

The Kuala Lumpur Religious House was established in the fall of 1968 with Ken and Zoe Barley as priors and Kjell and Margy Knutsen, longtime Methodist missionaries in Malaysia as key Order members.



The two couples recruited and offered PLC and

RS-I courses across the country. Given this toehold in Asia and a strong Movement in Australia the EI planned a first six week international course in Singapore for summer of 1969. Faculty from the U.S. began arriving in Kuala Lumpur in May to prepare for the ITI. Joe Mathews, David McClesky, Marilyn Crocker, and George Holcomb were among the early arrivals.

On May 13th, following a national election in which Chinese Malaysians gained political power, riots broke out and over 200 Chinese were killed primarily by Malay youth. The government couped itself suspending the Parliament and establishing a caretaker government voiding the election results. The country went under martial law with a 24 hour curfew.

Early in the evening the rioters were met by police, who used tear gas in an attempt to control them. A 24-hour curfew for Kuala Lumpur was announced on the radio at 7.35 pm and repeated on television at 8 pm. Many people who were unaware of the curfew order were shot. Some were also shot while standing in their own doorways and gardens.

Although most of the killings occurred on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, the burning and looting of Chinese shops and houses by Malays continued with most incidences of serious arson occurring on Thursday night and Friday. Over 450 houses were burnt. The curfew was gradually relaxed as the situation slowly returned to normal, but by the end of the month the curfew was still in force from 3 in the afternoon until 6.30 in the morning.

Newspaper publications were suspended on 15 May, but resumed on 18 May, and censorship was then applied on 21 May.] Foreign publications were banned, citizens found in possession of foreign news clippings were detained, and foreign reporters were criticised over allegations of racial bias by the army.

Our colleagues – the visiting faculty - suggested we were the jinx having left the recent riots in Chicago to come to Malaysia.

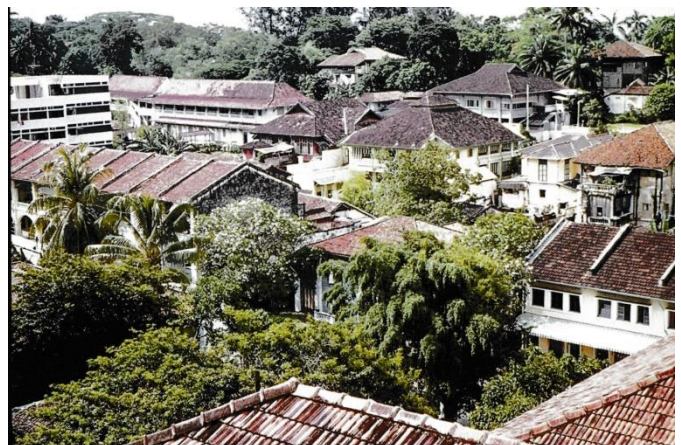
Preparing for the ITI became more complicated. Two Order teenagers in school in Malaysia, Lester Knutsen and JoAnn Slicker were brought to the House as boarding schools closed. Fifteen were housed at the House with banks closed and people initially allowed out on foot or bikes for only a few hours.

Ken Barley and Marilyn Crocker were teaching a course in northern Malaysia and Zoe Barley and David McClesky were teaching in Singapore. Ken and Marilyn were able to drive back to KL. Getting through by phone from Singapore Zoe asked what was needed at the House. Eggs and bread. She and David walked out at night, found a bakery open and found eggs for the flight to KL the next morning. On arriving at the KL airport the only choice offered was to take a shuttle to the downtown hotels. But we had a car at the airport and Zoe pleaded that her children were home and needed her. The car was placed into a convoy of armed jeeps. We drove in deserted streets with scattered bricks and burned out buildings. Arriving near the KL House the convoy left us, the House gate was closed, an eerie silence prevailed but someone came out to open the gate. A day or two later the children stepped out into the garden. A soldier came to the door and said if they don't stay indoors I'll have to shoot them. Slowly some of the restrictions eased. We held a meeting of Malaysian colleagues at the House. A radio began loudly nearby and everyone crouched in great fear.

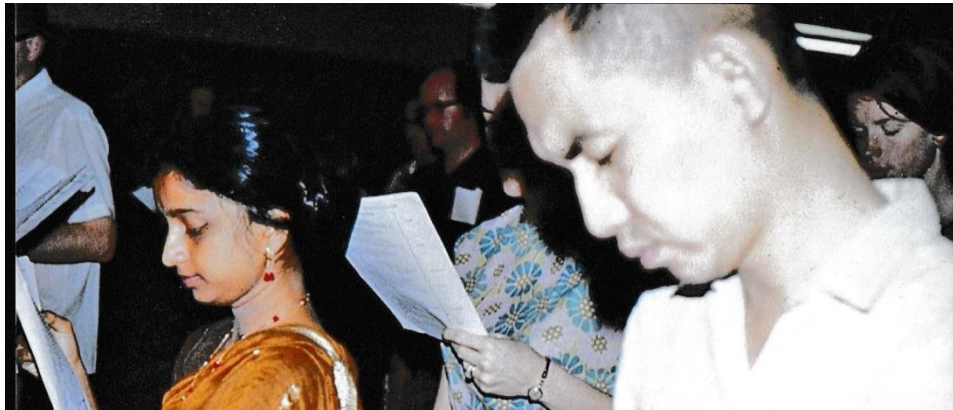
When the curfew lifted briefly we used the kids' bikes to go to the Chinese shop nearby. It was crowded. Fortunately the food we could use were things stocked for Europeans. The shopkeeper did not want to sell us rice. Fortunately, he was willing to trust us to pay him later as we had little cash and the press of the crowd made it impossible to check out. Reminders of the Chicago riots – there we had to open many single serving packets to serve a meal, again we had many small packets of things like corn muffin mixes to use for the 15 of us.

