “the congregation decided on February 17th to secure the services of a local gospel preacher and to support him fully”.²⁹² On 15 April 1974, Look Yu Sang, who had been a part of the church since his baptism on 6 October 1970, was “secured by the Church of Christ in Seremban to be its first full time minister fully supported by the local brethren”.²⁹³ Prior to this, he had been preaching in the Chinese worship services.

In October of the same year, S. M. Gnamam, who was previously an elder, was added to the ministry staff, having retired from his supervisory position at the Limsum Rubber Estate.²⁹⁴

Move to Port Dickson

With two full-time ministers in place, and with the church self-supporting, Ken Sinclair made the move to Port Dickson on 4 January 1975 to begin a new congregation there. He considered this as a mission work of the Seremban church as well as Lake Jackson's. He rented a house at 436, 1 Mile Coast Road, Port Dickson, which served as his family residence as well as a meeting place for the church to be. In the meantime, the

²⁹¹ Ibid., March 31, 1973.

²⁹² Ibid., February 28, 1974.

²⁹³ Ibid., undated, but marked as “Rec'd April 25, 1974”.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., October 31, 1974.

Sinclair's continued to travel to Seremban for Bible study and worship on Fridays and Sundays.²⁹⁵

The Seremban church provided initial support to this mission work in Port Dickson. Its two ministers, Look Yu Sang and S. M. Gnanam, would go to this coastal town on Mondays and Tuesdays respectively. Yu Sang helped with the personal work and Bible course students; while Gnanam reached out to the Indian families. In addition, Julia Cheah who was secretary in Seremban, assisted in the office work on Thursdays.²⁹⁶

Charles Bishop came from Klang to preach the first gospel meeting in Port Dickson on May 18-22, 1975. The meeting was held "on the roof garden on one of our Muslim Restaurants in downtown Port Dickson". One person, Chandra Sekaran, was baptised.²⁹⁷ He, together with T. M. Kuriakose (baptised in July) and Chew See Kwee (baptised in October),²⁹⁸ were later to provide leadership in teaching and preaching in the nascent PD church.

In his June 30, 1975 report, Ken announced that four persons were baptised in a month and the membership in Port Dickson stood at eight. Further,

WORSHIP is now conducted in our home in P.D. every Sunday evening at 7:00. Four Seremban brethren preached for us this month. They are S. M. Gnanam, Michael Leong, Sherman Wong, and Vincent Venugopal.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., December 31, 1974 and January 31, 1975. Also, in Ken Sinclair's report on the 14th Annual Asian Missionary Workshop dated February 1, 1975.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., February 28, 1975. Gnanam later extended his days in Port Dickson to three a week (in June 30, 1975 report).

²⁹⁷ Ibid., May 31, 1975.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., July 31, 1975 & October 31, 1975. T. M. Kuriakose was baptised along with his wife, Ammini. They were 'Syrian Christians'. Kuriakose and Chew See Kwee were 'conductors' in rubber estates.

The local brethren do all of the preaching as I am devoting myself entirely to personal work and leadership training.²⁹⁹

The church held its first Campaign for Christ on December 8-12, 1975 at the new town hall in Port Dickson. Perry Cotham, from Dallas, Texas, preached in this Campaign. The Campaign attracted a crowd of 226 on average each night with a high of 275. There were ten baptisms, of which four were from Port Dickson.³⁰⁰

Ken's mission work in Malaysia came to an end when his visa was renewed in March 1976 for "one final year or up to May 3, 1977!"³⁰¹ In his 1976 December report filed with the Lake Jackson church, he gave the following figures for the two places that he had laboured for close to 10 years in Malaysia:

<u>Membership</u>	<u>P. D.</u>	<u>Seremban</u>
Baptized	34	272
Identified	5	6
Total	39	278
Moved Away	9	122
Withdrawn	0	34
Deceased	0	6
Present Members	30	116

²⁹⁹ Ibid., June 30, 1975.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., December 31, 1975.

³⁰¹ Ibid., March 31, 1976. Ken and Estelle came back to Seremban in 2005 to be with the church they so dearly loved, taking advantage of the Malaysia My Second Home Programme. Estelle went back to the States to care for her ailing mother a few years later while Ken stayed on until his unfortunate demise on 2 December 2015 from dengue fever complications while visiting Singapore.

Demise of the Port Dickson Church

After Ken left, Michael Leong, who had been assisting Ken in Port Dickson, took over the preaching role. Michael Leong, however, fell away after several years. M. A. Daniel, for a while, in the early 1980s, also preached in Port Dickson until he left for Kuala Lumpur to be with his children there. The church continued to meet on its own for some time. But with the subsequent departure of the few remaining members to the Klang Valley, Seremban, and other places, it ceased to exist as of the early 1990s.

After Ken Sinclair

Look Yu Sang left the ministry in Seremban for the Kluang work in 1978. Richard Lim, who had a short stint with the Moulmein Road Mandarin congregation in Singapore following his graduation from Four Seas College, took on the ministry and served until 1981. But he continued to preach for the Mandarin service on a part-time basis and he remains in that role till today.

S. M. Gnanam also served the same role in the Tamil service for many years well into the 1990s until ill health and old age prevented him from doing so. Shortly upon the death of his wife in 1989, he moved to Kajang to stay with his eldest son's family. Even then, he continued to return to Seremban each Sunday to preach for the Tamil congregation, sometimes taking the Kajang-Seremban Tong Fong bus on his own when his son, Dr. Lawrence, was unable to drive him to Seremban. When it became difficult for Gnanam to travel to Seremban on a regular basis, Mailvaganam, who was with the English congregation, went over to preach in the Tamil service. Gnanam passed away peacefully in his sleep on 7 June 2006.

Ong Chong Seng, who was one of the many youth members in the Methodist church converted during Ken

Sinclair's time, became minister of the church (English service) in April 1985. Prior to this, he had served in Malacca with Ken Willis for about a year in 1972-73. He left the Seremban ministry in May 1987 to take up work with a logging company in Indonesia. After him, Simon Lopez (from Klang) served for almost a year as a personal worker.

Ong Kok Bin (October 1988 – December 2020)

In October 1988, Ong Kok Bin (originally, from Penang) came to minister to the church. Prior to this, he was minister with the Kuala Lumpur congregation for slightly more than two years between May 1986 and June 1988. When he left the Seremban ministry in December 2020, he was the longest serving preacher in a single congregation in Malaysia, having served for thirty-two years and three months in Seremban.³⁰²

In his time, the English service grew to a peak of some sixty plus in attendance. Because of this growth, the church building was renovated in 1998 to incorporate a larger worship hall and a kitchen and fellowship area.³⁰³ Kok Bin also initiated and organised three Homecomings (1993, 1995 and 2000), which were to encourage former members to return to the church.

³⁰² Two other preachers had longer stays of ministry than him in Malaysia. But they served at different congregations in their time of service. Lau Kin Fatt is the longest serving preacher in Malaysia (47 years, as of this writing). But he had served with 4 different congregations: Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Penang and, currently, Puchong. Next to him is Ong Chong Fatt (46 years, spread over Penang and Petaling Jaya).

³⁰³ The renovation work was under the oversight of Dr. Hon Peck Lim, then the church treasurer, as Kok Bin was away in Abilene, Texas, U.S.A., doing his Masters in Christian Ministry at Abilene Christian University. But the plan to renovate the building was first mooted by him in a church camp in Kuala Pilah several years prior to the actual work.

In 2015/16, the church was gifted with a two-storey shop-lot unit in Merchant Square in the new township of Bandar Sri Sendayan by the Matrix group, the developer of the township. This gift was made possible through the untiring efforts of Tony Lee. The church raised more than RM500,000, through contributions from sister congregations in Malaysia and Singapore³⁰⁴, current and former members, friends and visitors of the church, to renovate the first floor of the unit for use by the church as an outreach centre and to pay the property transfer tax and other fees. The first worship service at this new outreach centre was conducted on 5 January 2020, an evening service at 6 p.m. On 15 February, the church held a Dedication cum Homecoming Service to dedicate the outreach centre to the service of God. More than 120 people were in attendance.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia in February 2020 put paid to any meaningful outreach work in this place for a good while. But since the declaration of the end of the pandemic some two years later, the church has been able to hold evening meetings on each Sunday at 6 p.m. in this Sendayan outreach centre besides conducting weekly worship services at the Lobak premises.

³⁰⁴ The Pasir Panjang congregation in Singapore gave S\$50,000 alone. For many years, it partially supported Kok Bin's work in Seremban.

IPOH

Donald D. and Ann Green (March 1966 – December 1969)

Don Green's interest in mission work in the Far East began in 1964. In that year, the East Frayser Church in Memphis, TN., of which he was a member, had a missionary workshop. Among the speakers in the workshop were Ira Y. Rice and Gordon Hogan. They introduced him to Singapore and Malaysia. Before this, Don Green had intended to go to Turkey but he was rebuffed in this; and so he set his sights on Singapore instead. But he was soon told he would not be able to obtain a missionary visa in Singapore. His attention was then turned to Kuala Lumpur, but upon his arrival in Kuala Lumpur (February 8, 1966), he was informed that Jud Whitefield, who at the time was in Seremban, had decided to move up to the capital city. Thus, through a series of fortuitous twists and turns, Don Green found himself in the tin-mining town of Ipoh.³⁰⁵

Don Green arrived in Ipoh from Kuala Lumpur, with his wife Ann and young son Timothy³⁰⁶, either on March 2 (at 2:30 a.m. by train) or March 4 (his report on this was ambiguous).³⁰⁷ "The next morning, Saturday, March 5," they went to meet Moses Richardson at his work-place. Moses was a BBC student and was baptised by Henry Tan from Moulmein Road in

³⁰⁵ From an interview with him by the author in September 2014 at his home in Memphis. See also, his *Far East Newsletter*, January and February [year not mentioned, but must be 1966].

³⁰⁶ The Greens were to have a later addition, Tabitha Ann, born 3:30 a.m. on 21 August 1968. Don Green boasted, "Tabitha is the first child born to a missionary in Malaysia, I think, from the Church of Christ." *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, June through November 1968, No. 4.

³⁰⁷ *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, March, April, May and June 1966. But in his February to May 1967 report, he gave his arrival in Ipoh as on March 6, 1966.

November 1965. His wife was baptised by Phil Wright a month later and Don Green reported that they “had been communig (*sic*) in their home since”. Don Green told Moses that they were in Ipoh “to work with him in establishing the church”.

The next day, March 6, the Greens and the Richardsons worshipped together. Don Green considered this day “as the start of the work in Ipoh from an out reach (*sic*) view”. But he did not state the venue of this first worship service. It could possibly be at the hotel³⁰⁸ where the Greens were temporarily staying or in the home of the Richardsons. However, Don Green remembered that they studied Romans 7:1-7 and Moses wanted to know “why the worship was changed from Saturday to Sunday”.³⁰⁹

The Greens had two rather unfortunate episodes early in their stay in Ipoh. The day they went house-hunting they lost their groceries which they had left in the real estate agent’s car when they stopped to look at a house. Don Green showed his funny side when he humoured: “Everything was taken except the bananas. We knew then that it wasn’t a monkey who stole the food.”

The other incident was when they lost their car:

The most trying experience was when someone stole our car, a new Austin 1100 right out from under our carport about 5:15 one morning. I sure was exasperated when I went out about 9:00 and saw that it was gone. The police located the car in another part of town. We were thankful to get it back with only a broken window and cut wires.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Hollywood Hotel, see *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 1 October, November & December 1966, No. 5.

³⁰⁹ *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, March, April, May and June 1966. Don Green was sponsored by his congregation, East Frayser in Memphis.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.* Towards the end of the year, in November, the Greens went down to Seremban because of the tragic death of Wanema Matlock from

Don Green had a rather unorthodox approach in his evangelism methods as compared to his fellow missionaries. He would hold open air Gospel Meetings. Also, he would not just focus his work on Ipoh alone; but he would spread it out to other towns as well. One time, he was wanting to visit Batu Gajah:

to see about having an open air Gospel meeting such as we had at Taiping and here in Ipoh week before last. The over all plan is to preach the Gospel in all the leading cities of Perak, cut down on sin, and draw out those God is working with in each town.³¹¹

He reasoned:

We know this is right because it worked in Paul's day and with Jesus, and it is working now. George is our first evidence. He came to us from an audience of five hundred or more gathered that night on the soccer field in Buntong Village here in Ipoh and said he was interested in what we were doing. We took him aside and taught him more perfectly.

Don Green gave a little snippet on what happened at these open air meetings:

I had the first stone thrown at me while I was preaching in Taiping to a mixed crowd, and I knew I was on the right track. In Ipoh we had a 99% Tamil crowd and have

electrocution. When they returned to Ipoh they found their house broken into and burgled; *Don Green's Newsletter*, Vol. I, October, November & December 1966, No. 5. Then on January 24, 1967, their house was burgled a second time; Vol. II, January 1967, No. 1.

³¹¹ *Don Green's Newsletter*, Vol. I, June and July 1966, No. 3. From Don Green's various reports over his four years in Ipoh, we know that he had drawn prospects and made converts from a number of towns around Ipoh, such as Taiping, Kampar, Kuala Kangsar, Sitiawan, Ayer Tawar, Lumut, Menglembu, and Tanjong Rambutan. For a time, groups identifying themselves as the church of Christ met in Kampar, Sitiawan and Ayer Tawar.

succeeded in disturbing the community – the Angelican (*sic*), Methodist pastors, and pagen (*sic*) religions. The crowds of the best nights were 500 to 1,000 people. We have also succeeded in being invited to teach a group of twelve families who are respectable business people in Ipoh and who were already very disturbed by denominational manners in the community.

It was during one of these open air meetings that a certain Joseph Rajoo, “a lay preacher in the Methodist Church” and “a business man (*sic*), employed with the Merchantile (*sic*) Bank of Ipoh” came into contact with Don Green and the church. He and his family studied with Don Green for a while “every Sunday afternoon at 3:30”³¹² until they were all converted and baptised. Joseph Rajoo’s son, Solomon, who had a mind “to preach the Gospel since he was a small boy”, was to become an active teacher and preacher in the church. He went on to study at Four Seas College.³¹³

Francis Pavlas and Family Came to Ipoh from Mentakab

It was about this time also (“the last week of May”³¹⁴) when Don Green “was preaching in the open padong (*sic*) in Pokok Assam, Taiping, that Francis Pavlas moved his family from Mentakab in Pahang to Ipoh because his mother-in-law had died and “he had to look after the affairs of the family”. Pavlas told

³¹² *Don Green’s Newsletter*, Vol. I, August and September 1966, No. 4, 2.

³¹³ Unfortunately, at Four Seas College, he came under the influence of Samuel Miao, and came to believe that the church of Christ was not the only true church. He and his family later left the Ipoh church and were disfellowshipped. See Don Green, *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, June through November, 1968, No. 4, 3-4.

³¹⁴ The quotes in this section are from *Don Green’s Newsletter*, Vol. I, June and July 1966.

Don Green that “he had been sent out by the brethren at Mentekob (*sic*) as an Evangelist of the church and Ipoh would be his base”.

Assured of Francis Pavlas’ genuine identity and intent, through letters to churches in Malaysia (possibly from the brethren in Mentakab) seeking support for “this Tamil evangelist”, Don Green received Pavlas as a co-worker.

We are working together in Ipoh and Malaysia as co-workers. In the meetings we give the lessons in Tamil and English, and when we show films the same. He joined me in the Taiping meeting and we got an extension from the police and from the state to speak and show films. I believe this approach is new to the work in Malaysia. (underlined, Don Green’s)

But there appeared to be a division of labour too as necessitated by language:

We are now having services in the Tamil Settlement Club, in Tamil by Francis Pavlus (*sic*). This has left us to begin a new work among the Chinese in Canning Gardens, a new area like Frayser in Memphis, Tennessee.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ All the quotes and material in this section, unless otherwise indicated, are from *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, March, April, May and June 1966. The George mentioned by Don Green is George Pathmanathun, as revealed by Ann Green in her report in the same newsletter. Ann gave a rather comprehensive report of not only the work she and her husband were doing, but also of the local conditions like food, neighbours and so forth. In a paragraph on Francis Pavlas, she wrote: “I drive on out to Francis’ home, a humble home with no furniture except one bed, and his wife and six children. Paul, the latest, was born last week. I think of visiting Mrs. Pavlus (*sic*) in the General Hospital and it makes me sick. Dogs, cats, and chickens run in and out of the open wards and women chewing beetle (*sic*) nut spiting (*sic*) the rotten stuff out the open windows into the open drains, often missing as it splashes on the windows and runs down the wall. God was surely with little Paul and his mother the three days they were in the

The church at this time did not have a fixed place to meet. They met in the various homes of the brethren.

we have a congregation but it is small in number. We meet each Sunday. The Christians being babes in Christ miss assembling themselves together for the least little reason. This is most disappointing. The children are far more faithful than the adults. We have about 12 to 25 here in Ipoh. We are still meeting in the homes of the brethren; first one and then the other.³¹⁶

It was not until March 5, 1967, that the church rented a shophouse at 81 Brewster Road for use as a meeting place.³¹⁷ But the place was soon deemed unsuitable because of noise and dust pollution from the front street. In August, the church moved to 127 Cockman Street, a shophouse too. Gordon Hogan, who came from Pakistan to support the Kuala Lumpur Campaign for Christ (“Journey through the Bible”, 6-13 August 1967), visited Ipoh after the Campaign, and Don Green invited him to speak in a “short Gospel Meeting” on 15-17 August in this new place. Solomon Rajoo, one of the early converts, continued with the Gospel Meeting and spoke the next three days. Don Green described this Gospel Meeting:

The meeting started and we had a full house. Chairs were again borrowed from the Banker’s Union, and a hasty job of advertising was done. First night we had over one

hospital.” Ann Green referred to the group meeting in the Tamil Settlement Club as the Tamil Church of Christ.

³¹⁶ *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. II, January 1967, No. 1. This account most likely was penned by Ann Green. In volume III, February, March, and April 1968, No. 2, Don Green stated: “The church was fully registered in October, 1967. We moved our meeting place from Francis Pavlas’ home to N. J. Rajoo’s home, to 81 Brewster Road, and then to 127 Cockman Street.

³¹⁷ *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. II, January 1967, No. 1.

hundred, mostly all children. I asked a Brother Yim Tuck Fatt to translate in Cantonese for Gordon.³¹⁸

Another evangelistic approach Don Green took was to hold daily Bible School (or, Vacation Bible School) for students during the school holidays. This was a common method in those days. One such school was scheduled in October 1966 for a stretch of two weeks starting October 8 with the book of Acts as the teaching curriculum. Don Green wrote:

Consider what the effects of this tentative daily schedule will be on the lives of our ten students and the future of the church in Perak state.

6:30 - 7:00 - Bread and Tea
7:30 - 9:30 - Classroom Study
9:35 - 10:05 - Chapel Service (Worship)
10:05 - 10:35 - Tea, Fellowship
10:40 - 12:50 - Classroom Study
1:30 - 2:30 - Food for out of town students
2:30 - 4:30 - Rest and Study
4:30 - 6:30 - Acts in Action (Hse to Hse Evangelism)
7:00 - 8:30 - Evening Meal
9:00 - 10:00 - Study, Meditation
10:30 - Lights Out

There were more such Bible schools held in Don Green's four years at Ipoh. It is to his credit and a testimony of the success of the Bible school programme that the Ipoh congregation had the greatest number of students enrolled at Four Seas College from the late 1960s to the early 1970s and also the most number who became preachers in Malaysia. For example, in the academic year of 1970, there were eighteen full-

³¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, June, July, August, September 1967, No. 3. Yim Tuck Fatt, a retired teacher, would translate for other speakers on other occasions as well.

time students at Four Seas out of which “One half of these are from Ipoh and the state of Perak”.³¹⁹ During the 1970s, as many as twenty-five, or, possibly more, from Ipoh and Perak studied at Four Seas.³²⁰ Of these, “SIX SONS IN THE GOSPEL”, Lau Kin Fatt, John Lachmana, Frankie Leong, Annis R. Yankaya, Ting Kong Eyo and Wong Yoon Mik all became preachers.³²¹ Wong Yoon Mik (deceased) preached in Ayer Tawar; Yankaya (deceased) and Ting Kong Eyo both worked together in Johor Baru; Frankie Leong was in Malacca and Ipoh; John Lachmana (Don Green’s first convert³²²) in Kuala Lumpur; and Lau Kin Fatt in Kuala Lumpur (together with John Lachmana), Petaling Jaya, Penang, and as of this writing, Puchong, in Selangor.

In imitation of A. L. Harbin’s perpetual gospel meeting (which ran for 428 days) in Queenstown, Singapore, Don Green held a Great Gospel Meeting, which began from February 1 and lasted through to October 16, 1969, interrupted only briefly during the May 13 riots when a curfew was imposed nation-wide for a period of time. Besides Don Green himself, Francis Pavlas, A. L. Harbin (Romans), Miles Cotham (Galatians) and Jud Whitefield (Philippians), amongst others, spoke in this Great Gospel Meeting, which began with the Gospel of Matthew and ended with the book of Revelation (taught by Pavlas), chapter by chapter. When it finally ended, Pavlas remarked to Don Green “it seemed strange to him not going to a service or preaching each night”.³²³

³¹⁹ *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 5, January and February, 1970, No. 1.

³²⁰ *Don Green’s SOUTHEAST ASIA Newsletter*, June 1978.

³²¹ *Don Green’s Singapore Mission Report*, January 1975.

³²² *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. I, August & September, 1966, No. 4.

³²³ *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 4, October thru December 1969, No. 5; January 1969; February 1-March 15, 1969; March 15-May 1969.

Pavlas had left Ipoh for Johor Baru in early January 1967. He established a fledgling congregation there and also attended and graduated from Four Seas College. Towards the end of December 1968, he returned to Ipoh (see story on Johor Baru) and continued his ministry partnership with Don Green. Sometime in 1969, he started and operated a hawker business to augment his income. As Don Green observed: "This is a great help to them financially since they have seven children."³²⁴

Don Green was not only unorthodox in his missionary ways, he was adventurous too. We could say he tread where others would only dare to think of. He had been studying Mandarin (with a private teacher and in classes at the YMCA³²⁵) for a while but this would not be quite adequate for what he was to do next. A young Chinese "boy twenty-one years of age", Christopher Chan, "was baptized after a Bible study with him in his home". It was then, in September 1968, that Don Green "decided to try a Chinese Mandarin (*sic*) language service of songs and Bible readings" on Saturday nights. He wrote: "Anyway, it is the beginning of an effort to preach to some of these people in their own language."³²⁶

The Greens, whose visas were originally granted for a year only, had them extended for a further two years. But in the

³²⁴ *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 4, June September 1969, No. 4, 2. In his *Singapore Mission Report*, February 1975, Don Green mentioned Francis Pavlas was supported by the Kingston church.

³²⁵ For five mornings a week, from 8:30-9:30 a.m., he studied under Mrs. Tan Yee Kit and on three evenings, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00-9:00 p.m. under Mr. Tan Yee Kit at the YMCA; Vol. III, February, March, and April 1968, No. 2.

³²⁶ *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, June through November 1968, No. 4. Twelve people were present for that first Mandarin service and about the same number for the later services. Don Green had also tried to learn the Malay language or Bahasa Malaysia.

end, they, too, had to leave the mission field in Ipoh. In his report before his departure from Ipoh on 22 December 1969, Don Green gave a list of conversions from 1966 to 1969, which was first published in the *Ipoh Harvester*.

<u>CONVERSIONS:</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Ipoh</u>	<u>Other Towns</u>	<u>Total</u>
	1966	19	14	33
	1967	7	12	19
	1968	7	23	30
	1969	19	25	<u>44</u>
			Total	<u>126</u>

Because of the spread of his evangelistic outreach in towns other than Ipoh, he was able to list the numbers of Christians in 12 different places: Ayer Tawar (28), Sitiawan (18), Batu Gajah (3), Sungei Siput (3), Gopeng (1), Teluk Anson (2), Kampar (6), Tanjong Malim (4), Malim Nawar (1), Tanjong Rambutan (3), Parit (3) and Taiping (2).³²⁷

After Ipoh, Don Green went to Singapore where he spent several years teaching at Four Seas and preaching at Moulmein Road.³²⁸ He continued with his interest in Mandarin and studied the language for four years at the Nanyang University; at the end of which, he enthused:

³²⁷ Don Green's *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 4, October thru December 1969, No. 5.

³²⁸ After Ipoh, he spent a while transiting in Singapore in 1970 before returning to the States. Then in 1971, he came back to Singapore with proper visas and stayed on until September 1975. Gordon Hogan had a short piece on Don Green's work in Singapore in his July, August, September 1975 *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*.

It is great to be able to preach the Gospel in the national language of China. I could now preach to Chairman Mao of China, if he would listen.³²⁹

Don Green returned to Ipoh sometime towards the last quarter of 1977.³³⁰ One of his goals, besides “starting churches”, this time, was “to start the Bible Training and Evangelism School on a daily schedule this fall in the state of Perak”.³³¹ He must have worked hard and furious for in December of 1977, he reported:

Don and Francis Pavlas, a local minister in Ipoh, are busily involved in opening the first Bible College in Ipoh, the Ipoh Bible College. At present, there are seven students registered for classes. The teachers will be Don, Francis Pavlas ... A. L. Harbin.³³²

About this time also, he and Francis Pavlas began holding regular services in Taiping.

We both share in the preaching and teaching of the Lord’s Word. Miss Arul Selvi, daughter of Balraj was converted in Taiping. She makes the fourth Christian in this new congregation.³³³

³²⁹ *Don Green’s Singapore Mission Report*, January 1975. He revealed in his *South East Asia Evangelist* (Vol. 1 October 15, 1975, No. 5) that he had studied Mandarin in Memphis, TN, even before coming to Malaysia. So, his interest and motivation to learn Mandarin must have been great.

³³⁰ In East Frayser’s elders’ letter dated September 15, 1977, seeking funds for Don Green’s work fund.

³³¹ *Don Green Family Newsletter*, May-August 1977.

³³² In an undated report, but must be early December 1977.

³³³ *Don Green’s SOUTHEAST ASIA Newsletter*, February 14, 1978. Arulselvi’s younger sister, Arulmani, was also baptised in Taiping.

Unable to secure a visa for a longer stay, Don Green left Ipoh for a second time with his family in the first half of June 1978 for Jakarta via Singapore.³³⁴

³³⁴ Ibid., June 1978. Also, in letter from the Missions Committee of the East Frayser church dated June 23, 1978.

IPOH GARDEN EAST

Frank and Lily Leong (December 1982 – 1993)

Frank and Lily Leong were converted during Don Green's time in Ipoh. They went on to study at Four Seas College in Singapore. Soon after their graduation in 1974, they went to Malacca to minister to the church there. They moved to Ipoh on 29 December 1982 to "start a new Chinese work in Ipoh" with support from the East Frayser congregation in Memphis, Tennessee.³³⁵

Upon their arrival in Ipoh, they set about planning and organising for their first worship service with only about two or three days to the "FIRST DAY OF WORSHIP", as underscored by Frank Leong. Here is his description of that historic day:

The 3rd day, 2nd January, was Sunday and it was time to begin our first worship for 1983 in Ipoh Garden East. There were 2 or 3 days for us to get ready and settle for the first worship. We worked from as early as 6:30 in the morning till 1 or 1:30 a.m. the next day. Finally when Sunday arrived, as my family and I got ready and sat in the hall which was prepared for the service, our hearts were filled with anxiety and yet with expectation. Then 20 minutes before service, I heard the sound of our gate and someone came in, followed by another. They were Chang and his wife and baby girl. While we started to greet and talk with each other, one after another, those that we had contacted through correspondence, came in. We had 8 adults and 3 children on that morning. It was a 100% response to the mail that we sent out earlier. They expressed their desire to be with the church and work with us, as we expressed ours. The service was conducted with singing of hymns, partaking of the Lord's supper, giving and Bible study. It

³³⁵ Don Green's *SOUTHEAST ASIA Newsletter*, First Quarter Report, 1983, 1.

was more like a cottage service. A Mandarin Chinese (*sic*) Bible class was conducted later. We went out to lunch together.³³⁶

The “8 adults and 3 children on that morning” were Frank and Lily Leong and their two children, Aaron and Deborah, Chan Kwok Meng, Joyce Aw, Aw Swee Chun, Ng Phaik Yoong, Victor and Pearly Chong and their daughter Jun Joy³³⁷ (the last three would be “Chang (*sic*) and his wife and baby girl” as in the above quote from Frank Leong).

This first meeting was in the rented residence of the Leongs, which was at 44 Jalan Perajurit, Ipoh Garden East.³³⁸ The church would move to meet in other rented premises a few times, in Ipoh Garden East and in Bercham, before it finally secured a place of its own at 46 Lintasan Perajurit 6, Ipoh Garden East in 2004.

Because of this history of its locations in Ipoh Garden East, the church was commonly known as the Ipoh Garden East (IGE) church to differentiate it from the church (historically, the Ipoh church) begun by Don Green, which for a long while, from the 1970s through to the 1990s, was meeting at 63-A Jalan Lim Bo Seng. Other than the Leongs, those that met for the first worship service in Ipoh Garden East were from the Lim Bo Seng congregation then. Gradually, others too, from Lim Bo Seng, went over to Ipoh Garden East until only the Francis Pavlas family and the Paul Raj family were left at Lim Bo Seng. With Francis Pavlas also eventually going over to Ipoh Garden East and the falling away of the Paul Raj family, the historical Ipoh church

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ In Ipoh Garden East church’s 30th Anniversary Celebration Commemorative Magazine.

³³⁸ Per Frank Leong in a WhatsApp message, 18 February 2021.

came to an end; or rather, we could say, was subsumed into the Ipoh Garden East church.

In April 1992, Frank Leong took a year's leave from his ministry to work in Penang. He left full-time ministry in 1993. But he continued to be involved in the work in Ipoh, helping to establish a Mandarin congregation alongside the English-speaking one. He also initiated an outreach work in Pantai Remis, which however, did not last for long as he was constantly travelling to the States to visit with his children, Aaron and Debbie.

Today, Frank and Lily Leong are settled in Dallas, Texas.

KLANG

The Early Beginnings

Jud Whitefield gave this account of the beginning of the Klang church:

The church started in Klang with Alfred Kanniappan, the eldest in a Tamil family. Alfred was a Bible Course student. He wrote that he wanted to study with someone as he had concluded that we were teaching the truth of the Bible. He and I studied first under a large tree as we at first could not study in his home. Soon after being baptized, Alfred influenced the rest of his family so that over a period of 1½ years 7 studied through the Bible courses, and as they learned they accepted the gospel. There are 2 girls and six boys who make up the church in Klang. Their ages range from 23 years down to 15 years. For over a year the church met in their home but since these facilities were inadequate for Daily Bible Schools and meetings, we rented a second floor apartment and are in process of renovations. Two Daily Bible Training Schools have been conducted. The first had a high of 16 in attendance and the second one a high of 41. The Sunday attendance is averaging 18.³³⁹

It is unfortunate that Jud, who filed this report in January 1970, did not offer a date for this beginning. But Thelma Eubank gave us a clue in her August 1967 report:

Dennis and Melba go to Klang every Sunday afternoon and have a class to teach ... There are three in Klang, who are now members of the Lords (*sic*) family and are all brothers. Alfred was baptized about three months ago. When it is raining they hold the class in their uncle's house. If it is nice then they have it out in their back yard under the trees. The boys have made some benches ... They have from 15

³³⁹ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, January 22, 1970.

to 20 children every Sunday from small up to about 16 or 18 years old. Two of their sisters wanted to be baptized, but the parents objected. The boys went ahead but the girls would not disobey their parents.³⁴⁰

If the 'Alfred' in Thelma's report is the same as the 'Alfred Kanniappan' in Jud's, then this 'beginning' could be as early as April or May 1967. Dennis Cady provides the certain proof to this theory. In his report to his elders back home and dated April 1, 1967, he noted:

Jud and I have had two studies with 18 year old Alfred Kanniappan, 30 miles west in Port Swettenham ... Alfred's attitude is wonderful and we hope he will be the first member of the Lord's church in that city of thousands.

A subsequent report of May 2, 1967, narrowed the date to April 1967. In this report, Dennis stated that "Alfred Kanniappan ... recently became a Christian". In his book, *Go Ye Meant Go Me*, Dennis recalled this baptism:

One day the three oldest children (two in high school and one slightly older) were baptized. The baptizing was done near where ships were docked. As we walked back to their house after dark one of them said, "That water was sure dirty." And I remember responding, "It was clean enough to wash away your sins." Alfred, James and Cecilia Kaniapan (*sic*) were the first members of the church of Christ in Klang.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Thelma Eubank, *Malaysia News and Needs through the Eyes of Thelma Eubank*, August 1967.

³⁴¹ *Go Ye*, 15. Technically, this would be Port Klang as it is called today, previously known as Port Swettenham. Dennis Cady may have conflated Port Klang with Klang, a town very close to Port Klang. In this regard, he may have been mistaken about the three Kanniappan siblings as being the first members of the church in Klang. In his report dated July 1, 1967, he

Dennis Cady and Melba Bennett³⁴² were putting extra miles (literally and figuratively) in their work on Sundays. After the morning worship service in Kuala Lumpur, they would go to Klang to teach and conduct services there. Dennis noted that Jud Whitefield objected to their missing evening service in Kuala Lumpur as a result of their going to Klang. So Dennis and Melba “usually skipped Sunday lunch, got into a taxi immediately after morning services, went directly to Klang and returned just in time for evening services”.³⁴³ What hectic extra miles the two put in is shown in this report from Dennis Cady:

Let me tell you a little about my Sunday schedule. Services and study in K.L. are from 9:00-11:30. I leave from there (no time to eat) and ride an outstation teksi (taxi) 1½ hours to Banting where I worship and study with Edwin and his friends. I then rid (*sic*) about another ½ hour to Klang where Melba and I have Bible classes under some trees. Last Sunday there were 22 present ... This class is from 2:30-3:30 then it is back to K.L. just in tim (*sic*) for the 5:00-6:00 services there. It is a race, and I am thankful the pac (*sic*) is not that stiff on other days.³⁴⁴

stated: “On Tuesday of this week, I baptized Robert Balakrishnan (16) and Francis Nagarajin (14) into Christ and the church of which He died ... These are the first additions due to my Sunday afternoon classes in Klang. There are now three members in that city of well over 100,000.” Thelma Eubank mentioned the baptisms of Robert Balakrishnan and Francis Nagarajan, both BCC students in her August 1967 report and then added: “Dennis and Melba go to Klang every Sunday afternoon and have a class to teach ... There are three in Klang, who are now members of the Lords (*sic*) family and are all brothers. Alfred was baptized about three months ago.”

³⁴² After Dennis married Susan Yong, it was him and Susan who went to Klang. See his report of October 18, 1967.

³⁴³ Dennis Cady’s report, October 18, 1967, 14.

³⁴⁴ Dennis Cady’s report, June 1, 1967.

The Edwin mentioned above must be the 13-year-old Bible course student that Dennis wrote about 15 days prior to the above report. What Dennis wrote makes an interesting read:

Our hearts were thrilled a few days ago when I and one of the Indian brethren went about 40 miles outstation to visit a thirteen year old boy who is a Bible course student and wanted to become a Christian. We studied with him for some time then took him to the beach off the Straits of Malacca where I baptized him into our Savior and His church. I returned then, on Sunday afternoon and worshiped with him and taught him further. I hope to be able to worship with and teach him like this for several weeks then just occasionally (*sic*) after that. Though he suffers no family objection, you can imagine how hard it would be for a 13 year old boy to worship like a true Christian, being 40 miles from the nearest church and never before even knowing a real Christian. His grandmother will fix him some unleaven bread herself and he will squeeze the juice from two or three grapes to have the fruit of the vine.³⁴⁵

Thelma Eubank contributed her piece to this 'Edwin':

The boy at Banting is twelve, but is very interested in doing the Lord's will. He gets about three grapes and mashed the juice out of them for the Lord's supper. His grandmother, who is a buddhist (*sic*), but is happy for him to be a christian (*sic*), makes the bread for him, Dennis told him how ... He has already had one service alone, he also gives every Sunday as the Lord has prospered him. He has bought a song book with some of the money. The song book has in

³⁴⁵ Dennis Cady's report, May 15, 1967.

the front of it: Property of Banting Church of Christ, which at this time the boy only.³⁴⁶

Jud Whitefield also had an interesting story of a young Indian convert from Carey Island (or Pulau Ketam today):

Pachai, a Tamil boy from Carey Island, came in for daily instruction in the Bible and studied with Lemuel Phillips, preacher, Southside Electra, Texas. Pachai obeyed the gospel and shows great promise of becoming a strong worker for the Lord and His Cause. He is riding a bicycle 9 miles on Carey Island to catch the Ferry to the mainland, then takes a bus to Banting where he meets with 2 young Christians for worship each Sunday. This last Sunday he had a friend with him who is interested in obeying the gospel. This causes mission work to be a joy.³⁴⁷ (underlined, Jud's)

The Kuala Lumpur church just had a Campaign for Christ, "Journey through the Bible", at the Chinese Assembly Hall on August 6-13. M. F. (Mid) McKnight was the scheduled speaker, but he fell sick and Stanley Shipp spoke in his place. Lemuel Phillips was one of several brethren from the States who came to support in the Campaign, which had workers from Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore and other parts of Malaysia assisting too.

More on this Pachai from Jud Whitefield:

Pachai, the 18 year old Indian boy who obeyed the gospel during the campaign, has gone back home and has gone to work for the Lord. He wrote a letter asking for help, stating that he had four boys wanting to be baptized. Last Friday, Krishnan and I drove to Carey Island, crossed the ferry, and spent the night with Krishnan's sister and her husband. We

³⁴⁶ *Malaysia News and Needs through the Eyes of Thelma Eubank*, August 1967.

³⁴⁷ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, September 5, 1967.

met with Pachai and the 4 boys he had mentioned. They wanted to be baptized but it was soon apparent that they did not understand well enough. We studied for an hour and a half that night. Pachai is to study with them and Krishnan is to meet them each Sunday at Banting to worship and study. Banting is a town 19 miles from Carey Island. Pachai is teaching the Bible each night to these 4 Indian boys. They come to his home and there he has a room ready and waiting with chairs and table. He told us he needed someone to help him all the time, so he could learn more Bible and so that the 2,500 people on this Island could hear the gospel. Brethren, think of what this young man is doing. He obeyed the gospel August 8th. 54 days later is teaching a daily Bible class with four who are about ready to obey the Lord. He travels 19 miles to Banting to worship with 2 young Christians, one 13 and the other 15, with 9 miles of this made on a bicycle. Do you realize that this is the way that the Lord means for all of us to apply ourselves!³⁴⁸ (underlined, Jud's)

Another trip was made to visit Pachai on Carey Island ... I was truly impressed with the simplicity of the gospel as practiced in the life of this young man. Pachai has been getting in a room by himself each Sunday morning at 10:00 A.M. for worship. He first reads a chapter from the New Testament and then meditates upon it for five minutes, he then sings 2 songs, singing each over several times, "Joy, Joy, My Heart Is Full of Joy" and "I Will Make You Fishers of Men," (these are the only two he knows). He then prays, and last engages in the Lord's Supper. He is the only Christian of the five thousand (5,000) inhabitants of Carey Island. He now has a 14 year old Indian boy who meets with him each Sunday morning. Pachai is taking a Tamil Bible course from Francis Pavlas, Jahore, (*sic*) Bahru, and is

³⁴⁸ Ibid., October 15, 1967.

teaching this one lesson at a time to the 14 year old boy. He continues to study with three other boys several times each week. Pachai is using himself tor (*sic*) the Lord, and remember, not long ago he was a Hindu (*sic*).³⁴⁹

These anecdotal reports provide us a glimpse into the early converts made in Port Swettenham, Banting and Carey Island in 1967. But within a year or so, Klang came to be regarded as the place where the Lord's church started, as we saw in Jud Whitefield's account of its beginning (see above). In his January 28, 1969 newsletter, he headlined "FIVE CHRISTIANS NOW LIVING FOR CHRIST IN KLANG". These five comprising "three Tamil brothers" (most likely, the Kanniappan siblings, mine) and two recent additions, S. Balambal and M. Vadivellu, a sister and a friend of the three. In his April 23, 1969 report, he mentioned a 5-day Bible training school held in Klang, in which he and Ken Sinclair (from Seremban) taught. Fourteen were in attendance. Of these 14, six were members of the church. A month later, Jud observed that it was he, his wife Pansy, and Dolly Yong (another of the Yong siblings) who were going to "Klang each Sunday afternoon to teach and preach" (as the Cadys had left Malaysia).

Subsequent reports listed T. S. M. Robert, Albert, Raymond Chirng Yim Peng, Steven Chan Thian Kiat (in July 1971), Peter Chin and Ramson Cheah (November 1971), besides others, as being baptised in Klang. In 1971 alone, Klang had 32 baptisms, outstripping Kuala Lumpur, which had 14.³⁵⁰

Jud Whitefield singled out T. S. M. Robert for special mention:

³⁴⁹ Ibid., April 10, 1968.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., December 1971, & January 1972 combined report.

