VOL. XV. No.2 ISSUE 26

APBF Digest

NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIA PACIFIC BAPTIST FEDERATION

*For private circulation only

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 **EDITOR'S LETTER**
by Rev. Erwin Cabalang, Chair of APBF Communications

03 **A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT**
by Rev. Mark Wilson, President of APBF

04 **APBF'S CONTINUED CALL TO PRAYER FOR MANIPUR**
by Rev. Dr. Vesekhoyi 'Vee' Tetseo, General Secretary of APBF

05 **BEAUTIFUL MIZORAM**
The Lush Green Hills Scenic Views with Clouds Hanging Over the Mountain and Valleys
by Rev. Dr. Vesekhoyi 'Vee' Tetseo, General Secretary of APBF

07 **RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH IN OUR PRESENT CULTURE**
by Dr. AK Lama, Vice President of APBF

10 **RELEVANCE OF YOUTH MINISTRY**
by Rev. Steve Dixon, Chairman of APBY

12 **RELEVANCE OF MISSIONS IN OUR PRESENT CULTURE**
by Rev. Ardi Y. Wiriadinata, Missions Director of APBF

15 **RELEVANCE OF HUMANITARIAN AID IN OUR PRESENT CULTURE**
by Mr. Roshan Mendis, Director of APBAid

APBF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT
Rev. Mark Wilson (Australia)

VICE PRESIDENTS
Dr. AK Lama (India)
Dr. Joseph Ko (Korea)
Dr. Craig Vernall (New Zealand)
Mrs. Laura Raymundo (Philippines)

GENERAL SECRETARY
Rev. Dr. Vesekhoyi 'Vee' Tetseo (Okinawa, Japan)

TREASURER
Mr. Abraham Verghese (Malaysia)

CHAIRPERSONS
Rev. Ronnie Chiu (Malaysia)
APBAid

Rev. Erwin Cabalang (Philippines)
Communications

Dr. Jolly Rimai (India)
Mission

Dr. Rachael Tan (Taiwan)
Theological Education

Rev. Steve Dixon (Australia)
Asia Pacific Baptist Youth

Ms. Elissa Macpherson (Australia)
Women, Baptist Women of the Pacific

CO-OPTED MEMBERS
Mr. Howard Cham (Philippines)
Rev. Leor Sarkar (Bangladesh)
Ps. Peni Donavale (Fiji)

EMERITUS PRESIDENT
Rev. Edwin Lam (Singapore)

AFFILIATE BODY
Asia Baptist Women's Union (ABWU)
Dr. Vernette Myint Myint Sann
President

APBF Digest
Editor:
Ps. Erwin Cabalang

Media Assistant:
Ms. Ashley Muk

Published by APBF Communications
Rev. Dr. Vesekhoyi 'Vee' Tetseo,
General Secretary, APBF
APBF Secretariat, 3-22-5 Goya, Okinawa City, Okinawa,
Japan 904-0021

APBF is a regional organization of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). We represent over 40,000 local churches and 65 conventions in 22 countries across Asia Pacific.

APBF...
...promotes fellowship, cooperation and service amongst Baptists.
...stimulate and coordinate evangelism.
...assist in consultation and planning for various ministry programs.
...to function as a regional organisation of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

www.apbf.org
info@apbf.org
asiapacificbaptist@gmail.com
APBaptistF

EDITOR'S LETTER

This fast paced world we live in today is characterized by technological advancements, shifting values, and disturbing ideologies, the role and relevance of the church in society have come into question. Some argue that the church is becoming increasingly disconnected from modern culture, struggling to engage with younger generations and failing to address contemporary issues effectively. Some have accused the church of being too judgmental. However, to remain an influential and transformative force, the church must adapt and actively seek relevance within today's culture while upholding its timeless Biblical principles.

1. **Understanding Cultural Context:**
   To be relevant, the church must first seek to understand the culture it aims to engage with. This entails recognizing the diverse perspectives, struggles, and aspirations of the people within society. By empathetically engaging with cultural trends, concerns, and values, the church can bridge the gap between tradition and contemporary realities.

2. **Embracing Change without Compromising Biblical Values:**
   While the core tenets of the church remain steadfast, the methods of delivery and engagement may need to adapt. Embracing change does not imply abandoning biblical truths but rather finding innovative ways to convey them effectively. The church can leverage modern tools, such as social media, podcasts, and online platforms, to spread its message, connect with individuals, and foster meaningful discussions.

3. **Addressing Relevant Issues:**
   The church needs to proactively address the pressing issues faced by individuals and communities today. This includes topics such as mental health, social justice, environmental stewardship, and ethical dilemmas arising from technological advancements and the LGBTQ. By acknowledging and engaging with these issues, the church can provide guidance, support, and a moral compass to navigate the complexities of modern life.

4. **Cultivating Authentic Community:**
   In an era of social disconnection and isolation, the church can serve as a haven for authentic community and belonging. By fostering inclusive environments that embrace diversity, the church can demonstrate the transformative power of the Gospel, love, acceptance, and compassion. Meaningful relationships and supportive networks can be established, creating spaces where individuals can find solace, share burdens, and grow together spiritually.

