

DIOCESE OF WEST MALAYSIA

2017 SYNOD

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

THY WILL BE DONE

INTRODUCTION

In the Lord's prayer, the Lord Jesus taught us to pray 'THY WILL BE DONE on earth as it is in heaven'. It was said in conjunction with 'THY KINGDOM COME'. Every church and every individual needs to seek the Will of God daily, weekly, monthly and annually. At times, when we are so used to doing church, unknowingly, we allow the operation or daily ritual takes place and least bother whether God is around or we follow His Will. The routine goes on and no one, including ourselves, notices any difference because our mind is focusing on the 3 Big EGOs – Success, Achievement, Victory. Sadly, we often dwell on these as our Divine Goals and try to qualify ourselves using the Name of God or convincing ourselves that it is biblical and scripturally based. Do we really know the Will of God for our church? Is the Will of God, now, on earth the same as in heaven? Are we playing God or satisfying ourselves with theological and biblical know-how? Are we crediting our own wishes and desires and calling them God's Will? Where in this world, our nation, our diocese and ourselves is the Kingdom of God seen? Are we using God for our own agenda?

1.0 HOW IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THIS PRESENT WORLD

We are in a very challenging time. The world seems to get darker and darker each moment. The people of God is under heavy duress each day. The scenario of the Christian Church in the 21st Century is seemingly like that of the Christian Church in the 1st Century during Jesus and the Apostles' days. Rampant and open persecutions of the Christian Church is ongoing, once it was confined to the Roman Empire but now it is worldwide. According to Fox News, an Italian based report conducted by the Center for Studies on New Religions found that about "600 million Christians were prevented from practicing their faith in 2016".¹

In early November, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that Christianity is "the most persecuted religion in the world." Rupert Short's recent research report for Civitas UK confirms Merkel's claim — Christianity is in peril, like no other religion Short shows that "Christians are targeted more than any other body of believers." Short is the author of the recently published Christianophobia: A Faith Under Attack. He is

¹ Perry Chiaramonte., Christians the most persecuted group in world for second year: Study; published January 06, 2017; Fox News. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/01/06/christians-most-persecuted-group-in-world-for-second-year-study.html>

concerned that “200 million Christians (10 percent of the global total) are socially disadvantaged, harassed or actively oppressed for their beliefs.”²

These persecutions are coming in every angle and corner, be it politics, economics, religion, race, skill, class and practice. Some openly through the ruling authorities and others through subtle policies, denial of rights, ethnic segregation and community pressures. There are also those who are Christian atheists who believe God never existed or God is dead.³ Unsurprisingly, some of them are in our churches throughout the world. This is a subtler form of persecution – on one hand they are our members and hold positions, and the other they do not subscribe to the orthodox faith but are teaching and preaching a message of cultural and secular humanistic atheism without the existence of God, more so without the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of the former Christian atheist Crag Groeschel, after over a decade of successful ministry, he had to make a painful self-admission: ⁴

“My selfish Christian Atheist view was that God existed for me, rather than I for him. If he'd do what I thought he should, I'd trust him more. If he'd come through for me, I'd give him more of my life. If he made my life better and pain-free, I'd believe him more passionately. But anytime God didn't meet my expectations, we had a problem. God created me in his image. I returned the favor and created him in mine. The kind of God I wanted to believe in was this: if he's not what I want, then he can't have my whole life.... Every day, we'll choose to live out our belief in God instead of believing in the world or ourselves. When we truly know God, rather than living ashamed of our past of doubting God's ...”