Robert is literally turning the town of Klang upside down. He studies diligently and is learning to handle the Word well. He has informally debated the Jehovah Witnesses of Klang and handled it so well that they called in 3 top men from Singapore and he put them on the run. ... He is still young in the Faith, is on fire for the Lord, and is learning fast – but for some time will need guidance, teaching and training.³⁵¹

Of the others in the group, Peter Chin is the current President of Four Seas Bible and Missions College in Singapore. Raymond Chirng is serving Klang as a church assistant. On Steven Chan, Charles Bishop (see his story in the next section) wrote this introduction to the Lake Jackson church:

Steven's family is Methodist. His mother [father passed away when he was one, mine] told him it did not make any difference which church he attended. About the same time a friend, who was not a Christian, introduced him to a Bible correspondence course from Kuala Lumpur. This was in 1968 when Steven was in form one (seventh grade). Steven persuaded a friend, Richard Ang, to attend the services of the church of Christ. For about two years the two friends attended regularly.

In the summer of 1971 a Bible training course was held in Klang by a group from Sunset. It was during this time Steven made his decision for Christ. Steven was the first Chinese baptized in Klang that we know about. It was

³⁵¹ Ibid., November 1971. Robert, a Tamil school teacher, married Lim Ming Ai in 1972, who was then working as a secretary with the Kuala Lumpur church in the Bible correspondence courses alongside Lee Wai Cheng. Jud Whitefield in a caption below a photograph of Robert noted that Robert had "led more than 30 souls to Christ" (in *Jud Whitefield on Kuala Lumpur*, undated but marked August 1972).

through the efforts of Steven and T. S. M. Robert that a great number were added to the church.³⁵²

Steven Chan³⁵³ became one of the first two elders in the Klang congregation in the 1990s. The other was Koay Chuan Lek.

Charles and Cloyce Bishop (1972 – 1975)

Charles Bishop first came to Kuala Lumpur in July 1971 to acquaint himself with the local conditions in preparation for his coming as a missionary in February 1972, according to Jud Whitefield.³⁵⁴ An alumnus of Abilene Christian College, he was a pharmacist by training. He received his B.S. in Pharmacy in 1963 from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and was practising pharmacy in Lawrence, Kansas, for six years. He was about to purchase a pharmacy; but he found pharmacy work “wanting in terms of fulfilment”. He decided to “answer a higher calling”.

As a boy, he had the mind that “the Lord wanted me to preach”. Having decided on this, he entered Sunset School of Preaching (now Sunset International Bible Institute) in Lubbock, Texas. He was interested in doing mission work in Malaysia but he had no sponsoring church or churches who would support and send him to Malaysia. His wife, Cloyce, encouraged him to speak with Cline Paden, Director of Sunset. But Charles was unsure. He reasoned with his wife, “Cline had 300 students who in one way or another would be looking for support or at least a preaching position. He will only tell me to go back to Kansas and speak to the churches, which sent me to Sunset.”

³⁵² *Malaysia, A Report from the Bishops in Klang*, May 31, 1973.

³⁵³ He passed away unexpectedly on 1 September 2022.

³⁵⁴ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, July 29, 1971.

But Cloyce would not give up easily. As Charles put it: “She seemed to go beyond encouraging to that dreaded word *nagging* (italics, Charles’). “In exasperation” Charles finally spoke to Cline Paden “in the hallway” one morning and Paden answered just as Charles had expected, “Why don’t you go back to the churches that know you and ask them?”

But that night, at about 10 o’clock, he received a call from Cline Paden telling him that when he (Paden) got home “there was a letter from Lake Jackson, Texas, and they were looking for a missionary to go to Malaysia”.

After his graduation from Sunset, he moved to Lake Jackson in February 1972 to prepare himself for his work in Klang. In the 5-month period when he was at Lake Jackson, he also attended the Mission Seminar held at Abilene Christian College to further prepare himself.

“The rest is history” as Charles Bishop described his involvement with the Lord’s work in Klang and other parts of Malaysia.³⁵⁵

Charles’ tenure in Malaysia may be short, a mere three years (June or July 1972 – 21 June 1975),³⁵⁶ yet his effort in Klang proved to be most fruitful. Klang’s average attendance in the worship services in December 1972 was 27 but when he left there were more than 75 attending.³⁵⁷ In his first year in Klang

³⁵⁵ The above is written from material provided by Charles Bishop in a series of email exchanges with the writer in November 2014. Words within quotation marks are Charles’.

³⁵⁶ In his own account of his stay in Klang, Charles Bishop mentioned that he and his family came to Malaysia in June 1972 (email exchange as above); but in Lake Jackson’s *Newsletter*, Vol. 10, No. 48, October 4, 1973, it was reported that the Bishops “left Okla. City, July 12, 1972 bound for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to begin set-up and preparations for the work in Klang”.

³⁵⁷ *Malaysia, A Report from the Bishops in Klang*, January 30, 1973; and the 2014 email exchange as above.

alone, there was an addition of “30 precious souls to the Lord’s family”.³⁵⁸

In those days, gospel meetings and campaigns for Christ were employed as a primary method of evangelism apart from Bible correspondence courses and personal work. Klang under Charles Bishop was no different. Annual gospel campaigns at the Letchumanan Hall and gospel meetings within the church premises were held and these proved productive for Klang. For example, one such campaign at the Letchumanan Hall in 1974 (July 28 – August 2) netted 46 “precious souls”. Gary Montgomery from Lake Jackson was the principal speaker. Fourteen others from Lake Jackson and many local brethren from nearby congregations came to assist in the campaign, visiting and teaching one-on-one on a daily basis.³⁵⁹

Charles Bishop left Klang on June 21, 1975,³⁶⁰ because his visa was not renewed by the Malaysian immigration. It was the policy of the Malaysian government at the time to refuse new visas to foreign missionaries as it wanted to encourage local dependency. Thus, other missionaries like Frank Pierce, Ken Willis, and perhaps, Ron Warpole too, had to leave Malaysia in 1975 because of this policy. Only Ken Sinclair in Seremban had his visa renewed for a further two years. But he too had to leave in May 1977.³⁶¹

But before Charles left, he preached in a gospel meeting in Port Dickson on May 18-22. Ken Sinclair had just moved to Port Dickson to begin a new work there and this was the first

³⁵⁸ Lake Jackson’s *Newsletter*, Vol. 10, No. 48, October 4, 1973.

³⁵⁹ In a leaflet marked August 15, 1974 (possibly by a librarian at the Harding Graduate School of Religion) – probably an insertion in Lake Jackson’s weekly newsletter.

³⁶⁰ *Malaysia, A Report from the Sinclairs in Port Dickson*, 8 June, 1975.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1976.

gospel meeting in this coastal town of Negri Sembilan.³⁶² When Charles and Cloyce flew off at the Subang International Airport on June 21, there were sixty-five members from the Klang Valley and Seremban congregations to bid them farewell. Charles (sometimes accompanied by Cloyce) would return to Klang several more times before his passing in 2020.³⁶³

The Transition to Local Preachers

Klang began a search for a local minister in preparation for Charles Bishop's departure. Annis R. Yankaya, from Ipoh and a graduate of Four Seas, and Peter Lee, from Seremban, applied for the position.³⁶⁴ Both were invited to preach in Klang (most probably in the latter half of 1974). Peter Lee got the position and was appointed as the first local preacher in Klang in January 1975. He was baptised by Jud Whitefield in Seremban in 1965 and he led in the singing at the Gary Montgomery campaign in July/August 1974. He could speak the Hokkien (Fujian) dialect and Klang was planning to begin a Hokkien service at the time. Another factor that worked to Peter Lee's advantage was that he was from Seremban. Charles Bishop wrote:

Because Peter is from Seremban, close ties and co-operation between these two congregations is expected. This is advantageous in case of problems which might arise in the future. The more mature Christians of Seremban might be able to help in such a situation.³⁶⁵

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 8 April, 1975.

³⁶³ The date is 5 May 2020, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/kansas/name/charles-bishop-obituary?id=7385011>. His wife, Cloyce, passed away on 27 February 2012, brotherhoodnews.com/2012/03/07/cloyce-bishop-former-missionary-dies-at-72/ (both sites accessed 13/7/2023).

³⁶⁴ *Malaysia, A Report from the Bishops in Klang*, December 31, 1974.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, January 31, 1975.

It was likely that Charles remembered an incident in Klang in 1973 when he wrote the above.

The church has suffered some internal strife. It seems that an argument between some of the Chinese boys and T.S.M. Robert erupted. This led to a misunderstanding between the two factions. Ken Sinclair came to Klang to help sort out the trouble. We held several meetings and talked long with the ones involved. We are hoping the difficulties can be resolved very soon.

We are working towards ending some points of controversy between the younger and the older members. There is a “generation gap” but it is complicated by cultural and racial barriers too.³⁶⁶

But the problem was not resolved there and then; not even with Ken Sinclair’s intervention. Charles Bishop drove down to Singapore after service the first Sunday of April to meet with Gordon Hogan and Eddy Ee “to discuss ... some problems that had arisen in the church in Klang”. Eddy Ee agreed to “come to Klang and work with the church for a few days”. Charles Bishop wrote:

Eddy came to Klang Monday, April 9 to meet with the two factions and work out some of the problems. Eddy met with one group on Monday evening. The following day we called on some of the young people who were having problems with their parents. It is enlightening to visit homes and come to the real reason for their parents’ disapproval. Sometimes the young people claim persecution when the real problem is their disobedience. Eddy was a great help in speaking to parents who understand only one of the Chinese dialects.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., March 31, 1973.

Tuesday evening April 10 two groups met at the building to discuss their differences. Most of their problems were resolved and some of the individuals apologized, asked forgiveness, and expressed a desire to be united in serving the Lord. We are hoping that our time can now be devoted to the work of saving souls rather than worrying about internal problems.³⁶⁷

It should be noted that this “argument between some of the Chinese boys and T.S.M. Robert” was not resolved fully. This is evident from Charles Bishop’s statement: “Most of their problems were resolved and some of the individuals apologized”. ‘Most’ and ‘some’ are two tell-tale words that indicate the conflict was not resolved to the satisfaction of the conflicting parties. T. S. M. Robert left the church and did not return.

Peter Lee left the Klang ministry sometime close to the late 1970s to pursue further studies in Canada.

After him, Michael Cheah Chee Keong and Daniel Eng Leng Pang (both of Klang) served in the ministry for relatively short stints in the early to mid-1980s. Michael Cheah had previously served as the Associate Minister in Penang under Ong Chong Fatt. He left Penang to return to Klang and became its minister, possibly in 1979.³⁶⁸ He, however, resigned from the ministry in April, 1981. In September, 1984, he was disciplined and disfellowshipped by the Klang congregation because he “was teaching that salvation was to be found in denominational systems” and “taught the same to a few weak brethren (notably sisters) and eventually lured one of them to participate in the

³⁶⁷ Ibid., April 30, 1973.

³⁶⁸ This information is teased from the legend to a photograph, “THE THIRD ANNUAL BIBLE CAMP...” in Ira Y. Rice, Jr., ed., *Far East/World Evangelism*, July 1980, 6.

fellowship and activities of a charismatic Pentecostal group in Kuala Lumpur.”³⁶⁹

Daniel Eng, who succeeded Michael Cheah, was later attracted to the Crossroads Movement fellowship of churches. He went on to train with the Central London Church, in London, England, circa 1986/87, with the objective of beginning a new mission work in Singapore.³⁷⁰ He came to Singapore with a few others from (or affiliated to) Central London in 1987/88 and established a congregation which became the International Church of Christ.

Jim Dearman and his wife, Janice, came from the States in 1986 to set up the Malaysia School of Preaching based in Klang. The couple left in 1988.

Peter Chin became the administrator of the school after the departure of the Dearmans. The school ceased to exist after several years. Peter Chin became the church administrator of the Klang church in 1992 and served in that capacity until late 2004 when he left for Memphis, Tennessee, to study at the Memphis School of Preaching. Upon the completion of his studies, he was appointed as President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions in Singapore in July 2007.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ In a letter dated September 24, 1984, from The Chairman (Charlie Chan), Board of Management, Church of Christ, No. 3, Jalan Bunga Ros, Kelang, to the Church of Christ, 318 Lobak Road, Seremban.

³⁷⁰ See Daniel Eng’s article, “Mission: Singapore 1987”, possibly in *A Light to London*, Central London’s bulletin, though date and issue number unknown.

³⁷¹ <https://www.fourseas.edu.sg/peter-chin>, accessed 29 August 2022.

JOHOR BARU

Francis Pavlas and the Early Years

It could be said that the Johor Baru church had its birth beginnings on the evening of December 24, 1966, at a meeting of the Ipoh church which “though small in number, had one of the most significant meetings of its history”. At this meeting, the Ipoh church decided to send Francis Pavlas to Singapore to have the Basic Bible Course typeset and printed in Tamil. The plan included having Pavlas “take some work at the Malaysia Christian College,³⁷² and preach to the Tamil people”.

Malaysia and Singapore became two separate countries after Lee Kuan Yew took Singapore out of the Malaysia Federation in August 1965. As it would be expensive for the Pavlas children to receive their schooling in Singapore, Pavlas “decided to go as far south in Asia (*sic*) as he could with his family and then commute from this point to Singapore”. “The place where he finally settled was Jahore (*sic*) Bahru just on the north side of the straits cause-way (*sic*), before reaching singapore (*sic*), still in Malaysia”.

“At this moment Francis is in Johore Bahru preaching the Gospel”, Don Green reported; most likely, from his rented residence at 9, Jalan Yusof Taha, Johore Bahru. This would have been sometime in mid-January 1967 or shortly after since Francis Pavlas left Ipoh with his family on 4 January. Time was taken to find a place of stay and shuttling between Johor Baru and Singapore. Pavlas enrolled himself at Four Seas College (previously, Malaysia/Singapore Christian College) on 9 January and attended class that same day. On 10 January, Pavlas wrote

³⁷² Technically, this would be Four Seas College of Bible and Missions as Ira Y. Rice had changed the name since taking over from Pence Dacus in November 1966.

to Don Green about the difficulties he and his family were experiencing since leaving Ipoh:

We are quite well, but the children are sick due to the traveling.

At present I am in very much financial difficulties since I did not pay the house deposit yet and I need money to buy books for the schooling children.

Also at present the whole family is suffering since I only had money to reach Singapore. Today also I tried to find a job but I cannot get a job at Singapore because I am a Malaysian citizen.

Pavlas also wrote about the “same brethren still could not understand the position” as they had questioned why he did not settle and confirm his funds of support before making the move to Johor Baru. Don Green made a remark that “Francis means the funds from the other congregations”. In any case, Pavlas was brave about his position for he wrote: “Anyhow I am living in faith and still I want to go forward.” He then requested for Don Green to “send ten lessons each of the Elementary Bible Course ... I need it as early as possible, because I want to conduct worship at Johore Bahru from next Sunday onwards”.³⁷³

³⁷³ All quotes in this section are from *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. I, October, November & December 1966, No. 5, and the letter from Pavlas as reproduced in it; pp. 6 & 7. Francis Pavlas was sponsored by the Mentakab church and fully supported by churches in Malaysia and Singapore (*ibid.*, p. 5). He was most probably the first local Malaysian preacher. In February 1967, Francis Pavlas, Don Green and Jud Whitefield made a trip to Mentakab to iron out Pavlas' support. Don Green expressed apprehension, but as it turned out Mentakab was willing to continue in their oversight of Pavlas' work and churches like Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Ipoh, Penang and Moulmein Road were more than willing to continue with their support. (*In Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. II, February, March, April and May 1967, No. 2, 2.)

Pavlas made a good start in his ministry in Johor Baru. In between preaching and “taking a full load at Four Seas”, he managed to convert ten people by April. He also held a Vacation Bible School (VBS) on 17-22 April 1967, during which the Gospel of Luke was taught. Though eight enrolled for the class, only three actually attended. Two of them were baptised the day immediately after the VBS. It was a Sunday and Don Green, who came to teach in the VBS and who also preached in the evenings and the Sunday worship service, baptised them. Pavlas named five of the ten converts as: K. Munian, M. Rukumani, M. Pakiam, G. Krishna Murthey and G. Elengeven.³⁷⁴

The work in Johor Baru received evangelistic support from brethren in Singapore as evident from Ira Y. Rice’s report of how “The recent enforcement of immigration laws controlling (*sic*) the movement of people crossing the borders of Singapore and Malaysia has forced us to suspend our weekly visit to the border town of Johore Bahru to do evangelistic work in conjunction with the young church there”.³⁷⁵ Henry Kong also mentioned of how when he was ministering at Queenstown, he “directed students from Four Seas College to work in JB on weekends” in the late 1960s.³⁷⁶ One of these Four Seas students

³⁷⁴ Don Green, *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. II, February, March, April and May 1967, No. 2, 5-6.

³⁷⁵ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, September 30, 1967, 14.

³⁷⁶ Henry Kong, “History of the Lord’s Church”, feature article in *Essence*, probably one of the issues of 1989, p. 17. However, Henry Kong was mistaken when he stated that “The Johore Bahru work was first initiated by the Pasir Panjang (then known as Queenstown) congregation”. It is clear from this account that it was Francis Pavlas who began the work in Johor Baru. Lau Kin Fatt had also related to the author that he and a few others, while at Four Seas, would cross over to Johor Baru on Saturdays to do evangelistic work in the town.

was Lau Kin Fatt, who upon his graduation, would take up preaching in Kuala Lumpur.

Gordon Hogan in a report dated March 3, 1969, wrote:

Yesterday a male nurse, from Johore Bahru, was baptized. Henry Kong and the Queenstown church are taking the lead in working in Johore Bahru to carry on from the beginning made by Francis Pavlas. The young man baptized yesterday was the first fruit of that effort.³⁷⁷ (underlined, Hogan's)

Francis Pavlas returned to Ipoh on December 16, 1968,³⁷⁸ having graduated from Four Seas College.³⁷⁹

Annis R. Yankaya, Ting Kong Eyo and Others

With Pavlas' departure and the subsequent cessation of workers coming from Singapore, the Johor Baru church went into a decline. The work, however, was revived in 1975. Gordon Hogan wrote:

To the north of Singapore, the first city on the tip of the nation of Malaysia is Johore Bahru, a very large and important city, but until recent weeks there was no church of Christ meeting there. Several years ago an effort was made to establish the cause there but because no one was

³⁷⁷ In Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, June/July, 1969, 2.

³⁷⁸ Don Green, *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. IV, January 1969, No. 1, 1.

³⁷⁹ Gordon Hogan, *Forward for Christ*, January 30, 1969. The Malaysia Bible College (later, Singapore Bible College when Singapore separated from Malaysia in 1965) underwent changes in its administration and faculty with the departure of Pence Dacus to the States in late 1966 and was renamed the Four Seas College of Bible and Missions under Ira Y. Rice. During this transition period, Don Green was still referring to the college as the Malaysia Bible College in his *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. I, No. 5, October, November & December 1966.

living in the city to take the full responsibility, nothing permanent resulted.

With the encouragement of Pat McGee ... two young men, Malaysian citizens, and graduates of Four Seas College began efforts to establish the cause of Christ in this great city. The first meeting, in rented quarters, took place the first Sunday of March and I had the privilege of preaching the first sermon to the 17 persons who gathered to honor the Lord on that historic occasion.³⁸⁰ (underlined, Hogan's)

The "rented quarters" was at 112-A, Jalan Harimau Tarum, Taman Harimau.³⁸¹ The "two young men" were Annis R. Yankaya and Ting Kong Eyo, both from the Ipoh church and graduates of Four Seas College. Ting Kong Eyo left sometime later to work in Singapore before returning to Ipoh.

Annis Yankaya passed away on 11 June 1981 due to an inherited genetic disorder of the red blood cells, possibly sickle cell anaemia.³⁸² At the time of his death, he had spent 6 years with the Johor Baru church. Dave Hogan, who studied with Yankaya at Four Seas College, gave this tribute to his "FRIEND & BROTHER":

A vital young man, enthusiastic in all he did (I can remember many times when he would go to his first morning class after spending all night in the library) he was exuberant and energetic. A keen sense of humour combined with his flashing, infectious smile conveyed an all embracing warmth (*sic*). Alert, insatiably curious, Yankaya

³⁸⁰ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/ASIA Newsletter*, April 1, 1975. Pat McGee provided the support for the "two young men" through his work fund; in Ira Y. Rice Jr., *Far East/World Evangelism*, October/November, 1976, 4.

³⁸¹ Per Ting Kong Eyo in a Whatsapp conversation (sometime in April/May 2021).

³⁸² See Gordon Hogan's eulogy of Annis Yankaya in the appendix section. One of his sisters also passed away later from the same health condition.

was an avid reader (the breath of his reading and the many disciplines in which he was conversant always amazed me). And his Bibles, carefully underlined in a rainbow of colours and margins filled with copious notes (especially his favourite New American Standard New Testament which the Klang brethren had given him) bear witness along with his files of carefully prepared lecture notes and articles, of his ability as a Bible student. He was one of the few of us who made a serious attempt to use the biblical language training received from Four Seas.³⁸³

With Yankaya's passing, the work was left to Bobby Lim; but he went into secular work not long after. Bobby Lim, who was from Penang and a graduate of Four Seas College too, had laboured in Muar for a while. He was cited by Don Green as a "Malaysian National Preacher" in Muar in a statistical report of the congregations in Malaysia and Singapore in 1976.³⁸⁴

The work in Johor Baru suffered again somewhat in this period. However, there was an influx of members from other congregations which gave the Johor Baru church some much needed boost. Eddy Yong (Kuala Lumpur), Mak Ngai Leong (Penang), Gary Lye (Kuala Lumpur), Lee Chong Kwee (Malacca), Ong Kok Bin (Penang), Ong Chee Yong (Malacca) and their families were with the congregation at various times in the early to mid-1980s, though they were not altogether at the same time.

Of these, Ong Chee Yong remained with the Johor Baru church. Gary Lye returned to Kuala Lumpur for a few years, but came back later. Under the leadership and guidance of both men, the church experienced a spurt of growth. It was about

³⁸³ Dave Hogan, "ANNIS YANKAYA: FRIEND & BROTHER". First written in 1981 for *The Evangelist*, a publication of the Four Seas College student body.

³⁸⁴ In Don Green, *Singapore Mission Report, South East Asia Evangelist*, Vol. 2, March 14, 1976, No. 1, 2.

this time that the church, which was meeting at a rented place in Taman Pelangi, bought its own property in Serene Park. A few years later, the church also bought the next-door unit when the Lee Chong Kwees were with the church.³⁸⁵ However, a controversy connected with Dave Hogan arose around Christmas time in 1999, when the Petaling Jaya congregation had their Bible camp in Johor Baru. Dave Hogan (who was disfellowshipped by the Lim Ah Pin church) and Tee Geok Kwee and Gary Lye (both from Johor Baru) were among the speakers at the camp. The aftermath of this was that Gary Lye was ostracised and was not allowed to serve in the services because he disagreed with the main body of the Johor Baru church not to have fellowship with Dave Hogan. Tee Geok Kwee, on the other hand, renounced fellowship with Dave Hogan.

Sometime later, Lee Chong Kwee, who had returned to Singapore from Hong Kong, decided to worship in Johor Baru to assist the church. Ong Chee Yong later left the church with Bobby Lim to worship elsewhere due to an internal problem; but Bobby Lim returned to the church a short time later. A group which included Tee Geok Kwee also left some time in mid-2016 with his family and several others and formed a congregation in Skudai, Johor.³⁸⁶

Today, the Johor Baru church is stable and continues to meet at Serene Park.

³⁸⁵ The address is 6 & 8 Jalan Chendera, Serene Park, 80300 Johor Baru.

³⁸⁶ At Level 3-26 Skudai Parade, Batu 10, Skudai, 81300 Skudai. In "News & Notes", The Proclaimer, June 19, 2016, Vol. 47, No. 25.

KUCHING AND THE INTERIORS

The First Exploratory Effort

The fraught relationship between Ira Y. Rice and Pence Dacus in 1966 over the Malaysia Christian College (MCC) and the Basic Bible Course (BBC) had, at least, a positive development as far as the spread of the gospel to East Malaysia was concerned. Rice had complained of how his “replacement”, Pence Dacus, had allowed the Bible correspondence course programme to deteriorate into a “dilapidated state”.³⁸⁷ When Rice left Singapore/Malaysia in May 1964, there were more than 3,000 courses (of the BBC) being graded. But this was reduced to little more than a “few hundred” within less than two years.³⁸⁸ Out of these few hundred, 18 were from Sarawak; and of the 18, three had completed the entire course of 27 lessons and only one, “a young lady”, had requested baptism.³⁸⁹

It was out of this development that Rice first broached the idea of making a foray into Sarawak³⁹⁰ “not only to baptize the young lady in question, but to conduct a personal-evangelism campaign combined with a gospel meeting” in December 1966 (underlined, Rice’s). He thought of bringing in a “trained, experienced, effective corps of personal workers” from Singapore, particularly, the local preachers, and the seven

³⁸⁷ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, September 12, 1966, 4.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Rice made a “pioneering survey trip into Borneo” at the end of December 1956 with his wife, Vada; in *Far East*, May 25, 1968. 1. Colin McKee, about 1967-68, was planning to work in Sarawak as a missionary. But his plan was foiled as he could not obtain the necessary visa. He then went on to work in Medan, Sumatra Indonesia. Jud Whitefield had also ventured into Sarawak on at least two trips. See Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, October 30, 1969, 2.

Malaysia Christian College students who would soon be graduating. But he was mindful that this could be just “a one-shot, flash-in-the-pan, fly-by-night deal”. Not wanting it to happen this way, he ruminated how “one of the older, better-trained, more experienced preachers ought to stay behind” after the evangelism campaign “to direct the to-be-newly-established work in Kuching”. To ensure that this “first Sarawakian effort” could move forward and be permanent, perhaps, “one or two or three of the newly-graduating college students ought to remain with him [i.e., the older, better-trained and more experienced preacher, writer’s], working under his supervision and direction” (underlined, Rice’s).³⁹¹

Rice made known his thoughts to the Moulmein Road congregation, which met twice over this matter. At both meetings, it was felt that the proposed Sarawak campaign was not too feasible on two counts: (1) time was too short to prepare for the campaign in December; and (2) the church did not have sufficient funds to pay for such a large team of workers envisaged for the campaign. Instead, it proposed to “send a survey team of two” (comprising Henry Tan and Tan Chin Ai, with perhaps, Lee Ming Paul from Penang joining too) and then having “a Campaign for Christ during the month of April holidays”.³⁹²

As it turned out, Ira Y. Rice, Henry Tan and Tan Chin Ai made the trip to Sarawak “at the end of December and early in January, as 1966 turned into 1967” aboard a ship, the Kinabalu. They arrived in Kuching on 1 January 1967. As it was the first day of the week, the three broke bread together in a “good, cheap

³⁹¹ *Far East*, September 12, 1966, 5.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, November 1966, 12. In letter of October 18, 1966, which Henry Tan wrote to Ira Rice.

hotel”; and in a sort of way, this marked the first worship service of the Lord’s church in Kuching, Sarawak.

Henry Tan and Tan Chin Ai next went in search of the Basic Bible Course students. They located some after much difficulty, but the young lady who had requested baptism had moved elsewhere, “almost 200 miles away” from Kuching. In the end, 13 of the students, mostly teenagers, met with Rice, Henry Tan and Tan Chin Ai at another hotel, the Odeon, for two hours on Tuesday afternoon.

The next day, the three boarded another ship, “a Chinese coastal vessel”, for Sibu, where there was another concentration of Bible correspondence students. However, none of the students could be located as it was the school holidays and all of them had returned home to their own villages (kampungs).³⁹³

On Friday morning, the three having completed all their investigations, returned to Singapore – Rice flew (“to conserve my time”), while Henry Tan and Tan Chin Ai “returned the cheaper (but much slower) way by ship”.³⁹⁴

As can be observed, not much came out of this first exploratory trip. Even the proposed April holidays campaign did not materialise; much less, the establishment of any permanent work either in Kuching or Sibu. But Rice persisted with the Basic Bible Course correspondence programme. He advertised it in the national newspaper *The Straits Times* and two local papers, *Sarawak Tribune* and *The Vanguard*. From these advertisements, several hundred students were enrolled and their answer scripts

³⁹³ Sarawak has a system of bringing students from the villages in the interiors and boarding them in schools in the larger towns during the school weeks or terms and then allowing them to return to their home villages on weekends or the school holidays.

³⁹⁴ This section is from Rice, *Far East*, February 20, 1967, 1-5. The BCC students in Kuching were mostly Chinese, but the ones in Sibu were “Land Dayaks”; *Far East*, May 25, 1968, 3.

were graded either in Singapore (Moulmein Road), Penang (under Hayden O. Jenks) or Ipoh (under Don Green). A Dayak young boy named Richard Daudde from Sibu even wrote in to inquire on how he could become a priest.³⁹⁵

It is likely that this Richard Daudde did not make it to Singapore to become a priest but another Dayak did, not as priest, but as a preacher for the church. Tom Jerol Ahang, a BBC student in Kuching, converted from the follow-up work “from Singapore and Malaysia”, was enrolled at Four Seas College³⁹⁶ in 1984/86 and upon his graduation, he returned to Kuching to serve as the first native preacher of a congregation there.

The Second Effort – “The East Malaysia Project”

The development of a congregation in Kuching came about because of a vision of “a group of young enthusiastic Christians in the little town of Malacca in West Malaysia.”³⁹⁷ They wanted to evangelise East Malaysia comprising the states of Sarawak and Sabah. They had published a monthly magazine known as *The Evangelist*. In May 1977 they began to send copies of the publication to the 200 BBC students known to exist then in Sarawak. At the same time, they also began to enrol BBC students themselves. To put meat into their evangelistic ambitions, they began to make or encourage mission trips into Sarawak. Richard Lee made one trip in 1979. Ong Chee Yong (who was from Malacca, but was with Johor Baru at the time he made the trip) and Dave Hogan (Moulmein Road) went in 1982.

³⁹⁵ *Far East*, May 25, 1968, 3.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁹⁷ Anthony Ng, “The East Malaysia Project – An Overview from 1977 to 1987”, in *EYES*, Feb-Apr 1988, 6-7, reproduced in Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, March 1, 1988. The rest of this section and quotes, unless otherwise indicated, are also from this same source.

As a result of these trips, three were baptised; thus, marking the formal establishment of the church of Christ in Sarawak.

This missionary effort came to be known as “The East Malaysia Project”. Its development soon outstripped Malacca’s ability to go on her own “in terms of financial and human resources”. As of June 1983, there were 89 requests for baptism.

In 13 June 1983, Malacca sent out notice to churches in Malaysia and Singapore “to pick up the work”. The Punggol church, under Andrew Ng, took up the challenge in September 1983.

In December 1983, “4 mission workers, armed with maps and the ‘sword of the Spirit’ were sent into the fields with the mission to locate, teach and baptize the 89 hungering souls and to preach the unadulterated gospel”, as Anthony Ng wrote in *EYES*. Per Gordon Hogan, they visited several towns and villages, including the long houses. In Saratok, seven were baptised; and in Sibü, three. In all, there were 12 baptisms arising from this effort. Gordon Hogan wrote:

We hope that a full time preacher or mature Christian will be sent to this town to guide these new Christian’s (*sic*) and continue to reach out with the Gospel to others. The majority of these people are Chinese and Ibans.³⁹⁸

Two months later (February 1984), Andrew Ng made another trip to prepare for a Vacation Bible School and Gospel Meeting in April/May. His trip resulted in another 17 souls baptised into Christ.³⁹⁹

There were actually five mission trips “at the interval of 2 months per trip”, involving “a total of 10 mission workers sent to Sarawak” in 1984. In that year, 40 were baptised by the

³⁹⁸ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, February 1984.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, March 1984.

mission workers and another 14 by the native Christians that were converted in the December 1983 trip.

The next year saw the most number of mission workers who entered Sarawak – 24 in all. They were not supported from the East Malaysia Mission Fund as they went on their own means or were supported by others. Six trips were made and 15 baptisms were recorded. Gordon Hogan’s idea of a “full time preacher or mature Christian” (and even Rice’s “older, better-trained, more experienced preacher”) was in some way realised when Esther Wong, a graduate of Four Seas College and from Ipoh, took up the challenge to work in Kuching in October 1985.

Tom Jerol, whom we mentioned above, began “full-time ministry in May 1986 after 2 years of study in Four Seas College”. In 1987, Ritty Molly, a native Christian, was added to the staff in the Kuching church which had begun meeting since October 1984 in a rented house.

More mission workers (either full-time preachers or voluntary members) were to make further trips to Kuching and other places in the subsequent years.

Today, the church in Kuching, though not exactly thriving, is under the ministry care of Thomas Koh.

Recent Work in the Sabal Kampung

The gospel spread to Sarawak in the late 1970s to the 1980s was rather widespread and far-flung. Mission workers were going into all places where there were BBC prospects or ‘Macedonian calls’ from the local native people. In addition to the gospel work done in Kuching, the state capital, converts were made in a number of other places like Sibul, Sri Aman, and the more remote villages of Saratok and Sarikei. However, most of these converts were left on their own, and after a while many

returned to their former religious affiliations. This happened for three main reasons:

- (1) the rate and number of mission workers coming from West Malaysia and Singapore could not be sustained
- (2) there were no locals – able, trained, or willing – to take up the leadership and care of the believers in the far and remote places away from Kuching (other than Thomas Koh)
- (3) the native believers had a rather unhealthy dependency attitude.

Because of these, the church never quite take root in Sarawak apart from the congregation in Kuching.

However, at the dawn of the 21st century, a positive development brought renewed hope and interest to the work in Sarawak. Ong Chee Yong, in Johor Baru, received a telephone call from Thomas Koh (Kuching) on 23 September 2006. He was told that he had been scheduled to speak in a three-day gospel meeting in Kampung Sabal Tapang, a village in the Sabal area of the Simunjan district in the Samarahan division, starting Friday, September 29.⁴⁰⁰

Chee Yong made hasty preparation and on the night of 29 September he was with Thomas Koh preaching in Kg Sabal Tapang in the house of the local village head, Kapitan Thung.⁴⁰¹ About “a dozen or so people” were present in this first gospel meeting. Though neither Kapitan Thung nor any in his house-

⁴⁰⁰ Ong Chee Yong, *In Partnership*, Sep/Oct 2007, Vol. 1 Issue 1.

⁴⁰¹ Kampung Sabal Tapang is the only village in the Sabal area to be populated mostly by Chinese of either the Hakka or Hokkien heritage. Hence it has a Kapitan as the village head instead of a Tuai Kampung as in other Iban villages.

hold accepted the gospel, the meeting did result in one baptism. That was Mengan (an Iban), who was baptised on 30 September around 7:30 pm in the “little river that ran beside the village”.⁴⁰² Subsequently, Mengan’s husband, Lim Tho Teng, and their children were baptised too. Others in the village followed suit and a church building was constructed near to the Lims’ residence to accommodate the worship services.

The story would be repeated over the next three years with conversions and church buildings erected in Kg Sabal Krui (2007), Kg Nyelitak (2008) and Kg Sabal Aping (2009). Such was the excitement and growth of the work in the Sabal area that Chee Yong saw fit to build a hostel facility adjoining Lim Tho Teng’s house in Sabal Tapang to accommodate participants from the other villages during camps or seminars in the kampung. Later, he even constructed a two-storey brick house, a stone’s throw from Lim’s house, for his own dwelling whenever he was in the Sabal area. However, the house was never fully completed as he later withdrew from the Sabal work due to personal reasons.

Chee Yong’s work in the four Sabal kampungs or villages had support (financially and missionary-wise) from individuals and churches in Singapore and Malaysia. In particular, Andrew Ng together with Matthew Tan (Geylang) and Richard Phang (Woodlands) got themselves involved in the work with encouragement from Chee Yong. They would enter the villages periodically to teach and preach. They also formed the East Malaysia Interest Group to encourage others to participate in this mission field and to raise funds for it. Through them, the

⁴⁰² All other subsequent baptisms would be performed in this “little river”, the Sungei Aping, which coursed through a few villages in the Sabal area. The first Gospel Meeting happened in Sabal Tapang because of interest shown by Mengan.

church in Seremban, Malaysia, was drawn into the work in 2013.⁴⁰³ Its preacher, Ong Kok Bin, visited the four churches with Matthew Tan in the latter half of 2013. Over the years till December 2019, he would bring in mission teams from Seremban to conduct medical check-ups (twice), Vacation Bible Schools (VBSs) and camps.⁴⁰⁴ The VBSs and camps were organised especially for the village youth and children, who before this, did not receive much attention in terms of Bible education.⁴⁰⁵

However, the Covid-19 outbreak in early 2020 put pause to the mission work from Malaysia and Singapore.

Chee Yong's work, with support from individuals and churches in Singapore and Malaysia, was admirable and praiseworthy. Significant numbers in the villages were converted and church buildings erected. He was well-respected by the locals as he soon learnt the Iban language and was able to teach and converse with the locals in Iban. He was even invited to preach in a longhouse village (Sri Stambang) in the deep interior in

⁴⁰³ Dicky Lian, of the Puchong church, also got involved in the work a year later.

⁴⁰⁴ These were held variously at the Ranchan Resort in Serian (June 2015 and December 2019), the Sabal Kruin church premises (November 2016) and the Tapang House in Sabal Tapang (December 2017, 2018). Kok Bin raised funds (RM30,000) to complete the finishing touches to the house built by Chee Yong to a level suitable for habitation and use to hold classes. This house came to be known as the Tapang House.

⁴⁰⁵ Geylang, through Matthew Tan, also conducted VBSs in Nyelitak and Sabal Aping and jointly participated in a Bible Camp with Seremban.

Lubok Antu near the Indonesian Kalimantan border.⁴⁰⁶ About 11 or 12 households or 'pintu rumahs' were converted.⁴⁰⁷

However, like other efforts before this, the work in the Sabal area and Lubok Antu deteriorated over the years, except for Sabal Kruin, even with the continued entry of Andrew Ng, Matthew Tan and others to the kampungs each year. This happened for two of the three reasons stated above: (a) lack of native leaders capable of guiding and growing the church; and (b) a very strong dependency attitude among the natives. The church at Sabal Tapang had for all intents and purposes died out. Only Lim Tho Teng and his daughter, Bibi, remained. Sabal Aping and Nyelitak have been struggling to conduct worship services on their own. Only Sabal Kruin showed promise. This was because it had an experienced 'clergyman' in the person of Gani anak Swithern. Gani⁴⁰⁸ was an Anglican deacon before he was taught and baptised by Chee Yong in September 2007. He knew how to teach and conduct services and thus he was able to hold the church in Sabal Kruin together. The attendance at Sunday services ranged from the 20s to the 50s depending on the season (festivals and harvests) of the year.

Yet a troubling development arose in more recent years. Gani's son, Tammy, was sponsored by the Subang Jaya church in West Malaysia to study at Four Seas College in Singapore in 2016. Upon his graduation in 2018, he became the preacher at Sabal

⁴⁰⁶ This longhouse village is normally only accessible by boat from the Batang Ai Dam near the Lubok Antu township; though, it may also be reached using four-wheel drive vehicles through logging trails in the hills.

⁴⁰⁷ Unfortunately, there was no follow-up work in this place. When this writer visited the longhouse in 2016, he found only a handful of the converts still identifying themselves with the church, and even that, they did not gather to worship together on their own.

⁴⁰⁸ Gani together with Lim Tho Teng were financially supported by the East Malaysia Interest Group for their work in the Sabal area.

Kruin with financial support from Subang Jaya. At the behest of Subang Jaya,⁴⁰⁹ Tammy was told not to work or “co-operate” with the long-time mission workers like Andrew Ng and Matthew Tan. Even Christians from the other villages were told not to participate in events organised by them. This instruction has gravely affected the fellowship unity of the churches and Christians in these four kampungs, and thrown a spanner into the mission work.

⁴⁰⁹ More forthright, it was Yeow Chin Keong.

PETALING JAYA

Lau Kin Fatt and Chrissie (1982 – 1995)

The present church in Petaling Jaya began when Lau Kin Fatt and a group of about ten members from Kuala Lumpur left the congregation to establish the church in August 1982.⁴¹⁰ In a certain way, this can also be regarded as a revival of the church in Petaling Jaya. Before Kin Fatt came, there were groups meeting in this erstwhile satellite town of Kuala Lumpur (as it was recognised in its early days) intermittently as the church of Christ.