Fortunately Singapore, located at the southern tip of the Malay peninsula, was not affected by the riots although there was much more caution at the border. When Kjell and Zoe drove down with a car full of supplies for the ITI we only escaped questioning and high import duties because of Kjell's former close connections as missionary and pastor to the border inspector.

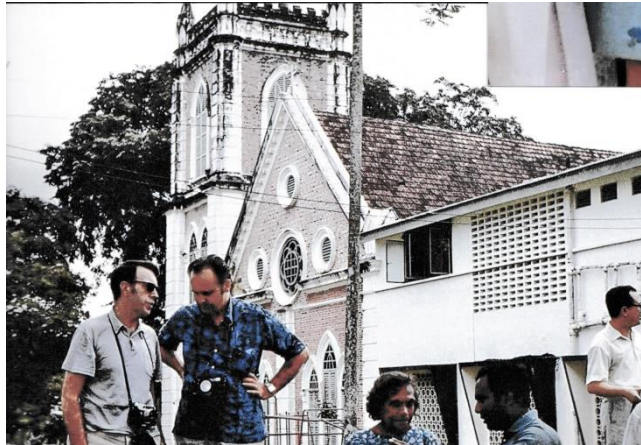
Trinity Theological Seminary was a good facility for the program.



We could not use the kitchen. The Chinese cook set up his 'kitchen' on a walkway. Most of the participants from the 16 Asian nations had never known or worked with Christians from the other countries. We found in Malaysia that most Christians had never worked across denominations but leaders and parishioners were surprised and delighted by ecumenism. Daily Office was held in the Trinity Chapel. The use of music and movement were a different experience for traditional Christians.



The group went to a variety of churches for Sunday morning worship. For many it was a first time to attend worship in a different denomination's services.

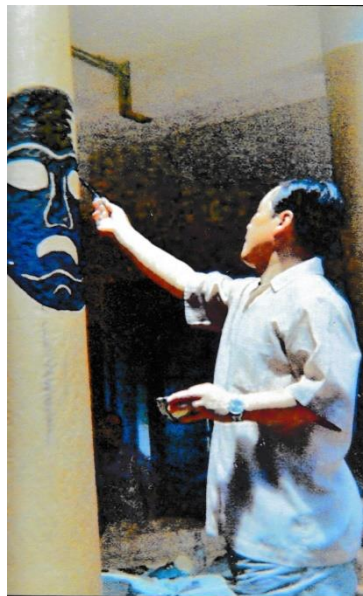
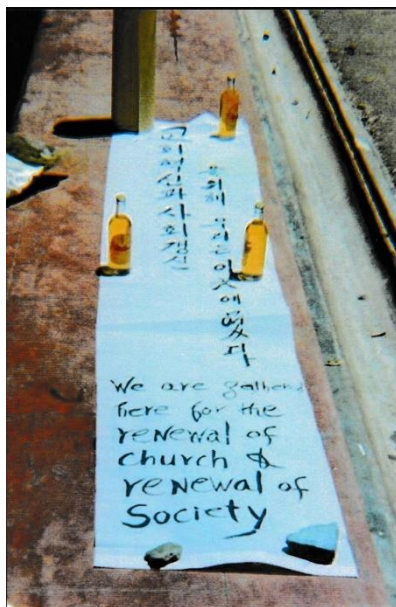


The ITI was also an exposure for participants to countries of Asia other than their own. A day trip by train to Kuala Lumpur entailed a lot of arranging. As a Muslim country with strict rules about proselytizing Malayan Muslims, bringing in a group of over 100 Christians wasn't the usual happening. We gathered all of the passports to expedite entry. A real puzzlement came when several passports contained names we were not familiar with. Using the photos and the country of origin it was possible to identify them as the Indonesian delegation. Indonesia is also a Muslim country and Christians there had to adopt Indonesian names for the passport rather than their original Chinese names. Malaysia was also still under military rule and only four months beyond the riots. Everyone was nervous but all went well and it was possible to visit a Thai temple, the national museum, the national mosque, and to see the civic buildings in Islamic style.



A culmination of the course work was the production of a Declaration of the Spirit Colleagues of Asia on Asia, the current reality and the future that must be created. Abruptly the Taiwanese delegation declared that if their names were associated with the Declaration they would be in serious trouble when they returned to Taiwan. The faculty helped them stage a rebuttal of the Declaration and they left.

Toward the end of the ITI a cultural celebration was held with each delegation planning a performance to represent their heritage. Preparations took much of the day.



Firecrackers, set off in the courtyard reverberated across the seminary's hilltop location. It was a delight to affirm the quite different traditions



The ITI at work.

