

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN MALAYSIA - LCM

Year Started and Brief History

In the late 40s, the British government in Malaya (now Malaysia) decreed that 'new villages' be built to accommodate the Chinese population in order to guard them against the rising communist influence. As a result, over 130 of such 'new villages' with an estimated 500,000 Chinese were established all over the Malay Peninsula. The daily lives of the villagers were closely monitored by the authorities, restricted by barbed wires and strict curfew hours. Soon these 'new villages' became ghettos with many social problems.

In March 1952, the Lutheran World Federation convened the 1st Southeast Asia Lutheran Consultation in Penang, appealing to Lutheran churches everywhere to respond to the needs of the half a million Chinese people who were stranded in these 'new villages.'

In 1953, the United Lutheran Church of America, in response to an appeal by the LWF, took the lead by sending Dr. Paul Anspach to Malaya to launch a mission program the following year. Dr. Peng Fu, who represented the Hong Kong Lutheran Churches, promised to send a large number of Chinese seminary graduates from Hong Kong to join the mission work. As a result, a united international mission project with missionaries from the USA, Germany and Hong Kong got off the ground in Malaya. In 1960, the mission extended its work from Malaya to Singapore.

In 1957, Malaya became independent; and in 1963, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS) was formally established, with missionary Rev. Paul Alberti elected her first president. In 1974, the LCMS elected her first bishop, the Rev. Carl Fisher. Bishop Fisher's term ended in 1978, and the Rev. Peter Foong succeeded him, becoming the first local ethnic-Chinese bishop.

Before 1997, the LCMS was divided into 3 districts: Northern District, Central District and Singapore District. In 1997, the LCMS granted independence to the congregations in the Singapore District, and thus, beginning 1 January 1998, the LCMS was divided into two national churches, the LCM and the LCS.

Church Leader

The Rt. Rev. Bishop Philip Lok (since Aug. 2005)

Membership

8906 (as of 2012)

Organisational Structure

The LCM is organized under the concept, "One Church, Many Congregations." The congregations are the 'life' of the Church, and these congregations are grouped into 'districts' according to their geographical location. Presently there are 3 districts and 2 provisional districts within the LCM. Each district comes under the care of a District Dean. Every two years, the congregations will send their representatives to the LCM General Assembly, in which the Bishop and the Executive Council are elected.

Main Areas of Work

Local church planting; overseas mission work; ministry to the Indigenous Peoples: diakonia ministries; children education; and Christian media.

Countries of Missionary Activities

China, Myanmar, Vietnam

Special Challenges

The present challenges faced by the Church include: rising Muslim fundamentalism; 'silent oppression' from the authorities; poverty among the rural communities and the indigenous people: limited resources to meet the great needs.

Involvement in Networks or International Operations

Mission partnership with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and The Lutheran Church in Australia;