

Malaysian Nurses Christian Fellowship

Newsletter

November 2008

Our Mission: To encourage Christian nurses in their Christian walk and witness.

A NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

I have been to four continents, but not Africa. So it was exciting to represent Malaysia NCF as a delegate at the NCF International Quadrennial Conference and 50th. Anniversary celebration in Nigeria from 14-18 September, 2008.

After almost 16 hours of flying time, it was a relief to arrive at our destination. Smiling faces and words of welcome greeted us as we arrived at the airport in Abujah, the federal capital of Nigeria. Sam Mbok, the president of the Fellowship of Christian Nurses (FCN) was among those who received us: Goh Swee Eng (Singapore), Alicia Banas (Philippines) and I.

From Abujah to Jos

We stayed overnight in Abujah at a retreat center and were driven the next morning to JOS, where the conference was held. I was privileged to travel in Sam's car with Kamalini (NCFI president), David Parfitt (NCFI Administrator) and his wife, Barbara. Another group had to squeeze into a van.

The journey by road took 3-4 hours. Along the way, there were women and youths carrying trays on their heads selling bananas, yam, maize, oranges and peanuts. Whenever the car slowed down, the traders would rush towards us to sell their produce. Roadside markets and shops gave the impression that people in that area were mainly petty traders and farmers.

The conference was held at the Hill Station Hotel in JOS, the state capital located on a plateau in central Nigeria. Interestingly, the early Christian missionaries gave the town the name JOS, an acronym for "Jesus Our Saviour".

The weather was cool with occasional rainfall. The grounds at the hotel were spacious with lovely trees, shrubs and rockeries. I occupied a single room with a king-size bed meant for the average Nigerian.

Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was a grand and colourful event, graced by the presence of the Governor of Plateau State, Da David Jonah Jang, who is also a pastor. During the roll-call of NCFI member

countries, the national representatives, in national costumes, came forward carrying their national flags, accompanied by loud applause from the 400 participants, 300 of whom were from African countries.

Conference programme

The overall conference programme was well planned and balanced. Each day began with personal/group bible studies and a time of praise and worship before the bible expositions. The plenary sessions addressed the theme of the conference, "Strengthened to Serve: a Christian response to global health needs". Participants were given a choice of concurrent professional workshops and seminars in the afternoons. The evening sessions included an NCFI evening, an African evening and the NCFI 50th. birthday celebration.

Bible expositions

The bible expositions on 'Biblical values in professional contexts' spoke to the hearts of nurses. Gbile Akanni, the bible expositor, made some pertinent points regarding nursing as a profession. From Exodus 1:12-22, we learnt that midwifery was a recognized office in biblical times. As nurses and midwives, God has placed us at the gates of life where people enter life (at birth) and exit to eternity (at death). In these two states, people are helpless and we are in a position to do good or evil. The Egyptian midwives feared God and didn't kill the male babies as ordered by the king. Do we have the fear of God in our hearts when performing our duties? Who are we when nobody is around? God, who is invisible, sees. He rewarded the midwives because they feared Him.

From the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) Gbile reminded us that nursing is a profession of compassion. Nurses are positioned to show compassion to our patients ('our neighbour'). Let us not be like the priest who passed by on the other side – uncaring, irresponsible and negligent towards the helpless victim, but rather, let us be like the Samaritan who deliberately came to the man, had compassion and was equipped to render first aid.

However, if Christian nurses have left Jerusalem (the holy city, God's presence) and are going down to Jericho (the city of sin, the Jericho of this world), like the priest and Levite, they will be in no position to help others with the healing balm of God.

In addressing the many challenges that nurses face, Gbile stated that only a nurse who has Christ in her heart could make a difference. From 1 Thessalonians 2:3-10 he reminded us that patients entrust their lives and welfare to us, and God entrusts us with the gospel in action. With such a trust, we are to carry out our work as pleasing God, not men. This means expressing the love of Christ, touching lives and being a servant. To enable us to face such challenges, we need to be strengthened in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:14-17).

Personal bible studies on Integrity of heart (Psalm 51), Stewardship (Matthew 25:1-30), Servant-hood (John 13:1-20) and God's chosen people (1 Peter 2:1-25) complemented the challenges of the bible expositions.

Plenary sessions

In the plenary sessions, we were given an overview of the challenges facing health practitioners in the 21st. century, especially in Africa. The statistics for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and maternal mortality are mind-boggling. Poverty is the root cause of many other problems such as malnutrition, infectious diseases, tuberculosis, illiteracy and violence. These problems are compounded by natural and man-made disasters such as war, corruption, exploitation and a 'useless' government. What can nurses do under such circumstances? It is natural to feel helpless and hopeless, but every Christian nurse has the resources to make a difference. Even though it is like a drop in the ocean, the participants were challenged to equip themselves with competencies to care, to engage in advocacy, counseling, health education, entrepreneurship and evidence-based research in order to know what to do and how. Together, nurses could organize themselves into corporate groups with the purpose to change and do something on the ground. God has called us to love and compassion and He will give us the strength and power to change if we are willing and obedient.

