SOUTH EAST ASIA

Burma
Thailand
Laos
Kampuchea (Cambodia)
Vietnam
Malaysia
Indonesia
Brunei
Philippines
Singapore
1. The distinctive Christian witness which its doctrinal and practical heritage enables Methodism to make in the south east Asian cultural (including political and economic) context.

2. The Methodist basis for, and contribution to, ecumenical discussion and cooperation in your context

SOUTH EAST ASIA

COUNTRIES: Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Burma, Thailand, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Laos

Countries without Methodist churches: Brunei, Thailand, Kampuchea, Vietnam and Laos

Similarities

1. Most share colonial experience
2. Generally poor
3. Most are involved in nation building, development, modernisation through science and technology.
4. Religion plays a big part in the countries, shaping the culture and conscience of the people
5. Seek authentic identity and cultural integrity in modern world

Buts....

1. Some colonial experiences were better than others (eg Singapore-British: more respect and warmth than Indonesia-Dutch relationship)

Thailand has always been free.

2. Exceptions: Singapore and West Malaysia where there is a strong middle-class.

3. Speed and state of development differ from country to country. The gap between the more advanced ones and the slower ones is rather wide.

4. Different religions play a major role in different countries (Philippines-Roman Catholic Church; Thailand-Buddhist religion). Some countries have sought to replace traditional religion with State ideology (eg Burma)

5. Some countries have it easier than others (eg Thailand and Philippines would have a stronger historic identity than Singapore)

6. Exception: Philippines

7. For this very reason, we would need to look at each country rather than deal with S.E. Asia as if it is a homogeneous entity.

Note: Some Methodist churches in S.E. Asia have British roots; others have been the result of American missionary work. There are still others who have been influenced by both the British and the Americans and have church structures which bear testimony to that fact (eg in Malaysia and Singapore, the Methodist Church has both 'presidents' and 'bishops')
BURMA

Population: 4048 million
Christians: 3%

History

Burmese kingdoms existed before British came.
Became part of British India
After rebellion, Burma was separated from India.Achieved internal
government
1941-45 Japanese occupation
Army led the move for independence. Achieved it in 1948
1962 Government faced rebellion by communists and non Burmese tribes
1962 Army overthrew government of U Nu and installed military revolu-
tionary government under General Ne Win
Ideology: The Burmese Way to Socialism
Country lived in self imposed isolation till 1973
1974 Became the Socialist Republic of Union of Burma

Present situation

1. Government called for nation building efforts to be intensified.
   Goals: a. raising of living standards
         b. industrialisation based on agriculture
         c. establishment of a socialist orientated production system
2. Country face a. inflation
   b. insurgents against the state. Military pressure has
      been intensified against these persons.
   c. opium production. Government has destroyed opium
      plantations and refinaries (Insurgents have been known
      to be behind opium production)
3. Foreign policy: non-alignment. Goodwill visits have increased over
   the past year.

The Methodist Church in Burma

a. Upper Burma

1887 The seed of the gospel was planted by missionaries with the Metho-
dist Missionary Society. A hostel for girls and a teacher training
school for men were set up.
In subsequent years, more schools were started. There was a leprosy
home and hospital as well.
1944 After the war, leadership was shared with the locals. Priority was
     given to the training of laypersons. Lay pastors were employed
     because of the lack of ordained ministers in some areas.
     The administration and the constitution were revised according
     to the culture and social life of the people by the last mission-
     aries.
1962 All missionaries had to leave Burma. First Conference was held
     by the local Methodists in Mandalay. "Assurance of salvation"
     became the main theme of the church's preaching. The church grew

The present situation

1. Most Methodists belong to tribal societies and backward tribes.
   Finance is a problem. Not yet a self supporting church (in government,
   in support and in propagation) Grants from the Methodist Overseas
   Division help to keep the church going.
2. Grassroots associations for the training of youth, women and potential
   ministers will be set up
3. The Burmese Home Mission Board has been busy. 517 new converts were baptised in 1985.

b. Lower Burma

William Butler, a layman, did some mission work in Burma
1879 Dr James Thoburn and Rev Goodwin came to Burma to assist the mission under a Rev Cater. The Methodist English Church was founded. It was under the South India Methodist Conference
1882 Methodist English Girls' School inaugurated
1883 Indian Boys' School started.

Evangelistic work in the form of meetings were held frequently
1895 Work among the Chinese community began.

Japanese Occupation: Many Christians were accused of being collaborators of the Allies and they suffered as a result of this.