We are, likely and possibly already, living in the last days as described in the Gospel of Matthew 24:⁵

“For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will

² James Kelly., The Most Persecuted Religion in the World; published in The World Post.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kelly-james-clark/christianity-most-persecuted-religion_b_2402644.html

³ Christian atheism is a form of Cultural Christianity and a system of ethics which draws its beliefs and practices from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels of the New Testament and other sources, while rejecting the supernatural claims of Christianity at large. Christian Atheism takes many forms - some Christian Atheists take a theological position, in which the belief in the transcendent or interventionist God is rejected or absent in favor of finding God totally in the world (Thomas J. J. Altizer), while others follow Jesus in a godless world (William Hamilton). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_atheism

⁴ CRAIG GROESCHEL., Christianity Today, article: The Christian Atheist, Believing in God but living as if he doesn't exist; published July 19, 2010. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/july/19.58.html>

⁵ Matthew 24:4-14

appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

But we have work to do, lots of work to reach out to the lost, the little, the least and the lame.⁶

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Many Christians believe that the Coming of Christ is near yet the Christian Church is far from being ready. The many scandals of the Church are heralding the front page of newspaper and cyber news these days which are hurting the Church and God badly. This cannot be the Will of God. The recent release of the American Pew Research Center studies has shown that 78% of those Americans who have left Christianity says that they were raised from Christian homes before abandoning their faith in their adulthood. Some of the reasons for the abandonment are: ‘Too many Christians doing un-Christian things’, ‘Church groups are seen more divisive than united’, ‘More harm done in the name of religion’, ‘Religious scandals by church leaders’, ‘Religion is anti-secularism therefore anti-progressiveness’, ‘Church people are too dogmatic therefore anti-freedom’, etc.⁷ While the Church in the western countries is experiencing reduction in numbers of adherents, but on the contrary, we are hearing that the Church in the east and south are increasing in numbers.⁸ A closer look at the Church in the east and south, as we see new believers are added to the Church, there are also large number of generation Christians becoming inactive and some have even left the faith. This is also a real concern for many church leaders, even though we have no official statistics to confirm. Where is the Kingdom of God seen? What is the Will of God for this world?

2. HOW IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THIS NATION

All the news of 1MDB, the Unilateral Child Conversion Bill, the RUU355 Private Bill, the 14th General Election, the nation’s debt, the China’s Belt and Road Initiative, Proton and Geely, Alibaba and the struggle between Uber and metered-taxis have saturated our minds lately. On the surface, our nation is still doing well but there is a huge hole which has been hidden from the eyes of the public.⁹ Our government keeps telling us that everything is well and manageable but the figures and signs are pointing otherwise. What is God saying?

The Church is a minority religion in Malaysia with only about 10% of the population of the nation of 30 million which is about 3 million in total.¹⁰ Of which more than 2/3 of the Christian population

⁶ Borrowing the words – 4L – from Archbishop Julian Leow, the Catholic Archbishop of KL, who said at his consecration service sermon in 2015 in Kajang.

⁷ Michael Lipka shared in the Pew Research Center Studies, Why Americas ‘Nones’ left Religion Behind.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_population_growth

⁹ Malaysia external debt is reaching RM1 trillion. <http://www.thestar.com.my/business/business-news/2017/03/24/external-debt-up-to-rm9087b/>

¹⁰ The population of Christianity, according to the 2010 census, is 9.2% of a total population of 25 million then. The present population estimate is 30 million.

https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemByCat&cat=117&bul_id=MDMxdHZjWTK1SjFzTzNkRXYzcVZjdz09&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZkIwZzQ4TlhUUT09

live in East Malaysia and belong to the Bumiputra groups.¹¹ The Malaysian Church is supposed to be the Church of God in this nation but how prepared and how much influence does she have? How much contribution or impact or effect does she have on nation building and her engagement in policy making in the nation? The former case of the Catholic Herald and the on-going court cases of the Jill Ireland and the SIB Sunday School materials on the usage of the word 'Allah' for God have inevitably negated much of Christian's influence in the public sphere. In fact, many ordinary Malaysian citizens have somewhat adopted a thwarted notion of the usage of the word 'Allah' by Christians, in which they assumed the ban on the Catholic Herald using the word 'Allah' is an overall ban.¹² This overall banning is, of course, not true. Unfortunately, the Sultan of Selangor has insisted the ban for non-Muslim usage of the word 'Allah' in the State of Selangor.¹³