For example, in May of 1969, Jud Whitefield reported that there was a Bible class held for “members of the church living in Petaling Jaya and their friends”. Three members were present for the first class and one of them was Mary George. Mary was a trainee nurse at the new University Hospital. Jud observed that for three years, she had to worship by herself, but “she can now worship with a group”.⁴¹¹

Mary George was baptised by Frank Pierce in 1964. Her conversion story makes a compelling read for three reasons: (1) for the power of the printed page (as Frank Pierce put it), (2) for the extraordinary lengths the early missionaries would go to teach and convert, and (3) for the pure and resolute faith of a young girl. Frank Pierce recounted:

It was on the 18th of September, 63, when Mary George, a 16 year old Indian girl, was sent the first lesson of our Basic Bible course. She took great pride in her work and for the first 5 lessons she made a perfect score. On the final examination she made 98 1/3%. It was at this point that

⁴¹⁰ The date is as given by Lau Kin Fatt, in WhatsApp conversation with the writer, 26/8/2023.

⁴¹¹ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, May 16, 1969.

she asked some special questions as regards the keeping of the 10 Commandments.

Pierce wrote a “very detailed explanation to her about the two covenants” (underlined, Pierce’s), the substance of which was that “the Lord Jesus Christ taught a way of life that is far superior to what was taught by Moses under the law”. But it soon became evident to Pierce and Mary George that questions and answers through the mail was inadequate and a face-to-face study was necessary. A rendezvous to meet was arranged:

On the date scheduled [14 May 1964] brother Merches and I, along with my daughter and Victor, began the journey to Kuala Klawang, which is around 65 miles from here. The town in which they lived is very small and the roads leading there (though paved) are quite winding. Soon after 12:30 we arrived at her home. She received us with great courtesy and in a little while her father came in from work. The family lived in the Central Electricity Board Quarters. Her father is employed in the generating plant. Though not able to speak English, he took great interest in the purpose of our visit.

This young lady was very honest about her search for the truth. So also was her father whom we called in to join us after he had had his lunch. As soon as he joined us I requested that she served as translator. ... After a couple of hours of study the father agreed to be baptized with his daughter. We went to a nearby stream and they were immersed for the remission of their sins.⁴¹²

It is not known how long this first group continued to meet in Petaling Jaya. But they must have stopped sometime

⁴¹² Frank H. Pierce, *Malaysian Newsletter*, June 1, 1964. Mary George and her father were Malayalams who belonged to the Assyrian Christian Church.

later as evident from Charles Bishop's report of a new congregation in Petaling Jaya. He mentioned a number of converts who were baptised in Klang but who lived in Petaling Jaya; among them, the Daniel family (7 in all), Murugaya who lived with them, a couple whose name was given only as Liew, and Shally Chuah, who was baptised in the Gary Montgomery campaign in July-August 1974. Charles Bishop gave the rationale for the new congregation:

Since this city is about seven miles from the church building in Kuala Lumpur and about thirteen miles from Klang, a congregation in Petaling Jay (*sic*) was needed.⁴¹³

This group had their first worship service on the Sunday night of September 1, 1974 at the home of Ken Willis. Twenty were present in this first service, "the numbers increased" on each succeeding evening. Several members from Kuala Lumpur who lived in Petaling Jaya also met with the new church, among whom were Mary George and "her new husband David".⁴¹⁴

This church had its "very first Campaign for Christ with Pat McGee preaching". This was in March 9-14 of 1975 with an average attendance of about 100 per night and 7 baptisms.⁴¹⁵

Again, it is not known how long this 'new congregation' continued to meet. Ken Willis left Malaysia on July 6, 1975.⁴¹⁶ This author recalled when he was in Kuala Lumpur in 1976-78, he met and spoke in the worship service with a group of mostly

⁴¹³ *Malaysia, A Report from the Bishops in Klang*, September 30, 1974.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *Malaysia, A Report from the Sinclairs in Port Dickson*, March 31, 1975.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1975.

students from the University of Malaya (MU) once or twice in a science laboratory⁴¹⁷ at Bedford College in Petaling Jaya.⁴¹⁸

After most of this batch of MU students had graduated and had gone elsewhere, it is probable that the remaining group met in a rented house. A controversy surrounding the “one-cup” in the Lord’s Supper ensued around the early 1980s.⁴¹⁹ A group of mostly former members from Malacca (e.g., Eric Khoo, Teoh Guan Soon and Johnson Lim⁴²⁰), embraced the “one-cup” practice and they were disfellowshipped by Klang in May 1981.⁴²¹ These “one-cuppers”, as they were called, later separated themselves to meet in a place in Kuchai Lama, which is in Kuala Lumpur. It was then that Jairus Joseph and his wife came to join this group around 1985/86.

Thus, when Lau Kin Fatt and his group came to Petaling Jaya in August 1982, it was a completely fresh beginning for there was no congregation in the city then, technically speaking. In the initial years, Kin Fatt’s work in Petaling Jaya came from funds raised in the United States by Harvey Starling. But as the church grew through new baptisms as well as transfers of members from other congregations, his support was assumed

⁴¹⁷ Lee Moy Chee in a WhatsApp message, January/February 2021.

⁴¹⁸ Lau Kin Fatt mentioned that it was Ken Willis who started a campus ministry at this Bedford College with the assistance of Wilson Tahsiah (in WhatsApp conversation with the writer, 26/8/2023).

⁴¹⁹ Ira Y. Rice Jr., *Far East/World Evangelism*, June 1983, 6-7. The “one-cup” practice was introduced by an expatriate, Bill Page, who was an employee of Exxon.

⁴²⁰ Names provided by Lee Moy Chee in a WhatsApp message, January/February 2021.

⁴²¹ Letter of disfellowship dated 29 May 1981 circulated to “The congregations of the Church of Christ”, signed by Yeow Chin Kiong in his capacity as Chairman, Board of Management, Church of Christ, Klang, 1981. See also, his letter dated 1 September 1980 in his personal capacity, but bearing the Klang Church of Christ letterhead.

fully by the Petaling Jaya congregation itself.⁴²² In 1989, the church began to look for a property to buy for use as a church building. They found one and bought it with funds raised from amongst themselves and sister congregations in Malaysia and Singapore and a bank loan. In May 1990, they moved into this property, a double-storey bungalow, after renovations.⁴²³

In mid-1995, Kin Fatt, with his wife Chrissie and two daughters, Sarah and Rachel, left for Abilene, Texas, to do undergraduate studies in Bible at Abilene Christian University (ACU). When he finished his undergraduate studies in 1997, he decided to do a further year of graduate studies at the university. He graduated in 1998. Upon his return to Malaysia, he decided to continue his ministry life with the church in Penang.

Ong Chong Fatt (December 1996 -)

When Kin Fatt left Petaling Jaya, it was Ong Chong Fatt who came to fill the void. Chong Fatt, himself, had completed his undergraduate studies at ACU and returned to Malaysia in December 1996. Upon his return, he assumed the Petaling Jaya ministry. He has remained there since.

⁴²² Lau Kin Fatt, in WhatsApp conversation with the writer, 26/8/2023.

⁴²³ In Seremban's weekly bulletin, *The Proclaimer*, 13 May 1990, Vol. 21. No. 19.

OTHER CHURCHES IN MALAYSIA

Ayer Tawar and Sitiawan

Of the towns in Perak with the exception of Ipoh, Ayer Tawar and Sitiawan, and to a lesser extent, Kampar, had the most number of converts who stayed faithful for a significant period of time to have services and form congregations.⁴²⁴

Don Green recounted the first conversions of three young students from Sitiawan: Ramani, Cecillia Ho and Ding Moe Kan, all about 17 years old at the time. They came to Ipoh for the Bible Training and Evangelism School in December 1967 and all three were baptised while attending the school. Sometime later, Don Green talked to them about “the Lord’s Day and the service they were to have the following morning”. Unfortunately, Don Green did not provide the date; he’s not very good at this.

They decided that 10:00 a.m. would be the time they would get together in Moe Kan’s house for worship.

Ann had baked some fresh communion bread a few days before, so I took some with me and a can of grape juice. After reading the scriptures, I showed them how to partake the communion of Christ. They already knew how to pray since this is the first thing we teach them in the school after they become Christians. Ramani led us in prayer.⁴²⁵

Ramani (Don Green would spell his name as Romani on other occasions) proved to be a soul-winner. Not long after his own baptism, he was teaching his mother, father and sister, and a neighbour – Muniandy. All four were baptised when Don

⁴²⁴ *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, February, March, and April 1968, No. 2.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, October, November, December 1967 and January 1968, No. 1.

Green and Yim Tuck Fatt visited them in Sitiawan one day and taught them more properly.⁴²⁶

On Ayer Tawar's beginning as a church, Don Green had this to say:

On Mothers' Day, May 12, the church had its beginning as a congregation in Ayer Tawar. They baptized one young man named Moses.⁴²⁷

This took place at the home of Chew Pang Kee (Stephen L.), which was at Batu 15 Bruas Road, Ayer Tawar. Pang Kee was baptised by Don Green sometime in 1966, most likely during the daily Bible Training School in October in Ipoh. Later, he brought some of his friends along and "two were baptized from my place" as he (Pang Kee) wrote Ira Y. Rice.

Then we decided to come together to break bread on every Sunday in my house. I told brother Don about this and he contributed five hymnals and some tracts. So we call some of our friends and we meet for the first time in my house on the 12th May, 1968. I expected many to turn up, but eleven turn up.⁴²⁸

Pang Kee, however, moved to Kuala Lumpur "to attend school the first part of 1969" and "turned the leadership of the services over to Lawrence Lau".⁴²⁹

In 1973, Wong Yoon Mik took on the mantle as minister of the church in Ayer Tawar.⁴³⁰ Mik (as he was known to all) was

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, February, March, and April 1968, No. 2.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, May 1968, No. 3.

⁴²⁸ *Ira Y. Rice, Jr.'s Far East Newsletter*, May 25, 1968.

⁴²⁹ *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. IV, June September 1969, No. 4.

⁴³⁰ In "Brief Notes on Francis Pavlas Evangelism Works", written by K. Paul Raj, Ting Kong Eyo, and Wong Yoon Mik, 1 March 1983. Mik passed away on 2 January 2018, per Chan Kwok Meng, in WhatsApp message, 12 February 2021.

a graduate of Four Seas Bible College. He was baptised by Don Green in April of 1967. Don Green wrote at the time:

Out of the six students baptized in April, one I believe will make a preacher, but time will tell. This young Chinese boy, MIK, is from Pushing about sixteen miles from Ipoh. He travels to worship on Sunday by bus.

Even though Mik was young in age and an infant in his spiritual birth, Don Green was already entrusting him with teaching responsibilities.

Mik started out two weeks ago, just like Solomon did several months ago, making short talks on Bible subjects. He has two more years to go in high school. You might think it isn't so exciting that these boys are preaching, but to me it means this country will have the Gospel preached to it before very long if we continue preaching and teaching.⁴³¹

The 1970s was probably the 'golden age' of the church in Ayer Tawar, with many converted in the Vacation Bible Schools and camps in Ipoh after taking Bible correspondence courses from the Ipoh church. Judging from a photograph of this era, the membership grew, perhaps, to about thirty or more. They were then meeting at 75, Jalan Ling Sing Hang.⁴³² But it was a 'teen-secondary-school' church. The members were mostly in their teens, in secondary schools. After Form 5, they inevitably had to go elsewhere, like Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Penang, Singapore, and even, overseas, for education and work.⁴³³ This

⁴³¹ Both quotes from *Don Green's Far East Newsletter*, Vol. II, February, March, April, and May 1967, No. 2.

⁴³² Ting Kong Eyo, WhatsApp messages, 23 July 2021.

⁴³³ This was and still is a common problem for churches outside the Klang Valley. This is why churches in the smaller towns remain small or die off.

had an adverse impact on the church. Through this bleeding of members to bigger cities and other places, the congregation at Ayer Tawar (and Sitiawan before it) gradually ceased to exist.

Taiping

Don and Ann Green returned to mission work in South-East Asia in August 1977. They were mainly based in Singapore; from where they made occasional mission trips to Malaysia and Indonesia. For example, in September 1977, they came up to Malaysia to visit with the churches. But principally, they involved themselves with the church in Ipoh and were there for several months. In his February 1978 report, Don Green mentioned that he and Francis Pavlas were holding regular services in Taiping. He wrote:

Miss Arul Selvi, daughter of Balraj was converted in Taiping. She makes the fourth Christian in this new congregation.⁴³⁴

It is likely this “new congregation” did not remain long as the Balraj family later moved to Batang Berjuntai and subsequently, Seremban. However, there is extant a small congregation of about ten members comprising the Koay family (Alan and Daphne), the Megan family, the Christine family and a Vietnamese member meeting on Sundays at the Louis Hotel, Jalan Pasir, for worship.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ *Don Green’s Southeast Asia Newsletter*, February 14, 1978. Arulselvi’s (that is how her name should be spelt) sister, Arulmani was also baptised by Don Green in Taiping. Both sisters later worshipped with the Batang Berjuntai congregation (according to Lau Kin Fatt). But for many years, they were with the Seremban church when the family moved to Seremban.

⁴³⁵ Alan Koay, in a conversation with the writer when the two met in the Penang church in November 2022. Also, Megan, in WhatsApp message 27/7/2024.

Malacca (Melaka)

Ken and Clyde Ann Willis (September 1971 – August 1972)

In his June 1, 1971 *FORWARD FOR CHRIST Newsletter*, Gordon Hogan signalled the arrival of the Ken Willis family (wife Clyde Ann and daughter Melody, or, Melodee) from Hendersonville, NC, “In the last days of April” in Singapore. In the time that Ken Willis was in Singapore, he taught in the second semester third year program at Four Seas College. But Ken Willis’ interest was in Malacca, Malaysia, where he planned to begin a new work. He moved to Malacca sometime around August or September of 1971.⁴³⁶ But not much is known about his work in Malacca as reports were scarce (to this writer). He did not remain in Malacca for long though. Ong Chong Seng, who was from Seremban, briefly worked with Ken Willis when he was in Malacca between February 1972 and January 1973. According to Chong Seng, Ken Willis left Malacca for Kuala Lumpur around August 1972. But he (Willis) would come down to Malacca biweekly on the weekends to preach. In addition, John Lachmana and Bobby Lim were called in to assist in the preaching from time to time.⁴³⁷

Frank and Lily Leong (September 1974 – December 1982)

Frank and Lily Leong, both of whom hailed from Ipoh and were graduates of Four Seas College, came to minister in

⁴³⁶ A Report from Kenneth and Estelle Sinclair, September 26, 1971.

⁴³⁷ As related to the writer by Ong Chong Seng in a WhatsApp message exchange, February 2021. Jud Whitefield in his *Malaysian Newsletter*, August 1972, 1, mentioned that the Willis family were willing to move to Kuala Lumpur to help in the follow-up of Bible Courses and to teach in the Daily Bible Training Schools.

Malacca⁴³⁸ in August or September 1974. In a letter to Don Green, which must be circa August/September 1975, Frank Leong stated, “we have been exactly here now for a year”.⁴³⁹ Frank Pierce gave support to this in his October 31, 1974 report when he mentioned that the work in Malacca was begun by Ken Willis in 1971, “but it is now being handled by a brother Frankie Leong”.⁴⁴⁰

Frank Leong did not only work in Malacca but he also extended his reach to Muar. In the same letter to Don Green, he said:

We have started the Muar mission on 10th August, and we restored sis. Lee Peck Ha, the cousin of Phyllis Ng. We also met bro. Ming Paul’s mother [actually, his adoptive mother] and she is just fine but she will be having an abdomen operation this week.⁴⁴¹

In the letter too, he related how he had left Malacca at 1:30 that day, stayed in Muar until 4 p.m. and made it back to Malacca “just in time for the Chinese Bible Class at 5 p.m.” But in the haste to return to Malacca, he left his bag and his lesson notes in Muar, and he had to teach the class from memory. But while teaching, he “almost collapsed” and had to cancel the class. Still, there was the worship at 6 p.m. and being “still weak ... I just sat down and taught”. Frank attributed his condition to

⁴³⁸ Ira Rice mentioned that the Leongs were supported in their work in Malacca by “one of the churches in Sydney, Australia.” In his *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*, February 1975, 4.

⁴³⁹ Don Green’s *SouthEast Asia Newsletter*, Vol. 1, October 8, 1975. No. 4, 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Frank H. Pierce, *Malaysia Newsletter*, October 31, 1974, 1. Frank Pierce was in Malacca to conduct a Gospel Meeting in October of that year and the meeting place was near the Malacca central bus station.

⁴⁴¹ Don Green’s *SouthEast Asia Newsletter*, Vol. 1, October 8, 1975. No. 4, 2.

tiredness and lack of sleep from having to travel too much and having guests in the past several weeks.

Gordon Hogan related a time he was asked to come to Malacca “to preach a meeting with emphasis on Church Discipline” (underlined, Hogan’s). This was in February 1975.

A young chinese (*sic*) couple, Frankie and Lily Leong, graduates of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, work with the church there. They are young and the church is young. This has resulted in the usual problems that come with inexperience. However, they do recognize the problems and have a desire to apply Bible solutions. Thus, I was asked to come to preach a meeting with emphasis on Church Discipline. The result was that twelve were restored and one baptized.⁴⁴²

The Leongs moved to Ipoh towards the end of 1982 to start a new work there. With their departure, the ministry of the church fell into the hands of the local brethren, principally, Leong Yu Kong, Richard Lee and Robert Ong. But they too, left for Kuala Lumpur in the 1990s, as did many of their stalwart members (either to Kuala Lumpur or elsewhere) in the 1980s or earlier.

The church now meets in their own two-storey shoplot at 98 Jalan Laksamana 5, Taman Kota Laksamana, 75200 Melaka.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴² Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, March 1, 1975.

⁴⁴³ The church used to meet on the first floor of 39 Jalan Kilang (this address given by Dave Hogan), which was in the hub of the Malacca town as it was there that the old Malacca bus terminal was located. The church subsequently moved to the Tranquerah (Tengkera) area before it bought the present premises, a double storey shop-lot in Kota Laksamana.

1980s and Later

From the late 1980s onwards, the cause of Christ in the Restoration Heritage saw a number of congregations established that were the result of efforts from the local brethren. These were chiefly due to the 'horizontal movement' phenomenon – the coming out of a group of members from existing congregations to form new congregations. These were either mission-minded with the view to establish a church presence in a new locality; or, break-aways from a 'parent' church because of certain disagreements over policies or practices. This marked a significant shift from the American missionary establishment of churches in the 1950s and 1960s. This was inevitable as the government barred foreign missionaries from working in the country from the 1970s onwards.

Section 17

This church was formed when a number of members from the Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur congregations came together to meet in Damansara Utama, Petaling Jaya, around 1989 or 1990. They were then known as the Damansara Utama church by convention. Later, they moved to Section 17 in Petaling Jaya and have since been known as the Section 17 church.

Subang Jaya

This church was formed when a group came out from the Klang church to meet in Subang Jaya sometime in the late 1990s. In the group were the Yeow Chin Kiong and the Charlie Chan families.

Kuantan

As early as 1967, Jud Whitefield reported that when his brother, Groce, came over to Kuala Lumpur, he took Groce to Kuantan in Pahang on the east coast to visit with a Bible correspondence course (BCC) student who had studied through Seremban's BCC programme. This student was Ng Kean Seng and he was in a "Trade School". He had also studied the gospel with his roommate who had earlier obeyed the gospel. When the Whitefields were satisfied that Kean Seng "fully understand what the Lord required for one to become a Christian", they drove to a beach and "Groce and Kean Seng waded out into the South China Sea, a very large baptistry (underlined, Jud's)" where Groce baptised Kean Seng into the Lord Jesus Christ. With this baptism, Jud Whitefield observed:

There are now 3 Chinese boys of high school age in and near Kuantan who are members of Christ's body and are in the position of having to carry on without the assistance of an older Christian.

Then, in the next breath, he asked (perhaps more out of whim, then real hope):

Will some of you who believe in God and His Great Commission come and work with these three boys and the many students in this area who deserve to know more about Christ and His power to save through the gospel.⁴⁴⁴

Eddy Ee, who was standing in for Ken Sinclair in Seremban when the latter was on furlough in the States in 1971-72, reported the baptism of a 17-year-old girl, Kong Lan Ha, in Kuala Lumpur. But she was from Kuantan and had just completed her secondary school education awaiting her national

⁴⁴⁴ Quotations and block quotes in this section from Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, June 15, 1967, 2.

examination results. She was Seremban's BCC student under Estelle Sinclair's guidance. She travelled from Kuantan to Kuala Lumpur to be baptised.⁴⁴⁵ Upon her return to Kuantan soon after, she was likely instrumental in the further baptisms of Kong Lan Moon (her own sister?), Veronica Sundraesvari and Tan Lee Weng. Eddy Ee commented that with these baptisms and the return of four others who had earlier "strayed from church", "we now have a new congregation in Kuantan."⁴⁴⁶

Not long after, Eddy Ee and Ong Chong Seng made a trip to Kuantan spending four days working with the Christians. He also arranged for Ken Willis (Malacca) and Ron Warpole (Kuala Lumpur), besides himself, to "visit ... from time to time in order to help lay some concrete foundation in the church there."

It is not known how long these "time to time" visits lasted. But with the subsequent departures of these missionaries within a few years of each other and owing to the distance involved, visits by Christians from the west coast must have stopped at some point in time and the congregation left on its own.

There was a later revival of the church though. Leow Yew Chong reported that another BCC student, Mollie Ding, was brought to Christ (date unknown). Through her, another person, Margaret Chong, was baptised into Christ in 2000. The following year, Ed Covert of the Hurricane church of Christ in the United States came to Malaysia on work assignment and was based in Kerteh, Terengganu. But he travelled weekly to Kuantan⁴⁴⁷ to worship with the two sisters in Christ and others who might be there. He taught William Chan, Margaret Chong's husband, who

⁴⁴⁵ Eddy Ee, *Newsletter from Malaysia: A Report from Eddy Ee in Seremban*, 12 January 1972. Kong Lan Ha's baptism was also noted by Jud Whitefield in his *Malaysian Newsletter*, December 71 & January 72 combined report, 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Eddy Ee, *Newsletter from Malaysia: A Report from Kenneth and Estelle Sinclair in Seremban*, March/April 1972.

⁴⁴⁷ About one and a half hours drive from Kerteh.

was later baptised in a bath tub one night. Subsequently, others were added to the church.

The Klang church took on the task of providing preaching and teaching support to the Kuantan church through Ng Yeow Kong and Leow Yew Chong. They and others like Richard Lee, Christopher Lopez, and Ong Eng Boon, would rotate amongst themselves to travel to Kuantan each weekend to conduct worship and Bible classes. Gospel meetings and other activities were organised too. At its height, the church grew to nineteen members. One of the young men even decided to do fulltime ministry and enrolled himself with Four Seas Bible College. Sad to say, dissension set into the church and the membership was reduced to nine as of this writing.⁴⁴⁸

Wangsa Maju

Gan Cheong Bok who is one of the founding members of the Wangsa Maju church wrote this to the author, “The birth of the Wangsa Maju COC (WMCOC) was neither planned nor intended”.⁴⁴⁹ Sometime “in early 2006” several Abilene Christian University (ACU) students visited the Petaling Jaya (PJ) church on an internship programme. A few members from the Petaling Jaya church took these students to the Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC) in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur, to “look see look see” (i.e., sightseeing) as Gan put it. The ACU students met many TARC students “about their age and they have a great time making friends and getting together”.

⁴⁴⁸ This section of the story on Kuantan is from Leow Yew Chong, in WhatsApp message, 17 September 2021.

⁴⁴⁹ Gan Cheong Bok, in WhatsApp message to the writer, 13 September 2021. This short account of the Wangsa Maju church is mainly based on the information provided by Gan Cheong Bok in this message. Quotes in double inverted commas are from Gan Cheong Bok.

Out of this visit, a few of the PJ members developed a vision “to “SOW” a campus ministry” in TARC, chiefly to give “free English classes” to the TARC students who “were not conversing in good English”. This gave birth to the establishment of the Wangsa Maju Christian Zone (WMCZ), of which, Sue Ann Mak (then with the Moulmein Road church) had played a significant role.

In May 2006, several families moved out from the PJ church to meet at 18-B, 2nd Flr., Jalan 2A/27A, Section 1, Wangsa Maju, 53300 Kuala Lumpur. These families included Gan Cheong Bok and his wife Christie, Steven and Eileen Shee, Douglas and Sharon Lee, Victor and Pearly Chong, Ravimaran and his wife Christine, Nalini, Irene, and a few others.⁴⁵⁰

Today, the Wangsa Maju church meets in its self-owned property located at 49-2 Block F, Platinum Walk, 2 Jalan Langkawi, Taman Danau Kota, Setapak, 53300 Kuala Lumpur.

Kota Kemuning

In December 2009, six families from the Klang and Subang Jaya congregations formally came together to establish the Kota Kemuning church. Before this, they had met in Kota Kemuning in mid-week home fellowships. The church has since grown to more than fifty members with elders (Eng Kim Leng and Lim Chan Khoon) and deacons (Sam Tan and Allen Lee).⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Sometime in December 2009, Ravimaran, Christine, Nalini and Irene came out of the Wangsa Maju congregation to meet on their own in Setapak and called themselves the Setapak church. The primary reason for this was their disagreement with the rest of the Wangsa Maju membership over how to minister to the Myanmar refugees who were attending the church services occasionally.

⁴⁵¹ Sam Tan, in WhatsApp message to the writer, 25 September 2021.

Cheras

In mid-2005, some likeminded Christians decided to start a work in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur. They first met in Liew Weng Lum's office on Tuesdays for Bible study. Eight were in attendance for this inaugural Bible study. The numbers gradually grew and the group moved to a shop-lot unit owned by Liew Weng Lum. In 2009 they began to worship together in the evenings before moving to the mornings in 2012. Membership grew to around thirty with five family units forming the core.

In 2011, Phillip Van Winkle came from Singapore to minister with the church for three years. Other men who played significant roles in preaching and teaching in the church were Leow Yew Chong, Albert Wong, Chris Lopez, Richard Lee and Ting Chit Har.

The church also had an active Sunday school programme. Teachers in the classes included Priscilla Lee, Wong Wai Lin, Pooi Lai Gangadaran and Ruth Teo.

Puchong

Lau Kin Fatt and his wife, Chrissie, left the ministry in Penang in the later half of 2006 to establish a new work in Puchong, Selangor. This was in response to a "Macedonian Call" as Kin Fatt described it.⁴⁵² Initially, the work was a Chinese work, that is, mainly aimed at those who can only read and understand Mandarin. The inaugural service was held on 1 October 2006 in the evening with about a hundred people present.⁴⁵³ But a year

⁴⁵² Lau Kin Fatt, in WhatsApp conversation with the writer, 26/8/2023.

⁴⁵³ This was in a rented shoplot unit, 28 Jalan Puteri 5/18, Bandar Puteri, 47100 Puchong (in News & Notes, *The Proclaimer*, 8 October 2006, Vol. 37, No. 41). The church has since bought their own premises and now worships at 40 Jalan Puteri 5/18, 47100 Puchong (in News & Notes, *The Proclaimer*, 4 October 2009, Vol. 40, No. 40).

later, several members from the Petaling Jaya congregation who were residing in and around Puchong came to worship with the fledgling Puchong congregation and English services were added to the weekly schedule.

Damansara Perdana

The Damansara Perdana congregation began life as an outreach effort of the Klang church to establish a new congregation in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur. Several members from Klang like Yew Foo Chun, Tan Seong Khoon and his wife, Nicole, and Leow Yew Chong first met on 1 April 2009 in a rented shop near Metro Kepong for Bible study.

In 2010, this group moved to the home of Nalini in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail for the mid-week Bible studies. This resulted in a few baptisms. With Nalini's consent the first worship service took place on 1 January 2012 in her home in the evening from 5.30 p.m. This continued for five years and several Christians who had fallen away were restored.

On 26 February 2017, the church moved to its present rented premises in Damansara Perdana. The average attendance in the services was about eighteen as of this time.⁴⁵⁴

Skudai

This congregation was formed when a group (which included the Tee Geok Kwee family) came out from the Johor Bahru congregation to meet in Skudai, a town about fourteen kilometres (as the bird flies) north of Johor Bahru sometime in mid-2016.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Leow Yew Chong, in WhatsApp message, 17 September 2021.

⁴⁵⁵ In "News & Notes", *Proclaimer*, June 19, 2016, Vol, 47, No. 25; a weekly bulletin of the Seremban church.

Mandarin Congregations in Johor and The Work of Phua Choon Huat

In 1990, Phua Choon Huat (who was well-versed in Mandarin) heard about the church in **Batu Pahat** in Johor, which had five members meeting in homes. At the time, he was working in Singapore. But he determined to come to Batu Pahat to help the church after working in Singapore a further two years. In the event, he came to Batu Pahat in 1996 under the sponsorship of the Klang church with a ten-year plan for his work in Batu Pahat. In this ten-year plan, Choon Huat envisaged the church to grow big enough for them to stand alone and be independent of his mission work with them.

In March 2004, Choon Huat and his wife Teresa, decided to begin a new work in **Yong Peng**, about a 45-minute drive from Batu Pahat. In the meantime, he was still with the Batu Pahat church, dividing his time between the two places: “three days at Batu Pahat. (*sic*) and three days at Yong Peng area”.⁴⁵⁶ After two years of this travelling back and forth between the two towns, Choon Huat decided to make his move to Yong Peng permanent, having determined that Batu Pahat was sufficiently strong to be independent. This was in June 2006.

Choon Huat and his wife have stayed with the Yong Peng congregation since then. With assistance from the Klang church, the congregation was able to purchase its own property (a shop-lot unit) for use as its meeting place.

In the intervening years in Batu Pahat and Yong Peng, Choon Huat also ventured mission forays into Muar (in 2000 for two years), Labis (2012-2015) and Segamat (one and a half years). All the work and churches established under Choon Huat’s watch are Mandarin-speaking.

⁴⁵⁶ Phua Choon Huat, in an email to the writer on 21 May 2021. This section about his work is based entirely on this email.

PART THREE

OTHER CHURCHES IN SINGAPORE

Geylang

Upper Serangoon/Lim Ah Pin

Queenstown/Pasir Panjang

Others

PART THREE OTHER CHURCHES IN SINGAPORE

GEYLANG

Lye Hong Meng (July 1963 – May 1970)

As we have seen earlier in the story on the early beginnings and Moulmein Road, Lye Hong Meng was a Methodist who left the denomination to form his own church known as the Jesus Christ Church in Muar. Later, he led this church into the church of Christ when he was baptised by Ira Y. Rice, Jr. in 1955. Lye preached for this Muar congregation and served as Rice's translator, particularly in the work at Kluang in those early years. Because Lye was conversant in the Cantonese dialect, Rice invited him to begin a Chinese-speaking congregation at Moulmein Road when the property was purchased in 1958. Rice described Lye as "the most consistent soul-winner for either Malaya or Singapore in 1961". Lye preached in Cantonese and Teochew, and baptised 20 people in that year alone.⁴⁵⁷

Following in the footsteps of several others before him, Lye left for the States aboard the S.S. Java Mail on August 10, 1962, to study at the Michigan Christian College on a one-year tuition scholarship. He was 50 years old.⁴⁵⁸

He returned to Singapore the next year upon completion of his one-year stay at Michigan Christian College.⁴⁵⁹ Not long after, Lye made it known to the Moulmein Road congregation that he was leaving to establish a new congregation in Gey-

⁴⁵⁷ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, February 19, 1962, 2.

⁴⁵⁸ *Far East*, September 10, 1962, 5.

⁴⁵⁹ *Far East*, 13 October 1963, 2.

lang.⁴⁶⁰ The precise reason for his decision is not clear but it appears it had to do with his financial support. In any case, the circumstance surrounding his departure was controversial if not acrimonious.

Lye was partially supported Stateside and partially by Moulmein Road.⁴⁶¹ Rice had observed how local preachers and churches in Asia had been heavily dependent on U.S. support despite the many years these churches had been in existence. He argued that local churches should be made to shoulder the financial responsibility to become self-supporting themselves. Towards this end, he “devised a way gradually, but inexorably, to “walk him [Lye Hong Meng] off” Stateside subsidy onto local support in Singapore”. Rice also claimed that Lye’s support “had come largely out of my working fund”. As Rice would have it, beginning from July 1, 1961, as he gradually and incrementally passed on the 50% U.S. support (which came from his working fund, as he had claimed) to Moulmein Road, “at the end of 3 years, he [Lye Hong Meng] would be completely off the American subsidy”. When he made this known to the Moulmein Road brethren, “They were shocked!” But the “shock-treatment” seemed to have the “desired effect”. The “local treasury, from having shown a chronic deficit over the years, began to show a balance” and the local brethren began to take on an increasing share of the support for Lye Hong Meng.

⁴⁶⁰ Henry Kong recalled, “on an eventful night during a business meeting at Moulmein Road, brother Lye the local minister expressed his desire to begin a new work at Geylang. After some discussion, all present gave it their blessing.” In Henry Kong, “History of the Lord’s Church”, in *Essence*, published by the Pasir Panjang church, possibly in the late 1980s, 5.

⁴⁶¹ *Far East*, 9 December 1962, 4. In a letter dated 5 January 1961, in reply to queries from the Glendale Church of Christ, Glendale, MS, he stated that he was under the oversight of the Hampton Place Church of Christ in Dallas, TX.

But what about the man himself? With the gradual transition to local support, Lye Hong Meng had to “make some sacrifices” himself, per Rice. But Rice “sensed a certain unwillingness to sacrifice on his [Lye’s] part”. The “moment of truth” came on “the Saturday night of July 27” when Lye rejected the local offer of “Malayan/\$500 monthly plus apartment and utilities” (a reduction of Malayan/\$100 from what he was getting under the Stateside and local support scheme). He resigned from his ministry at Moulmein Road with immediate effect, announcing at the same time, that “he was beginning a new congregation “on his own” the following day in the Geylang area of Singapore”.

In subsequent discussions, Lye rejected too an offer from the Moulmein Road brethren that they send him to establish a congregation in Geylang provided Lye agreed to give them an account for any financial aid he should receive beyond the base figure of Malayan/\$400 that Moulmein Road was willing to give him. He countered with a proposal of his own, which was disagreeable to the Moulmein Road leadership as well.

Rice was rather scathing and unkind to Lye Hong Meng with his comments:

The general consensus was that brother Lye, like so many before him, had gone to America for training, had, in the process, become unsettled by the wealth and affluence of the American economy and had returned to Singapore no longer content to live as an Asian on the Asian economy, but wilfully determined to live according to the American standard (if at all possible) even though his Asian brethren could not meet such a standard even if they would, and would not even if they could!

Rice also insinuated that Lye having been to the States, had made a lot of contacts there and that he need not depend

on local support anymore. He also urged his readers and supporters not to send any financial aid to Lye. He, himself, would not help him either.⁴⁶²

With no agreement on his financial support and Lye having said he could go on his own, Lye left to begin his new work in Geylang in July 1963.⁴⁶³ “Some 20 of the members [from

⁴⁶² The account of this unhappy parting of ways between Ira Y. Rice and Lye Hong Meng is taken from *Far East*, 15 August 1963, 7-9. It is rather unfortunate that “the other side” of the story is not available to this writer. Rice, in an earlier report, mentioned that he had “to make a run down to Singapore for a business-meeting with the brethren there” to persuade the Moulmein Road brethren to contribute more so that they could give more to Lye Hong Meng’s support and thus relieve Rice’s share and the differential could be used for the Kuala Lumpur work (in *Far East*, 22 May 1961, 2-3). In a correspondence with Otis Gatewood who had inquired as to how much Lye Hong Meng should be paid and under whose direction he should be, Rice discussed “several vexatious problems” – local returning preachers used to the affluence in the States would have difficulty readjusting themselves to “their own economies”; local churches, if self-supporting, could never afford to pay “the kind of salaries easily afforded by American churches”; “Asians tend to venerate the preacher who is receiving the most money, as if he were THE preacher, and the lesser-paid preachers somehow his inferiors”; any pattern of support set would have to be maintained thereon as Asians were “the most tradition-conscious people on earth – Chinese being the worst of all in this respect”; in Singapore and Malaya, “top salaries” for locals were about Straits/\$600 (US/\$200) a month, “we have almost no one in that bracket ... most of our families do not make even Straits/\$150 (US/\$50) a month”; it would be difficult to persuade the locals to sacrifice for Christ “out of their bare necessities” to pay top money to their preachers; but at the same time, it would be “ill-considered” “to try to force these returning preachers into the strait-jacket of the lowest-paid Asians”; “we must try to avoid the opposite extreme, as well” (in his reply dated 17 April 1963 as reproduced in *Far East*, 20 June 1963, 10).

⁴⁶³ Rice revealed later that he had learnt a certain congregation in the U.S. had supported Lye twice the amount what Lye would have got had he accepted local support. *Far East*, April-May, 1970, 3.

Moulmein Road], including his own immediate family, elected to go with brother Lye,” Rice wrote. The first worship service of this new congregation was “on the last Lord’s Day of July, 1963”⁴⁶⁴ (that would be 28 July 1963) in Lorong 19 Geylang⁴⁶⁵. Sometime later, the congregation moved to meet at the rented place of 4 Lorong 22 Geylang.⁴⁶⁶

When Lye Hong Meng started Geylang, it was a Chinese work as he was more conversant in his native Chinese dialects. But sometime later, his son, Gebian Lye, “together with other young people started an English-speaking work ... and in time, this overtook the Chinese work in numbers”.⁴⁶⁷ A report by a Geylang member in 1969 gave a picture of the Geylang church as it was then:

Very insignificantly, the work in Geylang was initiated towards the end of 1963. Ten miserable souls (at least in the eyes of men) including the Lyes’ (*sic*) family of five were instrumental in the establishment of the work in this area. Our place of worship was a store-room in one of our members’ home where green groceries were being stored. “And lo I am with you always ...” This has been our assurance and trust when we embark on any new project for Christ. Praise the Lord, we were not there long. After a short period of two months, we were able to have the present accommodation where about 50-60 people could be assembled together, though very congestedly. This has been made possible through the love and generosity of our brethren that meet in the Oklahoma City Village Church Building in Oklahoma, United States.

⁴⁶⁴ *Far East*, 13 October 1963, 2-3.

⁴⁶⁵ Per Matthew Tan, in WhatsApp message, 25 June 2021 and in his comments on the Geylang story when the manuscript was sent to him for his review at about the same time (hereafter, Comments).

⁴⁶⁶ *Far East*, 13 October 1963, 2-3.

⁴⁶⁷ Henry Kong, “History of the Lord’s Church”, in *Essence* (date published unknown, possibly in the late 1980s), 5.

Our Lord has been gracious to us. Day by day more souls were added to the church as such should be saved. To date we have an average regular attendance of fifty who speak English and forty Chinese speaking members.

Besides the worship services on Sunday, week-day prayer meetings, Bible studies and singspiration are also in session. Although the preacher does visitation and counselling daily, weekends normally are reserved (*sic*) for personal work which is being carried out by groups of men and ladies of both Chinese and English speaking congregations.

In addition, the local church also sponsors a Bible course entitled, 'Beginners Bible Course,' which was started late last year, but in a very short duration it has grown to a considerable scale. The latest report indicates a total enrolment of 550 students with graduates numbering 50 within the past month. Numerous souls have been added to the church through this (*sic*) effort.

From a very humble beginning we are now on the verge of acquiring larger quarters where 150-200 people can be assembled. This again has been made possible by Village Church of Christ – through the untiring efforts of Brother A. L. Harbin. Pray for us as we labor hand-in-hand in the Vineyard of the Lord. – Geylang Church of Christ.⁴⁶⁸

Lye Hong Meng died “early in May” of 1970, seven years after he began the Geylang congregation. Tan Keng Koon and Ken Sinclair (from Seremban) directed his funeral services.⁴⁶⁹ Rice gave a semi-biographical sketch on the life of Lye from the time the two knew each other in his *Far East Newsletter*, April-May 1970, 2-3, detailing some of their exploits together in Muar

⁴⁶⁸ Gordon Hogan, *Newsletter*, 30 April 1969. Matthew Tan commented that “The church almost purchased a big house at the junction of Tanjong Katong Road and Dunman Road”.

⁴⁶⁹ *Newsletter from Malaysia*, A Report from Kenneth and Estelle Sinclair, July 15, 1970.

and Kluang; but Rice was rather uncomplimentary of Lye in his last seven years of life: that he (Lye) had lived “in semi-disrepute among his fellow-Asian preachers and responsible Christians otherwise in the know” and even questioned as to “whether it will eventually cost his soul, when he goes before God to be judged”.

According to Matthew Tan (Lye Hong Meng’s nephew), Lye’s death “created a crisis”. The church, at the time, “consisted of a few working adults and mostly school kids”, with “No leadership and financial means to continue”.⁴⁷⁰

After Lye Hong Meng’s death, Charlie Ng took over responsibility for the preaching work of the church, especially in the Chinese services. In 1974, the English-speaking group moved out to meet at 31, Lorong 32 Geylang, in Gebian Lye’s house on the ground floor⁴⁷¹ leaving the Chinese-speaking group and Charlie Ng at Lorong 22.