5. **Engaging with Younger Generations:**
   To remain relevant, the church must actively engage with younger generations, who often feel disconnected from traditional religious institutions. This involves understanding their perspectives, investing in youth and young adult ministries, and creating opportunities for them to contribute meaningfully. Encouraging dialogue, mentorship, and participation in decision-making processes can help bridge the generation gap and cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging.

6. **Collaborating with the Wider Community:**
   The church can enhance its relevance by actively collaborating with other organizations, both religious and secular, to address societal challenges. By partnering with community groups, charities, and non-profit organizations, the church can pool resources and expertise to make a tangible difference in the lives of those in need. These collaborative efforts demonstrate the church's commitment to serving others and meeting the diverse needs of the broader community.

In a rapidly changing world, the church must embrace cultural shifts while remaining grounded in its core values and principles. By understanding the cultural context, addressing relevant issues, cultivating authentic community, engaging with younger generations, and collaborating with the wider community, the church can demonstrate its ongoing relevance and contribute to the betterment of society. By actively seeking to connect with individuals where they are, the church can be a transformative force that offers hope, guidance, and a sense of purpose in today's ever-evolving culture.

Rev. Erwin Cabalang
Chair, APBF Communications

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE CHURCH REMAINS RELEVANT WHEN CHRISTIANS LIVE THE MESSAGE.

In a world apparently hungry for entertainment, distraction, glitz, glamour, and noise, we need to understand the real hunger, our deepest hunger for authenticity. The fame of celebrities is fleeting, they amuse and fascinate, but people's hearts yearn for something deeper.

Ironically, the church often yields to the celebrity-driven culture. We seek to compete with the "wow-factor", oblivious to the reality that what we most desire is not a wow but a way—the Way.

Some churches apologized for simplicity and downplayed our Christian traditions. Churches spent large budgets on cameras and lights, to get action. If only we could package the message with greater creativity—more sizzle, razzle, and dazzle. If we build it, they will come.

Some church planters feel this pressure as much as anyone. Indeed, some church-planting models require considerable support and resources before they even launch.

Then we open Matthew 10, and it wriggles beneath our skin. Jesus prepared to send out His disciples and declared:

"Don't think you have to put on a fund-raising campaign before you start. You don't need a lot of equipment. You are the equipment, and all you need to keep that going is three meals a day. Travel light."
(The Message Translation)

Jesus looks at His disciples and tells them to drop the props and leave the lights. To paraphrase Him, He declares what all of us need to hear, "You are the message."

Our lives - raw, honest, authentic, real - are more than enough equipment in the hands of God. We struggle to believe it but it's true. God seeks not our competence but our trust, not our cleverness but our willingness, not our self-confidence but our full surrender.

The Kingdom of God is in us and among us. You are the message with lives marked by fear and *faith*, stress and *salvation*, pain and *hope*, grief and *love*.

So, let's speak softly, prayerfully, and assuredly today with our eye on Him. The effectiveness of the message lies far more often in the character of the messenger than the spark of the environment. You are the one through whom Christ wants to speak today. Believe it. Seek it. Yield to it. Trust it.

Some in today's culture say Christianity and the church are irrelevant. Yet, when we are the Christian Character based people, we become the Message, and nothing can stop it.

Rev.Mark Wilson
President, APBF

APBF's Continued Call to Prayer for Manipur!

Rev. Dr. Vesekhoyi "Vee" Tetseo, General Secretary of APBF

A peaceful protest by Manipur tribals on May 3rd against the Manipur High Court decision who had directed the state government to submit the recommendation for inclusion of Meitei community in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry was met with violent retaliation.

News media The Wire in the analysis, "Dispelling Some Misleading Claims About the Violence in Manipur" reported, "In protest against the Manipur High Court order directing the state government to recommend inclusion of Meiteis in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list, All Tribal Students Union Manipur (ATSUM) called for a peaceful protest on May 3. It was objected to by some valley-based Meitei civil society groups. In protest against the ATSUM rally, a counter protest was carried out from May 2 afternoon onwards where mobs blocked roads leading to hill towns and villages. On May 3, while a peaceful protest was underway at the Kuki-majority Churachandpur town, news had reached the hill areas that the Anglo-Kuki Centenary Gate at Leisang-Monglenphai was set on fire..."

Kaushik Deka on June 16 writes in indiatoday.in, a leading news magazine in India, reports, "Over the past month and a half, Manipur has been seized by repeated cycles of violence, bloodletting and failed efforts at peace. Since May 3, when ethnic clashes first erupted in the northeastern state, 130 people have died, 352 have been injured and some 60,000 have had to flee their homes. The list under 'still counting'...over 4,300 incidents of arson, nearly 3,500 houses destroyed in around 275 villages, 4,000 firearms looted by violent mobs from police armouries."

The current situation is not getting any better as there has been fresh violence erupting in different parts of Manipur. According to information received through the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India, around 250 plus churches have been razed to the ground. And the situation is still volatile, therefore prayer is paramount. Only God can bring peace and healing into the beautiful land of Manipur.