Due to these challenges, the Malaysian Church is seen working more closely together than she ever has. The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) is forging well and having the church leadership coming together as one team. Combined prayers and activities have taken place more so than ever before. The Church is seen more vocal on the rights and freedom of religion throughout both East and West Malaysia than the last couple of decades. However, the largest section of the Church which is the BM Church still needs lots of work on it, such as, financial strength¹⁴, theological education, discipleship training, church literacy, moral uplifting, personal biblical knowledge, spirituality health, leadership development, etc. Can the non-BM churches help? The BM Church has the numbers but needs depth, length and breadth to propel herself to a viable, healthy, effective and missional Church of God. When that day arrives, the Malaysian Church shall be ready. How far are we now? I believe, given the pace we are trotting, it will take another 20 years to reach the place we can safely consider 'prepared'. By then, I fear the challenges and persecution in the nation will become more intense and get worse.¹⁵ Two possible scenarios will likely to happen – Reformation or Revolution. Reformation can be a peaceful and internal transformation but Revolution is usually a painful and external transformation. What and how is the Malaysian Church going to face this impending and obvious onslaught? Is the Malaysian Church doing the Will of God?

¹¹ According to the 2010 Census, there were 2,617,159 people self-identifying as Christians (9.2% of the population). Of the Christians, 1,549,193 were Bumiputra, 706,479 were Chinese, 114,281 were Indian, 22,871 Others and 224,336 were non-citizens. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Malaysia

¹² Unfortunately, there are also some Christian circles who reject the use of 'Allah' for God and instead used Yahweh or Elohim. The question here is not the choice of words rather on the right of freedom of religion.

¹³ <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/as-allah-case-drag-on-selangor-sultan-insists-on-non-muslim-ban#8IFs83jrWem7U2xK.97> There are many unanswered questions such as: Can the Sultan really ban this? Is the Fatwa applicable to non-Muslims?

¹⁴ John Stott and Chris Wright; The Grace of Giving – Money and the Gospel; A special Edition to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of interserve Malaysia; Lausanne Library, USA, 2004 & 2013.

¹⁵ The Human Right Watch World Report 2016 projected that in the very near future, Malaysia will be worse off in the following areas: Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Assembly and Association, Political Prosecution, Police Abuse and Impunity, Criminal Justice System, Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Trafficking Victims, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, National Human Rights Commission, etc. Of course, they have not included Racial Polarisation, Religious Extremism, Corruption, Hatred Speeches and Ethnic Segregation. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/malaysia>

3. HOW IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN OUR DIOCESE

Our Diocese is only a small part of the Malaysian Church and we still have a long way to go to be prepared for the challenges ahead. When I was ordained in 1985, I saw in the Synod report as well as the diocesan directory registering about 45 churches and around 30 priests and parish assistants. Today our diocese has registered about 100 active serving priests and deaconesses and 133 churches with about another 20 new and yet to be recorded churches. We have seen growth in numbers and workers over the last 30 years. However, there are still many arenas needed special attention such as growth, expansion and depth.

3.1 MAKING DISCIPLES from the WORKERS OF THE HARVEST FIELD

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Luke 10:2
Since 2007, there is a consistent intention in the diocese to increase the number of workers of the harvest field. On one hand, it is intended to replace those retiring, and on the other hand, it is to increase the worker population. There are at least three groups of workers identified, namely the full-timers, the part-timers and the any-timers. The full-timers are the salaried staff or workers. The part-timers are the honorary workers with fixed time schedule. The any-timers are those who can help whenever they are available. Usually the any-timers are the largest work force but they need to be coordinated properly. If they can be properly mobilized, they can even ‘move mountains’. They are often referred to as the frozen people or the hidden force by many theologians – they are the LAITY. They need to be intentionally released. Isn’t it the Will of God that all believers of Christ should be His Disciples?

