

SCGM WAVE

Catalysing the National Missions Movement in Singapore



SCGM EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chairman:

Mr Daniel Jesudason

Vice-Chairman:

Pastor Neo Ban Hui

Secretary:

Mr Eugene Lim

Treasurer:

Mr Wong Kron Joo

Members:

Mr Chou Fang Soong

Mr Bernard Chan

Ms Saw Seang Pin

Rev Benjamin Lee

National Director:

Mr Lawrence Ko (ex-officio)



SCGM ANNUAL LECTURE 2019

with Prof. Dr. Choong Chee Pang

The “Trinity” of Christian Missions: Ecological, Socio-Political & Personal Perspectives



Professor Choong Chee Pang, a theologian and former principal of Trinity Theological College, delivered the SCGM Annual Lecture 2019 on the evening of April 24th on holistic mission.

Dr. Choong shared a glimpse of the historical scene some 50 years ago as a young Christian who had grown up in an evangelical tradition, when the focus of the Christian witness was solely on evangelism i.e. the personal aspect of Christian salvation.

The ecological and more so the socio-political interests and engagements among Christians were very much lacking in those days as they were regarded as too “liberal” a theology. Yet, the Christian Gospel that purports to bring a holistic restoration to this world compels us into a role, in one way or another, in every aspect of humanity; which includes no less the ecological and socio-political systems that both govern and sustain it.

If the world and all that is in it belong to the Lord, it should mean also that our restorative Gospel indeed comes with a holistic purpose – for this world and everything in it.



On the **ecological** aspect of the Christian missions, Dr. Choong started with the biblical account of creation in Genesis: our duty is to be good stewards of the earth as God the Creator had entrusted her to the care of the human race. We must know that God Himself remains the sole owner of this earth, and we human beings are merely part of the earth. He pointed out that in the divine scheme of God, there is undeniably an inherent solidarity between human beings and the earth; so much so that even after the Fall, any human activities that take place on earth would inevitably affect and impact the earth, directly or indirectly. It is therefore our part to play, even more so as stewards of God's creation, to desire and work towards its restoration. As the world progresses, there is consequentially an ongoing tension between development and destruction. Christian missions must therefore address and advocate for this issue with a greater sense of urgency.

“THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND THE CULTURAL MANDATE WHICH HUMAN BEINGS RECEIVED FROM GOD THE CREATOR, ARE THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IS FORMED.”

Briefly summarising the **socio-political** aspect, Dr. Choong emphasised that religion does not and should not exist in a vacuum. A powerful and consistent message of the prophets in the Old Testament is that when justice and righteousness are absent in society, religious activities would be meaningless and irrelevant. Our call to take care of the orphans, to look after the disadvantaged and fight for the exploited in our society is still of more value than our religious sacrifices and offering (Isaiah 1:11-17).

Dr. Choong also illustrated this relevance through the gospel of John. Chapter 18:28-38 recorded the most significant encounter between the “two kingdoms”, represented by Pontius Pilate and Jesus Christ: one of the powers and authority on earth and the other of heaven. Jesus had remained silent for the most part of His trial, but spoke and confronted Pontius Pilate on the issue of “truth” when it was an opportune moment. When we realise such politicians, law-makers and judges are in high positions to administer *justice* on this side of eternity, flawed and imperfect as it may be, we as the Church must strive and continue to live in our prophetic call of justice

and mercy, recognising that these are in fact great opportunities and prospects for Christian participation. But all these are not to say that they are without challenges and limitations to the influences that we may bring.

“THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL IS QUITE MEANINGLESS UNLESS IT IS PERSONAL AND EXISTENTIAL. OUR PERSONAL WITNESS WOULD NOT BE CREDIBLE AND CONVINCING UNLESS WE OURSELVES HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED BY THE POWER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

The **personal** perspective of the “trinity” has always been the strongest and most familiar to all Christians. Dr. Choong drove the point that in the end, the gospel we share has to come down in a very personal term. Many a time people do not doubt the transforming power of God in our witness to them, but the deeper and more palpable question is in what way and how much this power has transformed and changed our lives.