Paul Tan, Raybester Loke, Matthew Tan and Others

In 1976, Paul Tan, a nephew of Lye Hong Meng, started full-time ministry with Geylang upon his graduation from Four Seas College. Raybestor Loke (also a Four Seas graduate) and his wife, Emily, came over from Queenstown to join Paul in the ministry at Geylang in 1977. He served till 1982 and returned to Queenstown. But in 1993, he came back to minister with the Geylang congregation for a second time till 1996. This was when Paul Tan left for Abilene, Texas, in the States to do his undergraduate and graduate studies in Bible at the Abilene Christian University (ACU). Matthew Tan, another nephew of

⁴⁷⁰ Matthew Tan, Comments.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid. Gebian Lye is Lye Hong Meng’s son.

Lye Hong Meng, also served with Geylang, but for only a year. This was in 1988.⁴⁷²

Paul Tan resumed his ministry with Geylang when he returned from ACU in 1996, retiring in 2022.

A. L. Harbin, who had been instrumental in helping to raise support for the Geylang work since its early days,⁴⁷³ returned to Singapore for about two years between 1978 and 1980. In these two years he assisted the work in Geylang, repeating his Perpetual Gospel Meeting, which he first did when he was establishing the church in Queenstown in 1964-67. At the same time, he tried to establish a new work in his rented place at Upper Thompson Road together with Hugh Yeo (of Geylang). But this work never quite took off.

In 1989, the Lorong 32 group bought a double storey house at 17, Lorong 11 Geylang. Before this, in 1985, the group had moved out from Gebian Lye's house and rented a place at 6A, Lorong 32 Geylang to meet.⁴⁷⁴ Tan Gan Ou, who was from Lim Ah Pin, came over and started a Chinese service with this group. It was about this time that Charlie Ng and the Lorong 22 group came over to reunite with the Lorong 11 group, and thus, renewed the one Geylang congregation identity.

⁴⁷² This paragraph, Matthew Tan, Comments, and Raybestor Loke, 22/8/2021, in an Excel document (hereafter, Excel) shared with the writer.

⁴⁷³ A. L. Harbin, *Preaching the Gospel in All the World*, 2. The Village Church in Oklahoma City, the new sponsors of the Harbins, had also been supporting Lye Hong Meng's work in Geylang (Gordon Hogan, *Newsletter*, April 30, 1969, "The Story of the Church in Singapore" – Geylang). Ira Y. Rice Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, October 31, 1967, 8.

⁴⁷⁴ Matthew Tan, Comments. Raybestor Loke, Excel.

In 1995, the church sold the Lorong 11 house and bought their present premises, a unit on the first floor of the Guilin Building situated at 8 Lorong 27A Geylang.⁴⁷⁵

Into the 21st Century – Renewal and Emphasis on Developing the Young Adults

In 2015, the church embarked on “a renewal and redeveloping of leadership” programme, with emphasis on the young adults, “[p]utting and training [them] into church committee and ministry roles”. In this respect, the church was successful in pushing up a young man, Daniel Liu, into giving his life for the work of the church. In 2016, Daniel Liu became a “trainee” and later took up fulltime work focusing on the young adults.⁴⁷⁶

But this emphasis on the young adults has a negative impact on the conservatism within the church of Christ in as far as the Restoration Heritage is concerned. In the most recent years, the church has embraced singing with instruments, allowing ladies to lead in prayer and singing, and participating with denominations in their activities.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ This section of the post-Lye Hong Meng Geylang history is largely drawn from WhatsApp exchanges with Matthew Tan between 25 June (messages) and 2 July 2021 (conversation).

⁴⁷⁶ Matthew Tan, Comments. Daniel Liu later left Geylang for the Bartley Christian Church.

⁴⁷⁷ Source wished to remain anonymous.

UPPER SERANGOON/LIM AH PIN

Tan Keng Koon and Baby Tan (1965 – March 1979)

Tan Keng Koon is something of a legend in the folklore (if I may use the word) connected with the early beginnings of the churches of Christ in Singapore. Ira Y. Rice had caricatured him as an “extraordinary, small Chinese man” who “could not have weighed over 85 pounds wringing wet”⁴⁷⁸. When, in March 1955, Cecil Chen (or, Tan Siak Sze) first introduced Tan Keng Koon to Rice, he remarked to him, “Remember that man, he’s important”. Rice later mentioned that he “detected nothing that *seemed* important about the man”, but admitted, “How wrong I was!” because “Koon” (as Tan Keng Koon was known to everyone later) “would become the most influential member in the history of our Lord’s church in Singapore!”⁴⁷⁹

Though incredulous at the time, Rice decided to take Siak Sze’s word for it and made contact with Koon which “eventually led to numerous sessions of Bible study.” But the conversion was not forthcoming, not quite as yet. It would come three and half years later. Rice recounted how it happened:

One day, along in October, of 1958, Koon knocked on my door early in the morning. He was in a serious mood. “I never give my friendship easily to any man,” he began, after we had sat down. “For 3½ years you have been trying to teach me something about the Bible; but I wasn’t listening. I was studying *you*. I did not know I wanted to be your friend or not. Now I have decided that I want to be

⁴⁷⁸ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*, November-December 1978, 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Pressing Toward the Mark, An Autobiography*, Vol. II, *Missionary Work: 1955 to 1965* (Dallas, G. T. Press, 2001), 73 (in this account, Rice used the name Cecil Chen). Also, in *Far East*, November-December 1978, 1 (here, he gave the name as Tan Siak Sze).

your friend and I want you to be my friend. I have come this morning to ask you to tell me all over again what it was you wanted me to know."⁴⁸⁰

Rice was astounded that all this while his teaching was falling on deaf ears. But sensing a breakthrough, he began to teach the gospel to Tan Keng Koon all over again. Owing to language difficulties experienced by both parties to understand each other properly, Koon only made the decision to confess and be baptised into Christ in February 1959, which was done in the South China Sea on the east coast.

Koon's legendary status had two dimensions to it. The first was his purported career as a young military man in Chiang Kai Shek's nationalist armed forces. Rice wrote on this particular aspect:

Koon, at age 20, had been the youngest captain in the Chinese Air Force; and, at age 23, the youngest consul in the government of China. Not only had he been the personal confidant of Chiang Kai Shek, President of China, but was formerly in charge of Chiang's personal bodyguard.⁴⁸¹

In an earlier report, Rice wrote that Koon was a captain attached to the Fourteenth U.S. Air Force and had become "intimate friends with many of the famous Flying Tigers under the command of General Chennault" during World War II. And while Koon was at Freed-Hardeman, a certain Sergeant Henry Ward Beecher, Jr., who was under Koon's direct command, went all the way to Henderson from Washington D.C. to visit Koon. Koon himself appeared to corroborate this particular story. Rice quoted a letter (c. December 1960) from Koon as telling him that

⁴⁸⁰ *Far East*, November-December 1978, 2. See also, *Far East*, June 1971, 1.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

while on a two-week break from his studies at Freed-Hardeman, Koon had travelled “over 2,500 miles passing through Northern part of States ... preached in several congregations ... Same time I have been met (*sic*) my Flying Tigers friends. Mostly they are not the member of Christ (*sic*).” And in a later letter (dated May 27, possibly 1961)” Koon wrote in his own imperfect English:

Last Christmas I have been spoken over New York and Washington, D.C. These public speakings are arranged by my Flying Tigers friends. It is really a stronger influence towards them. Regarding the above speeches, I have received many letters recently, one from U.N. They offered me U.S. \$1,200 per month as an adviser of Asian affairs. Another from B.O.A.C. they try to hire me as a Chinese representative in International Air Port, New York. \$500 p.m. The last one was from Voice of America, monthly income will be U.S. \$600. The above chances I just unconsideration (*sic*) refused. I want, I must, I need to do Missionary work. I pray and wish that our Lord will provide me an opportunity to serve him.⁴⁸²

This brings us to the second dimension of the legend that Koon was – his faith and his resolve to give up earthly riches for the sake of serving Christ. Not long after his conversion, Koon intimated to Rice that he wanted to become a gospel preacher and had asked Rice where “he could learn Bible better than anywhere else in the world”. Rice pointed him to Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, TN, U.S.A. Koon, upon learning that the Rices were returning to the States in August of that year for their first furlough, determined to travel with them so that he could study at Freed-Hardeman College. Now, Koon was born into a most wealthy family. His grandfather was the first “rubber millionaire” of Malaya. His father inherited the million or

⁴⁸² *Far East*, 13 August 1961, 2.

millions. But when Koon let it be known to his father that he was going to America to study to become a gospel preacher, his father threatened to disinherit him and would not leave him a single cent. Moreover, he would not pay for his passage to America nor support him in the two years he would be there. Unbowed, Koon resigned from his job as an accountant with Rennie-Lowick, took out his life savings of about US\$1,600, bought his ticket and was on board the cargoliner, the M.S. Madison (with the Rices and Samuel Miao) that set sail on 7 August, 1959.⁴⁸³

At Freed-Hardeman, Koon refused to take the courses that would lead him to an Associate in Arts Degree. He threatened to quit if he were not allowed to take those courses in Bible studies only. The College acceded to his “demand” and allowed him to just study the Bible. But it was not plain sailing for him as he was limited in his command of English. He had to spend extra hours consulting his Chinese dictionary each day so that he could understand his course material. In any case, Koon duly completed the two years of required study and returned to Singapore in July 1961.⁴⁸⁴

Upon his return, “he was given the lead of the Moulmein congregation”. However, the attendance at Moulmein Road had shrunk to “around 40” in the absence of the Rices. Koon determined to work hard and “was just sure that he could teach and take over the entire Chinese community”. But a year had passed, and he had not baptised “a single soul”. With “unaccustomed humility”, Koon sought out Rice, who by now had returned to Singapore, for advice. Rice once again took him under his wings on the proviso that he (Koon) “*really* wanted to

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 2; *Far East*, November-December 1978, 2. See also *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 212.

⁴⁸⁴ *Far East*, November-December 1978, 2.

learn how to win souls”. Koon assured him that “he really did”. With this understanding between the two, they set out visiting students of the Basic Bible Course, “five nights a week”, “four hours every evening”, Rice doing “all the talking” and Koon to “keep [his] mouth shut” until he was allowed to speak. Koon had to “at first watch and listen”, which he did. Within a few weeks, Koon had learnt the ropes of teaching the gospel and Rice allowed him “to do follow-up teaching on his own”. Rice observed:

Once he got started, what a joy it was to see his development as a personal soul-winner. All along I had been baptizing a few; however, once I turned him loose to teach in his own right, before long he was winning souls three times faster and better than I ever could.

From the approximately 40 members he and I started with then meeting at Moulmein Road, within nine months we had built it up to more than 200.

Once he learned how, Koon was on his way to becoming the most effective soul-winner in all Asia up to that point in time. And his wife, Baby Tan, was not far behind.⁴⁸⁵ [See story on Baby Tan.]

While at Freed-Hardeman, Koon made acquaintance with an elder of the Humboldt congregation in Tennessee. Through this acquaintanceship, the elders at Humboldt decided to support Koon when he returned to work with the Moulmein Road congregation. Koon accepted this for a time. But when he had built up the Moulmein Road congregation to the point that it could support him, Koon informed the Humboldt elders to

⁴⁸⁵ *Pressing Toward*, Vol. II, 309-310.

discontinue their support to him, a “most unheard of thing”, as one brother remarked at the time.⁴⁸⁶

It should not surprise us that Koon was willing to forgo Stateside support for local support when we realise that he had spurned a potential million-dollar-inheritance a few years back. His detachment from money was further shown later when the Moulmein Road congregation went into financial difficulties of its own. In a letter to Rice dated November 25 (possibly 1964), Koon wrote:

The church in Singapore are truly grown through the Basic Bible Course. The baptizing and the attending are also increasing day after day. But 100% the new brethren are school boy. Therefore the contribution are not much increasing. We know they are wonderful young Christian. They are willing to give as I teach them that way, although they gave what they have, but the contribution are not increasing much, because they get little and give little. Recently our monthly expenses are over the income. The Balance getting lest and lest. It does not means we spend too mich, but since you left many items have to pay by the church. Regarding Henry’s support at the present time in my idea, I can only cut down my own support and give it to him. But one thing you can recall, when brethren cut down \$100 on my support, I just silence and take it.

What a man he was: to forsake wealth for Christ’s sake. When his own support was reduced, he was willing to take a further cut so that it could be given to his fellow worker.

⁴⁸⁶ *Far East*, November-December 1978, 2-3. Rice later clarified in a note, in *Far East*, January 1979, 2, that the Humboldt elders did not discontinue Koon’s support entirely, but merely reduced it; and later increased it over the years to factor in rising inflation. For an earlier account of the support Koon was to receive during the period of his transition from Moulmein Road to Upper Serangoon, see *Far East*, 15 August 1963, 10.

This financial crisis at Moulmein Road turned into an impetus for Koon “to go out and work by my own”.

Since you left, in my part is a big lost in work and finance. I realize sooner or later I have to go out and work by my own. Then that might be a good chance for me to practice and manage the work. Since the circumstances are very disadvantage in my part. But only God my Father could know me and bless me on His work. He will shown me the way what to do and how to do.

The financial crisis probably woke him up to the reality of the need for good financial resources in mission work. But even if the money was not forthcoming, it did not dampen his zeal to do God’s work.

The present problem of the missionary work is money, money; but the gospel must preach to every creatures ... Although I am now under very disadvantage circumstances, but if Lord willing, I shall build it up His work according to His will.

In a further letter dated January 28, 1965, Koon gave his reasons for wanting to establish “a new Mandarin Congregation”. He was also influenced by what he saw while on a visit to the church in Bangkok, Thailand, and had this vision of training young Chinese-speaking Christians so that they could penetrate into mainland China through Thailand. In any case, his reasons for a new congregation were mainly affected by local conditions extant in Singapore then. Koon wrote:

The special reasons being have a new Mandarin Congregation (in Singapore) will be these:

- (1) Centralize, organize, supervise the work and its development.
- (2) Avoid the comparison with many advantages which the English congregation now have.

- (3) Prove that the Gospel is for all (not only for the white men).
- (4) Avoid the bad influence from the old and ungrouping with spiritual sick brethren who now are in the Moulmein Church (Chinese Service).
- (5) Lead the member realize that the work is belong to their own, not working for other purpose, but Christ their Lord.
- (6) I can devoted full time, mind, strength, love in concentration the work.

The list above reveals another problem that Koon was also facing at the time. He most likely had an uncomfortable working relationship with two or more members in the Moulmein Road congregation.

As soon as my support and working fund are arranged, I should very happy to leave the building. I never intend to take anyone with me from the Chinese Services, but I just want to take the Chinese BBC with me ... I sincerely pray that we can work it out with the most peaceful and happiness way to winning souls ... I truly miss you very badly. If you are here everything are so simple to solve the problem ... But _____ and _____ (names withheld, possibly by Rice) could not give the definite answer in anything you try to discuss with them.

Koon went on to establish a Chinese speaking congregation in Changi in one of the brothers' house.⁴⁸⁷ A letter dated April 8 (1965) attests to this.

Since month ago, I start the new Chinese speaking congregation in Changi in one of the brethren's house. We have service in the morning. The attending is very good, about 18. Two Chinese Educated boy were baptized last two weeks. This congregation are base on self-support. Now I begin to train them taken part of the service. Now our younger brethren could begin to lead the pray, sing, soon they will learn to preach. That is truly a rejoicing work.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ When the writer (together with Edwin Choy) visited Baby Tan in 2015, she told this writer that in those early days a group was meeting at her father's residence in Changi, a handsome bungalow house; but not inside the house. Instead, it was in a shed near the garage. Rice, in *Far East*, June 1971, 3, wrote that they had an evening service once a week in Baby Tan's parents' house. Then he added, "in those days, we never got to hold these services inside the residential part of the house, but only under that lean-to shed on the opposite side of the garage." This was so not because they were "being inhospitable ... It was simply that they were Buddhists and could figure out no other way to hang on to their Buddhism!"

⁴⁸⁸ Except for the immediate footnote above, this and other quotations of Koon's letters above are from *Far East*, November 30, 1965, 14-15. These letters indicate that Koon left Moulmein Road to establish Upper Serangoon in 1965. In a letter to the elders at Hampton Place, Samuel Miao wrote relative to Koon's intentions at the time: "But Koon is thinking of moving the Mandarin section of the church (which meets at night at the Moulmein building) to his house and starting a congregation at his premises. This way he would be able to concentrate on his work with the Chinese-speaking brethren in a more effective way, and at the same time free the Moulmein Road brethren to support me." (cited in Rice's *Far East*, June 20, 1966, 11.) However, in a later newsletter of March 1976, 2, under the heading, "Tan Keng Koon Establishes Upper Serangoon", Rice mentions Koon as ministering in Moulmein Road upon his return from the States in July 1961 till 1963 when he relinquished the work to Henry Tan when the later

Sometime later, he also had a group meeting in his own house. Thus, he was establishing two congregations almost simultaneously. He also resumed accepting financial support from the Humboldt church in Tennessee.⁴⁸⁹ It is likely that these two nascent congregations later merged into one⁴⁹⁰ and met at Koon and Baby Tan's house in Upper Serangoon and which became known as the Upper Serangoon congregation.

Under Koon's steady leadership, his wife Baby Tan's evangelistic fervency, and strong support from the membership, the Upper Serangoon church grew to such an extent that it overflowed its meeting place,⁴⁹¹ which of course, was the Tans' residence. In a newsletter devoted to Koon and Baby Tan's work in Upper Serangoon and at the same time, making a plea to raise funds for a much-needed new place for the congregation, Rice wrote:

returned too from his studies in the States. Rice made it appear that Koon left Moulmein Road to establish the new work in Upper Serangoon in 1963. It is clear from the reports that Koon did not do so until 1965 and his move was prompted, in part, by the financial crisis at Moulmein Road when Samuel Miao returned from the States. Moulmein Road had to support three local preachers, Koon, Henry Tan and Samuel Miao, at the same time when it could hardly do so. Most likely, Rice was referring to Henry Tan being given the principal task of preaching to the English-speaking congregation upon his return (see Rice's comments on Henry Tan's return to Moulmein Road, in *Far East*, 17 July 1963, 1) and Koon probably being asked to concentrate on the Chinese/Mandarin work.

⁴⁸⁹ Rice, *Far East*, November 30, 1965, 15-16.

⁴⁹⁰ Writer's own assumption as he could not find information on what happened later to the Changi work. Rice also referred to Koon's two works in Changi and Serangoon, in *Far East*, June 20, 1966, 7.

⁴⁹¹ Upper Serangoon benefited too from the relocation of Four Seas College from Moulmein Road to Punggol Point. The Four Seas students who would have worshipped at Moulmein Road now worshipped at Upper Serangoon since it was closer to them. See *Far East*, August 1969, 6.

Koon's and Baby Tan's living room, by crowding, could accommodate 40 people. They filled it. Soon they had to put seats in both rooms. They filled them. They put seats in the kitchen; filled them; in the patio at the rear; filled them. By knocking out the front wall of their living room, they could use the front porch for seating; this was filled too. Finally, they built a canopy over their *entire front yard* for additional seating. By now, this, too, has been filled. In fact, the time is now here when every nook and cranny available has been filled. Just imagine 160 people in regular attendance in space not really suitable for 40!⁴⁹²

At this time, Koon was dying from terminal lung cancer which was first diagnosed in 1976. Despite his illness, Koon was unflappable in his zeal for the cause of Christ. He had identified a semi-detached property costing S\$210,000 for purchase for use as a church meeting place. The church had S\$25,000 and Koon and Baby Tan gave S\$5,000 out of their own pockets to meet the total of S\$30,000 as down payment for the property. They planned to sell their house, which could fetch at least S\$75,000. As for the remainder, they would have the church to borrow from a bank at 10% yearly interest.⁴⁹³ Talking about faith and zeal, this “pocket-size” couple towered over almost everyone else!

As things developed, the funds were raised and borrowed – the Humboldt congregation contributing \$60,000 and the Moulmein Road congregation another \$13,000 – the property located at 17-A Marlene Avenue was purchased.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² *Far East*, November-December 1978, 2. See also, *Far East*, March 1976, 2, for a similar account.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1. Figures given by Gordon Hogan to Ira Y. Rice in a letter dated November 2, 1978.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, January 1979, 1; February-March 1979, 3. A. L. Harbin sent 4,000 letters Stateside on behalf of Upper Serangoon and raised more than double

The church had their first service in this newly acquired property on March 1, 1979, and A. L. Harbin preached in that service.⁴⁹⁵ Unfortunately, not long after the congregation moved into their new premises, they had to move back to 28 Jalan Geneng, the Tans' residence. This happened because the immediate neighbours at Marlene Avenue made complaints to the Singapore authorities, who then forbade the congregation from meeting at the place.⁴⁹⁶ Eventually, the church purchased another property at Lim Ah Pin Road and their identity came to be known as the Lim Ah Pin Road Church of Christ.

Koon succumbed to his illness on March 8, 1979. He lived long enough to attend the first two services at Marlene Avenue though.⁴⁹⁷ Besides his evangelistic work at Moulmein Road and Upper Serangoon, he also taught at Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, served as its Dean of Students up to the time of his death. He was named Freed-Hardeman Alumnus of the Year 1978.⁴⁹⁸ In Rice's very words: "this little giant of the cause of Christ ... had tried so hard to live for Jesus since he was baptized into Christ."⁴⁹⁹

A Translation Flap

Koon often acted as translator for Rice and other visiting American missionaries or preachers. One time, in November of 1962, Marshall Keeble (and two others) stopped over in Singapore on a round-the-world tour.

the \$18,000, which Rice raised through his *Far East Newsletter* (*Far East*, February 1980, 3).

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, February 1980, 3.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, August 1980, 4. The Humboldt elders had asked Koon and Baby Tan not to sell their house (*Far East*, February-March 1979, 2).

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, February-March 1979, 1-2; *August* 1980, 4.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, November-December 1978, 1.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, February-March 1979, 2.

Keeble preached at Moulmein Road the same night he arrived. Koon was his translator. Keeble began his speech with these words: "I came to Singapore tonight to get my battery charged!"

Despite his two years in the States at Freed-Hardeman, Koon could not understand Keeble. After an awkward long pause, he looked at Keeble and asked him, "Brother Keeble, where is your battery?" (in Rice, *Pressing*, Vol. II, 312-314).

Baby Tan (née Ng Seok Lan)

Tan Keng Koon's wife, Baby Tan⁵⁰⁰ (as she is fondly and universally known; maiden name, Ng Seok Lan) is a legend too in her own right in the church of Christ. Her faith and zeal for Christ is only rivalled by her late husband, Koon. Like Koon, she came from a very wealthy Buddhist family. However, she did not immediately follow her husband into Christ when Koon was baptised in 1959. It took her another two years, after Koon had returned from his studies at Freed-Hardeman. A. L. Harbin was preaching at a special service one Saturday night (at Moulmein Road) and Baby Tan (Seok Lan, then) was in attendance. It was then that she decided to surrender her life to Jesus Christ. She attributed her decision to "something about [Harbin's] preaching that night which persuaded her she should be baptized without putting it off any longer".⁵⁰¹

Her surrender to Christ is ever so complete as manifested in her life and devotion to win others to Christ too. Through her personal evangelism and genuine care and compassion for all around her, be they members of the church or friends and acquaintances, she has over the years won many to Christ. This

⁵⁰⁰ In *Far East*, September 12, 1961, 2, Rice explained the name 'Baby' was given to her because she was so tiny.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

particular winsome aspect is best illustrated in her efforts to win, first, her grandmother, and later, her own parents to Christ (see Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East*, pp. 1-4, for Rice's write-out of these conversions).

Gordon Hogan wrote this short piece, "Nine Years – a Letter Everyday", in the daily devotional booklet *Power for Today*, November-December 1970:⁵⁰²

PATIENCE is a virtue that belongs in a special way to the Christian. Very soon after Baby Tan of Singapore became a Christian, rejoicing in her own salvation, she desired the same joy and assurance for her entire family. First she taught her aged grandmother, who soon obeyed the Lord. Although she lived in the same house with her mother and father, they clung steadfastly to their ancient pagan faith. In the Chinese culture, a girl just cannot teach such matters as religion to her father face to face. Undaunted, full of faith and patience, Baby Tan wrote her father a letter daily for nine years to teach him of God and the way of salvation. Each day for all those years she read the Bible to her mother. Patience wrought her perfect work when in 1969 both of Baby Tan's parents were baptized into Christ.

The example of this wonderful Chinese Christian lady constantly inspires all who know her in Singapore. She is a modern day Priscilla, Lydia or Dorcas, testifying to the power of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

⁵⁰² Gordon Hogan, *Forward for Christ*, February 1, 1971.

Post-Tan Keng Koon

After Koon's death, Kwan Tai Choom succeeded him in the ministry at Upper Serangoon/Lim Ah Pin.⁵⁰³

The church currently has elders, Jimmy Lau and Michael Yeo; deacons, Benjamin Tan and Jerry Cheong; a preacher, Ernest Lau (Kwan Tai Choom had served as the preacher upon Koon's death but had since resigned); and an administrator, Goh Ser Ern.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Koon had personally recommended for Kwan Tai Choom to replace him in the ministry at Upper Serangoon upon his death, *ibid.*, *Far East*, February-March 1979, 3.

⁵⁰⁴ [lapcoc.org/bulletin](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/39fbda_220773f5027d46289cae9e07324444da.pdf), 22 September 2019, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/39fbda_220773f5027d46289cae9e07324444da.pdf; Internet; accessed 3 October 2019.

QUEENSTOWN/PASIR PANJANG

A. Leroy and Fannie Harbin (July 1964 – 1967)

In the story on Moulmein Road, we saw how the Harbins were at the congregation between 1961-62.

Harbin came back to Singapore in July of 1964, via Australia⁵⁰⁵, and he started a new congregation in the Queens-town area in October of that year, with a “nucleus of some 15 or 20 members from Moulmein Road”, as per Ira Y. Rice.⁵⁰⁶ However, Harbin himself recollected that early beginning:

On Sunday morning, October 25, 1964, I met there [in the living room of Polly Lee’s rented flat]⁵⁰⁷ with two Chinese Christian boys, Chew Chiong Chee and Chiong Ching Keat, for worship, and we started a congregation and a Gospel meeting. Though we three, with one outsider, were the only ones present for the first service, some of the services of the meeting were attended by more than sixty people, including many non-members.⁵⁰⁸

Of his return to Singapore, Harbin wrote:

At the request of dear ones once left behind, of my own accord and at my own personal expense, I returned to Singapore from Australia on July 28, 1964. I returned on

⁵⁰⁵ Pence Dacus noted that Harbin was coming from Australia where he had worked 23 months near Sydney and “Will preach anywhere he is needed in Malaysia (Pence Dacus, *Singapore Newsletter*, Vol. 1 No. 12, August 1964).

⁵⁰⁶ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, November 30, 1965, 16.

⁵⁰⁷ It was at 128, Commonwealth Crescent (per tract advertising A. L. Harbin’s Gospel Meeting on “God’s Plan of Salvation”, 27-12-64 to 3-1-65). The address was actually 66, Commonwealth Crescent, #01-128 (in Henry Kong’s “Milestones”, *Hope for Today*, Vol. 4 No. 4, 2-5). Also, see Pence Dacus, *Singapore Newsletter*, Vol. 1 No. 15, November 1964.

⁵⁰⁸ In a report by Harbin as reproduced by Rice in *Far East*, October 31, 1967, 7. See also, A. L. Harbin, *Preaching the Gospel in All the World Newsletter*, September 1967, 1.

pure faith, without sponsor, without visible means of support and without visa. But God made a way, and I soon had all three: sponsor, support and visa. I had returned to plant the church in a section of the city known as Queenstown.⁵⁰⁹

The first baptism in this fledgling work was that of Ng Swee Siong in the very first Gospel Meeting. Swee Siong became “one of our very best workers for Christ”, Harbin remarked. “The attendance and membership grew quite rapidly ... all the additions were teenagers, almost all very soon began personal evangelism and other work in the church according to their abilities and Bible qualifications.”⁵¹⁰

The new church soon outgrew “the ten-by-sixteen-foot room” and a new place had to be found. Lam Teck Ming, “our beloved co-worker”, who preached in the Cantonese service in the afternoons,⁵¹¹ rented “a Government-owned shop house”.⁵¹² He used it as “his book shop” and at the same time allowed “a room about 20 by 30 feet” in the shop front area for use as a meeting place for the church.⁵¹³ Two Chinese families occupied the rooms upstairs and Harbin and his wife Fannie lived in “a shed-room across the back downstairs”.⁵¹⁴ Harbin was to throw more light on this ‘shed-room’ of accommodation for him and his wife:

Our floor was bare, rough concrete; our walls were naked concrete blocks (no windows), spaced apart for ventilation;

⁵⁰⁹ In same report in *Far East*, October 31, 1967, 7.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ *Preaching the Gospel*, August 1, 1966, 1.

⁵¹² The address was 47 Tanglin Halt Road, #01-327 (in Henry Kong’s “Milestones”, *Hope for Today*, Vol. 4 No. 4, 2-5).

⁵¹³ *Far East*, October 31, 1967, 8.

⁵¹⁴ *Preaching the Gospel*, June 15, 1966, 1.

our roof of corrugated metal (no ceiling) held heat from the equatorial sun past midnights in dry weather and had structural leaks to be avoided with our canvas cots in wet weather. Our closets for clothes, linen and dishes were of rough shipping boxes set on ends and supported by bricks placed under the corners.⁵¹⁵

It was in this new place that Harbin introduced his “Perpetual Gospel Meeting”, which began on May 1, 1966, and which ran for an incredible 428 nights continuously “without missing a single night”. In this way, Harbin preached through the New Testament, “a chapter a night, and then a second time through the books of John, Acts and Romans”.⁵¹⁶

The church then, was running services in the mornings (worship and Bible class), afternoons (Cantonese service) and evenings (worship service) each Sunday. Baptisms added new members to the church.

During the last year we baptized 24, and the total number of members grew to sixty. Fifty-five of these are teenagers. Once again we find our meeting place to be very inadequate.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., September 1967, 1. It saddened the heart of this writer to read that the Harbins were living in such spartan quarters, which was necessitated because of “a heavy reduction” in the Harbins’ personal support.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 8. See also, Harbin, *Preaching the Gospel*, June 15, 1966, 1 and August 1, 1966, 1, in which Harbin reported, “Attendance is small, but we never miss a night ... Eleven have already obeyed the Gospel since May 1st.” Don Green, later, was to do the same thing in Ipoh; though his perpetual meeting lasted much shorter (February-October 1969). In Don Green’s *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. 4, October thru December 1969, No. 5; January 1969; February 1-March 15, 1969; March 15-May 1969.

⁵¹⁷ As reported by Harbin, in *Far East*, October 31, 1967, 8.

Owing to the pace of growth in the Queenstown church, Harbin began to search for a property and to raise funds to purchase it for church use. In this, however, he was not too successful. Government land in the Queenstown area was not available for religious use and private property was too expensive. In any case, he was not too dampened in spirit, contenting himself with three options:

prepare ourselves to accept less than we want and be able to pay for it with available funds, or raise more funds until we're able to pay for what we want, or wait and watch and search for bargains until just possibly we find another opportunity like Holland Circus was.⁵¹⁸

His optimism was reflected in this report:

Already we have bought the first part of the new building. It is a new fibre-glass baptistry ... It was delivered on Saturday afternoon, July 23rd, and we used it the next morning to baptize a young man into Christ.⁵¹⁹

But to give readers a picture and a sense of the undaunting spirit in this faithful man of God and the frustrations he experienced, specifically, over the pursuit of this project to secure a church property; and in general, his own mission support, we shall let the man speak for himself:

As the only preacher prepared and positioned to campaign for the necessary funds ... I flew on February 5, 1965 to the United States, secured a sponsor for the project and launched the drive. We drove in eight months 32,000 miles, I spoke in 95 churches, and we raised in cash and commitments some \$90,000.00. The crowning contribution, a check for \$30,000.00 brought our campaign to a

⁵¹⁸ *Preaching the Gospel*, August 1, 1966, 1.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

thrilling conclusion and sent Sister Harbin and me back to Singapore in a hurry to push negotiations for purchase of the property.

Yet,

Those negotiations were tedious and slow.

In the meantime, the Perpetual Gospel Meeting began on May 1, 1966. Harbin mentioned a “real-breakthrough being achieved” as “Three splendid young men desired to give full time to the Lord’s work, and Sister Harbin and I supported them out of our own small salary.” He then continued:

A long-cherished vision and hope was materializing before our very eyes. Even the Government now came through with approval for us to purchase and use the wonderful property we had hoped and prayed and worked so hard to buy. But also NOW came two heavy jolts to slow us down but must not stop us.

After verbal assurance, but before written approval by the Government came to us, we were cabled of request for return of the wonderful \$30,000.00 gift. Surely no one has to be told that this broke our hearts, but I did not hesitate to concur fully in its return. Yet this was not the end of our sorrow. Before very long our sponsorship gave way, and with it went another \$25,000.00 promised as a loan to be repaid as five-year commitments would come in. My correspondence to contributors had been restricted to a one-page monthly newsletter, and our working fund was allowed to dwindle as supporters were falling away. Queenstown potential remained as great as ever, precious souls as numerous and receptive, and the Lord’s Commission as urgent, but this building fund we had so laboriously and successfully raised was depleted, our working fund evaporating.

Under compulsion of all these considerations Sister Harbin and I flew again to the United States, and within less than one month our sponsorship was gladly accepted by the Lord’s wonderful congregation in The Village in Oklahoma City. Now we are

gathering up the pieces of and rebuilding both the building fund and the working fund; for we cannot falter nor waver! The work in Queenstown must go on. The church in Queenstown must be expanded and made strong and permanent and secure.⁵²⁰

Even as his quest to secure funds for a property in Queenstown was crumbling, the indefatigable spirit in Harbin was prompting him to assist in raising funds for Geylang's purchase of their own 'home':

In cooperation with the church in The Village we shall also raise funds for purchase and renovation of property for the work they have so long supported in Geylang ... Here Brother Lye Hong Meng is the good Gospel preacher. He has a large family of now grown-up children, who, with his faithful wife, help him much in the work of the Lord. They are now meeting in a small rented place which, alone, is inadequate. This place, together with another adjacent one we hope to buy and by renovation make into quarters ample and suitable for the work in Geylang.⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ *Preaching the Gospel*, September 1967, 1-2. The \$30,000.00 cheque mentioned was the one given by the JAMCO Corporation of Oklahoma City towards the purchase of the Holland Circus property (mentioned earlier), which, because of legal complications, fell through and for this reason, JAMCO requested for its return (in "Note from Gardner Street Elders", *Preaching the Gospel*, April 2, 1967, 2). On the collapse of Harbin's support, Jud Whitefield told of how he "could not keep from shedding tears of grief" when "This white-headed and dedicated man-of-God" and his wife "came through Kuala Lumpur and told us of this" (Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, August 1, 1967, 2).

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 2. The Village Church in Oklahoma City, the new sponsors of the Harbins, had also been supporting Lye Hong Meng's work in Geylang (Gordon Hogan, *Newsletter*, April 30, 1969, "The Story of the Church in Singapore" – Geylang).

The Harbins returned to the States in early July 1967, “to raise funds for buildings both in Queenstown and Geylang”.⁵²² Most likely, this was also their departure from their located mission work in Queenstown. Henry Kong, on the occasion of Pasir Panjang’s 25th Anniversary, wrote a commemorative piece, “Milestones”, which outlined the history of the church year by year. Under 1967, he noted:

As all missionaries return to USA, the work is solidly in local hands with the local minister’s salary paid by Quail Springs Church of Christ in USA.

This implies that the Harbins were no longer fully located at Queenstown as of 1967 (July). But they returned to Singapore for an extended stay of about two years between 1978-1980, but this time they were attached more with the Geylang congregation (though they tried to start a new work somewhere else).⁵²³

Henry and Nat Kong (1966 – 2017)

Of the “Three splendid young men” that Harbin mentioned, one of them was Henry Kong. He was one of the first graduates of the Malaysia Christian College set up by Pence Dacus at Moulmein Road. Harbin reported:

Brother Henry Kong, one of our twenty-year-old preacher trainees, who after graduation from Malaysia Christian College studied daily with me for more than a year of our Perpetual Gospel Meetings, is working with the congregation and baptized two more during the first four weeks after our departure for America.⁵²⁴

⁵²² *Far East*, October 31, 1967, 8.

⁵²³ Per David Lee in WhatsApp conversation, 23/4/2021 and Matthew Tan in WhatsApp message, 25/6/2021.

⁵²⁴ *Far East*, October 31, 1967, 8.

In taking over the ministry reins from Harbin, Henry Kong became the first graduate of Malaysia Christian College, the precursor of Four Seas College, to go into full-time preaching in Singapore. He, himself, put the date as 1 May 1966 as “the day I started working full-time in the ministry”.⁵²⁵ But even before this, he was involved in the first mission work in Queenstown. He related how in 1963, some Christians from Moulmein Road began to do personal work in the “new satellite town of Queenstown and he was in that group of Moulmein Road personal workers.”⁵²⁶

In his recollection on the history of the churches in Singapore and Malaysia, Henry Kong had this to say of his own involvement in the establishment of the Queenstown/Pasir Panjang church:

It was at this time when the Geylang work was started that brother Ong Aun Nam with the help of the enthusiastic personal workers at Moulmein, laid the foundation for the first indigenous church in Singapore. Through foresight, good organisation and dedicated motivation, a neighbourhood Bible study was conducted at the home of brother and sister Lam [Teck Ming, author’s] at their apartment in Queenstown.

I recall fondly my participation in the neighbourhood Bible group and work with the personal workers (often ferried around by sister Eubank) in this virgin territory. This was the start of the Pasir Panjang work.

Upon the return of the A. L. Harbins from Australia (after a short spell in Singapore and Malaysia), brother Harbin was invited by this young local group to work with us, to be the full-time worker for this local evangelistic effort.

⁵²⁵ Henry Kong, *Stepping Out with God*, 2011 (a collection of articles written by Henry Kong over the years of his ministry at Queenstown/Pasir Panjang), in “45 Going 46 ...”, p. 18. See also, his “Milestones”, *Hope for Today*, Vol. 4 No. 4, 3.

⁵²⁶ “Milestones”, 2.

On the evening of October 25th, 1964, this group started the first worship service at the home of the Polly Lee family in the hall of a 3-room apartment at Commonwealth Crescent.⁵²⁷

Henry was to spend an incredible fifty-one years of continuous ministry with this same church, which morphed from Tanglin Halt to Outram (both in the Queenstown area) to Pasir Panjang in terms of its location and nomenclature.⁵²⁸ In those fifty-one years he saw the church grew from some fifty to more than five hundred at the time of his official retirement in 2017.

Each move in location was necessitated by increasing numerical growth. At Tanglin Halt, the church was holding two morning worship services from 1970 onwards until it had to move to the YWCA in Outram Road in 1973. Soon it was outgrowing the capacity of the YWCA hall and premises. In the late-1970s, the church began a search for a new place. This search culminated in the purchase of an old bungalow unit in Pasir Panjang Road in 1983. In 1987, an extension with a first-floor hall of three hundred capacity was added to the old bungalow house. This was completed in 1988.⁵²⁹ But soon, this proved insufficient too and the church had to run two morning worship services once again.

In 2021, the church embarked on a new building project. This involved tearing down the existing structure completely and erecting a four-storey building in its place capable of meeting its

⁵²⁷ Henry Kong, "History of the Lord's Church", in *Essence*, c. late 1980s. Unfortunately the precise issue of this *Essence* is not known to the writer. Compare Henry's account and Harbin's on the beginning and the first worship service in Queenstown.

⁵²⁸ While at Tanglin Halt and Outram YWCA, it was commonly identified as Queenstown; but when it moved to its own property in Pasir Panjang Road in 1983, it became known as the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ.

⁵²⁹ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, August, September 1988.

present needs and beyond. While the construction work was ongoing, the church rented halls in hotels for its services. In January 2024, the new building was completed and the church moved back to Pasir Panjang Road on 31 March. The attendance for that worship service was 423. What was more impressive was that the church managed to raise on its own and pay off fully the construction as well as the relocation costs, which came to S\$8.6 million.⁵³⁰

From its early beginnings, the church had a strong missions inclination. In 1968, it was involved in the work in Johor Baru. It helped to support the work in Ipoh and was “the main sponsor of the work at Ayer Tawar” in 1974 (and beyond).⁵³¹ In 1988 through to the 2000s, it partially sponsored the work of Ong Kok Bin, the preacher in Seremban then. Beyond Malaysia, it had also sponsored preachers and workers in India and the Philippines. Today, it is involved in mission work in India, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and China, sending mission teams to these countries as occasion and need present themselves.⁵³²

In the beginning and for many years, Henry Kong and the church were supported by The Village Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, which became the Quail Springs church in 1980.⁵³³ The purchase of the Pasir Panjang property was made possible in part with a loan of US\$400,000 from this Quail Springs church.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Simon Goh, in WhatsApp messages, 1 April 2024.

⁵³¹ “Hope for Today”.