3.2 LAY READERS/PASTORS – a Process of Discipleship Training

In 2008 onwards, in order not to disturb or upset the ministry of the existing Lay Readers which was already in existence long ago, a new ministry called the Lay Pastors was deliberately created to complement the existing Lay Readers ministry. For whatever reasons unknown, the existing Lay Readers then were not functioning to their full capacity. In fact, the Lay Readers could do more ministries than just as ‘cup-bearers and preaching’ only. With proper training and the permission of their priest or Vicar, they can do everything except ABC.¹⁶ After careful studies, the ministry of Lay Pastor was introduced. It is supposed to be equipped and to complement the ‘un-done’ ministry of the Lay Reader. Immediately it created lots of interest, thus this new ministry has eventually roped in many who earlier did not ‘have’ the opportunity to serve God as a lay person. All the new Lay Pastors when appointed were required to undergo a series of 4 annual retreats in-service training programme, known as Lay Pastors’ School. Such programme has generated a great number of faithful workers for the Lord both within and outside the Church.

The existing Lay Readers then saw the newer category of workers, the Lay Pastors, being trained and given much attention, also requested for similar training retreats. Since 2009, the training

¹⁶ Ian Bunting. Celebrating the Anglican Way; Hodder & Stoughton, London 1996, p.183. It refers to the Alternative Service Book 1980 on the Ordination of Priests and Deacons. A refers to Absolution – to declare the forgiveness of sins; B refers to Blessings – to bless the people he leads; C refers to Consecration – to preside at the celebration of Eucharist.

retreats for Lay Readers, known as Lay Readers' School, have also been introduced. This has inevitably led to improved services of many Lay Readers. In 2017, the ministries of Lay Reader and Lay Pastor which are the same in the first place, have combined and merged into one ministry known as Lay Reader/Pastor. The total combined number of Lay Readers/Pastors presently is about 600. This is a significant number for the harvest field. The Will of God is to release the 'non-engaged' workers into the harvest field.

3.3 DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH THE ANGLICAN INSTITUTE of MINISTRY (A.I.M.)

The Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM) has its Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programme for a long time. For some unknown reasons, the number of candidates from the Anglican circles is minimal. Since this year 2017, I have developed, following the pattern of STM TEE Course, the Bishop's Certificate and Diploma of Ministry (BpCM and BpDM) which is known as the Anglican Institute of Ministry (AIM). Though there is no certification yet from STM or any other college, the purpose and goal of AIM is:

- i. To encourage more lay people to have a systematic wholesome theological and biblical knowledge.
- ii. To prepare lay people to develop a solid foundation of the belief and faith of the church.
- iii. To create opportunity for lay people to know God more and to serve Him better.
- iv. To intentionally provide discipleship training and create disciple-makers.
- v. To intentionally increase the number of workers for the harvest field, both locally and beyond.
- vi. To prepare the Church for the rainy and hard days ahead.

I praise God for the 200 over lay people, so far, who have taken time and commitment to study the Word of God and be trained faithfully to His glory and honour. They are from various language groups and spread throughout the diocese. I strongly believe that in 20 years' time, we can have a very strong based and solid foundation for the Church who will be ready to weather the storms and typhoons of the time.

Further to this, at the Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang (HTBB)¹⁷ the St Paul's Theological College was set up to provide greater opportunity for those who wish to go further in theological training yet cannot afford to leave their job or still have family commitments to shoulder, and for some

¹⁷ The Holy Trinity Church Bukit Bintang (HTBB) was founded and inaugurated in September 2014. The priest in charge is the Rev Miles Toulmin and his assistant is the Rev Dan Millest. They meet on the rooftop of LOT 10 shopping centre in KL for worship and training. Within the first few months after the inauguration, the number of Sunday attendance has grown to 200. The first baptism saw 114 people baptized. Most of them came through the Alpha Course. A second service was initiated before the first anniversary at 5.00pm, while the first service remained at 11.30am. Soon after the second anniversary, a third service was introduced at 9.30am. Today the average attendance of all the 3 services combined is around 1000. Just about the time of the second anniversary, the St Paul's Theological College was launched. It operates in like manner as the TEE course. The first batch of registered students is around 40, with half of them taking the ordination track. It caters for Christians from other denominations as well as from our own. These students are mainly church workers or people from the commercial world who took time in the evening to learn of God, the Bible and theology. St Paul's Theological College is registered with Asia Theological Association (ATA). The Rev James Harding is the Principal in charge.

reasons choose not to enroll with STM TEE Course. We believe equipping and training the people of God is part of the Will of God.