Pray for all who have been affected by violence and killings. Many have lost their loved ones. Pray for mercy, forgiveness, comfort, strength and reconciliation.

Pray for families, women, and children who have lost their homes and are left with nothing to build their lives.

Pray for the families who had to abandon their houses to escape to the jungles for their lives. Report from Open Doors reads of a Kuki Christian saying, "It is very hard to explain the situation of our land. I believe God is protecting us and will protect us. Most believers are in trauma. We need churches' prayers. Please pray for us. Pray for the situation and pray for believers here."

Pray also for Meitei Christians who have and continue to face extreme retaliation by their Hindu brothers and sisters. They have been warned to either renounce their Christian faith and reconvert to Hinduism or otherwise not return to their homeland. That they will not be permitted to rebuild their churches. Pray for strength in the face of fear and evil.

Pray there will be a sense of civility amongst leaders and respect of human lives as community leaders seek for the passage of negotiation.

Pray for Manipur which is one of the hill states in the North East of India and is inhabited by Meiteis, Nagas and Kuki-Zomi people. The tribals (Nagas, Kuki-Zomi) are mostly Christians living in the hills areas of the district while the Meiteis who are predominantly Hindus live in the valley.

Pray 2 Chronicles 7:14 will become reasonable. Pray for God's divine intervention.

MIZORAM CITY ON A HILL

The Lush Green Hills Scenic Views with Clouds Hanging Over the Mountain and Valleys

Rev. Dr. Vesekhoyi "Vee" Tetseo, General Secretary of APBF

The Baptist Churches of Mizoram is a vibrant congregation of 680 churches, 176,404 members with 92 pastorates that represents the Baptist churches in the Indian state of Mizoram. Baptist Church of Mizoram was established in 1894, passed down from the work of the Baptist Missionary Society of Great Britain, and has since then played a significant role in the development of the Christian community in the North East of India.

A 3 day visit to the Baptist Churches of Mizoram provided an opportunity to witness the vibrant faith of the Mizos. They are an amazing people, faithful Baptists who have 191 full time Ministers and send 1300 missionaries into 20 mission fields to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world.

It has been a blessing to see how Baptist Church of Mizoram has established and instituted its holistic ministries with two hospitals namely Christian Hospital Serkawn, and Christian Hospital Lawngtlai, two theological institutions called Academy of Integrated Christian Studies, Aizawl, and Jubilee Bible School, Lunglei.

Also, through the years the Baptist Church of Mizoram have started various social and community development institutions like Baptist Church Orphanage, Baptist Rehabilitation Centre and Baptist Counselling Centre at Lunglei and higher education centers like: Baptist Higher Secondary School, Serkawn, Baptist English School Serkawn, Baptist English School Zawlnuam and Baptist English School Lungpuk. The mission of God is passionately pursued in many levels of its holistic ministry.

What would be a memory to keep is the 6 hours and 30 minutes travel from Aizawl to Lunglei through the beautiful mountains and valleys, across a never-seem-to-end curved, winding road that lets you view beautiful landscapes making you feel like you are riding on top of the clouds. Pray that all North Eastern states will keep their mountains green and protect the beauty of God's creation.

Important to the trip was also a visit to the Thaizawl Chin Refugee camp, which is located on the outskirts of the city of Lunglei. The refugee camp is home to 880 refugees who fled their homes in Myanmar due to conflict and persecution of the Myanmar Junta. The conditions in the camp were difficult with the challenges the refugees face on a daily basis. (The visit was during the Mocha Cyclone and the cyclone had blown off the ceilings of the church-cum-school.) The people at Thaizawl camp are appreciative of the Thaizawl village and the people of Mizoram for giving them shelter during this difficult time.

Despite the difficult circumstances, what struck me was the resilience and strength of the people in the camp. A community, with makeshift homes and schools were working hard to rebuild their lives in the face of adversity. As I spoke with some of the leaders there I was moved by their stories of hope, courage, and determination.

Overall, a visit to the Baptist Church of Mizoram was inspiring, and the Thaizawl Chin Refugee camp was humbling. It was a powerful and humbling experience to see how God is using the leaders of the Baptist Church of Mizoram. It reminded me of the importance of faith and resilience in the face of hardship. It convicted me to stay committed to the work of God. It gave me encouragement of the richness of being united as one body of Baptists under the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance. It renewed the call to be faithful as "Baptists Together Transforming Lives in Christ across the Asia Pacific." And last but not least, it reminded me to be a servant in Christ to those suffering, persecuted and outcasts.

Mizoram was beautiful. The lush green hills, scenic views of hanging clouds over the mountains and valleys is a breathtaking experience. May God bless the people of Mizoram!

"Despite the difficult circumstances, what struck me was the resilience and strength of the people in the camp. A community, with makeshift homes and schools were working hard to rebuild their lives in the face of adversity."

Relevance of the Church in Our Present Culture

Dr. AK Lama, Vice-President of APBF

Jesus began his ministry saying, "you have heard, and it was said . . . but I tell you" (Matthew 5:17-48). Despite serious dedication, religious leaders in the first century failed to understand the essence of the Law. Jesus had to remind them that the law was made for people rather than people for the law (Mark 2:27; Matthew 12:1-8). Likewise, what would Jesus say about our religious practices? What would he say about our Church? Will he consider her to be relevant to our present culture?