⁵³² See its website at www.ppcoc.org.

⁵³³ Henry Kong’s “Milestones”. On the name change to Quail Springs (and subsequently in 2014, The Springs Church of Christ), see <http://www.quailspringschurchofchrist.com/timeline.html> (accessed 1 March 2021).

⁵³⁴ “Milestones”.

On 30 April 2017, Henry Kong retired from his ministry in Pasir Panjang, after an incredible tenure of fifty-one years at a single congregation. He subsequently left Pasir Panjang to establish a new work on 1 May, 2017,⁵³⁵ which he called the Household of Faith at the Metropolitan YMCA in Stevens Road.

Other Developments and the Present

Over the years, the church has added other language ministries and staff to its work. In 1976, a Chinese work was begun “with the help of brothers Tan, Koon & Kwan from the Serangoon congregation”.⁵³⁶ Danny Han, who was added to the ministerial staff in 1982 as associate minister, became the preacher for this Chinese work. In 1991, he left to study in the States at the Oklahoma Christian University. Upon his return in 1993, he preached for the Citivision church.⁵³⁷

The Chinese congregation has since become an autonomous congregation on its own; though it still meets in the same premises. It is currently led by Anthony Li and assisted by Timmy Tng and Sin Leong Meng.

In 1972, Nancy Morris (née, Koh) started a deaf ministry with the conversion of a deaf Bible course student.⁵³⁸ This ministry grew gradually and in 1984 Patrick Ong was added to minister to the deaf congregation, now referred to as the hearing-impaired congregation.⁵³⁹

In 2004, the church appointed its first body of elders (Adrian Teo, Simon Goh, William Wong, Tan Beng Chuan and Eric Tan) and deacons (Vincent Lim, Paul Lim, Peter Lim, Winston

⁵³⁵ Date as per Tan Beng Chuan in WhatsApp message, 4/3/2021.

⁵³⁶ “Hope for Today”.

⁵³⁷ Danny Han, in WhatsApp message, 21/4/2021.

⁵³⁸ “Hope for Today”.

⁵³⁹ Patrick Ong, in an email message, 15/2/2021.

Chong, Lim Li Chhoan, Cheang K C and Terry Wan).⁵⁴⁰ Quail Springs, which had been a major sponsor of the church from the Queenstown days, sent its elder Bob Rowland for the occasion. Bob Rowland and Pence Dacus, who was in Singapore at the time, both helped to install these elders and deacons into office.⁵⁴¹ Tan Beng Chuan, one of the elders, became the administrative minister on January 1, 2014. He retired at the end of 2022 for health reasons. Patrick Ong, too, has also retired from being the full-time minister for the hearing-impaired, though he is still actively involved in that ministry.

With the retirement of Henry Kong and the others, a transition to a new set of young ministers has since taken place. In July 2021, John Lim became the youth minister shortly after graduating from Harding University.⁵⁴² Irvin Wan took on the role of lead minister in 2022. In the same year, Kyle Hooper also entered the ministry focusing on spiritual formation.⁵⁴³

In about the same period, the church has also appointed a new body of elders and deacons: Peter Lim Ting Chew, Lim Swee Aun, Simon Goh and Pang Tee Liang (elders); Lim Kok Hin, Frederick Yu and Romaine Jackson (deacons).⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁰ Names supplied by Tan Beng Chuan through WhatsApp, 4 March 2021.

⁵⁴¹ Henry Kong, in email message, 3/7/2021.

⁵⁴² John Lim, Facebook post, 1/7/2021.

⁵⁴³ Irvin Wan, in a short interview with the author at Belmore Road Church of Christ, 11 November 2023.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

OTHER CHURCHES IN SINGAPORE

Church Planting

We have seen how the Geylang, Upper Serangoon and Queenstown congregations were formed when members from the Moulmein Road congregation left and established these congregations in the respective places. In the instances of Geylang and Upper Serangoon, there was some form of disquiet among the local preachers which prompted them to move away from Moulmein Road to establish congregations in their own right. As for Queenstown, it was A. L. Harbin who came back to Singapore a second time, and who was determined to establish a new congregation on his own, which encouraged some members from Moulmein Road to venture out with him. In all these three cases, it could be said that they were not intentionally planned on the part of Moulmein Road in the first place. Circumstances led to the establishment of these churches and Moulmein Road merely acquiesced to those circumstances.

The same could not be said of the next three churches that were formed. Jurong and Ang Mo Kio were planted by Moulmein Road and Siglap/Bedok was planted jointly by Lim Ah Pin and Moulmein Road. All these came about because of the grand vision and mighty push from Gordon Hogan.

Hogan saw the need to have funds to finance the planting of new congregations if they were to have firm roots to survive for long. In February 1974, he challenged each member from the Moulmein Road congregation to set aside five dollars each week, in addition to their regular contribution, and to save the money in a container, known as "God's Jar". Then on April 28, they were to bring the accumulated sum for the Sunday's contribution which would be used wholly "to underwrite the mission program

in a new area of the city known as Jurong as well as other mission projects”.⁵⁴⁵

In the event, the collection on that April 28 morning came to \$6,723.35, short of the \$10,000 target. Yet, it was “probably the largest single Sunday contribution made by an Asian church of Christ specifically for mission work in contemporary times”, as Hogan himself asserted.⁵⁴⁶ This “Mission Sunday” collection became the precursor for other annual Mission Sundays at Moulmein Road as well as in other congregations in Singapore and Malaysia.

A) Jurong

Jurong, a newly established industrial region to the west of Singapore, came to Hogan’s attention as he set about working on his plan to establish a new congregation a year.

Early in this year [1972] the first of these works was started in a new community known as Jurong. Plans for a new meeting house for that congregation are now on the architect’s drawing board.⁵⁴⁷

Moulmein Road had applied to the Jurong Town Development Authority in 1973⁵⁴⁸ for a piece of land for church purposes and was granted on leasehold “ONE HALF ACRE right in the heart of a neighbourhood of brand new flats that will house 48,000 people.” “Ours will be the only church building,” added Hogan.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁵ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, April 1, 1974, 1.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1974.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, October 1, 1972, 3.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, May 1, 1975, 2.

⁵⁴⁹ In Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East/World Evangelism*, February-March 1973, 1.

A building fund⁵⁵⁰ was launched even ahead of the lease grant. With the grant received, the fund was accelerated in earnest to raise

the equivalent of \$22,000/U.S. from the local brethren. The balance we will have to raise from sources in the U.S. and from other brethren in Asia. Lord willing, we will begin construction very soon.⁵⁵¹

Construction of a two-storey building began in mid-February 1975 and was completed within a year, right on schedule.⁵⁵²

In the meantime, the Jurong church was formally organised on the Sunday morning of 10 March 1974. A group of members from Moulmein Road met for Bible class and worship in the 17-storey flat of the Chan family⁵⁵³ that morning. Hogan observed rather facetiously, “[This] probably makes the Jurong congregation the highest church in Asia” (underlined, Hogan’s).⁵⁵⁴ The fledgling congregation later met at the Jurong YWCA while waiting for the new building to be completed.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ It was set up in 1971 as a general mission fund “for expansion of facilities in mission areas”. Beginning in March 1971, the contribution on the first Sunday of each month was given over to this fund. Seremban was the first beneficiary of this fund when it received a loan of \$4,046.00 to finance the purchase of its property in Lobak the same year. The loan was duly repaid in good time. In *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, May 1, 1975, 1.

⁵⁵¹ *Far East/World Evangelism*, February-March 1973, 2.

⁵⁵² *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, May 1 1975, 2; January 1, 1976, 1. But in his earlier newsletter of February 1, 1975, Hogan stated that construction of the Jurong building “began January 15, 1975”, after accepting the lowest bid of \$95,000 amongst six bidding contractors.

⁵⁵³ This might be referring to the Chan siblings, Oi Keng, David and Alex Chan.

⁵⁵⁴ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, April 1, 1974, 1.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1974, 1. Also in Don Green’s *Singapore Mission Report*, February 1975.

The building was completed in January 1976, but the church only moved in sometime later after the Certificate of Fitness was received. On August 26, the official opening and dedication service of the premises was held. Fittingly, Gordon Hogan was on hand to officiate the occasion.⁵⁵⁶

Eddy and Theresa Ee (1974 -)

Eddy Ee, who was co-ministering with Gordon Hogan at Moulmein Road, took the challenge of spearheading this new work in Jurong. Hogan wrote:

He is so excited about the work in Jurong that he has applied for a flat there and he will take the lead in developing that new work.⁵⁵⁷

Like many in the early 1960s, Eddy came into contact with the church of Christ through the Basic Bible Course. He was “much involved with the “Youth for Christ” movement in Singapore and a recognized coming leader in the Methodist Church”. On his conversion, Ira Y. Rice wrote:

At first we did not seem to make much headway with him – but we kept on answering his scores and scores of questions until he finally decided we were the one true church and surrendered in loving obedience to the gospel.⁵⁵⁸

At the very young age of 19, Eddy had decided that he wanted to be a gospel preacher. As there was no Bible college in Singapore then, Eddy was sent to the Korea Christian College (KCC) in Seoul, South Korea, in 1963 for his Bible training

⁵⁵⁶ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, September 1, 1976.

⁵⁵⁷ In Rice's *Far East/World Evangelism*, February-March 1973, 2.

⁵⁵⁸ *Far East*, 17 July 1963, 11.

(together with “a promising young lady”, Judy Tang).⁵⁵⁹ He graduated from the College in February 1968⁵⁶⁰ and returned to Singapore whereupon he worked with Tan Keng Koon at Upper Serangoon for about a couple of years⁵⁶¹ before moving to Moulmein Road. When Ken Sinclair returned to the States on furlough, Eddy went up to Seremban in Malaysia to cover for Ken from February 1971 to August 1973 (see story on Seremban). He then returned to Moulmein Road before venturing to Jurong in 1974 where he has remained since.

Under his leadership, the congregation grew to about 120 members as of January 1980 and became “fully self-supporting”.⁵⁶²

The church continued to grow over the years; and today, there are two autonomous congregations – Chinese-speaking and English-speaking – meeting in the same premises.

Eddy Ee also taught at Four Seas shortly after his return from KCC (beginning from May 1968)⁵⁶³ and later served as Dean of Students. He became Dean-Registrar when Gordon Hogan resigned from Four Seas in February 1985.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid. Judy Tang, in choosing to go to Korea Christian College, had turned down a very lucrative offer from Malayan Publishing Company.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., April 25, 1968, 3.

⁵⁶¹ In a reproduced catalogue on Four Seas College, in *Forward for Christ*, January 30, 1969. This is also adduced from the mention of his name as co-signatories along with Tan Keng Koon (“preachers at Upper Serangoon Road”) to the disfellowship letter to Samuel Miao. In *Far East*, August 25, 1968, 4. But in the Four Seas catalogue, Hogan mentioned that Tan Keng Koon returned to preach at Moulmein Road “for the second time”, thus, leaving Eddy Ee alone at Upper Serangoon.

⁵⁶² *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, February 1, 1980.

⁵⁶³ In the same reproduced catalogue on Four Seas College, in *Forward for Christ*, January 30, 1969.

B) Ang Mo Kio

The next planting of a new congregation was at Ang Mo Kio (AMK). In 1978, Moulmein Road targeted the new township with a regular Bible study group in the area. Within a year, this Bible study group “became a full fledged congregation” with Richard Loh as its first minister supported by the Moulmein Road congregation.⁵⁶⁴ Richard Loh was minister at Moulmein Road before his move to AMK. He, however, left the ministry in 1985 for the corporate world, and Edwin Choy from Moulmein Road came in 1986 to replace him.

Tony Gross and his wife, Karen, came over from the United States in mid-April of 1990⁵⁶⁵ and assisted Edwin Choy in the mission work at AMK. Tony Gross was a graduate of Harding Graduate School of Theology. Edwin Choy left AMK in December 1992 to pursue undergraduate and graduate studies in Bible at Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas. He returned in December 1996 to resume his ministry at AMK. He and Tony Gross ministered together for a few more years until the later returned to the States to pursue post-graduate studies.

In 2003, the church merged back with Moulmein Road. The two churches decided to retain Moulmein Road as the name for the merged entity. Edwin Choy continued in ministry work at Moulmein Road together with Dave Hogan.

⁵⁶⁴ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, February 1, 1980.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, May 1, 1990. The Grosses had made two earlier trips to Singapore before they decided to make Singapore their mission base when they came in April 1990.

C) Siglap/Bedok

In October 1980,⁵⁶⁶ a group of members from Lim Ah Pin and Moulmein Road came together to set up a new congregation in Siglap. Kon Pak Fook, who was from Lim Ah Pin, took the lead in this effort. Andrew Ng, from Moulmein Road, assisted him in the first two years of the formation of the church.⁵⁶⁷ Writing in March of 1983, Gordon Hogan said,

The nucleus was made up of members from the Moulmein Road and Lim Ah Pin congregations. Each of these older congregations supported a preacher for the new work and the group has grown to about 40.⁵⁶⁸

On Pak Fook, Gordon Hogan remarked:

Kon Pak Fook is an extraordinary young man. He ministers to a young growing church in the Bedok section of Singapore. He was converted while in high school and because of his natural ability, almost immediately (*sic*) began to lead the youth in the congregation of which he was a member. After completing his education at Four Seas College of Bible and Missions he formed a group to plant a church in a new section of Singapore. That church thrives today because of him and others who are servants with him.⁵⁶⁹

Pak Fook was assisted in the Siglap ministry by Richard Chia for a number of years.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Kon Pak Fook, WhatsApp message, 3/8/2021.

⁵⁶⁷ "History & Lessons, Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration", a PowerPoint presentation, 6 August 2017. Also, Andrew Ng, in WhatsApp message, 6 May 2021.

⁵⁶⁸ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, 1 January 1984.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, December 1, 1987.

⁵⁷⁰ Andrew Ng, in WhatsApp message, 6 May 2021.

In the beginning, the congregation was meeting in rented premises and had to move whenever there was a complaint from a neighbour. About this time too, a new township in Bedok was being developed. As with government policy on religious matters, a piece of land was set aside for church purposes. The Siglap leadership got wind of this and asked Moulmein Road to bid for the land which was successful. But it came with a very stiff stipulation: "A crossed check in favour of Housing and Development Board for the sum of \$695,236.82" had to be presented to the Housing Board within two weeks of the offer. Gordon Hogan described his feelings on reading the offer and the requirement of the huge sum to be paid within 14 days:

as being similar to the Apostle John being instructed in Revelation 10:9 to eat up the "little book and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." There was sweetness in the knowledge that the land could be our (*sic*) to use for God's glory - - - the bitter part was how to raise \$695,236.82 in fourteen days.⁵⁷¹ (underlined, Hogan's)

True to his form and without losing courage, Hogan worked hard and furious to raise the sum.

I prayedfor (*sic*) wisdom! Then I contacted everyone in Singapore directly interested in this project. We all prayed! Then I decided to divide the task into smaller units. In this way the concept is easier to conceive.⁵⁷²

Two days after the tender offer was received, Hogan preached a sermon on GOD HAS ANSWERED OUR PRAYERS in the Sunday morning at Moulmein Road. Part of the sermon read:

⁵⁷¹ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, 1 January 1984, 2. Also, in October 1, 1982.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, October 1, 1982, 2.

Responsible, faith-filled people who pray as we have prayed arise to great works – for we know God gives us the power to do it and to finish it.

Future generations will recall this day and the next eleven days. They will either see what we do as an exercise of mighty faith – that truly faith can move mountains, thus serving as the power to motivate them to heights of success for the cause of Jesus, even beyond our fondest imagination, or this opportunity, if passed by, will serve as an historic landmark of little faith.⁵⁷³ (underlined, Hogan's)

Indeed, God answers prayers. The sum was raised (through gifts and loans; but mostly, loans) and on the deadline of September 30, 1982, at 3:30 p.m., cheques to the amount of \$695,236.82 were handed to the Housing Board office.

But more still had to be done. There was the construction and the money to be raised for it. In total the whole project cost almost, if not more than \$1,000,000. Everything came into place through God's grace and today, the Bedok congregation worships in its own building without fear of being asked to move out because of a complaint from a neighbour.

Other Congregations

From the mid-1980s there were groups of Christians who came out from the various churches to establish congregations on their own. Some of these were intentional on the part of the individuals or churches to plant congregations in places where there were no churches of Christ. Others came about because of doctrinal differences or disaffection with the 'parent' churches.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

In 1984, Ken Sinclair came to Singapore and together with a group of about 10 or 12 members from Jurong started a congregation that met at 10, Jalan Tekad, Off Upper Bukit Timah Road. The congregation was known as the **Bukit Panjang** Church of Christ. Ken later left to return to the States and Charlie Ong took over the ministry of the congregation. The congregation moved to the city in 1994 and called themselves the **City** Church of Christ. Danny Han left the Chinese ministry at Pasir Panjang in 1991 to study at the Oklahoma Christian University in the States. He joined Charlie Ong in the ministry at City when he returned in 1993.

In the mid-1980s, Ng Kok Wah and a group of fellow members came out of Lim Ah Pin and met in **Hougang** before they moved to the city and called themselves the **Downtown** Church of Christ. Ron Oltmanns, a fresh graduate from Abilene Christian University, came in 1990 intending to do mission work with campus students. His application for the relevant visa was rejected twice. But he enrolled himself with the National University of Singapore to study Mandarin on a student visa.⁵⁷⁴ In the time he was in Singapore, he helped with the work at Downtown.

City and Downtown merged in 1995 to form the **Citivision** church. Charlie Ong and Danny Han continued their roles as ministers in the merged Citivision church. But they have since left the ministry. Charlie Ong left the church altogether for the Methodist Church; while Danny Han went into the real estate business.

In 1999, nine former members of the Bukit Panjang church led by Richard Phang left Citivision and formed the **Woodlands** Church of Christ.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁴ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, November 1, 1990.

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Phang, in a WhatsApp conversation sometime in 2021.

James Lim from Pasir Panjang left the congregation sometime in the 1980s or 90s with a few others and met in **Sengkang**, and later, in **Bishan**. But they have since merged with the **Lavender** church which was formed in April 2004 when the **Shrewsbury** church (for this, see story on Moulmein Road) joined a group that came out from Lim Ah Pin and met at the Pico Centre on Lavender Street.

There was a campus church in **Punggol** when Four Seas College was still there. The church was first started by David Chew in 1977, who was President of Four Seas College then. David Chew started the campus church for the college students and the new converts and their friends who were living in and around the Punggol area. But they first met in Jalan Geneng in the house of Tan Keng Koon and Baby Tan.⁵⁷⁶ They must have moved to the college campus soon after. But when the college land was acquired by the Singapore government and Four Seas moved to Jurong, the Punggol church under Andrew Ng moved to the Bedok church building where they met in the afternoons and called themselves the **North-East** Church of Christ.

In 1999, a group left Jurong (having been disaffected by the leadership, see story on Controversies) and first met in one of the members' house on 6 June, in Jalan Asas, Bukit Timah. Later, they moved to Toh Tuck Walk in Bukit Batok. Among those in the group were Soon Choon Lin, Harry Wong, Chang Yee Chong, Wong Kum Kay, Lim Cher Kiat, Edwin Kweok, Carol Ling and her sister Guay Lee. They named themselves the **North-West** Church of Christ. A few of them have since moved to the Pasir Panjang congregation; some fell away. The remainder of the group are currently meeting at the YMCA Metropolitan on Stevens Road.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Per Anthony Ng, through WhatsApp, 1 May 2021.

⁵⁷⁷ Per Soon Choon Lin through WhatsApp, 23 April 2021.

As seen in the story on Queenstown-Pasir Panjang, Henry Kong started the **Household of Faith** after he retired from his ministry with the Pasir Panjang congregation in 2017.

In July 2019, a group of about thirty members from the Lim Ah Pin congregation came out “with the aim to bring the gospel to those in the eastern part of Singapore”. This group, “an outreach work by Lim Ah Pin church of Christ”⁵⁷⁸, is known as the **Eastside** Church of Christ. They meet at 63, Ubi Avenue, #05-04, Singapore 408937.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ Alvin Lin, through email, 27 & 28 April 2021.

⁵⁷⁹ www.eastsidecocsg.org, accessed 17 August 2023.

PART FOUR

MISCELLANEOUS
Evangelism
Christian Education
Controversies

PART FOUR MISCELLANEOUS

EVANGELISM – THE AWESOME TASK OF WINNING SOULS⁵⁸⁰

This writer once had a conversation with Frank Pierce. He asked him, “Why did you become a missionary?”

Pierce, who had served in the Korean war, replied, “After World War II, there was an awakening amongst churches in America that much of the rest of the world is unconverted and is in need of the gospel.”

This may or may not be the reason for the flush of missionaries from churches of Christ to come out of the United States to do mission work in Europe, Africa and Asia post-WWII.⁵⁸¹ But it is true that there was a beehive of foreign missionary activity by the American churches of Christ after the Second World War. Awakened to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, “go and make disciples of all nations” and Mark 16:15, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (NIV), most of the missionaries who left the shores of America were armed with zeal and the Bible but with little or no formal training in foreign mission work. Mission work as a discipline of training was quite unknown amongst churches and

⁵⁸⁰ After Gordon Hogan’s “the awesome task of evangelism” in *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, June 1, 1980, 1.

⁵⁸¹ Churches of Christ in America, prior to WWII, had concentrated their evangelism on home soil, especially in the northern states. But a few missionaries like George Benson and John Moody McCaleb did venture overseas. Benson went to China (1925-1939), while McCaleb Japan (1892-1941); https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/arkansas/benson.htm (accessed 9/7/24); <https://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/california/mccaleb.html> (accessed 9/7/24).

schools within the Restoration Heritage pre-WWII. It was only after WWII that there was an awakening to the need, and schools like Abilene Christian and Harding began to organise missions seminars and introduce missions training into their curriculum. But that is another story told somewhere else.⁵⁸²

The lack of any proper training in mission work and multiculturalism did not deter those who came to Malaysia and Singapore to evangelise this part of the world. They came equipped with their knowledge of the Bible and church-schooled methods of doing evangelism. The latter include Bible correspondence courses, gospel meetings and campaigns, and personal work – visitations, giving out tracts and Christian literature, showing film strips and personal Bible study in homes or church premises.

Bible Correspondence Courses

As can be seen in the history of the first churches established in the 1950s, the first converts came through personal introductions (like Lye Hong Meng) and serendipitous graces (like the mass conversions in Muar and Kluang). But these were exceptional instances and limited in scope. To reach out to the wider mass at large, Ira Y. Rice, Jr. wrote a 27-lesson Bible correspondence course (BCC) known as the Basic Bible Course⁵⁸³ and promoted it through the media of the time, that is, the newspapers. Pence Dacus, too, wrote a course, which focused on the falling away of the historical church and its restoration. It was first known as The Advanced Course but later came to be

⁵⁸² For example, see Chris Flanders, “The Beginning of Missions”, *ResQ* 61:1 (2019), 27-38. Chris Flanders was once missionary to Thailand c. 1990s.

⁵⁸³ For the story on how this course came to be written, see Ira Y. Rice Jr., *We Can Evangelize the World* (Nashville: Williams Printing Company, 2nd ed., 1966), 100-103.

known as A Great Return to the Bible, after some reediting to an 18-lesson course. Other courses were employed too. Frank Pierce, in the 1970s, wrote A Correspondence Course on Acts of the Apostles, a study of the first conversions and the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul as found in the book of Acts.

At its height in the 1960s to the early 70s, when letter-writing and having pen-pals and English was the medium of instruction in schools in Malaysia, the study of the Bible and the gospel through correspondence courses proved effective in its reach. For example, Jud Whitefield in reporting for the Kuala Lumpur church alone, enthused:

The Bible correspondence courses have proven to be the best means of making contact with the people of Malaysia. We now have over 4,000 students enrolled in the 4 Bible courses being used. This means that from 2 to 3 thousand are studying the Word of God on a regular basis. If this continues for a period of time we will be sure to reap a great harvest.⁵⁸⁴

Over the years, besides the three courses mentioned above, some of the other courses used were Beginner's Bible Correspondence Course (by Drucilla Wright), Foundation Facts for Salvation, What the Bible Says, John Hurt's Course and Foundations of Faith (by Batsell B. Baxter). At one time, Moulmein Road and Kuala Lumpur had their own printing presses to print the courses besides Bible tracts and other Christian literature. Volunteer ladies from the States came to serve as church secretaries assisting in the grading of the courses. They include Thelma Eubank (Moulmein Road, Kuala Lumpur, March 1963-June '70)⁵⁸⁵, Anna Klyde Davis (Ipoh briefly, Penang,

⁵⁸⁴ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, October, 5, 1967, 1.

⁵⁸⁵ Ira Y. Rice, Jr.'s Report, 9 April 1963. Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, October 15, 1966, 1; June 18, 1970, 1; Whitefield noted that

1966-May '68)⁵⁸⁶, Melba Bennet (March 1967-Oct '68)⁵⁸⁷ and Jayleta Glaze (Kuala Lumpur, Nov 1968-May '69).⁵⁸⁸ Mrs Ida Davidson came to serve as secretary to the Malaysia (later, Singapore) Christian College.⁵⁸⁹ Local ladies who served as church secretaries grading the courses were Julia Cheah (Seremban), Ruby Foong (Penang), Chrissie Khaw, Lee Wai Ching, Lim Ming Ai (Kuala Lumpur), Christine Lim (Klang), Esther Wong (Penang), Alice Chua and Josephine Tan (Moulmein Road), and Jenny Kwa (Queenstown).

Much as the BCCs proved useful as a medium to evangelise and make converts, its use had at least two drawbacks. The first was that most of the BCC enrollees were students in school and for this reason the early converts came from this cohort mostly. This put the churches in three disadvantages: a young and immature membership, low weekly contributions, and quick mobility or turnover in the membership. The last was especially true for churches in the smaller towns in Malaysia as their young people would move elsewhere for further education or employment once they completed their secondary education.

The second drawback, and this applied to Malaysia only, was that many converts were in remote or faraway places where there were no established congregations. The early missionaries, for obvious reasons, chose the state capitals in west peninsular

Thelma Eubank "spent 3 years in Singapore and 4 years with us here in Kuala Lumpur. She is the type of person who cannot be replaced."

⁵⁸⁶ Hayden O. Jenks, Jr., *Report from Penang, Malaysia*, May 1968.

⁵⁸⁷ Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, March 20, 1967, 2; August 5, 1968, 2; November 22, 1968.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, November 22, 1968; May 16, 1969, 1. Glaze came under the "Families for Christ" programme of the Highland Church of Christ, Abilene, TX.

⁵⁸⁹ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, December 28, 1966, 2-3.

Malaysia as grounds for their mission work. This left a huge lacuna in the rest of Malaysia. Thus, when a BCC student from a far-flung place would request baptism, a missionary would go and baptise him.⁵⁹⁰ But invariably, he would be left on his own, 'orphaned', so to speak, without much further support and his young faith would soon die out. It was only those who made it to the big cities like Kuala Lumpur or Singapore after their baptisms that they found spiritual sustenance and grew in their faith.⁵⁹¹

The BCC programme reached its shelf-life in the 1990s with the advent of the computer, email and the smart phone social apps. The switch in the medium of instruction to Bahasa Malaysia in the schools in Malaysia also hastened its end. Most likely, if any church were to offer any course through remote learning, it would be online today.

But having said that, it must also be said that the Bible correspondence courses played a significant role in the conversions of many of the existing members in the churches (including this writer's).

Personal Work, Cottage Meetings, the Use of Audio-Visuals and Christian Literature

Personal work or personal evangelism was first employed by Frank Pierce and Ira Y. Rice to complement Rice's

⁵⁹⁰ It is to the credit of the missionaries that they were willing to travel far and often through winding hilly roads to connect with the BCC students and baptise them.

⁵⁹¹ An instance of this was that of Mary George who lived in Kuala Klawang (Jelebu) some 65 miles or 105 km from Kuala Lumpur when she was baptised by Frank Pierce in 1964 at the age of 16. For three years, she was on her own. But subsequently, she moved to Kuala Lumpur to do nursing at the University Hospital and her faith thrived because she found a church community to sustain her. But hers was an exception rather than the rule.

Basic Bible Course (BBC, the only course used at the time). At first, they would visit the students after they had finished the course. But this was not too effective in producing converts. Pierce and Rice then decided to visit the students while they were on the course and after their completing it. This produced more positive results as baptisms were made. Later, the church at large was encouraged and trained to do visitations too.⁵⁹² This came to be known as personal work or personal evangelism.

Personal work became the norm for churches in Malaysia and Singapore to evangelise the unreached. Typically, it would be done on Saturday afternoons when most members were free from school or work. Visitations were made to the homes of prospects – BCC students, friends, family members, visitors – and when possible, Bible studies were carried out. Tracting, the distribution of Christian tracts or booklets and invitations to church meetings, were also done during these Saturday afternoons.

The medium of audio-visuals was also employed as a way to teach and generate interest in the gospel. For instance, Hayden Jenks showed Herald of Truth films (which he obtained from Philip Wright in Seremban) and films from the United States Information Service (USIS) library in Penang to a relatively large audience in front of a BCC student's house in Butterworth for about two weeks sometime in 1968.⁵⁹³ But it was the use of film-strips to augment Bible studies in visitations or cottage meetings (home meetings) that became the vogue for many years. Jule Miller's five-part series,⁵⁹⁴ *The Visualized Bible Study*

⁵⁹² See Rice, *We Can Evangelize* 100-103.

⁵⁹³ Jenks' report home dated April 6, 1968.

⁵⁹⁴ The five parts consisted of (1) The Patriarchal Age, (2) The Mosaic Age, (3) The Christian Age, (4) God's Plan for Redeeming Man and (5) History of the Lord's Church.

Series (VBSS), was the most employed by the churches; though, a few other series were used too. This writer remembers the times when he would carry the film-strips and accompanying cassette tapes, a projector and a cassette tape player to homes and show the series to prospective converts. Each film-strip had to be turned by hand frame by frame prompted by the “ting” of a bell after each commentary segment in the cassette tapes.

Gospel Meetings and Campaigns

From the onset of their work in Malaysia and Singapore, the missionaries would hold gospel meetings from time to time to preach the gospel. These gospel meetings, typically, would be three-night events from Friday to Sunday nights; though, they could also run into five nights. A guest speaker from a different congregation, or a missionary from a neighbouring country, or even, a preacher from the States, would usually be invited to speak in these gospel meetings. Some of the early guest speakers were missionaries to Thailand, like Ken Rideout and Parker Henderson.

A. L. Harbin once held a “Perpetual Gospel Meeting” when he was establishing the Queenstown church. This perpetual gospel meeting ran for an incredible 428 nights “without missing a night” beginning from May 1, 1966 (see story on Queenstown-Pasir Panjang). Don Green, too, held a long-running gospel meeting in Ipoh from February 1-October 16, 1969. He called it the “Great Gospel Meeting”, which was only interrupted by a national curfew imposed because of the May 13 racial riots which started in Kuala Lumpur. Don Green, too, held open-air gospel meetings in Ipoh and several other smaller towns around Ipoh (see story on Ipoh).

Advertisements inviting the public to the gospel meetings would be placed in the local newspapers. Some

churches would even put promotional banners in strategic places in their towns. Personal work would be intensified before and after each gospel meeting. Church members would go out to hand out invitation brochures from house to house, in shopping malls, or on streets where there was heavy pedestrian traffic. After a gospel meeting, follow-up work would be done. This involved visitations and further Bible studies with the newly-baptised (if any) and visitors to the gospel meetings.

Gospel campaigns, or, Campaigns for Christ, were bigger versions of gospel meetings in terms of their scope, budget, publicity, and involvement from fellow congregations throughout Malaysia and Singapore and the sponsoring congregations in the States. A high-profile speaker from the States would be invited and a large well-known hall in the town or city rented. A question-and-answer session would be extended at the end of the speaker's message and the speaker would field all the questions on the spot. Personal workers would be present to welcome the visitors, sit with them, or even, have Bible studies with them before and after each meeting.

The first such Gospel Campaign was held in Kuala Lumpur on August 6-13, 1967 at the Chinese Assembly Hall in the city. Jud Whitefield was the resident missionary then and his sponsoring congregation, the Southside church in Electra, Texas, sponsored the Campaign. Its preacher, Lemuel Phillips, and one of its elders, T. L. Harris, came to work in the Campaign. Stanley Shipp was the personal work director and the speaker invited was M. F. (Mid) McKnight who was supposed to speak each night on the theme "Journey through the Bible". But he fell ill in the States before the Campaign and could not make it to Kuala Lumpur. Stanley Shipp spoke in his place. T. L. Harris was the song-leader. Over 100,000 invitation leaflets were distributed and an average of 188 (with a high of 227) attended the

meetings each night. Workers from Penang, Ipoh, Seremban and Singapore congregations came to assist in the Campaign. In all, the Campaign netted 17 baptisms (before, during and after).⁵⁹⁵

Several churches were to organise such Campaigns for Christ in later years. For example, in 1969, on August 6-10, Seremban had its first Campaign for Christ at the Seremban Town Hall. Besides fellow Christians from sister congregations in Malaysia and Singapore who came to assist in the campaign, two teams from the States came too. One was from the Lake Jackson congregation, which sponsored the campaign. Its preacher, Clifton Rogers, was the campaign speaker. Among those who came in this group was Joe Talbot (deacon/elder) who would make several more such trips in subsequent years. The other was the Mission Seminar Group from Abilene Christian University led by Dr. George Gurganus.⁵⁹⁶ Klang, too, had several campaigns or gospel meetings at the Letchumanan Hall in the mid-1970s. Kuala Lumpur had another campaign in June 1976 at the Kuala Lumpur City Hall. In Singapore, ten congregations⁵⁹⁷ combined, for the first time, to hold a city-wide Gospel Meeting/Campaign/Rally⁵⁹⁸ at the Victoria Theatre on June 7-13, 1987 with Colin McKee as the feature speaker. This

⁵⁹⁵ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, May 3, June 15, August 1 & September 5, 1967.

⁵⁹⁶ Ken Sinclair, *Newsletter from Malaysia*, July 15 1969, August 1969.

⁵⁹⁷ The figure of 10 was mentioned by Gordon Hogan in his newsletters of June 1 and July 1, 1987. These ten would most likely be Moulmein Road, Moulmein Road (Mandarin), Pasir Panjang, Pasir Panjang (Mandarin), Bedok, Geylang, Ang Mo Kio, Punggol, Bukit Panjang and Hougang/Downtown; based on two circular letters to churches in Malaysia and Singapore dated 5 November 1986 and 7 July 1987 signed by the ministers of the respective congregations.

⁵⁹⁸ The terms were used variously in different reports by different writers.

combined meeting was preceded by a combined worship service of the ten congregations at the Theatre on the Sunday morning of the week.⁵⁹⁹ The contribution collected that Sunday went towards the campaign's expenses. This practice of combined worship services leading to a combined campaign was to be repeated over the next several years, though the number of churches co-operating together differed from year to year.

However, owing to declining attendances towards the end of the 20th century and other factors, churches began to shy away from gospel meetings, let alone gospel campaigns; though a few are still having them from time to time.

⁵⁹⁹ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, June 1, and July 1, 1987.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND BIBLE COLLEGES

One goal in the church (and more pertinently, of preachers and missionaries) is the teaching and training of Christians in the faith and the word of God so that they become fully mature in faith and in the knowledge of God; that they be equipped for “the work of ministry” and for “building up the body of Christ” (see Eph. 4:11-17). Put in another way, there should be a continuous chain of transmission of the Christian faith from one to another and another and so forth. As the apostle Paul puts it, “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses *entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (in his charge to Timothy, 2 Tim. 2:2, ESV; italics, writer’s).

The church of Christ, since the beginning, has been faithful to this task – the passing on of the Christian faith. But in the course of time, there was (and is) the realisation of the need to train faithful men and women, not only in the word of God, but also in some much-needed skills for the teaching and preaching of the word and the gospel. A more formal and recognised way of teaching and training has to be established and this has led to the setting up of preaching schools, Christian colleges and universities, especially in the United States.

Early Efforts to Train Men to Preach

Between 1956-1957, Ira Y. Rice, at the urging of Chew Seng Teck in Kluang, Johor, “to start a formal program of preacher-training”, invited three young converts, Charlie Ng Fock Lam, Albert Leong and John Chew (Chew Seng Teck’s son) to come and live with him in his house at 8, Tay Lian Teck Road, to be trained by him in the Bible so that they could become properly equipped to preach the gospel. The regime of this

training lasted fourteen months, Mondays to Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon.⁶⁰⁰

Charlie Ng went on to start a work in Kahang, Kluang, for about a year and in between secular jobs, preached in Muar and in Moulmein Road too. John Chew assisted his father in Kluang in the pulpit preaching until his untimely death in 1982. Albert Leong went on to study at Pepperdine Christian College in the States but has not been heard of since.

Fourteen others, including David Chew, Tan Keng Koon, Samuel Miao and Henry Tan, were to follow suit for “stateside training”. However, Ira Rice considered this a “lost cause” as only 6 out of the 15 (counting Albert Leong too) who went to the United States returned home to do any work for the church. This persuaded Rice “to expand our preacher-training efforts in Singapore into a full-fledged Bible college”.⁶⁰¹

The Quest for a Bible College

In the purchase of the Moulmein Road property, Ira Y. Rice envisioned it as “a missionary tool for establishing a church and preacher-training school”.⁶⁰² Prior to his first arrival in Singapore in 1955, he had stopped at Ibaraki, Japan, and visited the Ibaraki Christian College “to get ideas for the Bible college we planned some day to build in Singapore”. He had ruminated then which was the ‘*tree*’, the *church* or the *college*? He decided the church was the tree “to produce the teachers and students” to make the college possible – “*otherwise there would be no college*”.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰⁰ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Pressing Toward the Mark*, Vol. II, 112.

⁶⁰¹ This section from *Pressing*, Vol. II, 147-148.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

Yet it was not Ira Y. Rice who established the Bible college he had so envisioned; though, arguably, he had some part in bringing to Singapore the man who did it. That man was Pence Dacus.

The circumstances leading to Pence Dacus and his wife, Janis, coming to Singapore in 1964 was related by Rice in the 11 January, 1964 issue of his *Far East Newsletter* (pp. 18-19).⁶⁰⁴ Bob Davidson, missionary to Bangkok, Thailand, was the one who first alerted Rice's attention to Pence Dacus. Davidson (sometime in April 1963 when he was in Singapore for a Gospel Meeting) "remarked several times" to Rice: "I wish old Pence could see this!" Rice explained:

He felt that such an English-speaking city in the international-interracial environment of Southeast Asia was made to order for a Christian college, which could serve not only Singapore and Malaysia but a considerable part of Southeast Asia as a whole.

Rice thought Davidson must have written to Pence Dacus because Pence "wrote to me a few times". Later, in December, when Parker L. Henderson was in Singapore for a Gospel Meeting as well, Pence informed Rice that "he would be coming down [from Bangkok]". In the meantime, the Rices and the Hendersons had planned on taking their children "on a short holiday up the coast to Penang". Rice recollected of the trip to Penang:

All the way up to Penang I had tried repeatedly to persuade brother Henderson to agree to just send Pence down to Singapore preparatory to helping us set up a

⁶⁰⁴ According to Dave Hogan, who interviewed Pence Dacus when the latter came back to Singapore for a brief period circa 2000, Pence had a different account of the circumstances that brought him and his wife Janis to Singapore the first time. In a conversation with the writer at Moulmein Road, November 2022.

Christian college. With brother Dacus's background as a gospel preacher, Bible-Chair Director, college professor, along with his newly-acquired PhD. in Educational Administration, it occurred to me that here was exactly the man we needed for this purpose.

Only trouble was that Parker had almost identical ideas for such an undertaking in Bangkok! "If you are waiting for me to volunteer to send Pence to Singapore," he assured me, "you'll be waiting a mighty long time!" (underlined, Rice's)

When the Rices were back in Singapore on the last day of 1963, the Dacuses were there already "happily ensconced at sister Thelma Eubank's apartment".⁶⁰⁵ Rice recalled how he felt when Pence Dacus was with him:

So it was that all the time brother Dacus was here, I was in the embarrassing position of having to dramatize to him the gigantic opportunity for a Christian college we have in Singapore – at the same time being careful not to invite him to come take hold of it – all the while hoping he would do so of his own accord even without my invitation! (underlined, Rice's)

Rice described his predicament "As of this moment" (of not wanting to invite Pence outright to come to Singapore but hoping that he would do so of his own accord) as being caught "in the middle of a paragraph halfway between cause and effect".⁶⁰⁶ He very much wanted to have Pence Dacus come to

⁶⁰⁵ This fact could be seen as corroborative to Pence's own account of his coming to Singapore in 1963. Regrettably, the writer has no access to the interview tapes that Dave Hogan mentioned or the transcripts. But see the block quotes attributed to Pence Dacus in page 272.

⁶⁰⁶ Whatever this may mean, it must have sprung from his journalistic mind, for he was trained in journalism.

