

HISTORY OF THE WCG IN MALAYSIA

The history of WCG in Klang

The establishment of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in Klang is closely tied to the history of the denomination in Malaysia. The first members in Malaysia and Singapore came into contact with WCG mainly through the Plain Truth magazine published by the church headquarters in Pasadena, California. In the 1960s the magazine was advertised in the Reader's Digest and other publications. Free subscriptions were offered to those who requested for the Plain Truth. In addition, other literature published by the church was offered to readers of the Plain Truth. Today, Plain Truth Asia published by the WCG in Malaysia continues this tradition of giving free subscriptions to its readers.

As readers became interested in Christianity and the gospel message, they wrote to the WCG regional office in Australia, asking questions and requesting literature as well as visits from church representatives. Ministers from Australia then visited Malaysia and Singapore to meet and counsel interested readers, hold Bible studies and conduct baptisms for those who committed their lives to Jesus Christ. These visits, usually a few times a year, continued through the 1960s and early 1980s, as membership gradually increased.

In December 1962 the first four Malaysian members of WCG were baptized by the regional director from Australia. Among them was Yong Chin Gee, who was later to become our first local pastor. In 1971 the first local Feast of Tabernacles was held for three days in Kuala Lumpur with 57 people in attendance. In January 1974 Guy Ames was appointed pastor of the church in Malaysia and Singapore and S.E. Asian coordinator. That year the first 8-day local Feast of Tabernacles was held in Penang. Mr. Ames was based in Singapore until June 1975, when he was transferred back to the U.S. Under his pastorate two churches were established in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur with regular worship services.

The Kuala Lumpur church met in rented function rooms in hotels. Other individuals or small groups of believers were located all over West and East Malaysia due to the widespread distribution of the Plain Truth magazine over the years. These people were visited by a minister a few times a year, and usually were only able to gather with the other members during the Feast of Tabernacles, our annual church celebration and convention. Over the years the feast has been held in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Port Dickson, Cameron Highlands, Melaka, Singapore, Phuket (Thailand) and Genting Highlands.

John Halford, based in the regional office in Burleigh Heads, Australia, took over as pastor and S.E. Asia coordinator until January 1978 when he was assigned to Pasadena HQ. During his tenure the first local church officers were ordained - in 1977 Yong Chin Gee was ordained deacon and later that year was ordained church elder, while Low Mong Chai was ordained deacon. Chris Hunting from the regional office was the next Asian coordinator until 1981.

In May 1981 Colin Kelly assumed the post. In 1982 Mr. Yong, after a year of study and training in Ambassador College, Pasadena, became full-time assistant pastor to Mr. Kelly. Spokesman Clubs were started in the Kuala Lumpur and Singapore churches to provide speech training to men. The YES (Youth Educational Services) program for teaching preteen children of the church was started. A campsite was developed on the Bukit Ijok estate land of Mr. Low's family to conduct local SEP (Summer Educational Program) camps for teenagers of the church. Dormitories and other facilities on the site were constructed with volunteer help from church members. Church members from local areas and overseas served as counselors, teachers and activity coordinators at the camps which were held in December 1985, July 1986, November 1989 and November 1991.

Upon Mr. Kelly's departure to New Zealand in 1986, Mr. Yong became the first local pastor. From 1986 to 1988 a ministerial trainee from the U.S., Sio Oui Shia, assisted Mr. Yong in overseeing the church.

In February 1983 Herbert W. Armstrong, founder and pastor-general of WCG visited Kuala Lumpur for a planned public lecture for Plain Truth readers. However he was not given permission to speak by the authorities. In January 1984 he returned to Kuala Lumpur and spoke to 400 Plain Truth readers plus church members at a public lecture in the Hilton Hotel. He subsequently ordained Yong Chin Gee as preaching elder in Singapore. In 1988 Joseph W. Tkach, the next pastor-general of WCG, visited Kuala Lumpur and spoke to members of the Malaysia and Singapore at the Shangrila Hotel.

In 1989 Low Mong Chai was ordained local elder and P. Sellappan, Danny Soh and Wong Mein Kong were ordained deacons. The Kuala Lumpur church which at the time held worship services in the Hilton Hotel, started to look for a permanent place for meeting and office use. Four units on the second floor of a shop house block in Taman Selatan, Klang were found suitable and leased on a long-term basis. Renovations were done over several months to create a meeting hall, lounge, kitchenette, storeroom, conference room and office.

Source: WCG, Klang