Before writing about relevance, two basic presuppositions need to be defined. First, what do we mean by "culture"? The word "culture" is a very comprehensive term. It encompasses almost everything that defines one's value system, social behavior, mindset, norms, and belief. It is organic and transient as it gets impacted by social media, political propaganda, and growing religious fundamentalism. Identifying the context of culture, or culture(s) to which our church is trying to be relevant is the first challenge. Do we have a target culture(s) to which the Church would like to be relevant? Second, what makes a biblical Church? Is it the building, or the people, or the liturgy, or the essential truth to which the Church is committed to agree and to the non-essential she agrees to disagree. Yes, knowing the target culture and knowing the essential truth are the two basic presuppositions that must be defined.

The disaster of Covid Pandemic did teach us a new relevant lifestyle. Online Sunday services, online donation, and even hosting big virtual conferences redefined our perception of Church. Now, many churches are compelled to remain hybrid. Constantly changing cultural context(s) demands flexibility and willingness of the Church to embrace harmless adaptation.

I believe that churches endowed with godly wisdom and prudence are capable of reflecting, foreseeing, planning, and pioneering the needed changes to become relevant in the present culture.

A comprehensive discussion may require a book, but for this article, let me draw our attention to FIVE areas of relevance:

(1) the mission of the Church;
(2) the message of the Church;
(3) architect & worship style of the Church;
(4) connectivity of the Church; and
(5) financial priority of the Church.

First, how do we define the mission(s) of the Church in the present cultural context? Leading more people to Christ or increased number of baptisms and church planting are good news to our ears and gives our Church a sense of progress and growth. At the same time, a biblical church cannot remain unengaged with its resources when it sees pandemic, starvations, violence, victims, corruptions, injustice, and exploitations in its neighborhood. Evangelism and Social action are the two sides of the same coin called Mission(s). As the Lord allows the context, the Church tries to be a relevant response to its context. It is about being sensitive to the need around us without compromising the primacy of the Word and its eternal value. APBF has rightly launched an emphasis on a Holistic Transformation Movement (HTM) through its member Churches. And we are biblical when we emphasize on holistic approach rather one at the expense of the other.

Second, how relevant is the message from the pulpit to the cultural context of the audience? Is it possible that a sermon may be absolutely grounded in the biblical text and yet they fail to address issues faced by the congregation? The message must be first biblical, but also practical. The messenger must wrestle through the issues faced in the present cultural context and then come up with biblical analysis on what, why, when, and how aspect. The success or failure of the Church will depend much upon the kind of message it delivers from its pulpit. Are they practical and relevant to its congregation? Most millennials in the west avoid traditional Churches because they find their preachers irrelevant. They find the secular motivational speaker on YouTube more relevant than the preacher of gospel.

Third, the current prevalent western architect and design of the Church with steeple, pew, and pulpit has become common in Asia. Our Churches are yet to adapt a culturally relevant architectural design. Is the building of a mega Church in western style relevant to our context? Also, one may notice the dominance of western worship content and style in most urban Asian Churches. Worshipper of most Asian religions don't sit on the chairs and benches while worshipping the Almighty. The religious priests don't stand behind a lectern or pulpit or shout or jump while delivering divine counsel. Mere Interpretation of western songs, sermons, devotionals, and books does not guarantee relevance to our present cultural context.

One of the reasons for the success of the house church movement in some part of India is the cultural relevance where all worshippers sit on the floor, sing songs composed in their mother tongue and tune of the local prevalent religious folk songs. They call their worship place prayer house, rather than Church. Men and women of other faith finds it easier to publicly admit that they are going to a prayer house, rather than going to a Church.

Fourth, is the Church a relevant part of the Community? In Asian context, often Church is perceived as a sacred and holy place of worship for Christians. It is relevant only to the Christians, but it is often irrelevant to the community at large. But when Church in some places opens school, orphanage, rehabilitation center, primary health care, hospice, or any service center for the community at large the perception changes

(Matthew 25:40). Let me tell you a true story of a Church in India. Some years ago, most people from other faiths did not know where this Church in their city was located. But after extensive relief works during Covid pandemic lockdown, this Church is connected to the community at large (1 Peter 2:12). They run three children tutoring centers and one tailoring center to empower children and women from underprivileged communities. The community around this Church have begun to see her as a relevant place. And now they have begun a prayer center for people of other faiths.