Singapore (“it is my personal opinion that Pence’s training and talents can be used here perhaps more effectively for Christ than anyplace (*sic*) I know”, Rice),⁶⁰⁷ but at the same time, he did not “want to be (*sic*) in the position of sheep-stealing from the Thailand work”. However, he felt “they can better spare one of their six missionaries than Singapore can afford to be without even one!”⁶⁰⁸ And in venting his anguish, he said, “It is just one

⁶⁰⁷ But see Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Far East Newsletter*, April 1965, 7-12, for a more thoroughgoing version of the circumstances leading to Pence Dacus coming to Singapore to set up the Malaysia Christian College. In this version, Rice seemed less enthusiastic for Pence to proceed with the college. There was also an exchange of discussion between the elders of Seventh Street Church, Texas City, Texas (sponsors of Pence Dacus’ work in Singapore), and the elders of Hampton Place Church, Dallas, Texas (sponsors of Ira Y. Rice) over responsibility for the college and its future. In *Far East*, September 12, 1966, 1-4, Rice was rather uncomplimentary of the work that Pence had done; chiefly, connected with the Bible correspondence course program, but also the Malaysia Christian College (MCC). Rice did not refer to Pence Dacus by name, merely referring to him as “my replacement”, signalling the deterioration of relations between the two. Rice basically accused his ‘replacement’ of not working cooperatively, “with mutual consultations and prior agreements reached before any profound and fundamental changes would be made in the work we had pioneered in Singapore”. Rice complained that “when my replacement decided by himself to start the college, neither he nor his elders say any reason to consult with us concerning either its planning, its constitution, its prospectus, its basic goals and policies, its beginning, administration or anything at all about it.” This was in stark contrast to the situation in 1964 when Rice was effusive about his wanting to have Pence come to Singapore to start the college. Also, in *Far East*, October–November 1964, 16-20, Rice had published in full the constitution and prospectus of MCC, indicating that even if he was not properly consulted beforehand, he had approved of them and by extension, of Pence Dacus’ work, too, in regard to these matters.

⁶⁰⁸ Rice was scheduled to leave Singapore to return to the States in several months’ time.

of those frustrating circumstances when the warmest of personal friends both want the same man!”

In the end, Rice left the matter of Pence Dacus’ coming to Singapore (or not) to the man and his elders to decide. As things developed, Pence Dacus chose to come to Singapore, in January 1964,⁶⁰⁹ and had committed to stay “for at least 2½ years”.⁶¹⁰ Pence himself stated the reasons for his choice:

Before we moved to Singapore we had been told by Bob Davidson (missionary to Thailand) that the opportunity for founding a Bible college there was excellent. However, because of our concentration with the Thailand work, these ideas were quickly forgotten. Later, however, we were put into a position to examine the Singapore area as a base of operation, and soon came to understand the reason for Bro. Davidson’s appraisal.

Our January trip to Singapore gave us the courage to suggest to the elders at Texas City that we might possibly serve the cause of the Lord more profitably in Singapore. And, it was chiefly the education factor which motivated us to consider making a change. Furthermore, the Rice family was in need of someone to replace them.⁶¹¹

Pence’s mission in Singapore was two-fold: to minister the congregation at Moulmein Road and to establish the Bible college.

⁶⁰⁹ *Far East*, April 1965, 12. See also, Pence Dacus, *Singapore Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 7, July 1964 and Vol. 1, No. 10, October 1964.

⁶¹⁰ *Far East*, 2 April 1964, 15, 18. “This Saturday night the Dacuses, Vada and I are having dinner with your folks”, Rice wrote to Samuel Miao under cover of 20 March 1964; and “the Pence Dacuses moved here from Bangkok to be our replacements as we are leaving”, Rice.

⁶¹¹ In “WILL SINGAPORE’S BIBLE COLLEGE BE A REALITY BY 1965?”, Pence Dacus, *Singapore Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 10, June 1964. Rice reproduced this article in his *Far East Newsletter*, July 25, 1964, 13-16.

But he also saw himself as a Christian educationist as he had a doctorate in education. To promote Christian education outside the confines of the church building, he published and edited a monthly Christian journal, *New Testament Christianity*, whose first issue came out in June 1964.⁶¹² Frank H. Pierce was his associate editor. Staff writers were Henry Tan, Tan Keng Koon, Charlie Ng and Howard Merches; and guest writers for the first issue were Clarence Deloach, Jr., Dr. Neil Lightfoot and Gordon Hogan.⁶¹³

Malaysia Christian College (later, Singapore Christian College)

In the October 1964 issue of his newsletter (Vol. 1, No. 14), Pence Dacus announced the opening of the Malaysia Christian College⁶¹⁴, whose first academic year would begin on 4 January 1965. The stated goals of the college were: Teach the Bible – the word of God, Train gospel workers, Educate for Christian living, Engender an appreciation for the dignity of work, and Educate for civic responsibility. The college would offer the Associate in Bible Degree, with these subjects of study: Bible, Bible-related courses, English and Mandarin. The lecturers included: Pence Dacus (acting principal), Frank Pierce, Henry Tan, A. L. Harbin and Tan Keng Koon. Work scholarships, “earn-while-you-learn”, were available to full-time students.⁶¹⁵

However, the announcement made it known that the location of the college was still to be determined; a temporary

⁶¹² *Singapore*, Vol. 1, No. 11, July 1964.

⁶¹³ *Far East*, July 25, 1964, 12.

⁶¹⁴ This was the name used in announcing the college’s opening and first academic semester. After Singapore broke away from Malaysia in August of 1965, the name Singapore Christian College was employed; though in some instances, Malaysia Christian College continued to be used.

⁶¹⁵ See *Far East*, October-November 1964, 16-20, for the full articles of constitution, catalogue and prospectus of the college.

site was being selected; and plans “to raise funds for the purchase of land upon which permanent building will be erected” were underway.

In his next issue, November 1964, Pence published a picture of himself standing with a group of eighteen young people and the caption below the picture read:

The students above are planning to attend and will form the nucleus for our first college class in the new Malaysia Christian College – About one-half of the students will be enrolled in a full time capacity, and one-half on a half-time (*sic*) basis.

In the subsequent issue, December 1964, Pence announced the First Annual ALL STUDENTS DAY of the Malaysia Christian College. Reuel Lemmons was the guest speaker on the day, which was December 11. Pence noted that “Lemmons stresses need to keep college a Bible college – gives his full support” (underlined, Pence’s). Pence, at this time, was designated as President of the college.

On the opening day of the college, 4 January 1965, 26 students were enrolled – 10 on a full-time basis and 16 part-time. One of the first classes conducted was on Old Testament Survey.⁶¹⁶ The college campus was at the Moulmein Road church premise.

However, by the time of the Second Annual All Students Day in December 1965, the college was known as the Singapore Christian College⁶¹⁷ (at least, that was how Pence Dacus referred to it). Singapore had seceded from Malaysia on August 9, 1965. Stanley Shipp was the key-note speaker on this occasion.

⁶¹⁶ *Singapore*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1965.

⁶¹⁷ However, the name Malaysia Christian College (MCC) was more commonly used, even in later publications. *Singapore*, Vol. 2, No. 12 & vol. 3, No. 1, December 1965 & January 1966.

On November 5, 1966, the college had its first graduation exercise. Of the initial ten who had enrolled full-time in January 1965, three, Goh Eng Kee, Tommy Khong and Henry Kong, received the Associate in Bible certificate; while another five, Favour Han Sia, Alice Chua, Bobby Lee, George Wong and Tim Eng Ai, the certificate of completion. One (Margaret Tan) had dropped out and another (Tan Kian Huah) had drowned around Christmas 1965.⁶¹⁸

Pence's work with Moulmein Road and the college was jolted and disrupted by an apparent discord between him and Ira Y. Rice (see story on Moulmein Road). He was prematurely recalled to the States by his elders at Seventh Street Church at the end of 1966 and Hampton Place Church (Rice's sponsoring congregation) assumed responsibility for the college as of January 1, 1967.⁶¹⁹

Four Seas College of Bible and Missions

To soothe over the uncertainty caused by Pence's abrupt departure, Rice asked the three local preachers in Singapore, Henry Tan, Samuel Miao and Tan Keng Koon, to meet to discuss and make recommendations on the future of the college. In an exchange of letters between himself and Henry Tan, Rice opined that he was "leaning to the view that the college should be

⁶¹⁸ Per report by Pence Dacus as reproduced in *Far East*, December 28, 1966, 1. Also, in *Singapore*, Vol. 2, No. 12 & Vol. 3, No. 1, December 1965 & January 1966. Tan Kian Huah was a promising and prominent member of the Moulmein Road church. He was a Bible class teacher at Moulmein Road and preached on occasions at Queenstown. He drowned while swimming in the sea on December 26, 1965. In his memorial, Kian Huah was mentioned as "approved among his peers as a leader, a hard-worker, and a soul-winner".

⁶¹⁹ In an exchange of letters between the Seventh Street elders and Hampton Place elders in *Far East*, June 20 1966, 1-4.

developed into a college of world missions, specifically, rather than just a Christian college in general". "The college should be designed to supply workers and leaders for not just Singapore, but for nations all across Southeast and Southern Asia," he continued.⁶²⁰

Rice assumed the presidency of the college on December 1, 1966, following the departure of Pence Dacus in November.⁶²¹ He subsequently returned to Singapore on December 17, 1966, and two days later, he called for "a meeting of administration and faculty of the college". In attendance at this meeting were Tan Keng Koon, Henry Tan, Charlie Ng Fock Lam, David Chew, Samuel Miao and Ira Y. Rice, Jr. Amongst the things decided were the drawing up of the aims of the college, its administration and course structure and scholarships to be offered.

But, perhaps a more significant decision, was the change in the name of the college to Four Seas College of Bible and Missions; taking into consideration that Singapore was no longer a part of Malaysia; and also, more properly to reflect Rice's own vision of making the college into a college of missions. The name "Four Seas" was adopted from an ancient Chinese saying by Confucius (四海之内, 皆兄弟也), which translates as "Within the Four Seas, All Men are Brothers". Rice even suggested a motto for the college: "Within the Four Seas, to Make All Men under Heaven our Brothers in Christ".

Besides the Board of Directors, who were the elders of the Hampton Place Church of Christ, the new administration comprised Ira Y. Rice as President, Samuel Miao, Dean-Registrar, Tan Keng Koon, Dean of Students, and Charlie Ng Fock Lam, Treasurer.⁶²²

⁶²⁰ *Far East*, June 20, 1966, 10.

⁶²¹ *Far East*, December 28, 1966, 1.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 2-7.

The next phase in the development of the college was its relocation to Punggol Point, where a property was purchased for a consideration of \$230,000 (local currency).⁶²³ Gordon Hogan arrived from Pakistan to take over from Ira Rice (who left Singapore on August 19) as President of Four Seas as well as the ministry at Moulmein Road. Rice assumed chairmanship of the board of directors.⁶²⁴ At the same time, Rice asked Samuel Miao to resign his position as Dean-Registrar and from Four Seas altogether because of a doctrinal controversy.⁶²⁵

Under Hogan's leadership, the First Annual Lectureship of Four Seas College was held on January 5-10, 1969, with Mack Lyon as the principal speaker.⁶²⁶ In an undated promotional brochure on Four Seas College (but possibly, not long after Hogan's arrival in August 1968), Hogan listed the faculty and administration as follows: F. Gordon Hogan, President; Tan Keng Koon, Dean; David Chew, Registrar; Ng Fock Lam, Business Manager; Mrs. Tan Keng Koon, Eddy Ee and Henry Kong, faculty teachers.

With the passing of Tan Keng Koon in March 1979, David Chew was named Dean-Registrar and Eddy Ee, Dean of Students. Other changes include: Ang Siew Kheng was appointed Secretary of the college and Richard Loh was added to the teaching faculty.⁶²⁷

Gordon Hogan resigned from his position as President of Four Seas College on February 1, 1985⁶²⁸ and "handed his

⁶²³ *Far East*, July 25, 1968 documents the details of this purchase, including letters of negotiations between July and December 1968. The actual relocation to Punggol was in July 1969 (*Far East*, August 1969, 5).

⁶²⁴ *Far East*, February-March 1969, 1.

⁶²⁵ *Far East*, August 25, 1968, 3.

⁶²⁶ *Far East*, January 31, 1969, 4.

⁶²⁷ *Far East*, November-December 1979, 2.

⁶²⁸ *Far East*, March 1985, 3-4.

responsibilities to David Chew". The new administration comprising David Chew as President, Eddy Ee, Dean-Registrar and Kwan Tai Choom, Dean of Students, was installed on April 8, 1985 at the Moulmein Road premises.⁶²⁹

The Singapore government, under a gazette dated March 30, 1985, acquired pieces of land in Punggol, which included the land on which Four Seas College stood, for a public housing project. Because of this forced acquisition, Four Seas College was relocated to the Jurong Church premises in Boon Lay Place, where it has remained since.

David Chew retired as President of Four Seas College in 2007 and Peter Chin (from Klang) was appointed to replace him in July 2007.⁶³⁰ Prior to his appointment, Peter Chin studied at Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee, for three years in preparation for his new role at Four Seas.

Local Congregational Efforts

Vacation Bible Schools

From the beginnings of the local congregations, missionaries had almost invariably organised Vacation Bible Schools during the school holidays to not only teach the members more about the Bible (in addition to the weekly Bible classes) but also as a way to reach out to the neighbourhood children who were not Christians. The long year-end school holidays were particular favourite times for these Vacation Bible Schools.

Bible Schools

The Vacation Bible Schools were merely ad hoc and short term and did not seek to produce teachers or preachers in a

⁶²⁹ *Far East*, May 1985, 2, 7.

⁶³⁰ <https://www.fourseas.edu.sg/peter-chin>, accessed 29 August 22.

recognised way. Jud Whitefield saw this vacuum in Malaysia when he was ministering with the Kuala Lumpur congregation. In his report home in September 1967, he mentioned that “one of our greatest needs here is to plan and start as soon as possible a training school in which the Bible is taught daily ... If we send out young and half taught preachers and teachers, it of course will be fatal.”⁶³¹

In his subsequent report, Jud wrote: “Don Green and I have spent some time talking and planning toward the daily Bible Training School for those picked few students who show abilities toward being able to take the gospel to the people of this country” (underlined, Jud’s).⁶³²

To the knowledge of this writer, such a daily Bible training school never took off in Kuala Lumpur, though from time to time, short-term Bible teaching classes styled as Bible Training Schools were organised in some of the congregations. But Don Green started it in Ipoh in January 1969. There were two students, David Rama and Lawrence Fong. The teachers were Don Green himself and Francis Pavlas. Don Green taught on the book of Isaiah and Francis Pavlas on Evangelism 1.⁶³³ This school came to be known as the Ipoh Bible Training and Evangelism School which most likely morphed into the Ipoh Bible College when Don Green returned to Ipoh in December 1977 for a short stint.⁶³⁴ But this Ipoh Bible College was not a true college which offered accredited certificates or diplomas. It was merely a school which

⁶³¹ Jud Whitefield, *Malaysian Newsletter*, September 5, 1967, 2.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, October 5, 1967, 1.

⁶³³ Don Green, *Don Green’s Far East Newsletter*, Vol. IV, January 1969, No. 1, 1.

⁶³⁴ In an undated report from the Missions Committee, East Frayser Church of Christ. See also, *In Memoriam, Francis Pavlas, 9 August 1935 – 12 March 2012*, a booklet published by the Ipoh Church of Christ in memory of Francis Pavlas.

offered classes in the Bible to members and prospects of the Ipoh church and perhaps, Ayer Tawar as well.

Malaysia School of Preaching

There was one such school as envisioned by Jud Whitefield. In 1986, Klang sponsored the setting up of the Malaysia School of Preaching (MSOP) with the coming of Jim Dearman from the States. Jim Dearman served as its director and lecturer. Classes were augmented with taped VHS videos from the Memphis School of Preaching. Jim Dearman's tenure in Klang, however, did not last long. He left in 1987.⁶³⁵ Peter Chin took over as the school's director, having graduated from the school himself. The school lasted a few more years before its eventual demise in the early 1990s.

Training for Service

Gordon Hogan, after his resignation from Four Seas College, began a Training for Service (TFS) programme in April 1986 at the Moulmein Road church premises. He reasoned that "every Christian needs additional opportunities to study God's word and related subjects".⁶³⁶ This "spiritual enrichment programme", as Hogan called it, was initially conducted on Tuesday evenings (7:30-9:00 pm) in sessions of two-months each.⁶³⁷

The TFS, a year later, was expanded to a day programme with four semesters per academic year for those who were interested in studying full-time. The venue for the classes was

⁶³⁵ <https://klangchurchofchrist.org/about/historyvision/>, accessed 19/6/2024.

⁶³⁶ Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, April 1, 1986, 2.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

switched to the Bedok church premises.⁶³⁸ Subsequently, classes were also offered at the Ang Mo Kio building.⁶³⁹

It is very likely that the TFS continued into the 1990s, but when it ceased is not known to this writer.

Singapore International Bible Institute

The Pasir Panjang (PP) congregation set up the Singapore International Bible Institute (SIBI) at its premises in 2007 in a tie-up with the Sunset International Bible Institute⁶⁴⁰, Lubbock, Texas. It reserved the first floor of its old bungalow building for use as a hostel as well as a classroom. The first class was on Revelation taught by Charles Cook, the first dean, in December 2007⁶⁴¹ with students coming mainly from PP itself. In subsequent years, international students from Vietnam, China, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea were recruited into the institute which offered a three-year programme accredited by Sunset.

In May 2022, the institute was closed partly because PP was embarking on its new building project, but mainly because it was struggling to recruit students to its programme and also because some of its students came from countries where Sunset had similar off-shore branches.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁸ Ibid., February 1, 1987, 1-2.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., May 1, 1990, 1.

⁶⁴⁰ Formerly Sunset School of Preaching.

⁶⁴¹ Minutes of the SIBI Board Meeting, 15/9/2009.

⁶⁴² Lim Swee Aun, in email (13/3/2022) to the writer with attached letter (23/2/2022) from Tim Burrow, President of Sunset.

CONTROVERSIES

The churches of Christ, as a group in Malaysia and Singapore, and as local autonomous congregations, experienced fights, divisions and splits over its history of some 70 years. Most of these fights and divisions were over personalities, power and control, and preferences of practice. They did not affect the larger fellowship of the churches. If there was any fracture, it was limited to the persons and/or the congregations concerned. For example, the parting of ways between Ira Y. Rice and Pence Dacus in 1966 (see stories on Moulmein Road and Education) could be attributed to the breakdown in their personal relationship rather than over any doctrinal differences. But it had no practical effect on the local congregation then, which was Moulmein Road. In all likelihood, the mostly young membership in the church was oblivious to what was happening between the two missionaries.

There were, however, fights over doctrinal issues and practices. These had larger and more adverse consequences for the fellowship in the local congregation; and in one or two instances (as we shall see) the fights fractured the entire fellowship of the churches of Christ throughout the two countries. The fight between Frank Pierce and Howard Merches in Kuala Lumpur (as told in the story on Kuala Lumpur) in 1964 was down to the doctrinal issue of whether women can pray in the worship assembly of the church; and to some extent, also to personal differences in their approach to mission work. This fight was physically ugly and severe ⁶⁴³ and it broke the

⁶⁴³ One eye-witness to the fight, a young teenage girl at the time, told this writer in April 2021 in Melbourne that the fight between Merches and Pierce came to fist-blows and use of vulgar and curse language.

congregation into two. There were even a few who left the church altogether.

It would be quite impossible to lay down here all the fights and divisions that had occurred in time, whether between missionaries or preachers or members, or between congregations. Suffice for this work, that the few that are recorded and discussed in this chapter will go to show that the church of Christ, though it espouses unity in the church and true New Testament Christianity, is not immune to fights and divisions as are common to all denominational groups.

The Rice-Miao Conflict

As late as April 1968, Ira Y. Rice was sharing news that Samuel Miao was among a group (comprising mostly Four Seas College students) who went up to Ipoh in April to teach in a two-week Training School in Bible and Evangelism. At the same time, Rice, together with Hayden Jenks from Penang, was preaching in the evenings in a gospel campaign there.⁶⁴⁴

But by June in the same year, things took a turn and Rice was saying different things of Samuel Miao. It was not that Rice suddenly became aware of any change in Samuel Miao, for he was cognisant of the latter's movements and doings.

When I got back to Singapore [this was in November 1967⁶⁴⁵, writer's] ... I found that the seeds of error and doubt had been sown so deep in the heart of one of our young preachers (while studying under Dick Batey at Harding Graduate School) that he already had infected the congregation that meets here at Moulmein Road/Singapore with these false notions. His uncertainty of the truth of the gospel as well as his lack of conviction that we are the ONE TRUE CHURCH had so pervaded the hearts of

⁶⁴⁴ Ira Y. Rice, Jr.'s *Far East Newsletter*, April 25, 1968, 2.

⁶⁴⁵ See *Far East*, December 31, 1967, 3.

several of the young would-be leaders in the congregation that a continuing stream of erroneous teaching was pouring forth, not only in the Bible classes and through our church bulletins but over the pulpit and in private conversations as well. Had I delayed my return to Singapore any longer than I did, by this time we could have kissed sound doctrine both in the congregation as well as in Four Seas College of Bible and Missions goodbye.⁶⁴⁶ (underlined, Rice's)

Rice had been quietly suspicious of Samuel Miao since the latter's return to Singapore in August 1965 from Harding Graduate School of Religion. Rice was warned early that Miao was "spending entirely too much time reading "modern" theologians" in Harding's library – theologians like Tillich, Barth, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer. When he approached Miao, Miao explained to him that he was reading these theologians not to "follow" but to "answer" them.

Yet, it was not until January 1967, as Rice recounted, that he "became aware that Sam might actually be departing from the faith". A young man, Dudley Devereaux, from Australia, had been sent to study at Four Seas College. But he quit and returned home within a year. Not only did he quit Four Seas, but he also quit the church of Christ and went over to the Christian Church.⁶⁴⁷ He "gave Sam Miao full credit for having made shipwreck of his faith".

Rice wrote also that upon his return to Singapore in November 1967, "to continue my work there",
the first thing that met my ears was the uncertain sound of
strange winds of doctrine coming through the church

⁶⁴⁶ *Far East*, June 25, 1968, 1.

⁶⁴⁷ Also, in Ira Y. Rice, Jr., ed., *Contending for the Faith*, May 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 5, 13.

bulletins and out of the mouths of various young members where Sam's principal influence was being exercised, at 131 Moulmein Road.

Rice continued:

It was not until in May, as I recall, that as I listened to brother Miao, in a sermon he was preaching one Lord's Day, I was struck by how hard he seemed to be trying to say the right words; yet he seemed to be struggling against some inward conflict, as if not wholly convinced of what he spoke.

Shortly later, Rice spoke to Miao about the matter, and "Sam admitted to me that he simply no longer believed, as he once did". Rice spoke this to Miao:

Sam, those of us connected with Four Seas College had looked toward the day when you would mature and could serve, Lord willing, as its president. Now, unless you can work this all out somehow, it would be unthinkable.

Miao replied to Rice that "with his present views, it would have been impossible for him to accept such a post".

On 2 June 1968, 44 of the Moulmein Road members left to meet in a place in St. Thomas Walk, "leaving just a handful – perhaps 12 or 13 – to carry on according to "thus saith the Lord" at Moulmein Road". This was even before the formal withdrawal of fellowship from Samuel Miao in August.

Sometime in July, Rice brought along Tan Keng Koon and David Chew, "to serve as witnesses", and met with Miao "to try to get matters settled once and for all".

Then on August 1, the two met for an "Open Discussion before members of the church". The charge against Samuel Miao was that he

is no longer sure that the churches of Christ are the one true church of the New Testament, and that he no longer

believes it even possible for us to be of the same mind and the same judgment, hence to speak the same things.⁶⁴⁸

All the local preachers were invited and they were allowed “to bring along such members as they saw fit”. Also invited were “all the missionaries in surrounding nations to come if they could”. As it happened, Pat McGee from Indonesia, Don Green from Ipoh, Malaysia, Frank Fox and Dave Depew, both from Bangkok, Thailand, came. All the local preachers, except for Henry Kong – who said he did not receive the invitation – were present as well. In all, “At least 50 or more of the more mature Christians of Singapore showed up for the discussion”.

Rice claimed, “As far as I know, this was the first occasion of its kind among churches of Christ, not just in Singapore, but throughout South-east Asia and the whole Far East as well”.

The discussion started at 7:30 p.m. that day and went on “without recess until 1 o’clock the following morning”. Both Rice and Miao, as the “principal speakers”, were given “unlimited time” to present their cases. An hour was allowed for questions and answers from the audience at the end. Pat McGee acted as chairman of the discussion.

In the end, neither side moved from their positions or conceded anything. Rice determined that “there could be no further fellowship between him and us”. On 18 August, 1968, “a carefully worded letter of withdrawal of fellowship was signed by all the regular preachers of the churches in Singapore, as well as by Pat McGee and Monty Lee”. The Singapore preachers who signed were Tan Keng Koon and Eddy Ee (Upper Serangoon), Lye Hong Meng (Geylang), Henry Kong (Queenstown), Charlie Ng

⁶⁴⁸ As mentioned in the invitation letter, dated July 19, sent to Don Green (and perhaps all other preachers too) and reproduced by Don Green in his *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, June through November, 1968, No. 4, 3.

Fock Lam (Chinese Section, Moulmein Road) and Ira Y. Rice (English Section, Moulmein Road).⁶⁴⁹

It is not known to what extent this controversy affected the other churches in Singapore (most likely not much at all, if ever there was any spill over) other than Moulmein Road itself. But one student from Four Seas College, Solomon Rajoo of Ipoh, apart from the Australian Dudley Devereaux, was effectively dismissed from the college as “he didn’t think the church of Christ was the church of Christ, but that it could be found in all groups”. He further considered that instrumental music was alright. He and his “entire family who were all members of the church” left to join a denomination and were disfellowshipped by the Ipoh church.⁶⁵⁰

As was the case with all those who had crossed swords with Ira Y. Rice in one way or another, Rice was ungracious

⁶⁴⁹ All quotes and material in this section, unless otherwise noted, are from Rice’s *Far East Newsletter*, August 25, 1968, 1-4. In response to the 18 August 1968 letter of withdrawal of fellowship from Samuel Miao, a group of eight sympathetic to Samuel Miao issued their own letter dated 7 October 1968, which listed 12 points what Samuel Miao “does believe” and “does not believe”. The letter concluded:

Therefore, we have come to the conclusion that Samuel Miao not only believes in the Bible as firmly as anyone of us but that he has not taught any false teaching that have caused offences contrary to the Doctrine of Christ. However, this does not mean that he is in harmony with all the beliefs advocated by a portion of the brotherhood.

For all these reasons, we hereby announce that (i) we have ignored the letter declaring the withdrawal of fellowship from Samuel Miao, and (ii) we will continue to receive him as a brother in Christ.

The eight signatories to the letter were Tommy Khong, Goh Eng Kee, Sing Tong Sing, Linda Leong, Tan Hock Lye, Seow Gim Hock, Lee Hin Weng and Eric Tan. This writer is grateful to Timmy Choy for his gift of the two letters of disfellowship/fellowship in the Samuel Miao saga.

⁶⁵⁰ As related by Don Green in his *Far East Newsletter*, Vol. III, June through November, 1968, No. 4, 3-4.

towards Samuel Miao even up to the latter's death on 24 March 1987. Miao's obituary in a Singapore newspaper had read, "was called home by the Lord". Rice specifically quoted this and commented:

He died, as he had lived, completely apostate from the Lord whom he had forsaken since his return from Harding Graduate School in 1965.
How tragic!⁶⁵¹

It is indeed tragic that Christians within the Church of Christ tradition can be as ungracious as this towards those who differ from them in doctrine or practice, even up to the point of death.

Other Controversies

Before we give attention to the one controversy/conflict that had a definitive impact on the unity and fellowship of the churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore, perhaps we should mention a few others that were more localised in their impact and have them out of the way first.

The One-Cup Issue in the Klang Valley

Bill Page, an American expatriate, was sent by his parent company to work in Kuala Lumpur in 1979. He introduced the 'One-Cup' doctrine, first, to the Kuala Lumpur congregation, and later, to the Petaling Jaya congregation meeting at Bedford College. The One-Cup doctrine stemmed from the 'pattern-method' of reading the scriptures. The method itself sprang from the three-fold 'Command-Example-and-Inference' hermeneutic prevalent within churches in the Restoration Heritage. Proponents of the One-Cup doctrine argued that when Jesus ate

⁶⁵¹ *Contending for the Faith*, May 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 5, 13.

the Passover (or, in Christian usage, the Last Supper) with his apostles he used only one cup to serve the wine, which he then offered to his apostles to drink from (see Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; a similar case, too, can be argued for the bread). Since Jesus and his apostles drank from only one and the same cup, it was proper and safer (doctrinally) for Christians to drink from one and the same cup too when partaking the Lord's Supper: Jesus set the pattern, or the example, and Christians need to follow this example, they argued.

The doctrine was rejected by the Kuala Lumpur church and Bill Page was duly warned and subsequently disfellowshipped by the church sometime in the early part of 1980 as a 'false teacher'. Bill Page went over to the Petaling Jaya congregation and influenced a few of the local brethren there to the doctrine. Those influenced were Teoh (or, Teo) Guan Soon (formerly of Klang), Eric Khoo (formerly of Malacca), Johnson Lim and Koh Yew Hock. Guan Soon "taught publicly ["This false doctrine"] from the Petaling Jaya pulpit ... in August 1980" and it was "subsequently put into practice under the oversight of the three other brethren", as alleged by Yeow Chin Kiong. The four were declared "erring brethren" and disfellowshipped by the Klang church in May 1981.⁶⁵² The Johor Baru church had a few weeks earlier marked the same four. But other than Joseph M. E. Ng of Malacca, and to that effect, the Malacca congregation, there was hardly any objection from any other congregation or individual to the disfellowshipping of the four. Joseph Ng

⁶⁵² Letter of disfellowship dated 29 May 1981 circulated to "The congregations of the Church of Christ", signed by Yeow Chin Kiong in his capacity as Chairman, Board of Management, Church of Christ, Klang, 1981. See also, his letter dated 1 September 1980 in his personal capacity, but bearing the Klang Church of Christ letterhead.

pointed out “a few irregularities (*sic*) taken by our ‘faithful leaders’ ... i.e., presenting FALSE INFORMATION AS FACTS in building up a case or cases” (capitals, Joseph Ng’s). He alleged that “the one-cup issue” was not “the ONLY cause of division in PJ”; but that “a highly personal conflict between Yeow and Guan Soon” was the “MAJOR CAUSE” and this was the reason “why Malacca had not withdrawn (*sic*) from the ‘erring 4’”.⁶⁵³

Jairus Goldi Joseph, who was ministering with the Kuala Lumpur church around the mid-1980s (after Lau Kin Fatt had left to re-establish the Petaling Jaya congregation in 1982), and his wife Mary Elizabeth, were the other persons known to be drawn to the one-cup persuasion. He left his ministry with the Kuala Lumpur church to meet with the group of four and some others in the Kuchai Lama area at the time.

The Conflict in Jurong in the Late 1990s

A few years before 1999, two expatriates, Phil Yates and Steve Cox, came with their families to work in Singapore. They were from the ‘anti’ wing within the churches of Christ in the United States. Before they came to Singapore, they did their “research” and decided that the Jurong congregation was the best for them to worship with. At the outset they “made it clear that they were not there [in Jurong, writer’s] to hobby their doctrines, just to have a place to worship with the saints”.⁶⁵⁴ With this understanding, the Jurong congregation welcomed them and opened their fellowship to them. They (Yates and Cox)

⁶⁵³ Letter dated July 18, 1981, to “Churches of Christ, Malaysia” and signed by Joseph M. E. Ng in his personal capacity.

⁶⁵⁴ Per Soon Choon Lin. This section owed much of its information to Soon Choon Lin over WhatsApp messages on 23 and 24 April 2021. Further revisions were made by him through WhatsApp on 30 June 2021. Quotes in double quotation marks are from him.

did not share their 'antiism' either publicly or privately with any of the Jurong members.

But the peace that prevailed was shattered when Ira Y. Rice and Fred Stancliff came to Jurong one day. They called out the two by name and preached against them openly over the pulpit. There was an "uproar" as some in the Jurong congregation were "disgusted by their [Rice's and Stancliff's, writer's] behaviour". "[T]hings cooled down somewhat" when the two left.

However, this was merely the calm before the storm. "[S]eeds of discord [were] already planted" and "lines" drawn. Wong Yu Choong, who had left the Jurong congregation a good time before all these, was somehow invited back to Jurong by Philip Tang and allowed to teach the new converts class on Wednesday evenings. In the class, he taught that false teachers should be marked and those who were "associated with them and did not repent" should be disfellowshipped. Eddy Ee, who was minister of the church, and "some other leaders repented of their association with them [i.e., Yates and Cox, writer's]". But they "did not demand [those who were sympathetic to Yates and Cox, writer's] to do likewise". Yu Choong and Philip Tang changed this compromise. A sharp line was now drawn. Bible classes on Wednesday evenings were held to resolve the issue; but this was to no avail. Those who refused to repent of their association with Yates and Cox left Jurong in 1999 as they felt that there was no more harmony within the church. They believed that by staying put it would only harm the church spirit. They were also disillusioned with the hard sectarianism displayed. Among those who left were Lim Cher Yam, a stalwart leader at Jurong, and his wife. They went over to Pasir Panjang. But a larger group (of perhaps more than 20), some comprising what this author calls 'second generation leaders', began a new

congregation on their own in the Bukit Timah area and called themselves the North-West church. Among those in the group were Soon Choon Lin, Harry Wong (younger brother to Wong Yu Choong), Wong Kum Kay, Lim Cher Kiat (younger brother to Lim Cher Yam), Chang Yee Chong, Edwin Kweok (who had since moved to Pasir Panjang), Carol Ling and her sister Ling Guay Lee. For what they had done, the group were disfellowshipped by the Jurong congregation.

It needs be noted here that the ‘guilt-by-association’ doctrine was a popular device used by the ultra-conservatives in the churches of Christ to ‘divide-and-rule’.

Crossroadism

To the mind of this writer, in thus far as unity of fellowship amongst the churches was concerned, Crossroadism was a non-issue as no congregation either in Malaysia or Singapore was attracted to it other than a few individuals. The closest to anything contrary to this was a mere allegation by Ira Y. Rice that “Penang, led by their local preacher, almost certainly was heading into Crossroadism ... Penang apparently would become the first “Crossroads” church in Malaysia”.⁶⁵⁵ Nothing of the sort happened. But because it was such a ‘hoo-ha’ in the States and because it transpired on the local scene right in the aftermath of the Rice-Hogan conflict in the mid-1980s, it was blown up out of proportion.

The Central London Church of Christ, a Crossroads-Movement church, had Singapore in its sight in its mission programme for 1987.⁶⁵⁶ It had previously gained some

⁶⁵⁵ *Contending for the Faith*, July 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 7, 12. Rice attributed his information to “The Klang brethren”.

⁶⁵⁶ See Daniel Eng Leng Pang’s article, “Mission: Singapore 1987”, in the January 1985, Volume 4, No. 1 issue of *A Light to London*, a monthly bulletin

adherents in Malaysia, principally, in Taiping, Perak.⁶⁵⁷ But its biggest ‘trophy’ was the capture of Daniel Eng Leng Pang in 1984, who was then the preaching minister of the Klang church.⁶⁵⁸ Daniel Eng was taken to London for training with the specific purpose that he, together with another Malaysian, “a certain John Louis from Perak”, would lead the mission work in Singapore.⁶⁵⁹

A side-story to this episode was that the intentions of the Central London church got to the notice of the Malaysian authorities, in particular, the Islamic Affairs Division in the Prime Minister’s Department. This happened because Central London church published two articles critical of Islam in its May and June

of the Central London Church of Christ. Two members from Central London, James Lloyd and Steve Pipkin, made a trip to Singapore and met with the local preachers and the faculty of Four Seas on 23 April 1985 in the library of Four Seas College. Present at this meeting from the Singapore side were David Chew, Eddy Ee, Kwan Tai Choom, Kon Pak Fook, Foo Sek San, Eric Tan, Edwin Choy, Han See Teng, and Ken Sinclair. J. C. Choate, missionary to India, was also present. At this meeting, the Singapore brethren told James Lloyd and Steve Pipkin not to send their team as they had intended. In *Contending for the Faith*, July 1985, Vol. XVI, No. 7, 4, 6.

⁶⁵⁷ One of its leaders, James Lloyd, mentioned “small “house churches” meeting in ... Taiping, Malaysia” in his article “Immeasurably More in 1984”, in *A Light to London*, Volume 4, No. 1.

⁶⁵⁸ Daniel Eng was first contacted in January 1984 by Douglas Jacoby and Chris Teoh, two members of the Central London church, who were then visiting Malaysia and the Klang congregation. Through subsequent correspondence, Daniel Eng was persuaded to go to London for “further training”; in an article, “Singapore 1987”, published in Central London’s bulletin, Vol. III, No. 23, dated 23 December 1984 as reproduced in *Contending for the Faith*, July 1985, Vol. XVI, No. 7, 3.

⁶⁵⁹ In a circular letter by Yeow Chin Kiong dated 8 December 1986. The particular letter that this writer had sight of was addressed to Ong Chong Seng. However, in the same Central London bulletin of January 1985, Vol. 4, No. 1, it was announced that Steve Pipkin and Daniel Eng would be the co-leaders of the team to Singapore.

1986 issues of its monthly bulletin, *A Light to London*.⁶⁶⁰ The movements of the Central London would-be-missionaries to Malaysia/Singapore were then monitored by the Malaysian authorities.⁶⁶¹ Fearful of any negative repercussions, the Kuala Lumpur church wrote a letter to Datuk Dr. Yusoff Nor, then minister in charge of Islamic Affairs, in January of 1987, to deny any connection or association with the Central London Church of Christ (“kami tidak ada sebarang kaitan dengan pertubuhan “The Central London Church of Christ”).⁶⁶² It also wrote a letter to the Central London Church to the effect: “we are marking you and will have no fellowship with you”.⁶⁶³

But what was more pertinent to this history was the manner Ira Y. Rice played this Crossroadism card for his own purposes; in particular, in his conflict with Gordon Hogan. In his report on the 2nd Annual Asian Bible Lectureship held on October 26-30, 1986, in Singapore, under the sub-heading “A Divided House Presents Opportunity for Massive Takeover by Crossroads”, he wrote: “Crossroaders ... characteristically are on the prowl for either dead or divided churches”. He then

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ In an article in *Mingguan Islam*, a Malay journal dated 16 December 1986, and translated into English as “Christian Missionaries Disguising as Tourists”. In *Contending for the Faith*, January 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, 13, Rice reported that “Daniel Eng was planning to lead approximately 30 Crossroaders into Malaysia from Central London” but the team was banned from entering Malaysia, except for Daniel Eng, because of a warning from Yeow Chin Kiong to the Malaysian authorities.

⁶⁶² The letter was signed by Chan Kim Foh, Wilson Thahsiah, Wong Kok Cheong (Albert), in their respective capacities as Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer in the Committee of Management as registered with the Registrar of Societies.

⁶⁶³ The letter was dated 15 December 1986, and signed by various leaders from the Kuala Lumpur, Seremban and Port Dickson congregations. But it was initiated by Chan Kim Foh from Kuala Lumpur.

insinuated that Gordon Hogan and Ken Sinclair were divisive when they deliberately absent themselves from the Lectureship to be somewhere else. Then came the punch:

It is still too early to say what the final outcome of Central London/Crossroads' targeting Singapore may be; however, if indeed they *do* come and gain a foothold among the churches in Singapore, it will largely be due to such erratic leadership on the part of these two formerly dependable missionary brethren in Singapore.⁶⁶⁴ (*italics, Rice's*)

Later, his accusation against Gordon Hogan became stronger. He accused Hogan of being connected with Crossroadism⁶⁶⁵ through his friendship with Charles Haslam and his refusal to acknowledge that "*his own sponsoring church ITSELF* had "gone Crossroads!"⁶⁶⁶ He made the same link of Charles Bishop when the latter was invited to speak in the Yankaya Memorial Lectureship in Cameron Highlands in December 1987. Charles Bishop was once missionary to Klang, but at the pertinent time, he was ministering with the Westlink church in Wichita, Kansas. Of Charles Bishop, Rice wrote: "he evidently has swallowed Crossroadism – particularly the Boston variety – hook, line and sinker".⁶⁶⁷

Once again, guilt-by-association loomed large.

⁶⁶⁴ *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 10.

⁶⁶⁵ Gordon Hogan was never into Crossroadism as attested in this statement from him: "The Crossroads/Boston movement continues to divide churches and God hates division"; in *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, November 1, 1987.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, October 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 10, 12. The late Charles Haslam was an elder at Northside church in St. Petersburg, the sponsoring congregation of Gordon Hogan.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

Others

Other issues or controversies were the Yeow Chin Kiong-Ken Sinclair spat on baptism in 2002, and the disfellowship in 1980 by Look Yu Sang of Chew Seng Teck, his wife, and the Kluang church that was associated with the Chews (for this, see story on Muar and Kluang).