Workshops & seminars

The concurrent professional workshops and seminars offered a wide range of subjects from which participants were free to choose their topics of interest. It was a time of sharing and learning about

what Christian nurses have been and are doing in various parts of the world.

50th. Anniversary celebration

A special presentation highlighting 50 years of NCFI brought back wonderful memories and thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness. I was one of four veterans who went on stage to receive a souvenir. The others were Mary Thompson, Pat Ashworth and Micah Tswabki. We sang "Happy Birthday" to NCFI around a huge cake that could be cut into 400 pieces. As participants came forward to have a look at the cake, there was song and dance. The Africans really know how to light up a party!



Regional & international forums

'Business meetings' in the form of regional and international forums were held to review the previous years' activities, to thank God for His work in various national NCFs and to pray for future directions. We renewed our commitment to communicate more regularly, to work together and to share resources.

On the last day, we went for an outing to the zoo and museum. The organizing committee who were mostly male nurses (with 6 staff workers), worked hard to ensure that the conference ran smoothly. We accepted the occasional electricity power cuts and water disruption as part of our Nigerian experience. The joy of Christian fellowship and being one in the body of Christ in the nursing profession despite our cultural differences outweighed the physical inconveniences. We came away from the conference re-affirming our calling as Christian nurses to make a difference wherever God has placed us.

Chan Kum Sum

GRACE ONG WRITES:

October will be a busy month for me. The seniors started meeting again after the summer break. We had our annual singing competition on 3rd October for the old folks from the 3 areas.

On 13th October, we will celebrate the first anniversary of our Stroke Support Group. It will be a family occasion. They have been faithfully meeting every week. I have also included them in the social gatherings of our seniors.

Praise God for the many opportunities to continue the anti abortion talks in high schools. Whenever I teach in the high schools and look at the young beautiful faces of the teenagers, my heart is filled with love for them. They need to learn the right values of life. Because of their culture, people do not talk about abortion. What I teach is very new to them. I am impressed with the students; they listen very attentively to my talks. Through the talks, I testify that our God created life. Man did not originate from evolution. The theory of evolution is commonly taught in schools. Pray that many will want to know the creator God.

The Mongolian population is young - 70% are young people and children. Teaching life skills to young people are important tasks. Christian parenting to bring up their young in the fear of the Lord is also a much-needed ministry. I would like to invite people who can teach these topics to visit next year. I will be happy to help organize these seminars.

Thanks for being the team to support and pray for me.

Prayer Request

- 1) Salvation of the stroke survivors and senior groups.
- 2) An increase in the stroke support group members.
- 3) Open doors to teach anti abortion talks in high schools and churches.
- 4) Good health and protection.
- 5) Salvation of my family in Penang
(*Extracted from Grace's October newsletter*)

MNCF Newsletter via E-mail

If you would like to be on the MNCF newsletter e-mail address list, please send your e-mail address to: kumsumchan@yahoo.com



Prayer Points from Yeoh Lay Bee

- For the peace and stability in Thailand.
- For revival and transformation.
- B.S. (Barn Sukniran) committee - unity and wisdom in decision making.
- B.S. family -where Jesus Christ is Lord in each life; for good health.
 - Fon and Muk in their studies.
- Former girls - Nong will return to God.
 - For protection for Fa in Japan and she will find fellowship with believers.
- Home School - Children and their mothers/teachers will be blessed in different ways according to their needs.

NCF International & PACEA Region News & Prayer Points

- Barbara White & Tove Giske, the new NCFI President & Vice-President – for wisdom to lead the organization.
- Goh Swee Eng (Singapore), Chieko Fukushima (Japan) and Dawn Capaque (Philippines) – to be effective NCFI board members representing PACEA.
- Planning of the 2009 Staff & Leaders' Training to be held in Bali, Indonesia.
- Planning of the 2010 Regional Conference to be held in Japan.
- The NCFI-PACEA region community health project in Kalimantan, Indonesia.
- The formation of NCF in Indonesia.
- God's blessings on those who read "The Nurses' Bible", a new publication of NCF Australia.

The October-December NCFI Prayer Guide is available online at www.ncfi.org

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If you have news, testimonies or words of encouragement for nurses, please send them to: kumsumchan@yahoo.com by 1 March 2009.

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