Fifth, is the financial priority of the Church relevant? Financial management of the Church requires application of Biblical stewardship for its cultural context – stewardship of local and global mission(s). Neither frugality that leads to misery nor luxury that lead to waste, rather we must ask some tough financial questions to ourselves: Are we making the best use of the tithes and offerings to the cause of His Kingdom? Are we making the best use of facilities? It is questionable when the church decides to invest in the risky stock market, take loan to build million-dollar facilities which they might use only for 52 Sundays in a year, and spend a large sum of tithes and offering on technology, but often hesitant to spend a little more money on discipleship programs (Matthew 28:19). Any financial investments which undermine human values and human touch but majors on the glamour of the building, or programs likely to become irrelevant in Asian context where poverty and illiteracy are overwhelming. Asian economy demands human sensitivity and human touch where the community gathering succeeds not with quantity, but with quality of care, love, and charity. Hence, the emphasis must be on encouraging small group cells, compassionate ministry, and relief works. In the end one must ask the question, how does the economy of the Church facilitate that? Jesus reminded us, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). How will our Church go to the world and make disciples of them when her love is invisible in times of crisis?

The best way to assess the relevance of your Church to the community you live in is to make a random survey. Visit around 100 people of other faith(s) living within a mile and ask them, “What do they know about your Church, or about your Pastor?” It will indeed be a discovery.

Relevance of Youth Ministry

Rev. Steve Dixon, Chairman of APBY

Over the last two decades my work with young people has given me much to consider.I have worked with young people in local churches, supported and resourced youth pastors, taught youth ministry in an academic institution, and provided leadership across the wider global expression of our Baptist family.

Now I know I write from a particular part of the world (Australia) that has particular cultural values and dynamics but I have also spent a reasonable amount of time over the years with youth pastors, youth leaders, and young people from across Asia and the Pacific. This has been a privilege and has reinforced that while ministry and mission always needs to be contextualised, globalisation (accelerated in particular through advancement in social media platforms) allows us to observe informative trends and characteristics.

What I have learnt is that the young people are inherently open, creative, and forgiving.

Therefore, youth ministry offers an incredible relevance to our present culture as we grapple collectively with what it means to be human, what we really value, how is truth understood and expressed, and for us who follow Jesus - what it means to be people of faith.

In a recent study by Barna of almost 25,000 young people from 26 different countries, they found "…it's rare that teens think poorly of Jesus. Most teenagers around the world have a positive perception of him. About half of all teens, across faith groups, describe Jesus as "loving" (49%) and believe he offers hope to (46%) and cares about people (43%). The global impression of Jesus is that he is trustworthy, generous, wise, peaceful…" *(Barna, Global Teens Share Their Perceptions of Jesus, the Bible & Justice)*

Additionally, in the Australian context a study found that 8% of Australian young people can be considered to be seeking faith, 18% are spiritual but not religious, 15% are undecided about faith, and 19% are nominally religious *(Sydney Morning Herald, The Six Types of Teenage Spirituality in Australia)*. This might not be the same in your context, but for me it's been helpful to think beyond the often far too binary markers of simply those of faith and those of non-faith convictions.

These two pieces of research combined paint a compelling picture of the opportunity for the church when it comes to inviting young people to see Jesus as the answer to all our fears, concerns, and questions. It also serves the church as it considers how to live in the present culture in such a way that both cares for the hurting, the anxious, and the confused, as well as creating opportunities to see Jesus for who He really is - not simply a historical religious figure, but as the one who gives life in all its fullness.

Youth ministry is thus the place that can experiment with new expressions of ministry and mission. It can be the place where ideas are not simply explored but also tested. It can be the place where new ways of demonstrating the Kingdom of God take place. New ways of explaining Jesus. New ways of being the church. New ways of living out being people of faith. Youth ministry is a place of new-ness and that's something I believe our world is longing for.

My lived experience, as well as what I find in research, is that young people are indeed open to faith, creative with their thinking, and willing to forgive attempts that require further thought and consideration.

One might even contend that youth ministry is more relevant in our world today than it's even been - or at least it has the potential to be. It is indeed an opportunity that needs to be taken hold of.

This reminds me of the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote to the church in Colossi, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Colossians 4:2-6)

I pray that the youth ministry in your church and that the youth ministries in your region will be a place of experimentation - providing opportunities for young people to express faith and invite others to do likewise. I pray that there might be consideration to the needs that are being faced by those in your region, and that conversations of eternal significance might indeed occur in greater and greater frequency.

May you be gracious in your response to the young people in your midst, and may you proactively seek to make ways for them to both demonstrate and proclaim the faith our God has given them in your part of the world.

Relevance of Missions in Our Present Culture

Rev. Ardi Y. Wiriadinata, Missions Director of APBF

The Mission of God is still an ongoing process that we, as followers of Christ, are privileged to partake in. The central message of the Bible is clear and does not ever change. The message of how God created the world, including humans, perfectly; but when they fell into sin, God lovingly revealed His plan to restore all the brokenness. This restoration is made true by God coming to earth as a human in Jesus Christ, the only way, truth, and life for the perfect restoration in God's presence for eternity. This central message of God's grace is made possible to humankind through faith alone in Christ, revealed in the Bible as the true and infallible Word of God. This message of the Bible of what God has done, is doing, and will do through Jesus Christ is the message that we share with the world, it is the Gospel for all.

Our core belief in the infallibility of the Bible serves as the foundation for our obedient lives as followers of Christ. The Great Commission explicitly instructs us to disciple all nations as the means to fulfill God's Mission. The Mission of God and the message of the Gospel remain unchanged and unchangeable despite the passage of time and the shifting of eras.