After the War, the Chinese District was found to have more Methodists than the Burmese areas.
1962 All missionary schools were nationalised. No foreign missionary was allowed to do mission work in Burma.
1965 Last Conference with the presence of foreign missionaries was held.
1966 Methodist Church in Burma became autonomous
After 1965. Membership declined after this year because many migrated to the West.

Present situation

Membership has slowly increased.
The Church acknowledged the need for the total education of children and youth in the congregations.

There seems to be a lack of a wholistic approach to mission. People tend to be seen as 'objects of evangelisation'.

Social work as a whole seems to be understood as social service (ie relief, resettlement, non-structural social reform)

Ecumenism
The Methodist Church in Burma (Upper - UK related, Lower-US related) is a member of the Burmese Council of Churches (which includes the Burma Baptist Convention and the Anglican Church)
They are also members of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

Distinctive Christian witness that is Methodist in spirit

1. Evangelistic zeal
2. Preaching based on the theme of "assurance of salvation"
3. Lay leadership encouraged
4. Concern for educational and health needs of people
5. Link with world Methodist bodies (connectional in spirit)
6. Ecumenical commitment ("The Catholic spirit")

Observations

1. Church agenda and situational agenda of the country does not seem to have any connection. Is the church involved in nation-building? Is the church relevant to the needs of the people in the country?
2. Is the Wesleyan teaching on salvation clearly understood and preached?
3. What is the ecclesiology of the Methodist Church in Burma?
MALAYSIA

Population: 16.66 million
Christians: 2.5%
Ethnic groups: Malays 51% Chinese 30% Indian 10% Others 9%
Official religion: Islam

History

Malay states under their own rulers
The Portuguese came, followed by the Dutch. Trading centres established
The British made treaties with the Malay rulers and established colonial rule in Malaya. Indians were imported as labourers. Chinese came to trade.
1963 Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak gained independence. Became "Malaysia"
1981 Mahathir became Prime Minister
1985 In Sabah, the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) headed by a Kadazan Roman Catholic, won the election. Some Muslims were very upset. The PBS won the re-election (a re-election had been called because the results of the first election was questioned) and was admitted to the ruling National Front Coalition.

Present Situation

1. Leadership crisis: marked by the question of credibility
   a. The Chinese partner of the National Front Coalition (the MCA) lost the support of many Chinese who had enough of the preferential treatment of Malays ('bumiputra policy' of the government). Chinese voice in the government is weakened by this. MCA's president was jailed for Criminal Breach of Trust (CBT) in Singapore.
   b. Power struggle in the Malay wing of the National Front (the UMNO)

2. Religious and racial tension surface
   a. Islamic radicals are against the modernisation and the 'look East' (at Japan) policy of the government and the ban on the Islamic political party, the PAS. They also led protests against neighbouring Singapore for the visit of Israeli President Herzog to the island.
   b. Chinese (mostly Buddhists), Indians (mostly Hindus) and Christians (mixed racial bag) are against the Islamisation policy of the government. (Islamisation: the assimilation of Islamic values also found in all religions in Malaysian society. Question: if the values are found in all religions, why call it "Islamisation"?). They are also against the discrimination perpetuated the bumiputra policy.

3. Economy: unemployment and mounting debts
4. "Communist threat" - Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) activities (real or imagined) are infiltrating religious groups (Islamic groups are prime targets). Amendments to strengthen the Official Secrets Act (OSA)

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an Act that allows detention without trial of suspects are on the way. There is also restrictions on the freedom of the media.

4. Government has a very strong stand against dadah (drugs). Penalty for pushing drugs is death.

The Church in Malaysia

History

1884 William F Oldham was appointed by the South India Conference as missionary to Singapore
1885 Oldham and James Thoburn arrived in Singapore. The first evangelistic meeting was held.
1886 Methodist work in the Peninsula of Malaya became a Mission under the administration of the Missionary Society and separated from the South India Conference
1893 Became a Missionary Conference
1899 Work was begun in the Philippines
1901 Work started in Sarawak by Methodists from Foochow, China
1960 Sarawak Annual Conference started
1962 Sarawak Iban (native people) Provisional Conference established
1950-64 South-Eastern Asia Central Conference - made up of the Malaya Annual Conference, the Malaysia Chinese Annual Conference, the Sarawak Annual Conference, the Sumatra Annual Conference and the Burma Annual Conference.
1968 The Methodist Church in Singapore and Malaya - made up of the Malaya Annual Conference, the Malaysia Chinese Annual Conference, the Sarawak Annual Conference and the Sarawak Iban Provisional Annual Conference
1976 Constitution of the Methodist Church in Malaysia and the Methodist Church in Singapore. Rev. C.N. Fang became the first bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia and Rev. Kao Jih-Chung, the first bishop of the Singapore Church.