OUR MONTHLY MISSIONS BREAKFAST FELLOWSHIP



ANNUAL LECTURE 2019



五四运动讲座
2019年5月25日, 星期六
上午9时至12时
新加坡华人基督教会怀恩堂
Grace (S.C.C.) Church
14 Queen Street Singapore 188536
入场免费, 须先报名!
https://m4seminar.eventbrite.sg
www.scgmm.org.sg

赛先生
德先生
救国
读书

五四运动100周年：回顾与评审
讲员：钟志邦教授

主办单位: FES SINGAPORE, GFC, scgm



SCGM is pleased to support the
MICAH CONVERSATION 2019

The first **integral mission** gathering in Singapore, MICAH's vision is for the Church to be faithful in living out the whole gospel of Jesus and His kingdom - the integration of proclaiming good news and doing good works.

Come ready for a highly conversational and practice-oriented time together with many other like-minded Jesus followers.

When:
 19 July 2019, Friday
 7.30pm-9.30pm
 20 July 2019, Saturday
 9am-6pm
 Where:
 Covenant Presbyterian Church

REGISTER HERE:

tiny.cc/micahconversation

MICAH SINGAPORE
 19 July 2019, Friday, 7.30pm
 20 July 2019, Saturday, 9am-6pm
MICAH CONVERSATION 2019
tiny.cc/micahconversation
 good word / good works
GOOD NEWS & DOING GOOD
 GOOD NEWS
 supported by
 World Vision, scgm, FES SINGAPORE, BGST, Trinity Evangelical Conference

What is Integral Mission and Why Should I care?

by Ng Zhiwen

There was a time when the Church saw her mission primarily as that of 'saving souls', and of world evangelisation (i.e. saving souls from all nations). After being saved, one was to 'do church-y stuff', and live a quiet life with minimal fuss about the 'secular affairs of the world'.

At some other time, the mission was expanded to that of making disciples. We shouldn't just be saving souls, but we should also bring them up to spiritual maturity. Still quite 'churchy', rather personal (i.e. not social), but closer to the truth behind the Great Commission.

There was also a time when the Church looked at the awful mess of the world all around - the poverty, injustice, violence, and concluded that it could not just sit there and do nothing about it; That the gospel can't be good news if it does not compel people to serve the tangible, material, this-worldly needs of others. There was a social dimension to the gospel, they said. Some called this social holiness.

Along the way, some got dissatisfied with what they thought was an insular and uncaring church. They abandoned the need to evangelize, and focused only on social concerns. This has been called the social gospel. (This, I think, is where the church got seriously lost.)

SPEAKERS & CASE STUDIES

 Rev. Raymond Fong Faith Methodist Church	 Rev. Dr. Murreth Isaac Bethlehem Bible College	 Dr. Melissa Patricia Maggay Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, Philippines, Manila, Global	 Eugene Sim TOUCH International
 Lee Ed Yang Covenant Chambers LLC	 Paulson Ang Hesed & Ertes Eliav's Kitchen	 Abraham Yao Yau Am Homeless Hearts	 Kenneth & Addisu Thong The Last Resort
 James Quik My Helper	 Community Dinners ALL ARE WELCOME	 Tamar Village	 Marcy Ho Tamar Village, YWAM

MIGHTY CONNECTION, **REDEMPTION HILL CHURCH**, MICAH SINGAPORE



In some places, Christian thinkers pushed the limits of social holiness to say that the Church ought to be concerned not just with meeting the needs of individuals, but to also challenge the systems and structures that led people to get trapped in poverty cycles, or oppressed by systemic injustice. That the Church ought to speak against racial discrimination and unjust governments. To use biblical language, this was the kingdom of God confronting the powers and principalities. The gospel had a political dimension as well.