The question and challenge for us are, how can the unchanged 2000 years old message still be received and proclaimed in today's world?

To address this question, it is crucial to differentiate between essence and means. The essence of the Mission remains unaltered; it is the message of the Gospel proclaimed and exemplified through the Christ's Church in every nation, tribe, people, and language. The means by which this message is shared with all nations (ethnic or people groups) will vary depending on the context. Not the other way around!

"We must be agents of transformation through gospel transformation which transform a person holistically, thus transforming themselves, their families, and communities."

By understanding these two fundamental principles, Mission practitioners can effectively engage in the task of participating in God's Mission. As Baptists, our commitment to obedience to the Bible has guided us in comprehending the task at hand and remaining focused on the ultimate goal. Our rich history is filled with inspiring stories of renowned missionaries who traveled great distances to unfamiliar territories, utilizing various means to share the redemptive and restorative message of hope in the Gospel. Hospitals, orphanages, and schools are some of the means to build bridges between cultural gaps to open communication and trust to cross-culturally communicate the Gospel message.

Putting essence and means in its correct place will help us navigate the ever-changing world. Today, there are so many changes in the cultures in the world and it is hard to contextualize everything to match the speed of change. With globalization happening, fueled by technology, the world has become "smaller" and easier to reach. Despite that, the variety of culture and customs are still huge, and added to that there are new communities of new commonalities popping up everywhere and anywhere. What then must we do?

For one, we can't keep up and we can't have it all. Our belief that the Gospel message is unchanging is our confidence in carrying out the task of God's mission in today's world. The main means of missions is still the same, we as the church discipling all. That means, whatever context we are led to explore and serve, we must be agents of transformation through gospel transformation which transform a person holistically, thus transforming themselves, their families, and communities.

There are many approaches that has been proven effective in carrying God's mission throughout Baptist mission history and that are being done currently. To name a few which are still highly relevant:

One of APBF Mission Team member using his businessmen community to play Basketball as out reach)

Showing a picture taken by a phone (the means) in an improvised area of Indonesia sparks curiosityhich led to the proclamation of the Gospel (the essence).

01 | Evangelism, Discipleship, Church Planting:

Many great movements of people coming through faith in Jesus, continued to be discipled, and developing local churches are found in a lot of places in the world. India, China, and other places in Asia are testament to this. Scores and hundreds of people are coming to Christ because of their first-time exposure to the powerful message of the Gospel. The gospel-sharing movement can be perpetual when done faithfully.

02 | Humanitarian Aid & Development:

Baptist missions understand the need for comprehensive ministry, addressing spiritual, physical, and social challenges. In today's culture marked by poverty, inequality, and crises, Baptist missions play a vital role in providing humanitarian aid and development assistance. Through healthcare programs, education projects, poverty alleviation efforts, and disaster relief, Baptist missionaries offer practical help and tangible solutions to communities in need.

03 | Cultivating Cultural Understanding & Engagement:

Baptist missions value cultural diversity and understand the significance of tailoring the gospel message to specific contexts. By immersing themselves in local communities, learning languages, and respecting cultural customs, Baptist missionaries establish connections, cultivate relationships, and engage in meaningful dialogue. This cultural sensitivity allows them to effectively share the message of Christ in ways that resonate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

04 | Empowering Local Leadership:

By investing in training, education, and mentorship, Baptist missionaries equip local believers to take ownership of their faith, ministries, and communities. This approach ensures the long-term sustainability and growth of the church, as well as the development of leaders who are deeply rooted in their own cultures. Through capacity building, Baptist missions contribute to the strengthening of local churches, promoting self-sufficiency and fostering a sense of ownership among believers.

05 | Collaboration and Partnership:

Baptist missions actively engage with local churches, denominations, and non-governmental organizations, forging collaborative alliances to tackle issues such as poverty, injustice, and human trafficking. By pooling resources, sharing expertise, and working together, Baptist missions have a broader and more significant impact on the communities they serve. Collaborative efforts exemplify the unity of the body of Christ and demonstrate the transformative power of collective action.

The APBF is committed to fulfill the Great Commission as it is clearly stated in our Mission Statement. Understanding the high degree of contexts, a movement of Holistic Transformation is implemented in all aspects of our ministries. The desire to faithfully carry out the Great Commission by all APBF's member bodies, their local churches mobilized in the communities surrounding them, then obediently sent out to places where the Gospel has not been heard. By this, a holistically transformed person, brings hope through the Gospel's holistic transformation in all places and peoples of Asia-Pacific through contextualized means of proclaiming the unchanged Good News of Christ.

Relevance of Humanitarian Aid in Our Present Culture

Mr. Roshan Mendis, Director of APBAid

Humanitarian aid is a critical aspect of modern society. Today APBAid as the humanitarian Aid division of APBF has been enabled to be of assistance that has provided to people who are suffering from natural disasters, wars, or other crises basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, and medical care to those in need. Humanitarian aid is important because it helps to save lives and alleviate suffering.