Sometime in July of 2002, Ken Sinclair was scheduled to be in Kuching to speak in a gospel meeting with the church there. Yeow Chin Kiong, upon learning of this, wrote to Thomas Koh, the minister of the Kuching church, to “voice his concern” over Ken Sinclair. Yeow’s “concern” was:

I am convinced Kenneth Sinclair no longer believes baptism in water of repentant sinners is necessary for salvation. He has shown he no longer believes in this cardinal Bible doctrine by associating himself with the likes of Carroll Osburn, who has taught that we may extend fellowship to those who hold that baptism is because of remission of sins and not what leads to it.⁶⁶⁸

The two met in an open discussion at the Subang Jaya church premises on the night of 18 August 2002. In the discussion, Ken Sinclair categorically stated his unchanging belief and practice of water baptism for the remission of sins and Yeow continued with his allegation to the contrary chiefly based on Ken’s association with Carroll Osburn and other Bible professors at Abilene Christian University. Ken called for Yeow to retract his accusation against him and to repent of it. On both counts, Yeow refused.

The guilt-by-association doctrine had wider jaws and sharper teeth than most expected. Even when Ken Sinclair had publicly affirmed his belief in water baptism, it did not satisfy

⁶⁶⁸ From a document prepared by Yeow Chin Kiong dated 18 August 2002 with his name at the bottom of the document, but otherwise unsigned.

those who were with Yeow. For example, Ong Chee Yong, writing on behalf of the Menara TJB church (or, just TJB church) in Johor Baru, expressed that it was naïve to reduce Ken Sinclair's position on baptism to the simple matter of "Sinclair's affirmation or negation and that would be the end of the matter". He argued that "There are broader issues involved". And these "broader issues" involved "conduct", fellowship and endorsement of those who considered "those in denominations as fellow Christians".⁶⁶⁹ In a "position statement" put forth by him (along with two others) on behalf of the TJB church, he accused Ken Sinclair of being "hand in glove" with Carroll Osburn (on baptism) and Steven T. Gaines⁶⁷⁰ (on fellowship with denominations), both of whom he (Chee Yong) had marked as false teachers. Then came his position relative to Ken Sinclair:

We also mark Ken Sinclair who by his conduct aligns himself to such false teachers and supports them in their endeavours.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ In an email message dated 1 January 2003 circulated to churches of Christ in Malaysia.

⁶⁷⁰ Steven T. Gaines was an undergraduate student at Abilene Christian University. He spent two months interning with the Ipoh Garden East congregation in 1999 (from May to July; in "Our History – Milestones", Ipoh CoC's 30th Anniversary Celebration booklet, 5-6 January 2013) after coming along on a summer mission trip with other ACU students to Malaysia led by Ken Sinclair, who was then missionary-in-residence at ACU. It was in this time that Steven Gaines made some of his statements about fellowship and denominations.

⁶⁷¹ In a position statement as authored by Ong Chee Yong (with co-names Richard Tan and Jerry Tang) and which accompanied the above email. Ong Chee Yong (originally from Malacca) was part of the Johor Baru church from the 1980s to the 1990s until he left the church to worship at Menara TJB with his family and a few others (hence, the TJB church) in the late 1990s.

The Rice-Hogan Conflict

Gordon Hogan's son, Dave, had been practically brought up all his life in the mission fields of his father; first, in Pakistan and later, in Singapore. Dave's psyche, culture, and if we may say, 'blood', had been conditioned by mission, church and Christ. As a boy, under the charge of his father and mother, he had no choice but to 'follow-along', as we would say. And yet as he grew up and became a man in his own right, he decided that mission work, church and Christ were his all-embracing calling. At 20 years of age, he entered Harding College to equip himself more properly for the execution of his calling. The father wrote of the son:

He loves the Lord, is a proven soul winner and a good preacher (I admit to prejudice) ... Wherever Dave goes, so long as it is in the service of God, Jane and I shall rejoice, encourage, and support him.⁶⁷²

Little did the senior Hogan realise at the time how much weight of support and encouragement he would have to give to his son Dave some eight years down the road and beyond.

Dave returned to Singapore from his studies at Harding College and served with his father at Moulmein Road. He also taught at Four Seas College where he was once a student. In July of 1983, he wrote a series of three articles on Christian worship in *The Evangelist*, a publication of the Four Seas student body. The thrust of these articles was that Christian worship was not limited to time and location (based on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4). Nor was it limited to the "five acts of worship" on a Sunday assembly; but that it encompassed every aspect of a Christian's life. Thus, "all life is worship".

⁶⁷² *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, January 1, 1975, 2.

Dave also shared/circulated⁶⁷³ an article by Bruce Terry, “Baptized in One Spirit”, first published in *Restoration Quarterly*, Fourth Quarter 1978.⁶⁷⁴ This article argued that all Christians received the baptism of the Holy Spirit when they were baptised in water for the remission of their sins. The “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 was “a baptism in water and in the Spirit ... a physical and a spiritual aspect” (also, in John 3:5, “born of water and the Spirit”). This “Holy Spirit baptism” was “a past event in the Christian’s life”, a “gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38; 10:45), a baptism “into the one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). “All Christians have received this baptism”, “a once-in-a-lifetime experience”. But Bruce Terry distinguished it from being “filled with the Spirit” (e.g., Acts 2:4; 9:17), which he explained as “coming under the influence of the Holy Spirit”, which “may be repeated several times” in the Christian’s life. Being “filled with the Spirit” may have miraculous manifestations (e.g., tongue-speaking, Acts 2:4) or non-miraculous manifestations (e.g., boldness, Acts 4:31; joy, Acts 13:52; singing, praying, submitting to one another, Ephesians 5:18f.).

For his teaching on worship and Holy Spirit baptism, Dave Hogan was branded a “false teacher” and “was asked to step down” from the faculty of Four Seas College.⁶⁷⁵ Dave Hogan was

⁶⁷³ In *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 16; September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 19.

⁶⁷⁴ The article is reproduced in *Contending for the Faith*, April 1984, Vol. XV, No. 4, 4-7.

⁶⁷⁵ *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 15-16. This decision was made in a Board meeting on August 27, 1983, “at 9 o’clock Saturday morning” “in Room 622 of the Grand Sheraton Hotel, near the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport”. In a letter dated August 31, 1983 from Ira Y. Rice, as Chairman of the Board of Directors, Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, to David Chew, Dean-Registrar. Gordon Hogan, who was in attendance at the meeting, was tasked, most likely in his capacity as

also accused of showing “little respect or regard” to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Four Seas (Ira Y. Rice himself) when he used scriptures from the *New International Version (NIV)* in his writings (and most likely, in his teachings as well). Rice had spoken against the “use of the *NIV* as well as all other questionable versions” when he visited Four Seas in March 1983.⁶⁷⁶ Additionally, “Dave habitually devotes much if not most of his own personal study to books on theology written by *denominational theologians*” (italics, Rice’s).⁶⁷⁷

Dave Hogan, in an effort to rectify the situation, wrote again in *The Evangelist* (September 14, 1983 issue), to clarify his “intentions and make whatever changes are necessary to correct the misunderstandings”. At the same time, he sought forgiveness for his “poor choice of words or failure to develop certain ideas fully”.⁶⁷⁸

Dave also wrote a personal letter to Ira Y. Rice (dated February 28, 1984) on the Holy Spirit baptism issue. In it, he expressed his belief “that the biblical teaching concerning the Holy Spirit bears no resemblance to Pentecostal emotionalism”.

President of the college, to inform his son Dave of the Board’s decision to dismiss him from Four Seas.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid. The Board, in the meeting mentioned above, had also decided that the only versions allowed for use at Four Seas were the *King James Version* and the *American Standard Version of 1901*.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Besides the main thesis of the three articles – all life is worship – Rice also found offence at Dave Hogan’s use of words like “scandalous”, “revolutionary”, “cultic”, “cultus” and other expressions. Dave Hogan chose to write his “Christian Worship in the New Testament: Response to Objections” in *The Evangelist* because, as he put it, “it was through the medium of *The Evangelist* that some of my readers were offended, it is on these pages that the necessary corrections had to be made”. This response was reproduced in *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 16-17.

He considered the “Pentecostal doctrine ... of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second experience involving emotions and miracles” as “false and destructive”. He taught to this effect in “a Bible Class”:

to show that in the New Testament Paul uses the expression “baptized in One Spirit” as applicable to all the Christians in Corinth in reference to their baptism into the body. (I Cor. 12:13). He [Paul, writer’s] also says that when we were baptized the Holy Spirit was poured on us (Tit. 3:5-6). Thus his language refers not to some second emotional or miraculous experience but to the reception of the Spirit in becoming a Christian through initial gospel obedience in the waters of baptism.

Dave Hogan added:

Since some brethren have expressed reservations about this understanding I’ve ceased teaching this as a way of dealing with Pentecostalism. I realize that the study of the Holy Spirit is not an easy one and so I will gladly defer to brothers who know and understand more than I do.

Though Dave pulled back somewhat on the Holy Spirit baptism issue, he did not retract from his ‘all life is worship’ belief and stand. This did not placate Rice; nor the Board. Rice wrote:

neither I nor other members of the Board were disposed to accept what he wrote as sufficient correction that we could forget the whole thing and invite him back to teach once again at Four Seas College.⁶⁷⁹

Initially, all these were in the quiet – within the confines of those in the know and the players (or, antagonists)

⁶⁷⁹ *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 17.

themselves. Most of those outside Four Seas College and Moulmein Road had no inkling of what was happening. Gordon Hogan was teaching at Harding University as a missionary-in-residence.⁶⁸⁰ for the academic year 1983-84 when everything began. In the immediate aftermath, Moulmein Road did not flinch from their support to Dave Hogan.⁶⁸¹ Dave Hogan himself went on to complete his graduate studies at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis in 1984.⁶⁸²

But all came out in the open within a year or two later. The resignation of Gordon Hogan as President of Four Seas College in February 1, 1985⁶⁸³ was the signal that not all could be kept under the lid. Everything spewed out at the Second Annual Asian Bible Lectureship⁶⁸⁴ held at the Tai-Pan Ramada Hotel in Singapore on October 26-30, 1986. This Lectureship, “Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”, can be considered as the watershed event in the unity/disunity of fellowship amongst churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore. David Chew, Eddy Ee and Kwan Tai Choom, the three top faculty at Four Seas, were the organisers. Of the churches in Singapore at the time, only

⁶⁸⁰ *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, June 1, 1987.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16. For this, the Moulmein Road congregation was accused by Rice of violating 2 John 9-11, the plank on which the guilt-by-association doctrine was built.

⁶⁸² *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, September 1 and October 1, 1987. Dave completed his graduate studies in May 1987 and returned to serve at Moulmein Road in October with his wife Debbie. He was sponsored by the Holmes Road church of Christ.

⁶⁸³ *Far East/World Evangelism*, March 1985, 3-4.

⁶⁸⁴ The Asian Bible Lectureship was held as an alternative/rival to the long-traditioned Asian Mission Forum (which started out as South East Asian Missionary Workshop) due to the division amongst the American missionaries in Asia into “conservatives” and “liberals”.

Lim Ah Pin and Jurong were in full support of the Lectureship.⁶⁸⁵ They were, in effect, the sponsors. Gordon Hogan was away in Bangkok, Thailand, speaking in a church camp. He had earlier denied Rice's request for the Lectureship to be held in the Moulmein Road premises. The other missionary in Singapore at the time, Ken Sinclair, was away in Penang for a gospel meeting. From Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and Klang had Chan Kim Foh and Yeow Chin Kiong, respectively, to speak at the Lectureship. Seremban, Johor Baru and Kota Kinabalu were represented too.⁶⁸⁶

But this Lectureship would be noted for what transpired on the night of October 28; in what John M. Grubb, reporting on the Lectureship, called "Tuesday's Turmoil".⁶⁸⁷ Dorsey Traw, a long-time missionary to Thailand and friend to Gordon Hogan, was one of the speakers on the night. His topic was "The Basis for Unity". At the time, Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage (MDR) was an issue which was raging amongst the churches and missionaries in Bangkok (but not in Singapore or Malaysia). Several of the missionaries like Loren Hollingsworth, Larry Henderson, Joe Bagby and Kelly Davidson had been influenced by Ted Stewart's teaching on MDR⁶⁸⁸, which Dorsey Traw and his group vehemently opposed. These missionaries were said to "have divided the church in Thailand by pushing a doctrine that

⁶⁸⁵ As per Joseph A. Ruiz's report on the Lectureship, in *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 11. In reality, the other churches had also advertised the Lectureship in their church announcements and some of their members had also attended the lectures when the Lectureship was in session.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ In *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 6.

⁶⁸⁸ Ted Stewart was from Sunset School of Preaching. His teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage was said to be quite similar to James D. Bale's views in his book *Not Under Bondage*.

allows people to continue in adulterous relations”.⁶⁸⁹ Because Gordon Hogan had gone to speak in a camp backed by these missionaries, Dorsey Traw, at the end of his speech, “rather unexpectedly”,

launched a 5-minute verbal assault against Gordon Hogan, charging that he (Gordon Hogan)

(1) had erred in his views on Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

(2) was preaching to and fellowshipping with “erring” congregations in Thailand.⁶⁹⁰

Dorsey Traw’s diatribe against Gordon Hogan was despite their years of friendship. It was hitting and strong as seen in some of the statements from the participants themselves:

brother Hogan saw fit to absent himself in order to participate with false teachers in Thailand (from Ira Y. Rice); *Gordon Hogan*, was in Thailand ... as the key-note speaker in a camp sponsored by the very false brethren from Sunset that have caused division in that country over the subject of M-D-R. In so doing brother Hogan has become partaker of their evil deeds (2 John 11) (from Joe Ruiz; italics, his); This is a grave problem inasmuch as we are not to fellowship those who have left the doctrine of Christ as these Bangkok brethren have done (II John 9-11) (from Tommy Alford).⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁹ Tommy Alford in his history leading to the Asian Bible Lectureship series; in *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 13.

⁶⁹⁰ In a letter dated 10 November 1986 to members of the Moulmein Road congregation and signed by Peter Ho, Michael Wee, Stephen Chang and Chang Chee Wee.

⁶⁹¹ In *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 10, 11, 16.

But to the Moulmein Road members who were present, the charges were “uncalled”, “unchristian”, and not true.⁶⁹² Tommy Alford reported:

At the end of Dorsey’s speech several who are leaders of the Moulmein Road congregation stood up and began to take issue with brother Dorsey.⁶⁹³

Alford was referring to Stephen Chang, Peter Ho, Chang Chee Wee and Michael Wee.⁶⁹⁴ In the eyes of Alford, Rice and their ilk, these were “young men who once knew the truth” but had their “hearts” “corrupted” after “several years of hearing false teachers and false doctrine”.⁶⁹⁵ But to the four “young men”, they must have been compelled to stand up to speak for someone who was not there to speak for himself. To the silent minority, who had no voice (whether they were not permitted or dared not speak), it was a traumatic and confusing moment. One lady from Moulmein Road, who was a young Christian then, recalled the episode some thirty years later, her pain and hurt still palpable:

⁶⁹² In letter of 10 November 1986 signed by Peter Ho, et al.

⁶⁹³ *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 16.

⁶⁹⁴ From letter of 10 November 1986, which showed that Peter Ho, Stephen Chang and Chang Chee Wee spoke in defence of Gordon Hogan relative to the MDR issue; and Michael Wee rebutted Ira Rice’s charge that the Ang Mo Kio, Bedok, Bukit Panjang, Geylang, Hougang, Moulmein, Pasir Panjang and Punggol “misbehaved” when they did not participate in the Lectureship. The churches had in fact announced and publicised the Lectureship. In the PowerPoint presentation on “History & Lessons – Moulmein Church of Christ Anniversary Celebration”, 6 August 2017, Peter Ho, Stephen Chang and Michael Wee were mentioned as standing up to speak for Gordon Hogan.

⁶⁹⁵ Words in quotes, Tommy Alford’s; in *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 16.

the topic veered towards our beloved Brother Hogan. It was about him not teaching the truth. As the speaker confronted Brother Hogan and called him a false teacher, my heart pounded heavily. I was confused and afraid. I sat rooted to my chair and felt that my faith was in a crisis. Even as a young Christian, I knew it is wrong to attack someone from the back; when the person is not able to defend himself. I left the room soon after as I could not make any sense out of the whole episode. On the sofa outside the seminar room, I found some ladies weeping away. I left, telling myself that I won't be going back to church the next week.⁶⁹⁶

Any pretence of unity or fellowship between the group sympathetic to Rice and the group sympathetic to Hogan⁶⁹⁷ was flung wide open and laid bare. Rudyard Kipling's "never the twain shall meet" stood then and still stands today. A fellowship built on the foundation of Christ was split into two. A foreign problem that was not endemic to the local scene was brought in as a convenient wedge to split the churches. Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage (MDR) was not an issue amongst the churches in Singapore and Malaysia at the time. Gordon Hogan did not teach anything near to Ted Stewart's, or for the matter, James D. Bales' views. None taught anything contrary to Matthew 5:31-32 or, 19:4-9; or, Mark 10:5-12. But after Tai-Pan, MDR was the 'talk of the town'. For a long while, everyone was talking about

⁶⁹⁶ Jennifer Wong, in Sue Ann Mak's paper: "Moulmein Church of Christ 1955-2015: A Historical Narrative", 11.

⁶⁹⁷ For want of a better choice of words, the expression "sympathetic to Rice and the group sympathetic to Hogan" is used to describe the situation then. It might be valid for the circumstances then, but it is not as valid now to describe the divisions extant in churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore today.

it, as if it was a local problem. Even today, when the subject of the split would crop up, MDR would invariably be mentioned.

But MDR was a mere phantom wedge. Guilt-by-association, as interpreted from 2 John 9-11 by those who would wield it, was the real log that caused the split and it continues to split (e.g., see the Yeow-Sinclair spat on baptism discussed above).

In the discussion above of the conflict occasioned by the Second Asian Bible Lectureship, Dave Hogan's name was apparently absent. But he and his "all life is worship" and "Holy Spirit baptism" must have featured prominently in the Lectureship; if not publicly over the lectern, they would be in private or small group conversations. Tommy Alford, for example, wrote on Dave Hogan's "all life is worship" thus:

Of course, it is a silly doctrine which would make men shaving and mothers changing diapers acts of worship to God. Also it would lead to everybody forsaking the assembly, for, since every deed in their life would be worship, then, they would be involved in worship wherever they were!

And on Dave Hogan himself:

he preached at the Moulmein Road congregation and continued to emit uncertain sounds. Today, he is preaching *false* doctrine, whereas before he attended Harding Graduate School he was known to preach *sound* doctrine.⁶⁹⁸ (italics, Alford's)

The Dave Hogan saga did not end with the Lectureship. Almost immediately after, Kwan Tai Choom wrote a letter to Dave, seeking "where you [Dave] stand *doctrinally*" (italics, Kwan's). Additionally, he posed 15 questions for Dave to

⁶⁹⁸ In *Contending for the Faith*, February 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 15, 16.

answer.⁶⁹⁹ Dave did not respond. Neither did he respond to further letters (registered or otherwise) to him or attempts by third parties to get him to answer the 15 questions.⁷⁰⁰ Finally, on 17 December 1992, the Lim Ah Pin congregation issued a disfellowship letter to Dave Hogan. The letter was brief and to the point:

Dear Bro Dave,

For the past five years, and even before, many faithful brethren have tried to discuss and persuade you away from your false doctrines. However, up to this present time, you have shown no sign of repentance. It is now our unpleasant duty to inform you, that as from this day forth, the Lim Ah Pin Church of Christ can no longer extend our fellowship to you. We continue to urge you to abandon your false doctrines in order that this fellowship might be restored.

In the service of Christ,
(signed) Kwan Tai Choom
For Lim Ah Pin's leadership

⁶⁹⁹ The letter dated November 20, 1987, with the 15 questions was reproduced in *Contending for the Faith*, September 1993, Vol. XXIV, No. 9, 1, 3 & 4. These questions were designed and called for 'Yes' or 'No' answers. Klang also had a list of questions for Dave to answer and a position statement pre-prepared for him to sign when "a few of the leadership in the Klang congregation discussed with Dave to help him admit that he did not believe in 'all life is worship' but to no avail. He refused to sign a letter prepared by them for circulation." In a letter by Soo Kok Leong dated 1 March 1993 on behalf of the Leadership of Lim Ah Pin Road Church of Christ to Leaders of the Churches of Christ, Singapore and Malaysia, as reproduced in *Contending for the Faith*, September 1993, Vol. XXIV, No. 9, 6. As an aside, a list of questions was also posed to Seow Choon Leong by the late Annis R. Yankaya in June 1977 when the latter questioned the "doctrinal position" of Seow.

⁷⁰⁰ See *Contending for the Faith*, September 1993, Vol. XXIV, No. 9, 4-6 for reproductions of these letters.

The response amongst the churches and even individual Christians to the disfellowship of Dave Hogan was divided. There were those who agreed and there were those who disagreed. Some were ambivalent (until they were compelled to take a stand). An episode would illustrate this.

On 22-25 December 1999, the Petaling Jaya congregation held their annual Bible Camp (“Looking to Jesus”) at the Rasa Sayang Hotel in Johor Baru. Amongst the speakers were Dave Hogan, Tee Geok Kwee and Gary Lye; the latter two being members of the Johor Baru congregation. The Johor Baru congregation, through the initiative and leadership of Ong Chee Yong, subsequently took action to dispel “the impression” that the Johor Baru congregation “did not respect the withdrawal of fellowship action” by the Lim Ah Pin congregation. It asked Tee Geok Kwee and Gary Lye to state their positions relative to Dave Hogan.

We leave it to brethren Tee Geok Kwee and Gary Lye to make their own statement and/or give their explanation as to their course of conduct in the matter – whether they innocently, intentionally, negligently or with reckless disregard, proceeded to speak in the PJ meeting even after knowing that Dave Hogan was the featured speaker.

Subsequently, Tee Geok Kwee wrote an e-mail letter to churches in Malaysia and a few other recipients that he “was not informed that brother Dave was also one of the featured speakers beforehand” and that he and his family “did not intend to fellowship, will not fellowship and does not wish to be seen as in fellowship with any brethren who has been disfellowshipped”.

But Gary Lye, on the other hand, took the position that “Dave Hogan’s teaching on ‘All Life Is Worship’ was not a good ground for disfellowshipping him”, besides a few other points,

for his maintaining of fellowship with Dave Hogan. For this, Gary Lye was put in ‘cold storage’ and barred from any role of service or teaching in the Johor Baru congregation, even after Ong Chee Yong himself left the congregation some years later with a few others to meet at Menara TJB (hence, the TJB church).⁷⁰¹

Today, the “all-life-is-worship” doctrine continues to be a bone of contention in churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore. Many believe flat-out that it is false; but many believe too that it is valid and scriptural, though not in the sense its opponents make it out to be (e.g., as in Tommy Alford’s statement above).

The front on the Holy Spirit has been relatively quiet, except for an episode in the Lim Ah Pin (LAP) congregation. In 2003, someone⁷⁰² taught on the “Person and Work of the Holy Spirit” in Bible Class at LAP. His teachings on the subject were labelled as “false” by the LAP leadership and he was subsequently disfellowshipped by LAP in November 2006. But by and large, there has not been much open talk on the subject. The consensus is that miraculous gifts through the Holy Spirit had ceased with the apostles; thus, the aversion to the use of the phrase “Holy Spirit baptism”. But there is ambivalence (or, even polyvalence) over the role and influence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s life amongst members in the churches of Christ; specifically, the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19) – direct, indirect, representative, or otherwise.

⁷⁰¹ Information for the writing of this episode, including block quotes and quotes in double inverted commas, are from a letter from the Johor Baru congregation dated 1 July 2000 to churches of Christ in Malaysia & Singapore and its accompanying “Position Paper” and email by Tee Geok Kwee. The letter was signed by Ong Chee Yong, Lee Chee Thim and Bobby Lim.

⁷⁰² The person wishes to remain anonymous.

EPILOGUE AND EVALUATION

Personal Journey

I had not thought of writing this closing chapter when I embarked on the history of the churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore. The idea did not strike me at all from the beginning through to the writing of the histories of the various congregations. But when I emailed the manuscripts to Benny Tabalujan with the view for the completed work to be published by Klesis Press, he suggested to me to write an evaluation of the history of the churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore. He said to me (not verbatim), “It would make the book that much more interesting and useful. With your more than thirty years of ministry experience, your views would be respected and appreciated.”

I do not know about the part “respected and appreciated”. On the contrary, I fear the worst – being attacked and ridiculed – written up as a liberal and false teacher who betrays the cause of the Restoration Movement and the Church of Christ. But if what I shared in this chapter proves useful, at least to some, then I would brave the potential brickbats.

Let me begin by sharing my initial conversion and experience in the church of Christ. My conversion was not through anyone from the church – no visits or personal Bible studies with anyone. As a matter of fact, I had not attended any services of the church of Christ nor of any other churches at all, Catholic or Protestant, before my conversion. My interest in Christianity and God was kindled first by the compulsory attendances in a few of the chapel services on Fridays at the Pykett Methodist School (a primary school) during the Standard 5 and 6 years just before school dismissal. Then when I was in secondary school at the Methodist Boys’ School, for some

forgotten reason, I chose to attend the elective Religious Knowledge classes on Tuesday afternoons. That was in Form 3. I also participated in the Christian Youth Fellowship meetings held on Friday afternoons just immediately after school.

At the same time I was doing the “SOON” Bible correspondence courses from an institution/church from Australia. I completed two of their courses. The story of Elijah remains a vague memory from these courses. I also requested a Bible from them and received a blue hardcover King James Bible, about 4” by 3”, with the cut edges inked in red. It was my first Bible and I treasured it at the time. A Form 3A classmate, Tay Un Soon, introduced me to a local Bible correspondence course and I signed up for it. It was Ira Y. Rice’s 27-lesson Basic Bible Course. I duly completed all the twenty-seven lessons; at the end of which, I answered “Yes” to the question: “Do you want to be baptised and have someone to assist you in this?” (something to this effect). For some strange reason, I cannot remember anyone coming to visit me after this; but there must have been a visit. I might have missed this person’s visit. But there was an arrangement made for me to be baptised. So, on the evening of 19 December 1970, I took my bicycle and cycled from my home in Gladstone Road in Georgetown all the way up to 564 Ayer Itam Road, Ayer Itam, and was baptised (against my late father’s stern warning). It was also my first time attending a church service, a Friday Bible Class of the church of Christ, Penang.

I soon learned that the church of Christ was neither Catholic nor Protestant nor denominational. These terms were quite incomprehensible to the young novice that was me at the time, even though I had asked a question or two about the Catholic-Protestant strife in Ireland while taking the “SOON” courses.

The Penang church was small. It had a minister, Peter S. Oon, a graduate of Four Seas. He was the one who baptised me. It had a church secretary, Ruby Foong, who graded the Bible courses, besides doing other administrative work. Then there were the members: a sister Lee, who was the more senior amongst them and who lived and ran a grocery store next door; a sister Theresa and her children; three Lim sisters, Nellie, Nancy and Molly; two Lam brothers; and Heah Kong Lam, who was slightly blind; besides a few others who attended occasionally.

I became close to the younger of the Lam brothers. He was two or three years my senior. I talked with him the most while in church. We would go out together on occasions, roaming the graveyards in Rifle Range and Batu Gantong, enjoying the peace and serenity of the netherworld environs. Tragically, he became schizophrenic soon after failing his Malaysian Certificate Examination, despite scoring distinctions in five or six subjects. But he failed the compulsory Bahasa Malaysia subject. A couple of years later, he took his own life.

I discovered that the church did not use musical instruments while singing during the services; that it served the Lord's Supper every Sunday. These two practices in the church services made no impression on me at the time. I did not understand the rationale for them and there was no impulse to ask why. Sometime later, there were announcements made that an American (Frank Pierce) had come to Penang and had started another church somewhere in Green Lane. Still later, we were told that American support for our church had stopped and that the church could not afford the rent for the premises we were meeting in. Not too long after, we moved to sister Theresa's place in Rifle Range, Boundary Road, for worship. I attended a few of these worship services but stopped attending soon after. It was likely that my young faith had been stretched to its limits

– the loss of a close church friend, the diminishing numbers in the services, and the troubles that were facing the church. I was to learn later that the group soon stopped meeting at sister Theresa’s place. Sister Lee, the Lim sisters, sister Theresa and her children and Heah Kong Lam went on to meet with the church group that Frank Pierce had established, which had since moved to Ayer Itam⁷⁰³ for their services. Others like Peter Oon and Ruby Foong did not follow suit and for all intents and purposes, fell away from the church completely.

I was a year or two away in the ‘faith wilderness’, so to speak, not going to church anywhere. But my faith in the one God never wavered. So when one of the members (a fellow schoolmate⁷⁰⁴ at the Methodist Boys’ School, incidentally) from the Ayer Itam church came to visit me one day, I returned to the church of Christ and have not looked back since. I preached my first sermon (on James 4 about why conflicts happened) when Frank Pierce was away one Sunday. But it was the church camp at the Stella Maris bungalow in Port Dickson in December 1975 that made a big impression on me at this stage of my faith’s walk in the church of Christ. The conditions at Stella Maris were spartan. We slept on straw mats on the bare wooden floor in the common hall (the girls slept in the rooms). Peter Lee (from Klang) and some of the ladies cooked the meals.⁷⁰⁵ I cannot recall the speakers nor the lessons taught at the camp, but I remember the joy of fellowship and the spirit of unity that pervaded the camp. For the first time in my church life, I met Christians from other parts of Malaysia and Singapore and I was

⁷⁰³ 61-T, Jalan Matang Kuching, Ayer Itam, a rented semi-detached double storey house.

⁷⁰⁴ Koo Hoong Ling was his name.

⁷⁰⁵ It was while queuing in line for a lunch meal that I spied on a beautiful young lady that unbeknown to me (and her) at the time that she would become my life’s companion at home and at church.

impressed that we were all Christians in the same, the one and only church, the church of Christ. We sang, prayed, worshipped, studied and played together. In the nights, we were bused to the newly built Town Hall to support a Gospel Campaign that was happening at the same time. Ken Sinclair had just moved to Port Dickson to establish a congregation and he took the occasion to have this Gospel Campaign so that many Christians could be present to support it. Perry Cotham was the speaker. But, again, what impressed me was the closeness of the fellowship. Everyone was of one heart and one mind.

These are my recollections of those early formative years of my faith's walk in the church. The writing is longer than anticipated or intended. But I think it serves as a pointer to how I am going to write this epilogue and the evaluative comments to follow. My faith's history and experiences have been coloured and shaped largely in the church and not by any denominational influence. By the same token, the history and the faith practices of the church of Christ have been coloured and shaped by the missionaries who came to evangelise this part of the world.

Observations

Yes, the church of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore has a history. There is no denying this (contrary to some who would assert otherwise). This history is rooted in the nineteenth century Restoration Movement in the United States; more pointedly, in the conservative wing of the Church of Christ in the southern Bible Belt of America after the Restoration Movement split three ways – the Disciples of Christ (instrumental), the Church of Christ (non-instrumental), and the Christian Church (a further split from the Church of Christ early in the twentieth century, also on musical instruments). This history has

significant ramifications in the teachings and practices of the churches here; to be more precise, of those who are in leadership roles and who have the biggest influence on the membership at large. The teachings and practices, in turn, give identity and character to the churches, whether as asserted or as expressed existentially.

The Restoration Movement began life as a unity movement in the 19th century, renouncing all denominational divisions, teachings and practices deemed contrary to the Bible. It sought to restore the divided church to its pristine first century state – the one and only church that Jesus Christ promised to build (Matt 16:18) and which came into being in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It is ironic and contrary to the visionary ideals of the Restorationists like the Campbells, Thomas and Alexander, and Barton W. Stone, that this unity movement should suffer the wreck of divisions in such a relatively short time. The crack that first appeared to split the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ continues to splinter into many lines of smaller cracks like a pane of glass splintering into many pieces. In truth, this crack is only one amongst countless others which have been splintering the historical church into so many denominations and sects from the very first schism (whichever that was). Many in the denominations hold the view that the church of Christ exists in the collective denominations (and even sects, barring the more extreme and outlandish cults) like a vine with its many branches. Some have cited John 15 in support of this belief. Some think that it is an intersection of the denominations. But to the Restorationists, this will not do. The church is fundamentally one. It cannot be divided. It cannot have so many differences of practice and doctrine and cacophonous voices.

The question to ask is: If the church is not the sum of the collective denominations, nor an intersection, then is there a church or a group in the divided Christendom that can truly claim that it is indeed the church of Christ which Jesus built and which is not any different from the first century church? Scripturally, there is such a church since Jesus also promised that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18, KJV). Existentially, it must also be true since the words of Christ, who is divine, are ever true (John 14:6; Psalm 33:4; cf. John 6:63).

The question to ask next is: Where is this church and what are its distinctive characteristics? The Campbells and Stone believed it is possible to find this church in the scriptures when one leaves aside all human creeds, traditions, manuals and confessions of faith. Successors to these Restorationists believe they are this true church of Christ. They strongly believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and is the only guide and authority for faith and practice. They will speak only where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent. Moreover, they believe all true seekers of God can find him and his will for them if they will only obey the commands and follow the examples in the Bible; and make discerned inferences from Scripture. If they were to do all these, they are saved and are added to the one church of Christ which was established in A.D. 33 (or, A.D. 30) in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

Succinctly, seekers of God are saved and added by the Lord to the church when they hear and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. This is shown when they repent of their sins, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and are baptised (immersed) for the forgiveness of sins. As they are in the church of Christ, they participate with other similarly saved Christians in the local church’s services and activities, viz., mid-week Bible classes, Sunday worship and Bible studies. In worship, they sing

praises without the use of musical instruments (a capella), pray and make intercessions, partake the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, read a passage of Scripture and hear a sermon preached and give of their monetary means into the offering bag. These are the so-called five acts of worship and anterior to these, the five steps of conversion.

Churches of Christ do not have a mother church or a central governing body or a headquarters. Each local church or congregation is autonomous; that is, self-governing. Each local church, when old and mature enough, would have a body of elders and deacons. The elders govern and lead the congregation. The deacons assist the elders.⁷⁰⁶ If a church does not have elders and deacons, its leadership is in the hands of the male members. Female members do not take on formal leadership roles. They do not lead in any capacity in the worship services. They are not allowed to teach the men, whether through preaching from the pulpit or teaching in a Bible class or leading in a prayer.⁷⁰⁷ They may teach amongst themselves in ladies' classes and children in the children's classes. A church may hire a preacher or preachers (usually known as ministers) to preach and teach and do the evangelism work in the local community.

The above describe in brief the church of Christ, undenominational, neither Catholic nor Protestant. Each characteristic, doctrine, or practice, has a scriptural authority or precedent. Members of the churches of Christ pride themselves (this writer included) in belonging to the church which Jesus

⁷⁰⁶ Also known as pastors, presbyters and bishops; though these three terms, by convention, are lesser used in the churches of Christ.

⁷⁰⁷ However, as of 2021 or earlier, one church, Geylang, has allowed women to lead in prayer and song in its services. It has also used instrumental accompaniment in its singing. These changes were made to keep the young in the church. At least another congregation is considering allowing their women to have more active roles in their worship services too.

promised and built (thus, church of Christ and not Church of Christ). They call themselves Christians only, disciples or followers of Christ; but not Baptists, Presbyterians or any other denominational or sectarian names; and certainly, not Campbellites or Stoneites.

Risking being repetitious, the question must be asked again: What is the true church of Christ? Is it just not having a non-sectarian name or nomenclature? Or, not having a central governing headquarters or mother church? Or, positively, practising the right steps of conversion? Or, performing the five acts of worship each Sunday just as the first century church did? Or, reading Scripture through the lenses of command, example and inference? Or, are there other defining characteristics besides what have been mentioned?

This writer had the opportunity to be in Memphis, Tennessee, in the United States in the latter half of 2014 attending a semester at the Harding School of Theology (HST) on a Hogan-Cate Sabbatical Grant. While in Memphis, he visited and worshipped with several of the churches of Christ and non-churches of Christ not too far from HST; though he was with the Chinese speaking congregation at the Highland church of Christ most of the Sundays. There was one particular church which he was determined to visit and this was the Getwell church (of *The Spiritual Sword* fame). He visited the church one Wednesday evening for its mid-week Bible class and subsequently one of its Sunday evening worship services too. What this writer took away from these two visits was the sameness in the 'feel' and pattern of the services as those which the writer grew up with in the 1970s and 80s in the churches of Christ in Malaysia. This impression was reinforced when about a couple of weeks before the writing of this paragraph (May 2024), he visited and worshipped with a church of Christ in Melbourne and after the

service he felt the sameness in the ‘feel’ of the service too. Whether it was Memphis (2014), Penang (1971), Kuala Lumpur (1976), or Melbourne (2024), the same aura and pattern of services were repeated. It was as if there was an unwritten ‘fixed liturgy’ and a common language of prayers to be said: “Let us give generously for God loves a cheerful giver”; “Dismiss us from here and bring us back at the next appointed hour”.

All these could be due to the same five acts of worship being performed in all the churches. Or, could it be something else? What if I were able to somehow transport myself to a ‘pristine church’ in the first century, say, Jerusalem, and it was doing the same five acts of worship, would I still get the same ‘feel’ in its services? I would tend to think not; though I have absolutely no way of proving this. How then do these modern-day churches of Christ derive their common ‘fixed liturgy’ (often humorously described by some as “three songs and a prayer”) and the prayer language? The answer is not too difficult to find. All these churches share a common heritage – the Restoration Heritage. But what is even more significant is that these churches were and are taught by the more conservative wing of preachers and missionaries, viz., the southern Bible Belt of America⁷⁰⁸ and their ‘sons’ in the local scene.

The point I am making is that these conservative preachers and missionaries had stamped their brand of conservatism on the churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore. Even though they upheld the inspiration and authority of Scripture, with book, chapter and verse for everything they taught, they could not prevent their human foibles from

⁷⁰⁸ A case in point is that had Howard Merches, who was from outside the Bible Belt, won his battle with Frank H. Pierce and more pertinently, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., churches of Christ in Malaysia would have a different complexion altogether. See the story on Kuala Lumpur.

clouding their teachings and practices. They wanted orthodoxy and orthopraxis, but did they get it all right?

The call of the Restorationists was to go back to the Bible – back to where and when it all began – Jerusalem on Pentecost and subsequently, the mission churches which the apostles and others planted throughout Samaria, Judea, Asia and Macedonia. In this, the Restorationists believed they had both the blueprint and the pattern for restoring the broken and divided church and thence to establishing local congregations anywhere in the world in like pattern to the first century church. Any deviation from the blueprint and pattern had to be fought tooth and nail. Along the way there were such deviations (perceived or otherwise) – missionary societies, musical instruments, pre-millennialism and others, big and small; not to mention denominations. This history of battling false teachings to keep the truth and purity of the church developed into a militant “fighting style”⁷⁰⁹ mindset amongst some in the more fundamental conservative group in the churches of Christ.

A strain of this “fighting style” became embedded in the minds and faith systems of the local Christians in Malaysia and Singapore through the missionaries who taught them.⁷¹⁰ The more militant ones would call out their fellow Christians as “false teachers” if they differed from them in their teachings. They arrogate themselves as possessing all the truth of the Bible. Only

⁷⁰⁹ Owed this phrase to Richard T. Hughes, in *Reviving the Ancient Faith* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996).

⁷¹⁰ A former member from the Moulmein Road church shared with the writer one time that when he was young in the church, he would go out with other fellow young Christians to do personal work on Saturday afternoons. He said, “We would carry along our guns, i.e., our Bibles to debate with the denominational folks.” The writer was both amused and taken aback with his allusion of Bibles to guns, which uncannily echoes the “fighting style” spirit.

their readings and interpretations of the Bible are correct. All who differ from them are to be rooted out and corrected. And if they refuse to repent of their false teaching(s) they would have to be disfellowshipped; that is, treated as being outside the communion of the churches of Christ and be shunned by all the faithful.

But what if not everyone agrees to the disfellowship? What if some continue to fellowship with the disfellowshipped? Then, they, too, will have to be marked and called to repentance and if they refuse, they, too, will have to be disfellowshipped. This became known as the 'guilt-by-association' doctrine, based ostensibly on 2 John 9-11.

In a nutshell, this is how divisions happen within the church, both local and universal.