To cap it off, others have argued that the mission of the Church includes creation care and the proper stewardship of the environment. From saving endangered species to lobbying to fight the deleterious effects of climate change, this span of activities falls within the ambit of God's all-encompassing mission of redeeming all creation to Himself.

So, what is our mission? All of the above? What takes priority? How do we hold all of these together?

I've seen churches in Singapore lean in different directions, and am convinced that we need one another to keep each other from falling off the tight rope. We need to listen to how one another

makes sense of this, and talk it through on the basis of shared Christian tenets. What are some of them?

I'm a military man, and so when I think of mission I think of the Authority who gave the orders, the One whom I serve. That is the Christ.

I also think of the mission orders that Christ has issued, as found in the Scriptures. Unfortunately (or fortunately!) there isn't a single all-encompassing mission statement found in the Bible. We have instead a story, a drama in a sequence of acts, told in various forms, of God at work, of God on the move, with Christ as the Central Person of the story. Our understanding of Christian mission is figured out within these parameters - Jesus at the Centre, understood under the authority of His Word. Do not be surprised by how easy it is for the church to lose sight of this.

I could say more.

We could talk about the Story themes that frame the drama:

Creation and New Creation.

Idolatry and Injustice.

We could talk about Jesus Christ as King and Saviour, of the Kingdom of God which comprises (at the very least) the people and the land, and how this Kingdom is breaking into this world, with the decisive victory secured at the Cross;

Or of the grand scheme of how God in Christ is reconciling the world to Himself, drawing individuals into a deeply personal knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and sending them out to be His witnesses, image-bearers, and a royal priesthood into the world. Can we hold all of these together and live our lives as fully wrapped up in (INTEGRATED into) God's Big Story, such that our deeds and our words speak the same message which echoes into eternity?

That is the business of integral mission, and it is a life-long enterprise.

Clearly we have to care about this.

Let's work this out together.

Under the Word.

Jesus at the Centre.



REGISTER HERE:
tiny.cc/micahconversation



Journey with the Urban Poor...

by Joan Alikazin

Rusty, zinc-plated rooftops; old campaign posters patched across dilapidating walls; strings and poles laden with sun-dried laundry across the narrow alleys; these are not unfamiliar sights of slums and squatters' houses for someone who has been on mission trips outside this beautiful shore of Singapore. As part of my developmental training with SCGM, I went along a 5-day service-learning journey with a group of tertiary students from Singapore to the heart of Metro Manila City. The focus was on Manila's urban challenges. Even though it was the first of such kind for me, my role as a group facilitator (and thanks to prior cross-cultural exposures), had allowed me to position my learning expectations ahead - in some ways - of the rest of the students.

But what awaited in Manila still turned out to be quite extraordinarily.. disconcerting. Many of us left with our hearts full and enriched, but a handful more disturbed than ever. Pockets of slums and squatters' houses have grown rampant and urban poverty is scaling despite the city bustling with economy. Instead of another one of those short "ministry visits" to these slums (a service I am more familiar with) we were made partakers (though nominal) of the urban poor living in this densely-populated city, home for the 12.8 million. We entered their homes; we conversed; we heard their heart-wrenchingly laudable life stories; we learnt; we co-labored; we communed.



Dr Raineer Chu, a lawyer and a missionary himself living among the slum dwellers, mentioned in his article *Companion of the Poor: Urban Spirituality* that there are two different ways a person can enter the slums: one either *brings* God to the poor with a quick-fix pursuit mentality; or *seeks* the presence of God in his journeying, believing that God has been there even before he arrives in the slums. And for a Christian searching for some palpable relevance of bringing the "conceptual" Good News into a community that is so fundamentally deprived of basic material needs, the biblical concept of *doing justly, loving mercy and righteousness* finally made sense in this trip. I learnt what the incarnate Christ truly means; what holistic gospel and incarnational spirituality entail. What *mission* truly looks like.