Characteristics of the Methodist work in Malaysia and Singapore

1. Emphasis on mission and social concern
   a. in the streets: street preaching in Malay
   b. in jails: ministry to Indian convicts
   c. opening clinic cum medical mission to serve the Chinese population
   d. work with the lepers, prostitutes, orphans
   e. Speaking out against gambling and opium sale

   education and mission
   a. opening of mission schools
   b. establishment of a printing press
   c. theological training provided

   Mission to different parts of Malaysia and to the Philippines, to Indonesia, to Borneo to the tribespeople (eg Iban, Sengoi)

2. Involvement of women and lay persons in positions of responsibility and leadership: ordination of women in 1956, use of "Bible Women" and local preachers. Lay leadership in the conferences.

3. Ecumenical involvement: Methodist work in Singapore and Malaya started with close cooperation with the Anglicans and the Presbyterians. Methodists have been leaders and supporters of the ecumenical national council of churches and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA.)
Trinity Theological College was set up by the efforts of three men - a Methodist bishop, an Anglican bishop and a Presbyterian pastor.

4. Work with youth: Youthwork was a priority. The Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade and the Epworth League (now the MYF) brought in many who became the leaders of the church.

Present situation

1. Mission and educational work of the church still goes on. Social work (among the drug addicts etc) is still carried out by the church.

2. Lay leadership remains strong. East Malaysia has a few women ministers. West Malaysia has none. Discrimination against women in leadership positions have been reported of the church in West Malaysia.

3. The church is an active member in the newly formed Christian Federation of Malaya (CFM). The CFM is now engaged in a few important tasks:
   - EG responding to the Islamisation policy
     It's Resource and Communications Committee (RCC) is committed to research and provide accurate information to the churches on issues like human rights in Malaysia and indiginisation
   - The CFM is made up of the Roman Catholic Church, the Council of Churches in Malaysia, the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship.
   - Methodists are also represented in the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. (The Muslims chose not to be a part of this group).

4. Church is short of pastors.

5. Malaysia's own ecumenical seminary (S.T.M.) was set up in the early 80s.

Distinctive Christian witnessing that is Methodist in spirit

1. Mission in the power of the Spirit

2. Wholistic approach to salvation - concern for social issues, education and social work goes hand in hand with evangelism

3. Involvement of women and lay persons in positions of leadership

4. Ecumenical spirit - openness to work with other denominations (and even with people of other faiths)

Observation

The Methodist Church in Malaysia seems to be 'in touch' with the happenings of the nation. This is promising - its involvement in the CFM and in the Consultative Council with people of different faiths.

(*through the Council of Churches in Malaysia)
SINGAPORE

Population: 2.64 million
Christians: 10%

History
1819 Malay colony 'founded' by Sir Stamford Raffles
1959 Achieved internal self government
1963-65 Became a part of Malaysia
1965 Became an independent republic
Since 1959, the government of the country has been the People's Action Party (PAP) headed by Lee Kuan Yew
1984 PAP received 62.9% of the votes. Lost 2 seats to Chiam See Tong (a Presbyterian) and Jeyaratnam (an Anglican). This was the last nationwide election

Present situation
1. Political control by a small elite
2. Question of succession: who will succeed Lee, the only strong leader Singapore has ever known?
   - Jeyaratnam imprisoned, thrown out of Parliament (after 'TV' trial for saying that there was executive interference of the judiciary)
   - Law Society's President got into trouble when he questioned the actions of the government
   - 16 persons (some of them RC staff workers, led by Vincent Cheng of the Justice and Peace Commission) were detained by the Internal Security Department (detention without trial). 4 were released, 6 more were arrested. They were all accused of being "Marxists" Government used this as an object lesson to say: Be vigilant against Communist infiltrators/Religion should keep out of politics. (liberation theologies were condemned)
Many in Singapore do not believe that the detainees were Marxists or Communists. There is a lot of anger at the government's actions. But nothing can be done at present.

4. Singapore experienced recession but now signs of recovery can be seen.
   The nation has a high standard of living, second to that of Japan.

5. Government concerned with falling birth rate. Is still trying to do genetic engineering. Also trying desperately to encourage women to get married and produce 3 babies at least.

