

VISION STATEMENT



THE METHODIST CHURCH IN MALAYSIA

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A RENEWED CHURCH

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- ❖ Empowering Churches
- ❖ Enriching Families
- ❖ Enhancing Education
- ❖ Engaging the Nation

Lamentations 5:21 (ESV)

".....Renew our days as of old."

更新的教会

- ❖ 强化教会使命
- ❖ 丰化家庭生活
- ❖ 提升教育素质
- ❖ 参与国家建设

耶利米哀歌 5:21 (新译本)

.....求你更新我们的日子，像古时一样

GEREJA DIBAHARUI

- ❖ Memperkasa Gereja
- ❖ Memperkaya Keluarga
- ❖ Mempertingkat Pendidikan
- ❖ Memperlibatkan Bangsa

Ratapan 5:21 (AVB)

".....Baharuilah hari-hari kami seperti zaman dahulu."

புதிப்பிக்கப்பட்ட திருச்சபை

- ❖ வல்லமை அதிகாரம்அளிக்கும் சபை
- ❖ குடும்பங்களை வளப்படுத்துதல்
- ❖ கல்வியை மேம்படுத்துதல்
- ❖ தேசத்தை இணைத்தல்

புலம்பல் 5:21

"...பூர்வகாலத்திலிருந்ததுபோல எங்கள் நாட்களை புதியவைகளாக்கும்."

GEREJA TI DIKEMARUKA

- ❖ Ngenegapka Gereja
- ❖ Ngayaka Ruang Bilik
- ❖ Ngemanahka Pelajar
- ❖ Ngaul Raban Bangsa

Sabak Kenang 5: 21b "Pulaika baru mulia kami ke suba".

GERIJA BIPERPAI

- ❖ Pkuat Gerija
- ❖ Pekaya Keluarga
- ❖ Petingkat Pendidikan
- ❖ Pelibat Bangsa

Ratapan 5:21

"... Perpaileh arik-arik jik bagei jaman entem."

A VISION STATEMENT

Christianity had come to Malaysia possibly as early as the 7th century with the Nestorians settling in the North-western part of the peninsula. It was, however, the Portuguese occupation of Malacca in 1511 that had a wider Christian influence. The Methodist work first began in Singapore with the arrival of Rev. William F. Oldham and Rev. James M. Thoburn on February 8, 1885. “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, said the Lord,” (Zechariah 4:6) was the text of the first Methodist sermon in Singapore preached by Thoburn. The work of the Methodist Mission soon spread into Peninsular Malaya and grew in several directions. It grew linguistically, in English, Tamil, Chinese, and Malay. And it also grew geographically up the peninsula. In the early 1900s, the mission spread to the Chinese in Sarawak, and later to the Ibans.

As the work grew, we organised ourselves with Vision and Mission Statements, and every now and then, with Road Maps. We wanted to ensure that we stay the course and not lose sight of what we felt God wanted us to do. The last Road Map was formulated by the General Conference Executive Council in 2010. The theme was “Spreading Scriptural Holiness, Transforming the Nation.”

In this new quadrennium (2021-2024), we, the people called Methodists, want to establish a new Vision Statement for the Methodist Church in Malaysia. Having discussed and prayerfully considered where we are as The Methodist Church in Malaysia, we want to come before God in repentance. Especially during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, political uncertainties, economic distress and social anguish, we want to turn to HIM. We want to seek HIM together to lead us even as we repent on our own behalf and on behalf of others.

We confess that we might not always have been sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit of God. We confess that we might have done our work relying more on human resources rather than dependence on God. We confess that we have been Christians in name only and have not faithfully lived our lives as disciples of Christ. We confess that we have been disunited and have not actively cared for those in our community and society. We confess that we have been more concerned with ‘doing church’ and have failed in our leadership. We confess that we have not always preached clearly about commitment, holiness and character formation. We confess that we have not understood the cost of discipleship and have chosen the path of comfort rather than sacrifice for the sake of the gospel.

Even though we might not be where we should be as a Church in accordance to HIS will, may God still make us A Renewed Church. May HE renew us to be all that HE has called us to be! And may all that we do as a Church arise out of our being **A Renewed Church** – a Church renewed by the power of the Almighty God.

There are at least 27 references in the Bible that speak about *renewal*. One of the references is Lamentations 5:21. This is a prayer for renewal by the prophet Jeremiah. “Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old” (ESV). Jeremiah pleads with God to restore the people to Himself, and renew the days as of old.