Although this trip was intended to be wholly educational and non-religious in context, I could not fail to see that the faithful Hand of Provision is at work amongst the poor through the various local church partners and organisations who live among them and are serving on the ground. I witnessed first-hand the hands and feet of Jesus who are there clothing the naked, who feed the hungry, who fight for the oppressed, and who have become mothers to the motherless and fathers to the fatherless. Truly God was already there. But something got displaced - or rather put in place - within me.

I could perhaps start off with an extract from the **Manila Manifesto of 1989** which perfectly paints the little gem that I have gleaned from this trip, while still in the process of refining and finding where this stirring would eventually lead me:

“Our continuing commitment to social action is not a confusion of the kingdom of God with a Christianised society. It is, rather, a recognition that the biblical gospel has inescapable social implications. True mission should always be incarnational. It necessitates entering humbly into other people’s worlds, identifying with their social reality, their sorrow and suffering, and their struggles for justice against oppressive powers. This cannot be done without personal sacrifices. We repent that the narrowness of our concerns and vision has often kept us from proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life, private and public, local and global. We determine to obey his command to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”.”



During the trip we spent some days travelling through the city visiting 3 different slums communities and got to know some young ladies who have become their family’s breadwinners. As 26-year-old Reyna invited our team of 16 into her humble home which houses her family of 11, one by one waddled through the door and navigated awkwardly around the living area (also their bunkbed area, study area and storage) in search for personal space. Some had to remain standing at the doorway, others had seated and sardined ourselves on her wooden bed while making sure we were not breaking anything. Reyna boldly took us through her battle story against her life in poverty. I felt this same sense of bewilderment and cautious sensitivity growing and hovering around us as we visited from one house to another...

As we retired from the day’s activities, that first evening later came somewhat as a shock to my system – when I was unexpectedly welcomed with cold shower with less than powerful pressure back in our humble dwelling where we would stay for the next 3 nights. Perhaps it was the whirlwind of new sights, smells, sounds and emotions compounded; or the unbeknown anticipation of comfortable rest by someone from a privileged home; or a combination of both – I remember just how my eyes suddenly welled up as I felt my heart sank ... and that was the beginning of my serious contemplation over my role: as a dissatisfied, first-generation evangelical Christian who was educated and taught in practice to seek justice and defend the weak.

While evangelism, bible study, discipleship and youth camps etc. are fun and equally important, over the years these questions have nagged at the back of my mind: are they the only agenda and goals of our missional calling? What is the use of these ‘churchy’ activities – imparting goals and visions that they will never think about after we depart, simply because they have more pertinent and immediate cares to think about every day?

Our team participated in a house-building project, a creative housing solution for the urban slum dwellers initiated by Gawad Kalinga (GK), one of the biggest local non-governmental organisations. This is where I learnt that poverty in Philippines is essentially never about economic issue. Every human being made in the image of God has an intrinsic dignity and honour, without which life has little worth to fight for. And poverty diminishes this intrinsic value that makes them *feel* human. GK’s core vision in their fight against poverty is to first and foremost restore this human honour and dignity by allowing the slum dwellers to build proper homes and community for themselves debt-free*, offering a new beginning for them to create a better life and future. They were not promised a permanent housing but assured that they will never be left behind. That alone made such a stark, tangible difference in the atmosphere, even the countenance on the children’s faces as we visited both the slums and the GK Communities. Perhaps this is also what we ought to consider in our own obedience to Christ: it is not all just about counting souls, making our presence loud and known with spiritual wisdom and superiority, or showing the poor a far glimpse of ‘*this is what life could be for you*’ while giving them periodic moments of spur, quick-fix Jesus solution out of poverty. Perhaps what more is needed is Christians who truly love their neighbours, who are willing to take their hands and journey through life with them, and the promise that they will never be left behind in this harsh world.