3.4 DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING through SPIRITUAL FORMATION

We can obtain Biblical and Theological knowledge from seminaries and bible schools. But to develop one's spirituality and his relationship with God demands more than head knowledge. It requires the heart, life experience and intentional spiritual encounter with the supreme being who has created and is guiding us daily. We have found that in the seminary or bible school, the spirituality or spiritual formation course provided, no matter how good it can be, students, however, tend to pay most of their attention in getting the credits rather in gaining the experience. How sad it is but this is so true. Similarly, it is also true for those workers who are already in the harvest field. In the book *The Leader's Journey*, it mentions that workers who lack the authentic spirituality and discipline are referred to as 'Soul Neglect', in which I quote:

"We grow busier and busier to please more and more people. We spend more time in meetings than we do in prayer. We scarcely have time to read the newspaper, much less spiritual classics or devotional readings. We study Scripture, but we do it for other people to convey God's Word to them. Our hearts are often thirsty for a word from God, but who has time? We faithfully minister to the spiritual needs of others and teach ourselves to be content with the leftovers."¹⁸

Since the beginning of this year, the Spiritual Formation Platform (SFP) has been put in place.¹⁹ The programme of Spiritual Formation is in progress and it is held at our Rawang Retreat House.²⁰ Each SPF programme covers a series of 4 spirituality retreats which is presently led by the Rev David Cox. Presently about 16 people are attending in 2 different groups, one over the weekend and the other during week days. It is our intention to have the SFP in different languages, hopefully by next year. The purpose and goal of SFP is:

- I. To create a platform for spiritual retreat and be led by a spiritual director.
- II. To encourage every person to have a personal spiritual encounter with the Almighty.
- III. To cultivate a habit of spiritual-connect with Jesus, even in our daily living that we may be able to hear from God.
- IV. To cultivate a life of authentic spirituality and spiritual disciplines.

The SFP is open for all members of the church. As we develop our biblical and theological understanding, we too must develop our spiritual disciplines so that we can be better equipped workers of the harvest field, and those who know the Will of God and do it.

"Personal transformation in one's own life is the only foundation on which effective leadership can be constructed. To the degree that we are personally being transformed,

¹⁸ Jim Herrington, Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor., *The Leader's Journey – Accepting the Call of Personal and Congregational Transformation*; USA, 2016. p.131

¹⁹ I have desired to have such a SFP in the diocese since my earlier years as a priest. It took 30 years to finally see the reality of it.

²⁰ The Rawang Retreat House is donated by the Rev Peter Cheung, our missionary priest from Hong Kong.

we are able to lead the way as our congregations change, so that they will be available to God for the transformation of their communities.”²¹

3.5 CHARACTER AND FAMILY TRANSFORMATION through MICPE and other formations

The image of ‘poor’ conduct and ‘poor’ personal relationship with church members is one of the biggest complaints of the priests in the diocese that I face frequently. There are fewer complaints on the preaching or leadership skill of my priests. With the present set up in the diocese, there is almost no avenue to develop skills for one’s character and conduct, let alone that for their families. Most of the time, our Church just allows the new priests to try an error with their lives in the harvest field. Today’s congregations do have a high level of expectation of the workers of the Lord on good moral, conduct, integrity and character. Some of them can develop them as they journey along in their ministry but often through painful mistakes and difficult learning curves. I have been pondering over this for years since my ordination. When the MICPE was first introduced in 2006 by Bishop Lim Cheng Ean, it took us some time to understand what it is all about. But after I have grappled with it, though with little understanding in the beginning, I was willing to plunge into it and gave it a try since the diocese did not engage in any training course or programme to develop our conduct or character. Initially, I was constantly being misunderstood as someone introducing something liberal from America, and deliberately putting extra burden upon the fresh graduands from STM before ordination; and from the aspect of the MICPE supervisors, I was viewed as non-serious promoter and only a taster of the product.²² But in the early days, I was very clear myself that I was looking for a course or programme or training that could develop and provide training for my clergy and workers in character formation which was also not financially costly to operate.