The Methodist Church in Singapore

For "History" and "Characteristics", see page . The Church shares a common heritage with the Methodists of Malaysia.
Present situation

1. 18,000 Methodists in Singapore. Largest Protestant body in the nation. Most members are young. Church is middle-class. (Note: 1/3 or all University students are Christians. 2/3 of the medical students are Christians.) There are several Methodist members of Parliament (4 so far)

Evangelism and mission plays a very big part in the life of the Church. "Tracting", evangelistic meetings and city wide rallies/crusades are the usual means of getting converts. Mission trips to different parts of Asia have been made.

3. Nurture of converts: through intensive baptism and membership classes. Bible studies, lay training courses conducted by local churches. Public lectures and seminars are common. Cell groups in big churches help to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of members.

4. Theological climate: The church is deeply influenced by -
   a. Para-church groups that are very fundamentalist or evangelical in character (eg Youth for Christ, Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ; Youth with a Mission, Full Gospel Businessmen's Association International)
   b. The Charismatic Movement: started in early 70s. Many key lay leaders are 'charismatics'. So are a number of local preachers. 1/3 of the pastors in the English Conference (Trinity Annual Conference) are professed charismatics. 1/3 would be very open to the movement. Chinese Conference pastors who serve in English speaking churches are very open to the movement, although the Chinese Conference as a whole frowns upon it. The Indian (Emmanuel Tamil) Annual Conference pastors are very open.

Result:
   a. Polarisation in the church. Denominational lines do not matter so much as theological affiliation. (A Methodist charismatic will have more in common with an Assembly of God member than with a fellow Methodist who is not a charismatic; the same goes in the case of a Methodist evangelical... though in a lesser degree)
   b. Little interest in 'ecumenical ventures' in official circles (eg the National Council of Churches is 'half dead': it does not do much at all. Most Methodists are not too interested in its work. The Chinese churches are not happy with the inclusion of an "ecumenical news" page in the official Methodist newspaper, "The Methodist Message"! The church is still a member of the National Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia and she has a say in the running of the ecumenical Trinity Theological College. However, her involvement is minimal.

Methodists are very suspicious (on the whole) of the Roman Catholic church. Like many Protestant churches in Singapore, many Methodists would not accept the RCs as "fellow Christians". The English speaking conference (Trinity Annual Conference) is perhaps slightly more open to relating with the RCs. Cooperation with the RCs can be seen in the anti-abortion for conscience project of the Board on Social Concerns, the 'sharing of news' between the Catholic News and the Methodist Message, and the Methodist bishop's encouraging telephone call to the RC Archbishop during the recent furour about RC staff involvemer in the 'Marxist conspiracy'.

   c. Anti-cul ture bias. Many Methodists have a hang-up about dragons and cultural/religious symbols because of the charismatic movement. Interfaith dialogues are not popular at all.
   d. Great concern for health (faith-healing) and wealth (prosperity cult)
e. Preference is given to choruses rather than Methodist hymns in some congregations.

despite the fact that Methodists have some influence in the corridors of power, the church tends to 'tow the line' and 'play it safe' in controversial issues (eg the arrests of the 16 by the ISD). They have however, spoken up against gambling and abortion. (Not as a church but as individuals who hold leadership positions in the Methodist Church)

6. The usual work in mission schools, social service (home for the aged, sick, the aged, children, educationally subnormal) goes on.

7. Lay leadership is quite strong. Leadership of women is limited to traditional positions (eg secretary of the church board, WSCS work, Christian education, music etc). Has one woman elder and two women deacons. The Indian conference is reported to have a bias against women elders. (Their sole deacon has left for further studies after years of being assigned to non-pastoral work)

8. Methodist polity is the cement for "Methodist identity". Distinctive Christian witness that is Methodist in spirit

1. Zeal in evangelism and mission
2. Concern for nurture of members
3. Use of laity in leadership of church. (Limited) involvement of women in leadership capacity
4. Social conscience—mainly in the area of social work.
5. Concern for educational needs of people
6. Ecumenical spirit (though limited with regards to denominations) that is open to different theologies (evangelical, fundamentalist charismatic)
7. Connectionalism (not congregationalism) emphasised

Observation

The Methodist Church seems to be a reflection of the state of the nation: middle class, consumeristic, conservative in theology. It faces the danger of losing its own heritage to the influx of para-church and charismatic theologies. It is also very 'western' in outlook, structure and worship.
INDONESIA

Population: 163.92 million
Christians: 8%

History
Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms rose in Sumatra and Java under Indian influence
14th century: Islam arrived with traders
Came under Portuguese influence
Dutch took over the islands. Developed economy through forced cultivation of cash crops.
1942: Japanese Occupation
1945: Independence declared. Sukarno forced the Dutch out of the country. Unfortunately, he was an inefficient administrator. There was widespread corruption and tremendous wastage of resources. Sukarno also had leftist leanings.
1966: Suharto deposed Sukarno and instituted a military regime. He became President in 1968.
1963: New Guinea (former Dutch territory) was taken by Indonesia. It is now called "Irian Jaya"
1976: East Timor (former Portuguese territory) was taken.