The Rev. John Wesley translates “Renew our days as of old” as “Restore us to our former estate.” Wesley understands the phrase to mean that the people needed to return to the Lord in genuine repentance, not be returned to their own land of Judah. So we must understand Jeremiah’s desire for renewal here as a desire for the conversion of hearts and the transformation of lives. Jeremiah’s hope is as they repent, they will enjoy all that God had promised them when He first established them in the Promised Land – peace, prosperity and His blessings. But notice this. Jeremiah first prays for repentance. Then only does he plead for renewal.

Renewal is so very important and it has always been an important and essential concept in Christian theology. From its earliest days, Methodism defined its mission in terms of renewal. It was renewal through the spreading of scriptural holiness over the land and reforming the nation. The Church today is not beyond renewal. There are sufficient workings of God in our midst as evidence of that. But more importantly, we can expect renewals because they are based on the faithfulness of God towards His people. Therefore, we do not lose heart. We must work towards understanding the holiness of God. We must preach for the hearts of the people to be turned to the holy God. And we must proclaim the message of hope that God is a faithful God. He will not forsake His people who are called by His name. In this way, we pray it might please God to make us **A RENEWED CHURCH**.

EMPOWERING CHURCHES

Our prayer is that the renewed Church will be an empowered Church by being rooted in the Word of God. The Bible must be at the centre of the church life in all her teaching and preaching. We must be diligent in proclaiming the truth of the gospel and be conscious of the power of the gospel to transform lives. We must therefore preach the Word in season and out of season. The Word of God must be studied in order to be obeyed.

We, as the people of God who believe in the miraculous, must go back to prayer. We must pray alone and we must pray together with the people around us. Only prayer will cause God to intervene to bring about the miraculous. As John Wesley said, “God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.”

To be an empowered Church, we need men and women who will carry out the ministry, either in a full-time capacity or as volunteers. We need men and women who have the fruit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Church must be led by Spirit-filled men and women who are godly and God-fearing, and who are willing to pay the price of discipleship. We need men and women who will take duty, commitment and sacrifice for the sake of the Church and GOD seriously. It is the Church led by such persons that will be a Church with a sense of mission and direction.

We need to be focused in the care and nurture of God’s people via small groups. Small groups, and sometimes even smaller groups, need to be created to play a vital role in restoring community life. These small groups will come together to study the Bible and hold one another accountable in how they live as disciples of Christ. They will provide mutual support to one another, reach out to their neighbours and colleagues with the good news, and provide practical help to those in need.

The renewed Church must be a mission-minded church that is concerned for the world to come to know the good news of Christ our Lord. Personal evangelism and structured evangelistic programs should be part of our curriculum in equipping our members. Cross-cultural missions must be our priority lest we forget the world is our parish.

Some questions that emerge:

1. What is God saying to the Methodist Church in Malaysia?
2. Should the church without walls be a concern to us?
3. How should we look after Generations Y and Z, the emerging future of our Church?
4. How do we prepare the Church for the “new normal” where physical attendance is restricted by SOPs and previous ways of ministering to the people have changed?

What should we do?

1. Read, teach and preach the Scripture systematically.
2. Place greater emphasis on conviction of sins, repentance, and being born again.
3. Nurture every new believer immediately to have assurance of salvation. Help them grow in their personal relationship with God and live holy lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.
4. Challenge our church to discover individual and corporate life of prayer.
5. Help our members discover and use their spiritual gifts.
6. Empower church members by encouraging, guiding and involving them to serve so that they are transformed from worshippers to co-labourers.
7. Use effective tools to share the gospel.
8. Recover the supernatural dimension in our Christianity which was also found in early Methodism.
9. Train everyone in our church in apologetics so that we are not easily swayed by false teachings.
10. Emphasise on building community life through small groups.
11. Focus on ‘Being Church,’ by helping members be transformed in their inner lives rather than ‘Doing Church’ with having too many activities.
12. Encourage pastors to carve out time for personal disciple-making amidst their demanding schedules.
13. Evaluate and re-inspect our existing role within the communities where our churches have been placed.