We praise God that this year we are seeing the MICPE graduating its 10th batch of graduands. In total, there are more than 120 people who have completed the MICPE Level One course. Of course, not everyone has benefited fully but many have been transformed. This 6 – 7-month MICPE learning is not magical. It cannot straight away transform anyone into having a perfect character. It only serves as a foundation because it is only Level One that we have launched. It is a demanding course but the benefits are great. Given another 10 years, I believe the diocese will experience much improved quality in the conduct and character of the priests and workers. One of the greatest lessons from MICPE is SELF-AWARENESS. Many people do not know why they do and often repeat what they themselves do not wish to do. MICPE is only a very basic education to help the students to understand themselves, their backgrounds and their environment in relation to those around them, like family members, colleagues and church members, in order not to repeat too often their idiosyncrasies and abject behaviour.

We still need Family Formation programme for our diocese. Too many families are facing difficulties which inevitably will lead to problematic homes, thus, producing problematic children. The families of clergy and workers are not spared. Without healthy leaders, there will be no health

²¹ Jim Herrington, Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor, op.cit., p.14.

²² From the reports of some of the priests who have gone through MICPE in the early few batches, one will know that some were unwilling and displeased to walk through the 6 – 7 months MICPE training course but others have benefited.

family and subsequently no healthy congregation – communities – nation. We still have a long way to go. We need to find suitable lead in this arena, and hopefully in the very near future, we can engage with and establish a Family Formation Platform in our diocese. The Will of God is to see emotionally healthy families serving in our diocese.

3.6 SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION through ANGLICAN CARE

We praise God that the Anglican Care has officially completed its 10th year. Prior to the formation of Anglican Care, each parish was doing their own social ministry themselves, but only few parishes were involved. In most cases, they were usually operating without much training resources for their workers/care-givers and helpers. Since the formation of Anglican Care, there are centralized training and care-givers are given much attention and appreciation than previously. This has seemingly encouraged more parishes to enter the arena of social ministry.

When the days ahead get tougher and restrictions are all over, obviously, social ministry is the best channel in reaching out to thousands and millions for Christ, both directly and indirectly. A note of caution: the greatest danger in doing social ministry is when there is a loss of focus upon the original Call and Conviction, i.e. when one just carries on for the sake of keeping the ministry alive. In such case, there is no difference at all with any NGO which engages in social concern work.

“We love because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

Similarly, we give because He first gave us; we care because He first cared for us. It is our prayers that more and more parishes will begin some form of social and caring ministry for the communities around. This is the Lord’s mandate as we have seen it expressed in the early church when the apostles, in the pursuit of evangelism and making Christ known, landed themselves in the caring of the poor and needy, especially the widows, and considered it a worthy cause for the Lord’s sake.²³

The Anglican Care, which is linked to the Anglican Alliance²⁴ based in the Anglican Communion office, is gradually developing the aspects of Advocacy, Human Rights, Human Trafficking, Slavery, Refugees, etc. and is in the pipeline. I believe the Anglican Care will take more pro-active measures to build on these aspects. It is not the Will of God to activate and initiate social transformation through the caring ministry?

3.7 CRISIS RELIEF through REACH

The Relief Emergency and Crisis Help (REACH) was developed in 2008. The first response was to bring reliefs to the victims of the Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. It has taken some time since the launching of the REACH Fund to see it moving gradually and steadily ahead. It was in 2014, we

²³ Acts 5:32-37; 6:1-4 The disciples living in communities caring for the poor and needy. Many sold their lands and houses to care for the needy.