As we have seen in the stories on the churches, there had been at least three such divisions: (1) the first involving Samuel Miao and his cohorts, (2) the second involving Bill Page and those he persuaded to be one-cuppers and (3) the third involving Dave Hogan and his articles on all life is worship and the Holy Spirit. Of the three, the first two are limited in scope with not much impact to the unity of the churches. But the third was to effectively split the fellowship into two. In December 1992, Lim Ah Pin formally disfellowshipped Dave Hogan on account of his "false doctrines". This had the effect of splitting the churches into two sides: one which agreed with the disfellowship, the other disagreed and continued to fellowship with Dave Hogan. Even though no church sent out letters of disfellowship to other churches in the aftermath of the disagreement, the division was clear. Those churches which went along with Dave Hogan's disfellowship would not want to have anything to do with the other churches which did not. Moreover, they considered these other churches as liberal and therefore to be marked and

avoided.⁷¹¹ Guilt by association was the nail used to condemn these 'liberal' churches.⁷¹²

Evaluation

Before all these broke out, this writer had not heard of guilt by association as a doctrine to disfellowship. He only knew Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5. But both have to do with moral infractions, not false teachings. The passage 2 John 9-11 is cited to support the guilt by association doctrine. Is this right? I have my reservations.

The context behind 2 John 9-11 is one of itinerants and hospitality, welcoming and not welcoming. This should be a yellow flag to signal caution when building a doctrine on disfellowship. But my main reservation rests on the interpretation of the phrase "teaching (doctrine) of Christ" in verse 9. It is possible to read this phrase in two ways:

- (1) teaching *from* Christ; i.e., the body of teachings as taught by Christ himself and enunciated by the writers of the New Testament;
- (2) teaching *about* Christ; i.e., the teaching concerning the person of Christ himself, his humanity and his divinity.

Within the context of the Johannine epistles, it is more probable that John is referring to the teaching on the humanity

⁷¹¹ Some of the churches would even tell their members not to worship with the so-called liberal churches when the members travelled out of their hometown.

⁷¹² It was also used to mark and shun those who have attended Christian schools deemed liberal (e.g., Abilene Christian University) and those who were deemed to continue to associate with Christians who made controversial remarks (e.g., Ken Sinclair seen as associating with Carroll Osborn at ACU).

and divinity of Jesus Christ – Jesus is come in the flesh and he is the Christ, the Son of God (2 John 7; 1 John 4:1-3; 1 John 2:20-23). There were antichrists in John’s time who denied both teachings. In denying both, they denied the Father and the Son and thus, were not from God. Moreover, they went out from the fellowship of Christians (1 John 2:18-19; 2 John 7). Thus, these itinerant teachers were not to be shown the ancient customary hospitality.

But what if it was the teaching(s) from Christ? We know Jesus taught many things: God, kingdom, salvation, human intercourse – like love, forbearance, forgiveness, justice, mercy, etc. Which of these are of such gravity that a failure to abide in them deserves the condemnation of being called a “wicked work” worthy of disfellowship? Certainly, there are teachings that cannot be compromised at all. But are there teachings with enough wiggle room to differ and the differences tolerated? Or, is it an infraction of one is the infraction of all (cf. James 2:10 – stumbling on one point of the law is guilty of breaking all of it)? Another question: have we all understood the teaching(s) of Christ correctly; or, have we been misinformed; or, have we even substituted our own opinions for the teachings of Christ?

But even if a Christian is to be disfellowshipped, it is his elders and/or his congregation that should be the ones to do the disfellowshipping. A church or a person that disfellowships someone from a different congregation violates the autonomy principle of local churches to self-govern and self-discipline.

There is a most uncompromising attitude amongst the fundamental conservatives who take it upon themselves to guard the purity of the church and its teachings. They regard themselves as having the whole truth of God’s word and those who differ from them must necessarily be false. Take the instance of all life is worship. To these conservatives, worship

constitutes the four or five acts of worship performed congregationally on appointed days and times. Worship cannot be all of life, twenty-four hours a day, or, each waking moment. To them the doctrine is false because it would mean that every act of a person is worship – like going to the toilet or making love on the bed. But this is not what those who espouse or are sympathetic to the doctrine mean. They do not mean all acts; but the whole of one’s life is to be given to the service and glory of God. It is not so much actions, but mind, intention and attitude. It is heart. All life is worship is what these Christians understand from the “greatest commandment” to love God with “all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt 22:37) and the “royal law” to love neighbour as self (Matt 22:37-39; James 2:8). In so loving God and neighbour, these Christians understand that they have to offer their “bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” which constitutes what the apostle Paul describes as “your spiritual act of worship” (Rom 12:1-2, NIV). This cannot be sporadic, or confined to certain holy days like Easter; but daily. Thus, all life is worship.

The uncompromising attitude can be carried by certain individuals to the ludicrous use/misuse of Scripture (proof-texting). At the height of the all life is worship controversy a group of leaders from the Kuala Lumpur, Klang, Petaling Jaya and Seremban congregations came together in the latter half of the 1980s to discuss the issue, specifically, the fellowship or disfellowship of Dave Hogan. This writer was at the meeting too. At one juncture, one in the group remarked that Dave Hogan was to be disfellowshipped because he refused to answer a set of “Yes-or-No” questions posed to him. He reasoned that since Dave Hogan refused to answer the questions, he was in violation of 1 Peter 3:15, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”.

Therefore, he deserved to be disfellowshipped. This writer had the “duh!?” moment of his life.

Looking at the overall history of the churches in this part of the world, we need to ask ourselves whether we truly are the church that Jesus promised and built. Or, we have become, wittingly or unwittingly, the church that resembles more the church of Christ of the southern Bible Belt of America. We claimed and prided ourselves as being identical to the pristine church of the first century. In truth, we are more like the church at Corinth, conflicted and wrecked by factions. Reality is often far from the ideal.

Church is more than the externals – local autonomy, plurality of elders and deacons, singing without piano accompaniment, observing the Lord’s Supper on each Sunday, scriptural support for every doctrine and practice, or any of the hallmarks of the churches of Christ.

The Restorationists might have a most noble goal; but they were children of their time. Europe was enamoured with the Enlightenment. The logic of reason and the scientific method were becoming more and more the tools of epistemology. Francis Bacon’s inductive method (Baconianism) through logical reasoning was most persuasive. There was freedom from central control, governmental and ecclesial, in the New Land. Conditions were ripe for a new break from the traditional. It was this rush of freedom and logical reasoning that influenced the Restorationists’ thinking on church and Scripture. Alexander Campbell’s effort to rediscover the pristine church of the first century (also referred to as “primitivism”) was shaped by Bacon’s inductive method and the Scottish Enlightenment. He believed that the “inductive style of inquiring and reasoning, is to be as rigidly carried out in reading and teaching the Bible facts and documents, as in the analysis and synthesis of physical

nature”.⁷¹³ The hermeneutic of command, example and inference had its root in this rigid “induction style”. It is a useful method; but not the only method and certainly not fool-proof; especially when there is an element of silence (e.g., the “many” versus the “one” in the communion controversy; or, Sunday schools).

Scripture is more than a book of facts. It is not a scientific treatise. It is revelation from God mediated through godly men over centuries “at many times and in various ways” (see Heb 1:1-2) with diversity in genre, background, history, audience, purpose and so forth. Of greater significance, revelation is God-breathed, inspired by the Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Pure and cold logical reasoning cannot be the exact tool to pry open “the deep things of God”. There needs to be a spirit sentience too in the reader of God’s word (see 1 Cor 2:6-16). We need to heed the warning of Peter when he alludes to Paul’s letters that they “contain some things that are hard to understand” (2 Pet 3:15-16). Scripture as a whole too contains many things that are hard to understand. As believers in God reading his word we need to be humble enough to admit that even while we understand so many things, we, too, are uncertain or even ignorant about so many other things. As such, we may be right with some things; but by the same token, possibly wrong with others as well.

Again, church is more than the externals. These externals are merely the skeletal structures that hold and frame the shape of the church. We may want to think that these externals give identity to the church. But the real identity lies in the inner life of its community of believers – its fellowship – how the believers walk with God and with one another. Loving God and loving one another (even, enemies) are signal messages that

⁷¹³ Cited in Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 31.

constantly pop up in Scripture. Compassion, kindness, mercy, gentleness, peace, goodness, faithfulness, forgiveness, grace, humility are frequent prescriptions to how we should relate to one another. We will do well to learn from Jesus' compassion to the poor and the oppressed, the children who came to him, the Samaritan woman, the woman caught in adultery, the thief on the cross, and even Peter who denied Jesus three times.

Paul's writings on fellowship within the church are worthy of our meditation and emulation in real life. He recognises that the church, though it be one, is in fact many with diversities of gifts and functions. Each member should not think too highly of themselves (Rom 12:3-8; also 1 Cor 12). Where there are differences on disputable matters, there should be forbearance (Rom 14, 15). Every effort should be made which leads to peace and mutual edification. God's work (i.e., the church) should not be destroyed over a matter of opinion (Rom 14:19-20). When grievances appear, forgive one another (Col 3:12-14). Submit to one another, the apostle instructs (Eph 5:21). Love for one another must abound because love never fails (1 Thes 3:12; 4:9; 1 Cor 13:4-8). The apostle John too has similar ambitions for his readers (1 John 3:11-20; 4:16-21).

The Restorationists' vision of the church as one is most admirable. In envisioning this one church, they called for believers from everywhere, every denomination and sect to come out of the darkness of human traditions into the light of God's word. Human traditions divide; God's word unites. The Lord Jesus prayed for his followers to be one with "complete unity" (John 17:20-23). Paul, the apostle, exhorted the early churches to have "a spirit of unity" – "one heart and mouth", "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose", "perfectly united in mind and purpose" (Rom 15:5-6; Phil 2:1-4; 1 Cor 1:10). The early church in Jerusalem was an

exemplar of this unity, being “one in heart and mind” (Acts 4:32-35; cf. 2:42-47).

Alas, this unity did not last long. The church at Rome had fault lines along the Jewish and Gentile divide (both groups were believers in the same church); the church at Corinth was beset by factions; two Christian sisters in Philippi could not agree with each other. Paul pleaded with them to agree. In the same manner, he urged the Corinthians to agree with one another; that there be no divisions. He asked rhetorically, “Is Christ divided?” To the Roman Christians, he warned them “to watch out for those who cause divisions” and to “Keep away from them”. (See Rom 16:17-19; Phil 4:2; 1 Cor 1:10-13.)

A church that is contorted with conflicts and factions is not the church of Christ that Jesus built and prayed for even if it got all the externals right. Divisions have been rife in the larger church from the beginning. The unity Jesus prayed for has been elusive. It is no surprise then, that we, churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore, are divided. The sense of universal brotherhood and mutual co-operation in the 1970s to the mid-1980s has been replaced by division and parochialism. Churches have become more isolated from one another. Is it the times? Or, the absence of missionaries? Or, the ‘jet-lag’ from all the fighting and quarrelling? Or, churches have become big enough to be self-reliant and have no need of the others? It is most probable that it is not a single one of these, but a combination of them all plus others.

This writer has a wistful dream – “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” (Ps 133:1).⁷¹⁴

⁷¹⁴ He is heartened to learn of the reconciliation between the Eastern Shore and Lindisfarne congregations in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, which took twenty-one years from the time Eastern Shore disfellowshipped Barrie Morgan in 2001. Barrie Morgan had a big hand in establishing Lindisfarne.

Conclusion

Churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore were established by missionaries that came mostly from the Bible Belt in the southern part of the U.S.A. We are grateful that they came and for the sacrifices they made to leave home and family. They brought with them the Restorationists' vision of the one true church of Christ and respect for the authority of Scripture. But they also brought a conservatism that developed over the history of the Restoration Movement in battling false teachings both within and without the Movement. The dual vision of one church and respect for Scripture's authority is laudable and it is equally laudable that this vision be conserved with every effort made against any adulteration and/or deviation. However, the fight for orthodoxy and orthopraxis has become, for some, a personal crusade to win at all costs without any leeway of consideration for others' opinions, that others too, may also be standing on Scripture. Or, the matter in question is disputable with no rightness or wrongness in and of itself. Of greater consternation is that this fight has torn asunder the unity of both believers and churches contrary to the will and prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Church is more than the externals. It is also the life of its members – how they show the love of God in their fellowship with one another in grace, humility and forgiveness.

Not only did these two congregations reconcile, they merged to become the Mornington Hill congregation. This story was presented by Barrie Morgan at the APEDS Forum at the Belmore Road church in Melbourne on 5 November 2023.

Jesus prayed:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” – John 17:20-23, NIV

APPENDICES

- 1. Ira Y. Rice's Letter of Withdrawal of Fellowship from Samuel Miao**
- 2. Response Letter to Rice's Withdrawal of Fellowship from Samuel Miao**
- 3. Dave Hogan's Three Articles on 'All Life Is Worship'**
- 4. Dave Hogan's Response to Objections to His Three Articles on 'All Life Is Worship'**
- 5. Excerpts of Gordon Hogan's Eulogy of Annis R. Yankaya**
- 6. List of Churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore**

Appendix 1: Ira Y. Rice's Letter of Withdrawal of Fellowship from Samuel Miao (copy of letter courtesy of Timmy Choy)

131 Moulmein Road
Singapore 11
Republic of Singapore

18th August 1968

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, Greeting--

Re: Withdrawal of Fellowship
from Samuel Miao

Forasmuch as there had been growing concern over the past many months as to the doctrinal soundness of brother Samuel Miao, he was invited to consider these doctrinal differences in open discussion with brother Ira Y. Rice, Jr., on the night of 1st August 1968, at 131 Moulmein Road, here in Singapore.

Invited to witness this discussion not only were the regular preachers from all the local congregations in Singapore (who, in turn, were requested to invite mature members of their own congregations, as they saw fit), but also all the teachers and students from Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, as well as various missionaries and local preachers from Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Thailand, Viet Nam, Indonesia and Australia (at least four of whom managed to be present from some of these other countries).

Beginning at 7:30 p.m. that night, the discussion lasted until 1 o'clock the following morning. By mutual request of brethren Rice and Miao, brother Fat McGee, of Djakarta, Indonesia, served as chairman of the meeting. Both speakers were given unlimited time to state their views concerning the doctrinal matters involved. Open questions by any and all present were invited at the close of the talks.

Resulting from the foregoing, the following points were clearly and definitely established:

- 1) That the differences concerned were wholly doctrinal in nature, not of personalities.
- 2) That brother Miao does not believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible, as taught by the scriptures.
- 3) That he believes it to be impossible to understand the Bible, except in the most ambiguous terms, based a) upon one's own personal cultural background and b) upon one's own private interpretation, contrary to II Peter 1:20-21.
- 4) That Sam believes that the word of God is just one among other sources of faith.
- 5) That he believes it to be impossible for two Christians to speak the same things, being of the same mind and of the same judgment with no divisions, as required by I Corinthians 1:10.
- 6) That brother Miao no longer believes that the churches of Christ are the one true church of the New Testament.
- 7) That brother Miao believes that the church of the New Testament, today, includes not only some of the members of the churches of Christ, but also some of the members of some (though not all) of the denominations. Seemingly, he finds it impossible to identify with any clarity just what the one true church of the New Testament is.
- 8) That Sam has no clear belief as to whether members of denominational churches are either saved or lost, and admittedly makes no effort whatsoever to convert them.
- 9) That he no longer believes that churches of Christ are the restoration of original Christianity as taught in the New Testament.

10) That brother Miao has no clear idea of just how New Testament Christianity could be restored--or even that it should be restored.

11) That he believes the churches of Christ are merely one of the denominations among many.

12) That Sam, contrary to John 8:32, I Timothy 4:3 and II John 1, 2 and 4, disbelieves that we can really know the truth.

13) That, according to his own public statement, the use or non-use of instrumental music in Christian worship is a matter of no consequence to him.

14) That he deplores what he calls the churches of Christ's "closed limited system" as preventing us from going forth to meet the "dynamic challenge"--though he did not define just what that challenge might be.

15) That it was while in Graduate School that he first conceived of the churches of Christ as having a "closed, limited system," thus destroying his faith in it. He charged us with having become a "legalistic sect."

16) That Sam believes that the Bible, including the New Testament, is a "written code" that "kills," which is a perversion of the teaching in II Corinthians 3.

17) That he believes "the Christian is not under a law system"--that we are free not only from the law of the Old Testament but also from ALL LAW, which is contrary to Galatians 6:2.

18) That he believes, in his own words, that "we are saved by grace apart from adherence to a law system."

19) That Sam ridicules those who use Bible quotations extensively in their preaching.

20) That he feels it senseless to try to defend the faith, contrary to Philipians 1:17 and Jude 3. Those who contend for the faith to the exclusion of the doctrines and commandments of men he stigmatizes as guilty of "obscurantism" (i.e., the practice of trying to obscure the sources of knowledge).

21) That Sam contends that by "truth" churches of Christ mean that we have "worked out the perfect system" and that everyone who comes to God must come through us, which is not what we teach at all--and never have!

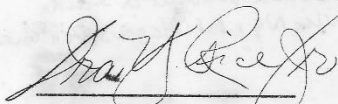
Over the past three years, since returning to Singapore in 1965, it is self-evident that brother Miao not only has entertained such views, but that he has sowed them in the hearts of many, thus causing offences and divisions contrary to the doctrine of Christ. In Romans 16:17-18, the apostle Paul teaches us to "mark" and "avoid" such persons, "for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

All scriptural efforts to restore Sam to the faith (of which, like Eymenaeus and Alexander (I Timothy 1:19-20), he has made shipwreck) have failed. Brother Rice reports having told him his fault privately on more than one occasion. (Matthew 18:15) When Sam did not repent, brother Rice took brethren Tan Keng Koon and David Chew, as witnesses, and talked with him again, to no avail. (vs.16) It was only after these initial steps already had been taken and failed to effect correction that the open discussion of August 1st was held, at which time brother Rice "told it to the church". (vs.17)

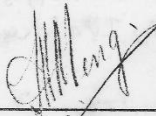
Inasmuch as brother Miao still persists in following his offensive, divisive course, having refused to repent, we, the undersigned, therefore, collectively and severally, withdraw our fellowship from him and mark him for what he is--a false teacher.

In taking this action, none of us has any animosity or ill will toward brother Miao. It is our prayer that he may thus be led to think on these things, come to his senses and repent, that fellowship might be then restored, according to Galatians 6:1.

Signed in sadness,



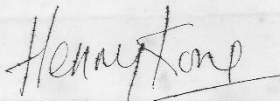
Ira Y. Rice, Jr.,
Missionary to Singapore
Minister, Moulmein Road
Church of Christ
President, Four Seas College



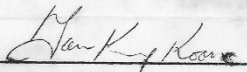
Lye Hong Meng,
Minister, Geylang
Church of Christ



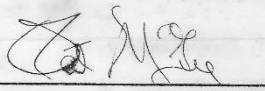
Charlie Ng Fock Lam,
Minister, Moulmein Road
Church of Christ
(Chinese Section)
Business Manager,
Four Seas College



Henry Kong,
Minister, Queenstown
Church of Christ



Tan Keng Koon,
Minister, Upper Serangoon Road
Church of Christ
Dean of Students,
Four Seas College



Pat McGee,
Missionary to Indonesia
Minister, Djakarta
Church of Christ



Eddy Ee, fellow-minister with
brother Tan Keng Koon at
Upper Serangoon Road
Church of Christ
Teacher, Four Seas College



Monty Lee,
Editor, The Teacher's Newsletter

Appendix 2: Response Letter to Rice's Withdrawal of Fellowship from Samuel Miao (copy of letter courtesy of Timmy Choy)

RE: LETTER DECLARING WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP
FROM SAMUEL MIAO

7th October, 1968

Dear Fellow-Christians,

Grace and peace be with you.

We refer to the letter under reference dated 18th of August, 1968, which listed twenty-one articles of "alleged false teachings" described as "clearly and definitely established". In as much as we were witnesses of the open discussion held at 131 Moulmein Road on the first night of August, 1968, we would like to inform you that the letter, initiated by an individual, have in many instances misrepresented the above mentioned. It may interest you to note carefully:

- i) That Samuel Miao stated distinctly that he does believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible.
- ii) That Samuel Miao does not believe it to be impossible to understand the Bible except in the most ambiguous terms.
- iii) That Samuel Miao does not believe we cannot really know the truth, (but definitely not all truth)
- iv) That Samuel Miao does not believe we are free from all law.
- v) That Samuel Miao does not ridicule those who use Bible quotation extensively in their preaching (but maintains that purposefulness is far more important than quantity.)
- vi) That Samuel Miao does not believe that the New Testament is a written code that kills.

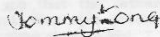
In addition, we would like you to realise that Samuel Miao does believe that:

- i) Because the Bible is subject to interpretation, we cannot have all truth, since the original manuscripts have been lost and direct revelation has ceased.
- ii) Instrumental music in Christian worship is not a matter of faith.
- iii) Restoration of the church is a continuous process and cannot be complete.
- iv) A certain portion of the brotherhood has developed itself into a closed, limited system.
- v) The Church of the New Testament includes some members of the major Protestant churches that share in the fundamental beliefs.
- vi) "The truth", a certain portion of the brotherhood claims to have is not necessary identical to the "Faith" mentioned in Jude 3 or the "Doctrine of Christ" in Romans 16:17.

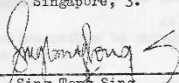
Therefore, we have come to the conclusion that Samuel Miao not only believes in the Bible as firmly as as anyone of us but that he has not taught any false teaching that have caused offences contrary to the Doctrine of Christ. However, this does not mean that he is in harmony with all the beliefs advocated by a portion of the brotherhood.

For all these reasons, we hereby announce that (i) we have ignored the letter declaring the withdrawal of fellowship from Samuel Miao, and (ii) we will continue to receive him as a brother in Christ.

Signed in Conviction,



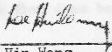
Tommy Khong
340 Henderson Crescent,
Singapore, 3.



Sing Tong Sing
13, Simon Lane,
Singapore, 19



Tan Hock Lye
16, Marina Avenue
Singapore, 16



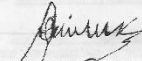
Lee Hin Wong
19 Lorong Bachok
Singapore, 14



Goh Eng Kee
20 Lorong Pelandok
Singapore, 3



Linda Leong
14, Gemmill Lane,
Singapore, 1



Seow Gim Hock
46, Veerasamy Road
Singapore, 8



Eric Tan
53E Jalan Batu
Singapore, 14

tkb/

Appendix 3: Dave Hogan's Three Articles on 'All Life Is Worship'

Article 1

**Christian Worship in the New Testament
Part I**

What is Christian Worship? Is it something that happens several times a week when Christians “go to church”? “Worship is at 9:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.” We have “opening” and “closing” Prayers (*sic*) and not a few of the closing prayers have included the expression (or one similar): “dismiss us from this hour of worship and bring us back at the next appointed time.” We also speak of “*five acts of worship.*” This is the first in a series of articles in which we will explore the New Testament concept of Christian Worship.

It was in his scandalous discussion with the Samaritan Woman that Jesus announced the revolutionary kind of worship that God is seeking in his worshippers (John 4:21-24). She had been shocked when the Jewish Rabbi asked her for a drink. Men did not often speak in public to women in those days and Jews despised Samaritans (and vice versa), so for a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman was a real shocker. And Jesus did not merely engage in a superficial chit-chat but began to probe and unveil her tragic life. That’s when she changed the subject to a hot religious issue; the longstanding debate over where one should worship that raged between Jews and Samaritans. “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (Jn. 4:20).

“Believe me woman,” Jesus said, “that the time is coming when it will be neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem that you will worship the father (*sic*).”

Before moving on to a positive statement of what worship will be he clears the ground with this negative statement. Worship will no longer be restricted to a place. He is not saying that it would be wrong to worship in Samaria (Philip’s converts worshipped there) or Jerusalem (the earliest Christians even met in the temple for a while,

cf: Acts 2:46). He is saying that worship is no longer restricted to just place. It will no longer be restricted to geographical location (Jerusalem) or architecture (the temple).

In verse 24 Jesus goes on to a positive statement of what worship will be. "True worshippers will worship God in spirit and in truth." We will give more attention to this in our next article. Suffice it to say now that our language which tends to limit worship to time and place cannot be justified from this passage. The old way of worship for the Jews was regulated and restricted by time and location. But now the place of worship is the very life of the believer. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, you are not your own: you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body (*sic*) (I Cor. 6:1). "You are a royal priesthood..." (I Pet. 2:19 (*sic*)). So it is Christian's body that is the temple, God's dwelling place. And the Christian himself is the priest always on duty. So worship is a round the clock affair!

Article 2

Christian Worship in the New Testament II

In Jesus (*sic*) remarkable conversation with the Samaritan woman he announced the dawning of a new age. "A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem," he said. The veil separating sacred from secular would be torn asunder. True worship would never again be confined to time and place. The Levitical cultic system with its special priesthood and elaborate ritual at the tabernacle and later the temple in Jerusalem had its place. It was God-ordained but not eternal. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews," Jesus explained, clearly taking his stand with revelation. In this he did not equivocate. And the Samaritans in rejecting all of the O.T. except the five books of Moses were (like the Athenians in Acts 17) worshipping in ignorance. But Israel had served

its purpose. The Promised One had come and with him the fullness and truth of which the old Jewish way was merely a shadow.

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.” In v. 21 Jesus had loosed worship from geographical fetters, the temple and holy places built and guarded by men. Henceforth the question “which place” is the wrong question. True worship, inaugurated by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, is in spirit and in truth. Some have incorrectly interpreted this to mean “in sincerity and according to God’s word.” What would be new about that? Jesus is contrasting the old way with the new. God has always expected man to worship in sincerity and according to His will. (For a full discussion see James D. Bale’s *Instrumental Music and New Worship* pp. 19-20). This was clear in the Law (Deut. 5:32; 6:4-9; 12:32; Exo. 25:2) and the continual cries of the prophets (for example: Jer. 7:1-4; 8:15). Jesus is saying much more here. He is not putting new wine in old wineskins but announcing a new and radically different understanding for which the temple worship in Jerusalem was merely preparatory.

We must listen carefully. This is a key issue in our relationship with God. “For such worshippers the Father seeks!” In misunderstanding of life which Jesus Christ came to bring us (*sic*) (Jn. 10:10). Until Jesus Christ true worship of the Jews and false worship of Gentile (*sic*) had been characterized by 2 qualities: physical in substance and symbolic in nature. The elaborate temple cultus was “touchable, seeable and smellable”, God’s way of teaching and preparing people for his full self-revelation in Jesus Christ. In Jesus “the word became flesh” (Jn. 1:14). And through Jesus we, who live in the flesh, are empowered to offer God real worship. “God is spirit” (v. 24) is not a definition of his being anymore than ‘God is light’ (1 Jn. 1:5) or ‘a devouring fire’ (Deut. 4:24). To know that God is spirit is to understand that he is life-giving. “In truth” perhaps should be translated “in reality”, the greek (*sic*) word often occurs in John in the sense of “the real” – for eg. (*sic*) Jn. 1:9. Jesus announces the wonderful news that we may now be real worshippers “those whose religious exercises are

in actual fact and reality an approach to God, and not a shadowy ritual which either counterfeits or at best merely symbolizes the approach to God” (C. H. Dodd *The Fourth Gospel* p. 170). Worship now embraces all of life – not merely a few sacred hours a week. Every moment is now charged with meaning and purpose. This we must continue to explore as our series progresses!

Article 3

Christian Worship: The New Testament

In John 4:21-24, we have seen that until the coming of Jesus Christ worship was institutional, ceremonial, limited to specific times and places. It was physical in substance and symbolic in nature. Sometimes Christians have spoken and thought of their worship in these Old Testament terms, restricting their concept of worship to certain acts, limiting it to certain times. But the new worship of which Jesus spoke must not be so limited.

“The hour is coming when true worshippers will worship in spirit and in truth.” “And whatsoever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Col. 3:17). “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (I Cor. 10:31). God seeks worshippers not detached acts of worship that have little or nothing to do with the rest of the life of the worshippers. God seeks true worshippers – the worshippers themselves. It is the life of worship and not the place with which the New Testament is concerned. For the Christian worship begins as he emerges from the waters of the new birth and lasts forever.

But it is possible that our popular expressions or our mental framework more nearly corresponds to the Old Testament practice than to the New Testament principle. “Go to worship. Dismiss from worship. Acts of worship.” If these expressions exhaust our understanding of worship we are wrong. I am not saying that our

public assemblies are not worship but that they are only a tiny slice of our lives of worship.

As followers of Jesus Christ we have come into fellowship with God. He is concerned with the whole of lives. We dare not fall into the trap of compartmentalizing our life: “this little segment is God’s and is holy – but the rest is secular and is mine! “So whether you eat or whatever you do, do it *all* for the glory of God!” This is the thesis of this series of articles: all life is worship. When we see our entire life as an offering to God then our time at work or school or at play takes on new meaning and significance. It can all be done to God’s glory. Inevitably our homelife deepens. We cannot gather in public worship then go home and be unkind to our family or go to work and be unfair to our colleagues or go to school and cheat. Everything in our lives has, by God’s grace, been brought under the lordship of Christ and is worship.

In our next article we will see how this life embracing understanding of worship affected the teaching of the first century church.

N.B. These three articles written by Dave Hogan were reproduced from Ira Y. Rice, Jr., ed., *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 13-14. This writer has not sighted the original articles as they were first published in *The Evangelist*, July 15, July 23 (or, should it be 22?), and July 29, 1983 issues. Even though Dave Hogan promised a “next article” at the end of his third article, this writer is not certain whether this “next article”, the would-be fourth in the series, was ever written or published; or whether Rice merely failed to reproduce it in his *Contending for the Faith*. It is more probable that it was written, but was never published as the matter of the three articles was brought to Rice’s attention by Pat McGee soon after and Rice had acted on them by August 1983 as averred in his report in the same issue of *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 14.

Appendix 4: Dave Hogan's Response to Objections to His Three Articles on 'All Life Is Worship'

**"CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:
RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS"**

When the Editor of THE EVANGELIST recently introduced the new series, which began with the July 15th, 1983 issue, he explained that its primary purpose is to serve the brotherhood through edifying, encouraging and informative articles. It was in this spirit that I began to write a series of articles entitled "CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT." In writing these articles I aimed to encourage our Christian readers to be more committed and faithful to our Lord. I was saddened to learn that some brethren, in particular Brother Ira Y. Rice, Jr. and the members of the Board of Four Seas College (all of whom reside in the U.S.), considered them to be contrary to the Word of God. This saddens me because I am firmly committed to God's Word and desire only to know and do His will and to encourage others to do the same. The same words sometimes mean different things to different people. I believe that misunderstandings have arisen through my poor choice of words or failure to develop certain ideas fully – my own failings as a writer which I deplore and through the patience and forbearance of my brethren I hope to correct. As a Christian I feel responsible not only for what I intended to write and actually wrote but also for what my readers concluded in reading.

Brother Rice, in a recent letter to Brother David Chew, objected to several words or expressions in Parts I, II and III of my series. I would now like to clarify my intentions and make whatever changes are necessary to correct the misunderstandings.

Brother Rice objected to my styling Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 as scandalous. By this I meant only to help readers understand the social and cultural setting of Jesus' discussion with the woman. It was an offense to the propriety of Jews for a Jew to speak to a Samaritan (whom they regarded as dogs). It was also offensive for a man to speak in public to a woman. Because

of his love for people Jesus violated these ungodly customs and dared to speak not only to a Samaritan and a woman but, doubly worse, a Samaritan woman. Please forgive my choice of the word scandalous for conveying this idea as it failed to do so for some readers.

Brother Rice also asked by what authority I described the new worship Jesus announced in John 4:21 and 23 as revolutionary. I claim no authority and desired only to help readers see that to first century Jews, who revered the Temple and their holy city Jerusalem, Jesus' announcement of a radical change would be new and different, perhaps even threatening. Forgive me for failing to develop that idea more fully.

Cultic and cultus were two other words (used in Part II) to which Brother Rice objected because of their derogatory connotations. These were poor choices on my part. I foolishly used them in their technical sense as having reference to the elaborate Levitical ritual and temple ceremonies (grain and animal sacrifices, incense, instrumental music, etc. cf. II Chron. 29:18-35). I should have taken into consideration their bad connotations in current usage for describing bizarre religious groups that worship their human leaders. I did not in any way mean to speak badly of God's way in the Old Testament Levitical System. Please forgive my poor choice of words.

Brother Rice also objected to my statement that "God is Spirit" is, like other biblical statements ("God is Light" in I John 1:5 and "God is a devouring fire" in Dt. 4:24), not a definition of God's being. I only meant to call attention to the fact that biblical writers, unlike greek (*sic*) philosophers, did not seek to satisfy speculative thinking but to call men to right living before God. Thus since God is Spirit (Life-giving) men must worship in spirit. Since God is light (Holy) men must walk in light. Since God is a devouring fire (Jealous) men must worship no graven image. But in this I am venturing into waters too deep for my present understanding. I was wrong to share undigested and half developed thought and ask for my reader's forbearance.

Brother Rice's main objections relate to the central thesis of my articles: "As for Dave's unsupported teaching that 'worship now embraces all life – not merely a few sacred hours a week,' he could not

prove this from the scriptures if his life depended on it. It is just not true.” Brother Rice saw this thesis as undermining the Christian assembly. He said that I indicated that expressions such as “acts of worship,” “go to worship,” and “dismiss from worship” are wrong. In the article I wrote: “If these expressions *exhaust* our understanding of worship we are wrong.” They are wrong only when we restrict our understanding of worship to them. In Romans 12:1 Paul beseeches us to offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices (in contrast to the sacrifices of dead animals in the Jewish temple worship) which he says is our “spiritual service” or “worship” (ASV margin). “Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.” I Cor. 6:19-20. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” I Cor. 10:31. Similarly in I Peter 4:7-11 the apostle concludes a list of exhortations to godly thinking and living “that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” These passages clearly teach that worship is more than just our corporate assemblies.

In teaching that we worship God in our bodies do the New Testament writers undermine the importance of the Christian assembly? Certainly not. It is precisely because our day to day lives are to be lived to the glory of God that our regular corporate assemblies are so important. Those who have given their whole lives to God recognize the need for being with their brothers and sisters in Christ. The only passage in the New Testament which encourages Christians not to forsake their assembling together was written to Christians who were in danger of giving up their Christianity. (Heb. 10:23-25). The purpose of the assembly is, through corporate worship, to encourage us all to live lives of worship throughout the week: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not ... and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another” (Heb. 10:23-25). In our assemblies all things should be done unto edification (I Cor. 14:26). In singing we admonish and instruct one another while also praising the Lord (Col. 3:16) which

helps us to live our lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). In preaching we are challenged and encouraged to be more faithful (II Tim. 4:1-2). In the Lord's Supper we remember our Lord's death by which we are saved and affirm our unity (I Cor. 11:23ff; I Cor. 10:16-17). In giving of our means we meet the needs of fellow Christians (I Cor. 16:1-2). In prayer we pray for each other and ask for God's forgiveness, blessing and guidance (James 5:16; Col. 4:2-6). Paul also commanded that the scripture be read (I Tim. 4:13; Col. 4:16). By my count that makes 6 acts of worship. But whether we count five or six the expression "acts of worship" itself does not occur in the New Testament. What is most important is that we do God's Will (*sic*) in assembling regularly for the purpose of building one another up and helping each other live our daily lives to the praise and glory of God (Eph. 1:6,12,14; 2:10).

Since it was through the medium of *The Evangelist* that some of my readers were offended, it is on these pages that the necessary corrections had to be made. Because of my love for the Lord, His Word and my brothers and sisters in the family of God I submit this material in hope that it will correct misunderstandings that resulted from my first three articles. Again, I ask for my readers' forbearance for my poor choice of words and expressions in my original articles and I pray that my poor judgment will not be misconstrued as wilful false teaching. I urge all readers to join me in being not only hearers but also doers of God's word. (Jas. 1:23).

(Signed)
Dave Hogan

N.B. This response from Dave Hogan was first published in *The Evangelist*, September 14, 1983. The reproduction above is from Ira Y. Rice, Jr., ed., *Contending for the Faith*, September 1987, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, 16-17.

Appendix 5: Excerpts of Gordon Hogan's Eulogy of Annis R. Yankaya

ANNIS R. YANKAYA
December 17, 1953 – June 11, 1981

At about 7:30 a.m. June 11, 1981 Annis Yankaya passed from this life into eternity, truly "...a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel." (II Samuel 3:38).

He was born December 17, 1953 in the small town of Sungei Siput, Perak, Northern Malaysia. He is survived by his wife Lilian, eighteen month old son Eion, mother, father, sisters and brothers.

While still a school boy he enrolled to study a Bible Correspondence Course offered by the Church of Christ in Ipoh, Malaysia. Through this study and contact with brother Don Green, evangelist then living in Ipoh, Yankaya learned the truth of salvation, was obedient to the Lord and was baptized into Christ April 28, 1968. After completing his secondary education in Malaysia he enrolled in Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, Singapore, where he distinguished himself scholastically and in every other way. He earned a Bachelor in Arts degree, as well as the Degree in Post Graduate Studies in Bible.

Immediately following graduation from Four Seas College he became the pioneer missionary in the southern most city of Malaysia, Johore Bahru. During the six years that he served in that city many souls were saved. At the time of his death he was making plans for a great city wide Campaign. In addition to souls won in Johore Bahru, Christians from other parts of Malaysia moving there to work, joined with Yankaya and his wife Lilian to create a powerful force for the Lord.

Yankaya, in addition to his ministry in Johore Bahru also served as a special lecturer in the Four Seas College Extension Program. His classes were always popular because of his ability as a teacher and the thoroughness of study he brought to every class session. Over the years he came on a regular basis to Singapore to teach special Bible Classes in a downtown office building to workers on their lunch breaks. This resulted in winning a number of souls to Jesus and strengthening

many others. He was in great demand to preach Gospel Meetings. When doctrinal problems arose he was among the first to be called upon to assist in sorting matters out with the truth of God's Word. In the context of the Malaysia/Singapore brotherhood he was regarded as a home grown Bible scholar. He was a careful student of God's Word and at the same time maintained marvelous balance. He had a happy spirit and was always an encourager.

He was a tremendous example for his fellow preachers in this region – he was not a quitter.

...

About three weeks ago a group of graduates of Four Seas College met in Singapore to form an Alumni Association and they selected Yankaya as the Chairman of the Committee. I am certain he would have been elected the first President of the Alumni Association had he lived.

Yankaya was one of the closest friends of our son Dave. They were classmates together at Four Seas College. They dreamed of great plans for evangelising the world together. Yankaya was like a son to Jane and me. He spent many days and nights in our home. He was always courteous, kind and respectful.

Yankaya had been ill and weak for about one month. Earlier last week he telephoned and asked if I would preach and teach in his place. On Wednesday I telephoned him to say I would. He was very weak and he did not sound like himself. I asked that he let me take him to Youngberg Hospital for proper treatment, even that day. He put me off, but promised to come the next day at 2 p.m. and enter the Hospital. At 6:30 a.m. June 11, Lilian, his wife telephoned that he had a bad night and that he would be coming immediately for treatment at Youngberg. A brother in Christ drove him, Lilian and their son to Singapore and we immediately went to the emergency room of the hospital. The doctors worked with him feverishly but to no avail. Yankaya died of Cardiac Respiratory failure according to the Coroners (*sic*) report. Postmortem studies continue in order to determine what other diseases he may have suffered from.

On the evening of June 12, a service was conducted in the Moulmein Road Church building that overflowed with friends, family, brothers and sisters in Christ. It was a service of tribute to Yankaya and praise to our God, who gave him and all of us in Christ, victory! Richard Loh, minister of the Ang Mo Kio congregation Singapore led the singing; David Chew, Dean of Four Seas College spoke about Yankaya as a student; Lau Kin Fatt, minister of the Church in Kuala Lumpur, paid tribute to him as a fellow student and gospel preacher, Kwan Tai Choom, minister of the Upper Serangoon Church, Singapore spoke as the representative of Yankaya's sponsoring church. I spoke of him as a student, a friend and son.

At 10:30 a.m. June 13 a funeral service was conducted and his remains cremated at Mount Vernon Crematorium, Singapore. Students of Four Seas College served as Pall (*sic*) bearers.

...

We sorrow but not without hope. A great soldier of the cross has fallen but others will rise up to continue the battle for righteousness.

In Him,
Gordon

Excerpted from Gordon Hogan, *Singapore/Asia Newsletter*, July 1, 1981.

Appendix 6: List of Churches of Christ in Malaysia and Singapore

MALAYSIA

Batu Pahat

7 Jalan Tukas 1
Taman Soga
83000 Batu Pahat
Johor Darul Takzim
Email: gaichuu@hotmail.com

Cheras

46 Jalan Mawar 17
Taman Mastika
Cheras
56100 Kuala Lumpur
E-mail: cherascoc77@gmail.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cheraschurchofchrist/>

Damansara Perdana

D-102, Block D, Perdana Exclusive Condominium
Jalan PJU 8/1
Damansara Perdana
47820 Petaling Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan
Tel: +6013 331 3792
Email: yewchongkcoc@gmail.com
Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/damansaraperdanachurchofchrist/>

Ipoh Garden East

46 Lintasan Perajurit 6

Taman Ipoh Timur

31400 Ipoh

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