ENRICHING FAMILIES

The Church must recognise that faith formation is the primary task of the home. Parents are the primary disciple-makers in their respective families. Our churches must equip the homes to be centres of faith-formation. By that, we mean that churches should follow the biblical mandate and equip, empower and enable parents to be the primary agents of faith-formation (see Exodus 12, Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4, etc). The Church must thus equip families as the central units and agents for growth in the Christian faith.

We pray that families will learn to worship together at home. The Church must free the parents and children to have more time at home with each other to pray and study the Word of God. In his sermon, "On Family Religion," based on Joshua 24:15, John Wesley emphasises that it is the duty of parents to impart spiritual knowledge to their children. And he adds that it should be done early and frequently.

Churches can begin to carry out ministry to whole families through various events, trainings and programs. This is to help members of a family participate in ministries as one family. At the same time we must be intentional in ministering to every generation within the church. And we must do it inter-generationally as often as possible. This should not affect ministry to specific age groups or specific need groups. Intergenerational ministry is carried out in order to reach every generation together.

Some questions that emerge:

1. Is the home now being assaulted by the workplace in the light of 'work and study from home?'
2. The 4 concentric circles of work, education, family and ministry may now be converging on the home. Do we define the roles separately or do they now overlap?
3. How should the Church offer help in such times of mental stress as boundaries are blurred?

What should we do?

1. Equip parents to disciple and mentor their children, plus lead in family worship.
2. Encourage families to set aside time daily or weekly to pray together and discuss Scripture as a family.
3. Teach God's creation of male and female, biblical values and design on marriage, family and singleness.
4. Embrace, with sensitivity and creativity, singles without immediate Christian families, as part of the Family Ministry in the church.
5. Provide opportunities for new Christians to be adopted by those who are more mature and who can journey with them as part of spiritual mentoring.
6. Train pastors and mature church leaders to minister to families.
7. Plan for activities, social as well as ministry related, where whole families can be involved. The children and youths especially can see that being Christians can be fun as well as meaningful. Younger families can interact with older couples and see their lives in action and bonds of friendship and trust can be nurtured.
8. Look into programs or activities, especially for children and youth ministry groups, that can actively involve parents and grandparents, with the intention of building relationships within the family units.
9. Focus on younger couples with children so that a new generation of families can be raised who understand and have experienced nurturing faith formation in the home.
10. Embrace unchurched children and youths from our outreach work into church families so that they can experience the love of God and be discipled.

ENHANCING EDUCATION

One of the first institutions established in early Methodism in the 18th Century was schools. When Methodist missionaries arrived on our Malaysian shores in 1885, they too founded schools. In the decades and centuries that followed, the hallmark of the Methodist Church in Malaysia was providing education for all persons. This was done irrespective of age or gender, financial or religious backgrounds, rural or urban backgrounds. Schools were not established for the sake of the Church but for the sake of the society. The Methodist Church has since been committed to establishing basic education all the way to higher education.

As **A Renewed Church**, we want to enhance the quality of the education we offer. We want to ensure that no child is denied of education. For this reason, we have kindergartens run by many of our churches. We have, in more recent times, started to provide hostels for our aboriginal as well as indigenous children. We also have children's homes, not only to provide shelter for the needy but also to ensure that the children are receiving quality education. We want to create opportunities for our children to have a brighter future through quality education. We want to see that children are not be left out of good opportunities available. For those who are more inclined towards skill-based education, we now have a Vocational Centre which will equip them for skilled labour. The vocational education we provide will equip the attendees with the training that is appropriate and relevant to them.

The ethos of our Methodist education is to ensure that our educational facilities provide the best education at an affordable cost. It is our prayer that more educational centres can be established and a higher educational standard be achieved through our schools. And it is our prayer that this would be one of the ways we could contribute to nation-building.

Some questions that emerge:

1. How should we face the hybrid approach to learning, i.e., classroom as well as digital?
2. Can 'education online' be made even more available and affordable to those who were previously unable to afford quality education?
3. Can our Methodist Education move not only into establishing Vocational Centres but also into the public arena, e.g., reclaiming strategic government-assisted schools to impart spiritual values and formation as part of nation-building?

What should we do?

1. Have every church adopt a school within her neighbourhood to pray for as well as to find ways to engage meaningfully in the life of the school.
2. Challenge the local church to be involved in student Christian fellowships and campus ministry.

