

致： 马来西亚卫理公会全体会友

有关 2010 年 5 月 16 日诗巫补选前夕政府拨款给卫理学会的教牧书信

奉我主耶稣基督的名，问大家安。

我们的会友们大都知道，媒体报导了最近在诗巫区国会议席补选前夕，政府拨了款给诗巫四间卫理学会。会长理事会已于 2010 年 5 月 25 日开会讨论此事，并会进一步在下一次总议会理事会详细讨论。目前，会长理事会欲发表这封教牧书信如下：

1. 首先，为发展宗教而拨款给宗教团体，跟拨款给其他好像学校等团体一样，都是政府应尽的责任。接收这样的拨款也是公民的权利。总言之，政府所拨出的钱实际上就是纳税人的钱。我们国内的问题的确是，拨给宗教团体的钱大多数都给了某一种宗教群体，给其他的就相对很少。就这一次拨给几间堂会的钱来看，政府可以说是在尝试更正过去的错失。此外必须指出的是，政府并不是第一次拨出此类款项，而得着拨款的也不只是我们的教会，还有其他宗教团体也得着类似拨款。
2. 不过，有如公众所指出的，这次拨款的问题是出於时间的选择。这些钱是在一场势均力敌的补选前夕拨出，因此给人一种操纵性和令人质疑的印象。也有人因此呼吁堂会把收到的钱归还政府。
3. 基督教会关心的是道德与政治。虽然如此，教会并不能在政党政治上偏帮一方，理由有很多，包括教会在政治分界的两方都有基督徒。此外，教会也要提防给人一种印象，以为是给在朝或在野的政党利用了。基於这个理由，此时拒绝接受政府拨款不一定是一个解决方案，因为人家会误释为拒绝政府偏袒反对阵线。很清楚的，我们陷在了加在我们身上微妙的两难之中。
4. 马来西亚卫理公会尊重这四间堂会领袖的权利，按各自情况决定如何使用所拨之款。同时，包括会督及全体会长在内的总议会理事会，将会与该堂会共同寻求明智的处理方案。
5. 我们要在此向本会所有牧师和会友们呼吁，勿评论此事，以免把事情闹得过大。反之，让我们留心我们的主耶稣在马太福音 5 章 16 节所说的话，特别是在我们目前的状况中显为重要的“你们的光也当这样照在人前，叫他们看见你们的好行为，便将荣耀归给你们在天上的父”。当我们真正的如此生活时，我们就可以深远的满足了我们的四年主题，“宣扬圣经圣洁，更新转化国家”了。

愿上主的平安与你们同在！

主内 马来西亚卫理公会会长理事会主席

华勇会督 敬启

To: All Members of the Methodist Church in Malaysia

A Pastoral Letter Concerning Government Grants to Methodist Churches on the Eve of the Sibü By-Election, 16 May 2010

Warmest greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Many of our church members are aware of the reports in the media that the government made grants to four Methodist churches in Sibü, on the eve of the recent Parliamentary by-election. The Council of Presidents discussed this matter at its meeting of 25th May 2010. Pending fuller deliberations on the matter by the General Conference Executive Council at its up-coming meeting, we wish to issue a pastoral letter stating the following:

1. First, the giving of grants to religious bodies for the advancement of religion, as well as to other bodies like schools, etc., is a government responsibility. To receive such is a citizen's right. After all, the money given is actually taxpayers' money. Indeed the problem in our country is that most of the money for religious bodies is usually given to one particular religious community, with relatively much smaller proportions given to other communities. In so far as the money was given to the churches this time round, it can be said that the government is trying to right a past wrong. Moreover, it should be pointed out that this is not the first time the government has given such grants. Further, our churches are not the only recipients. Other religious groups also received similar grants.
2. However, as the public at large has pointed out, the problem with the grants made in this instance is that of timing! They were given on the eve of a closely fought by-election and therefore perceived to be manipulative and highly questionable. Some people have therefore urged the churches involved to return the money.
3. The Christian church is concerned about morality and politics. Nonetheless, it cannot take sides in party politics for various reasons, including the fact that there are Christians on both sides of the political divide. Furthermore, the church must also guard against being perceived as being used as a tool by political parties, whether those in government or those in opposition. In light of the above, rejecting the grants given by the government in this instance is not necessarily the solution, because it could be misinterpreted as a rejection of the government in favour of the opposition. Clearly we are caught in a delicate dilemma, which has been forced upon us.
4. The Methodist Church in Malaysia respects the right of the leadership of the four churches to decide on what to do with the grants given, in accordance with the conditions pertaining to them. At the same time, the General Conference Executive Council, which includes the Bishop and all the Presidents, will work with the churches concerned to resolve the matter wisely.
5. Meanwhile, we would like to urge all our pastors and members to refrain from making any comments on the matter so that it does not get blown out of proportion. Instead, let us take seriously the words of our Lord Jesus in Mat 5: 16, which is particularly significant in our present context. *'In the same way, let your light shine before all men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'* When we truly live in this manner, we will go a long way to fulfil our Quadrennium theme, **'Spreading Scriptural Holiness, Transforming the Nation.'**

May the peace of the Lord be with all of you!

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Hwa Yung

Chairman, The Council of Presidents,

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