²⁴ We give thanks that Sister Annamany, the present Chair of Anglican Care, was appointed as the part-time Anglican Alliance facilitator for East Asia.

saw the first mobilization of relief workers to assist in the Kelantan Flood situation, particularly in Kota Baru, Kuala Krai and Gua Musang. Though while it is still in its infancy stage, I firmly believe that it is ready to expand, extend and rise to the occasion in bringing relief to emergency and crisis areas. REACH is following closely and learning from the Singapore counterpart ACROSS²⁵. So far REACH personnel have joined the medical service trips to some communities in Nepal and Sri Lanka. Given proper time and training, REACH personnel can be very useful in times of needs and crisis. We will indeed welcome more interested and willing people to join the REACH team and be trained and get ready for any occasion of relief or crisis help.

3.8 CHURCH PLANTING and MISSION & EVANGELISM

The diocese has seen the fastest growth during the period of the Decade of Evangelism (1991 – 2000). According to the Synod statistics, the church membership has grown from 7,000 plus in 1991 to nearly 20,000 in 2000. It means that the diocese has almost planted one church of 100 members per month.²⁶ The introduction of the post of Evangelists by Bishop Savarimuthu in 1993, and the number of new church plants during that period augured for the rapid growth. The addition of new churches and chapels in the Chinese New Villages and Orang Asli kampungs have also boosted up the increase in church plants and church membership.²⁷

Since 2007, the church planting effort was again encouraged and given much impetus. Number of new church plants have sprouted throughout the diocese over the last 10 years from 2007 to 2017. The diocese now has in total – 46 parishes, 32 Missionary Districts, 55 outreach churches with 20 non-recorded outreach churches.²⁸ With the 2015 Synod's approval of creating 3 new Dioceses²⁹, the crucial viability depends heavily on increasing new church plants. The main purpose in the creation of dioceses is to decentralize for growth and expansion so that more people can be reached and brought to faith in Christ, which is consistent with the Great Commission of Christ.

Church planting efforts today require new approaches but with the same Gospel message. The people today and yesteryears differ in lifestyles, habits and tastes but basically having similar needs i.e. love, grace and mercy. Recent researches have shown that we are living in a Global Village where people of all walks of life, different ethnicity with different nationalities, languages, faiths and creeds are living in the same urban community, usually for a short period of time as compare to the rural folks who are largely of the same community and live for a much longer

²⁵ ACROSS is Anglican Relief Outreach & Support Singapore <http://www.across.org.sg/> The present chair of REACH is Rev Matthew Chay.

²⁶ Over the 10 years from 2001 to 2010, the diocese has seen growth of 12,000 members. This means that in average there is addition of 1,200 per year which is reflected as 100 per month. Diocesan Synod statistics of 1991 and 2000. A study of this was done in 2003 and presented at Synod 2003 by me. The present total membership stands at about 35,000 from the records received.

²⁷ Ng Moon Hing, *From Village to Village*, Diocese of West Malaysia, KL, 2009. The Anglican Village Ministries and the Orang Asli ministry were started in 1993 and 1995 respectively.

²⁸ Diocesan Synod 2017 Statistics. The non-recorded outreach churches are newly established churches which have not been given sufficient time to ascertain their continuity and sustainability.

²⁹ The 3 new dioceses will be known as Northern Peninsula, Central & Eastern Peninsula and Southern Peninsula. The final decision is still depending on the Provincial Synod's approval.

period, sometimes their whole lives. Irrespective of the ethnicity, class, place of origin, background and profession, we are living in a world of blame-game – where it is always the other person who is wrong. Therefore, it is so essential and necessary for us to carry the message of Christ filled with the fullness of love, grace and mercy of God. This is clearly and excellently expressed through the words of Pope Francis:³⁰

“Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love Without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert ... Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.”

CONCLUSION

The Will of God for our diocese is to establish the Kingdom of God on earth to its fullest through every means that brings Him majesty, honour, praise, thanksgiving and glory forever. In so doing, we need to equip our diocese with truth and grace, love and compassion, humility and mercy, strength and commitment, vision and perseverance, forgiveness and sacrifice in the service of Christ our Lord.

**Teach us, O Lord,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Ignatius of Loyola (1491 - 1556)³¹

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