3. Promote bridging ministries such as Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, No Apologies, Character Building, etc.
4. Promote and market skill-based education through more vocational schools.
5. Appoint appropriate resource personnel to our Board of Governors or Managers who understand the status of mission schools negotiated via the Aziz Commission (1970) and articulated in the Education Act 1996.
6. Provide appropriate educational opportunities to achieve their potential for children from diverse ethnic, lower social and economic backgrounds and those with special needs.
7. Take seriously Early Childhood Education through Tadikas and Tabikas.
8. Provide education at affordable costs by setting up scholarship or financial aid funds in each of our schools and local churches.
9. Encourage our teens or youths to consider teaching (national or private) as their vocation.

ENGAGING THE NATION

We must be a Christian voice to the nation in an organized way. The Church needs to be united and speak as one voice to the government and the society. While the Church must be nonpartisan, we must not be seen as unconcerned about justice and righteousness. We have a Scriptural mandate to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly before our God (Micah 6:8).

We have often been involved in social concerns. Now the Church must also take an interest in advocacy. We must speak out for those in need and take a stand against injustice. We must remember the poor. We must not lose interest in the politics of the country even as we bear in mind that the church is not a political organization. The Church must also stay alert on issues pertaining to religious freedom, education, marriages, families, natural environment, socio-economic welfare, treatment of migrant workers, and justice.

The Church has always given a helping hand to those who are poor. Although much help has been given, the poor are still increasing. Our Lord Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." When has the Methodist Church in Malaysia done all these to our Lord? When we did it to the least of Malaysians, and the least of immigrants

here, we have done it to Christ. Without becoming weary, we must continue to do good works. John Wesley instructed the early Methodists to “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” We Methodists should not forget this instruction.

We, as the people of God, must be godly leaders in nation-building by setting good examples for others to imitate. We must maintain financial integrity and conduct our business affairs ethically. The way churches manage our affairs ought to be the gold standard which society looks up to. The church leadership, entrusted with overseeing the church, must not overlook wrongful actions should they take place in the church. We would lose our moral authority to engage the nation if we are seen to be covering up issues that have done harm to those in our churches.

Some questions that emerge:

1. Can we be involved in economic empowerment rather than charitable activities so as to effectively help the B-40 population?
2. Can we relook at strengthening the indigenous churches through economic empowerment?
3. Will we prepare our indigenous churches with concrete plans of action for the onslaughts of un-Christian agenda?
4. How do we find and involve people of different gifts and talents in the ministry of the church? The Methodist Church is not short of people who are talented and gifted in many spheres of life - education, government & politics, business & economics, media & technology, the arts, science & medical, family and others.

What should we do?

1. Develop a theological understanding of salvation to help us embrace our identity as salt and light in our nation.
2. Inspire our youths to be responsible citizens, stakeholders in our nation with Kingdom principles and values.
3. Be the voice for the voiceless through advocacy. Establish study or response groups on national issues facing society and provide concrete help to those who are in need.

4. Take a more explicit role in mobilizing personnel, expertise and resources in the major areas of influence, such as the arts and media.
5. Display the Malaysian flag and the Rukun Negara prominently on our premises to acknowledge that churches are God's representatives to the nation.
6. Inculcate respect for diversity of cultures and faiths in the country.
7. Link up, at local church level, with or support and partner with different NGOs which are involved in work such as advocacy, social concerns, mental health, etc.
8. Choose into church leadership only the disciples of Jesus who have shown godly examples of spiritual maturity and humility.
9. Promote intentionally the study and application of our Methodist Social Principles as found in our Methodist Book of Discipline.
10. Teach and provide a biblical framework and understanding of relevant issues facing the church.

Renewal is not new to Methodism. Methodism was born as a result of one life that was renewed at Aldersgate Street on the 24th of May, 1738. And that was the person of the Rev John Wesley. The Methodist movement has since then continued to impact lives and nations. Born in the power of the Holy Spirit of God, it has never been afraid to preach to turn the hearts of people to GOD. It is our belief that if we will humbly turn to God in repentance, we will be a Church continually renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit of GOD.

In this Vision Statement, we are addressing many areas of life and ministry, from church life to national life. The reason is because we want to be holistic in our approach and we want to target as many spheres as possible. In doing so, we affirm that the gospel has far-reaching effects and that it transforms every area of life. So that at the end of it all, it is not only the Church that is renewed. Our society and nation as a whole are transformed as well.

**General Conference Executive Council
The Methodist Church in Malaysia
19th of February 2021**