Present situation
The Indonesian government faces:
1. Questions on leadership - who will succeed Suharto?
   - clarification of President's position sought
2. Economic problems - corruption is widespread
   - recession (oil prices slumped, Japan bought oil from China instead of Indonesia) results in unemployment for many
3. Muslim extremists. One solution to this threat was to force all religions to accept the Pancasila (state ideology). The other is to ban all religious and ideological political parties.
4. Discontented citizens - over the economic situation, state ideology and the lack of freedom for the Press.

The Methodist Church in Indonesia
1905 Methodist mission work was carried out from Singapore and Malaya. Concentrated on Jakarta in Java, Pontianak in West Kalimantan and Medan in Sumatra.
1920 By this time, many preaching stations and churches have already been established. Served mainly the Chinese population in the cities and the Sudanese people in rural Java. Key ministries: educational and social work. (Schools, including a teacher training school and a Bible Institute for evangelists, were set up. There was a Methodist hospital and a sanatorium)
   Missionaries were Indian (Solomon Pakianathan from Malaya worked as a teacher), Chinese (from Singapore) and Batak (local Indonesian tribesman)
1927 New York (mission headquarters) decided to disband work in Java and Kalimantan to concentrate on work in Sumatra. Results - missions in the two places were handed over to Dutch denominations
   - there was an overflow of manpower in Sumatra
   - With the closure of the Bible
Institute of Java, no regular ministerial training was given for 20 years. Church continued to grow among Chinese and Toba-Bataks. Government restrictions and Muslim opposition prevented the Church from making inroads into other ethnic communities. Bible Institute revived. Church more outward looking. Gospel was preached by laypersons who were resettled from one part of Indonesia to another by the government. Their pastors followed up their work by setting up churches. Church in Indonesia became autonomous.

Present situation
1. Tithing emphasised in Churches
2. Outreach and evangelism - to Karo Bataks, 11,000 baptised.
   - to Chinese in fishing villages through boat clinic
3. Priority given to ministerial training and lay training.

   Ecumenism: 1. Member of the NCC 2. Member of CCA. Little Prot-RC relation
   Distinctive Christian witness that is Methodist in spirit
   1. Evangelism and outreach went hand in hand with concern for educational and health needs of the people
   2. Zeal in evangelism, mission in the power of the Spirit.
   3. Concern for the nurture of new converts
   4. Lay leadership and training encouraged
   5. Openness to work with other denominations in the spreading of the gospel (ecumenical)
   6. Teaching on the right use of money (in as far as tithing is concerned) given.

Observation
The church's prophetic role (in a corrupt society and in the face of the enforced acceptance of a state ideology, not to mention the issue of press censorship and 'invasion' of East Timor by Indonesian forces) seems to be muted.
PHILIPPINES

Population: 56.45 million
Christians: 90%

History

1898  Independence from Spanish domination. Under the care of USA
1946  Manuel Quezon brought independence to the nation
1941-45 Japanese Occupation
1946  Philippines became a republic
1965  Marcos came into power
1972  Martial law declared (against communist threat)
1974  Muslim conflict with government peaked
1983  Aquino assassinated
Communist party of Philippines boycotted elections.
Economy ravaged. US and Japan sent aid. Accused of stabilizing
Marcos regime.
1986  Cory Aquino swept to power when Enrile, Ramos and the US switched
loyalties. Political prisoners freed. Talks with Communist and
Muslim insurgents.

Present Situation

1. Mood of uncertainty - danger of military coups (question of political
   stability)
   - changes (how much? how far? how soon?)
2. Quest for solution in the conflict with Muslims and Communists
3. Economy - to be revived.