According to a report by Human Rights Careers 1, humanitarian aid is different from development aid. In early recovery, humanitarian aid serves as a bridge to longer-term development. Aid helps communities prepare for crises. Disaster preparedness is part of humanitarian aid. As an example, for five years, 56% of all EU-funded humanitarian projects included disaster preparedness. By this, humanitarian aid plays a crucial role in mitigating the long-term impacts of emergencies by investing in sustainable development and resilience-building initiatives. By addressing the root causes of crises and providing assistance in a holistic manner, humanitarian aid contributes to the stability and well-being of affected communities.

In the face of an increasingly interconnected world, the relevance of humanitarian aid has never been more pronounced. Humanitarian aid, characterized by its focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and providing assistance during times of crisis, plays a crucial role in our present culture. As societies face an array of complex challenges such as natural disasters, armed conflicts, and widespread health emergencies, the importance of humanitarian aid becomes evident.

I'd like to propose several reasons why humanitarian aid remains relevant in our present culture, emphasizing the vital role it plays in fostering compassion, mitigating suffering, and promoting global solidarity. Highlighting its impact on individuals, communities, and global solidarity.

Promoting Compassion and Empathy:

As the hands and feet of Christ we are called to a ministry of compassion – Just as Jesus saw the people that were helpless like a sheep without a shepherd His heart went out to them in compassion. (Matthew 9:36). For APBF humanitarian Aid has been the touchstone of compassion to communities affected by disaster. Humanitarian aid serves as a lifeline for individuals and communities affected by crises, ensuring the provision of essential needs. Humanitarian aid serves as a powerful catalyst for promoting compassion and empathy in present culture. In a world often divided by differences and conflicts, it serves as a reminder of our shared humanity. It helps the church to identify with the sufferers and be a wound healer. By reaching out to individuals and communities affected by crises, humanitarian efforts break down barriers and inspire others to recognize the importance of compassion. Such acts of empathy foster a sense of solidarity among diverse populations and encourage individuals to contribute to the well-being of others. The humanitarian aid sector plays a critical role in raising awareness and encouraging society to prioritize empathy, helping to build a more compassionate culture.

Mitigating Suffering and Saving Lives:

The image of the call to ministry before us is of a restorer of broken walls. (Isaiah 58:12). I believe this captures in essence what we as APBAid strive to do. The relevance of humanitarian aid, particularly when done with the motivation of this calling adds a meaning and significance in the present culture that becomes especially evident in times of crisis and disaster. The world is no stranger to natural disasters and armed conflicts that wreak havoc on communities - from earthquakes and floods to armed conflicts and epidemics, millions of people worldwide are vulnerable and in urgent need of assistance. Humanitarian interventions help provide immediate relief, and long-term support in the face of such crises. These interventions not only alleviate suffering but also save countless lives. It is critical that these are carried out in a timely and efficient manner as a response to emergencies. By embracing flexibility and innovation, humanitarian aid continues to address present challenges while preparing for the uncertainties of the future. It then becomes a testament to the indispensable role of humanitarian aid in preserving human dignity and supporting vulnerable populations.

Fostering Global Solidarity:

I am convinced actions do speak louder than words. I am convinced the way we live our lives and the way we treat others paints the truest pictures of who we are. Our actions display what we stand for and what we think is right. As Christians, we are called to one thing in particular, love God and love others. It is our love and solidarity that characterizes whose we are (John 13:35). In an era of globalization, humanitarian aid has the power to foster global solidarity. It transcends geographical boundaries, ethnicities, and religions, emphasizing the interconnectedness of our world. Humanitarian interventions inspire individuals, communities, and nations to come together for a common cause. By extending a helping hand to those in need, we strengthen the fabric of global solidarity, reinforcing the belief that we are all in this together. This solidarity transcends cultural differences and promotes a shared vision of a more compassionate and just world. In a time when global challenges require collective action, humanitarian aid serves as a unifying force, reminding us of our shared responsibility to uplift the most vulnerable members of our global family.

Advocating for Human Rights and Social Justice:

Humanitarian aid is closely intertwined with the principles of human rights and social justice. In our present culture, where inequality and injustice persist, humanitarian organizations play a vital role in advocating for the rights of marginalized populations. They work to protect vulnerable groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons, women, children, and minorities, from discrimination, violence, and exploitation. By raising awareness about human rights violations, documenting abuses, and providing legal support, humanitarian aid aims to address the root causes of suffering and promote long-term change. By highlighting the importance of dignity, equality, and justice, humanitarian aid initiatives contribute to the development of a more inclusive and equitable society. The inclusion of affected individuals in decision-making processes ensures that their voices are heard, their rights respected, and their dignity upheld.

Bridging Hope, Transforming Lives

The tagline of APBAid captures the essence and heart of what humanitarian aid seeks to achieve - Bridging Hope, Transforming Lives. As a ministry, we are constantly exposed to news of natural disasters, conflicts, and socio-economic crises. Humanitarian aid not only offers practical assistance to those in need but also raises awareness and inspires acts of kindness and generosity. Our hope at APBF is that by responding to humanitarian crises with compassion, we create a culture that values the welfare of all individuals, regardless of their background or geographical location.