The highlight of my learning was through our interaction with Dr Raineer Chu. He once organised one of the largest land acquisition for the urban poor in the Philippines for 500 families. Dr Chu too challenged us in our thinking that urban poverty is never solely and deeply connected to personal and ethical problems of individuals i.e. laziness or bad attitude. Contrary to this popular notion, the urban poor labour equally as hard if not more than the average-class worker. Yet, the incentives they receive are far from compatible, causing them to make poor choices in life because they are *given* poor choices to begin with. Essentially, it is the systemic evil that exists in our social and political structure that prevents the urban poor from being able to break out of the poverty cycle. It was a profound shift in paradigm even as I sought deeper into this understanding through the findings of our very own local sociologist: *poverty cannot be resolved without addressing the issue of inequality*. It was clear then that children of God, in whatever profession and wherever we are positioned with authority and influence in society, have crucial roles to play – both in the social and political arena – so that justice can be administered in one way or another and seen among the oppressed.



Deuteronomy 15:4-5;11

"But there will be no poor among you; for the Lord will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess — if only you will strictly obey the voice of the Lord your God ... You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land."

Coming closer to home where slums and homelessness are almost non-existent, it is a difficult lesson for some of us to learn on true brotherhood; on loving our neighbours just as ourselves. It "*necessitates entering humbly into other people's worlds [and allowing others to enter ours], identifying with their social reality, their sorrow and suffering and their struggles...*" It is a long-drawn, inconvenient and tiring journey. But at the end of the day, this is how Christian mission ought to look like; evangelism and social concerns are no longer and can no longer be regarded as mutually exclusive. Perhaps if I look further and deeper, I would find that poverty is also a common narrative even in this impeccably efficient first-class city. To those who have embarked on short-term overseas trips – be it for social responsibility, educational or missional purposes – who feel like some of us as though righteousness and justice could be more than just preaching God's word, laying bricks for a day, leaving footprints or taking home snapshots for noble memories: perhaps a small awareness is the start of something bigger; perhaps it starts even with as tiny as a photo we have all taken home at some point for ourselves.



Talaba slums community



Gawad Kalinga Community House

* Residents of the GK Community pay for their houses through "sweat equity" i.e. a certain number of man-hours is required by each household to construct the GK houses. These housings are temporary homes for the residents, giving them (and their children) basic liveable conditions so they can focus on working for a better future, and eventually move out of the slums to own their own permanent homes.



GREEN DESERT ECO-MISSION PROJECT

Participate in Environmental Education and Tree Planting in the desertified grassland to combat desertification and climate change

**Care for God's Creation.
Redeem the Wastelands.**

"The Green Desert Project (GDP) offers a unique opportunity to reinforce lessons learnt about missions. GDP has a holistic view - involving some key components: the poor, cross-cultural, nature and care for it. The earth is the Lord's and the purpose of creation is God's glory, hence it was my choice as practicum. The trip will be a time of service learning to know about desertification, its impact and the effort to mitigate it - no matter how small the effort. A broaden world view, fresh perspectives of missions would be my aspirations from this trip. Reviving my long lost spoken Mandarin would be a bonus!" - Raymond Yue



"Planting trees is very new to me as a concept of mission. In the past I have the impression that mission is all about people. I thought it was more interested about people. But this trip opened my eyes and my mind to see that God is also interested in Creation. First of a kind for me!"

- Adrian

"Joining the Green Desert Project provides me with a wonderful opportunity to actively participate and care for Creation. To reflect our love for the Creator as "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it". Looking forward to an experiential learning journey and having the cross-cultural exchanges in this trip."

- Dave Ang

**Raise Awareness of
Climate Change &
Need for Sustainable
Development.**



"It was amazing how we can transform desert into green land! When God acts, everything is transformed and restored. It is how it should be a part of everything we do: better today than what we did yesterday."

- Annie Court