The Methodist Church in the Philippines

1898  First Protestant service held (Before the coming of the
       Americans, to hold a Protestant service would mean death)
1899  Bishop James Thoburn arrived. With the help of Mr Arthur
       Prattch, a businessman, a service for Americans was started.
       Later, meetings for Filipinos began (upon the request of the
       locals). Local leadership was encouraged.
       Early missionaries were from the Women’s Missionary Society.
       One started the Epworth leagues and Sunday schools, another
       opened a hospital. Schools were opened but were discontinued
       when Catholic parents refused to send their children there.
       American missionaries (clergy) evangelised and established
       churches.
1906  The church had grown. There was a seminary and several schools
       (lessons were taught in local language)
1941  Japanese Occupation - missionaries were interned. Locals took over
       leadership of churches

Present situation

1. The Methodist Church is still a part of the United Methodist Church
   of the USA.
2. Some Methodists have worked with the Roman Catholics in the struggle
   against Marcos (civil disobedience etc)

Ecumenism: 1. Member of the National Council of Churches 2. Member of
the Christian Conference of Asia
Distinctive Christian Witness that is Methodist in spirit

1. Ecumenical cooperation, openness
2. Concern for social justice and social issues
3. Active involvement of women leaders
4. Educational and health: church was very involved in these

Observations

Church seems to be in touch with what is happening in the country.
DISTINCTIVE CHRISTIAN WITNESS MADE :BY METHODISTS IN S.E.ASIA

1. Evangelistic zeal, emphasis on mission in the power of the Spirit
2. Concern for educational needs of the people
3. Social witness - social concerns, social justice (more of the first than the second)
4. Openness - the 'ecumenical spirit' to other denominations, theologies (and even other religions).
5. Understood importance of nurture and Christian fellowship - stressed 'follow-up' of converts and members
6. Women and lay persons in positions of leadership
7. Methodists are one people' affirmation made by our connectional system

THOUGHTS

1. Our doctrinal 'distinctives' (eg Wesley's 'doctrine' of salvation - his concept of sin, atonement, grace, justification, new birth, assurance, sanctification, faith and good works, the corporate life of faith, Christian perfection, glorification, transformation or creation) form the basis for the work of the Methodists in S.E.Asia. However, it is highly unlikely that all the Methodist churches understand or think about these doctrinal roots when they go about their work. Most would carry out their ministries because 'Methodists have always been doing this kind of work' and because they have vague memories of John Wesley's personal concern for the less fortunate and his work in education.

2. With the influx of denominations, theologically-different para-church groups who are equally involved in the same ministries as the Methodist Church, the question arises:

   What are the distinctive features of Methodism that can not be found in other denominations/para-church groups?

3. Two features stand out: Methodist polity (the connectional system, the use of various boards, committees, annual conferences, all interlinked) and the 'ecumenical spirit': a spirit of openness. (It is unfortunate that 'Christian perfection' is not emphasised in Methodist churches either in teaching nor in preaching).

4. Possibilities and promise of these two features: Methodists will have a strong 'Methodist identity' (based on polity, not doctrine) and be flexible to accommodate various brands of theology within its ranks. It's 'catholic spirit' is needed to further the goal of 'visible unity' among churches from different denominations. Visible unity is crucial to the Church in S.E.Asia, especially in countries where the Christians are in the minority. It is essential for witness.

5. Danger: More concerned about practicals than about theology, we are in the danger of losing our 'roots', our Methodist theological and doctrinal heritage. What God has entrusted us to share with the whole Christian Church will be forgotten. The Church will be poorer for this. Cut from its roots, the Methodist Church might, in time, cease to carry out the work that it has been involved in... simply because it could find no rationale for continuing the work.

6. Some questions:
   a. Should the Methodist Church in South East Asia have a joint conference of national churches once in three years? The Lutherans the Anglicans have meetings like these. It could foster closer relations between the Methodists in the region. It could be a means for closer cooperation and mutual support in living out the Wesleyan heritage.
   b. Most of the Methodist churches exist within a 'religious enclave'
quite detached from what is happening in the country that they are in. They are concerned with micro issues but do not seem to be aware of the macro ones (structural problems). Perhaps this is inevitable because Christians are a minority in most SEAsian countries and because Wesley himself did not seem to grasp macro issues very clearly. What would be the Methodist response to the use of Marxist social analysis? What is the Methodist stand on church-state relationships? Relationship with other religions and cultures? Should Methodists in S.E. Asia have a 'magisterium' of some sort in their own countries so that they can live out their prophetic role as the Methodist Church?

What is the place of sacraments?

Denominations - Western construct + Western problem?

(*Pneumatology vs Demonology problem)

? Sun Ai Park