Therefore, the relevance of humanitarian aid in present culture is unquestionable. Its ability to promote compassion, mitigate suffering, and foster global solidarity highlights its essential role in addressing the challenges we face as a global society. As we navigate an ever-changing world, it is imperative that we continue to prioritize humanitarian aid so that we can alleviate suffering and build a more equitable and compassionate future. By doing so, we not only uplift those in need but also reaffirm our shared commitment to the great commandment and imperative of God to love our neighbor as ourselves, as part of a more humane and interconnected world. Humanitarian aid, thus, acts as a catalyst for transformative change, fostering self-reliance and resilience among those affected by crises. By addressing the consequences of disasters and conflicts, humanitarian aid fosters stability, helps rebuild communities, and offers a glimmer of hope amidst chaos.

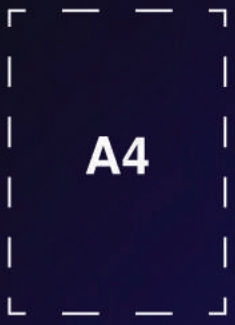
The relevance of humanitarian aid in our present culture cannot be overstated. By providing assistance to vulnerable populations, mitigating the effects of crises, promoting global solidarity, and advocating for human rights, humanitarian aid shapes a more compassionate and empathetic society. Its impact goes beyond addressing immediate needs, as it encompasses compassion. As we navigate the complexities of our interconnected world, the importance of humanitarian aid remains a beacon of hope, fostering resilience and inspiring positive change in the face of adversity.

"The power of human empathy, leading to collective action, saves lives, and frees prisoners .... We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better."

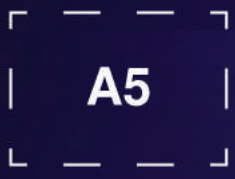
~J.K. Rowling~

ADVERTISE WITH US!

ADVERTISE IN OUR APBF DIGEST



Full Page (A4)
297mm (h) x 210mm (w)
Full colour or greyscale



Half Page (A5)
148mm (h) x 210mm (w)
Full colour or greyscale

CONTACT APBF.OFFICE@GMAIL.COM
FOR MORE INFORMATION

COME APBF FAMILY!

One Lord • One Faith • One Baptism
APBF
Asia Pacific Baptist Federation

50th ANNIVERSARY

IMAGINING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

Revisit the past! Rejoice God's faithfulness today!
Remain obedient to God's mission.

Strengthen our commitment to stay

STRONGER TOGETHER

November 17 – 18, 2023

International Baptist Church, Singapore

Hosted by One Lord • One Faith • One Baptism APBF Asia Pacific Baptist Federation

In collboration with singapore baptist convention 新加坡浸信会联会

JULY 9-12
2025
BRISBANE

23rd BAPTIST WORLD CONGRESS

Sign Up for Updates:
BWABrisbane.com

THE LARGEST GLOBAL GATHERING OF BAPTISTS

Make plans to join us for this powerful time of worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching, and service in the beautiful city of Brisbane, Australia. Experience the one-of-a-kind opportunity to gather with Baptist sisters and brothers from around the world and learn how God is at work in and through our global Baptist family.

"I'M EXCITED BY A FORETASTE OF WHAT HEAVEN WILL BE LIKE WITH EVERY TONGUE, TRIBE, AND NATION PRAISING GOD TOGETHER."

Past Congress Participant from Australia

"IT HAS BEEN A POWERFUL EXPERIENCE FOR ME TO BE REMINDED THAT I AM PART OF A WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY OF BAPTIST BELIEVERS DEDICATED TO SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST."

Past Congress Participant from USA

"PRAISE GOD! I HAVE BEEN BLESSED ABUNDANTLY. MY FAITH HAS BEEN RENEWED, MY HOPE RESTORED, AND MY PASSION FOR MISSION AND JUSTICE REINVIGORATED."

Past Congress Participant from Trinidad and Tobago

ASIA PACIFIC BAPTIST YOUTH

BI CONFERENCE 2024

COL 3:16

Authentic Passionate Connected Saved

DATE:
MAY 29 -JUNE 1, 2024

VENUE:
BAYOU LAGOON PARK RESORT
MELAKA, MALAYSIA

— REGISTRATION FEE —

EARLY BIRD
(TILL OCTOBER 31, 2023)
- USD 190 (DEVELOPING COUNTRIES)
- USD 240 (DEVELOPED COUNTRIES)

REGULAR
(NOV 1, 2023–FEB 29, 2024)
- USD 230 (DEVELOPING COUNTRIES)
- USD 250 (DEVELOPED COUNTRIES)

LATE
(MAR 1–MAY 25, 2024)
- USD 250 (DEVELOPING COUNTRIES)
- USD 270 (DEVELOPED COUNTRIES)

One Lord • One Faith • One Baptism
APBF
Asia Pacific Baptist Federation

www.apbf.org

APBY
Asia Pacific Baptist Youth

One Lord • One Faith • One Baptism

APBF

Asia Pacific Baptist Federation

STRONGER TOGETHER

apbf sunday

SAVE MANIPUR DAY OF PRAYER

August 20th, 2023