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## **Baptist News**

A quarterly news letter of the  
COUNCIL OF BAPTIST CHURCHES IN  
NORTH EAST INDIA

The Council comprises Assam Baptist  
Convention, Nagaland Baptist Church  
Council, Manipur Baptist Convention,  
Garo Baptist Convention, Arunachal  
Baptist Church Council and Karbi Anglong  
Baptist Convention.

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 *from the General Secretary's Desk....*



Dear Friend,

First thing must be kept first. I can take credit for numerous meetings, seminar presentation, sermons preaching, and supervising administrative changes in the past year. But I failed to keep first thing first in my spiritual disciplines. I am glad that I heard Dr. Ron Frost speaking in the Family Conference (Jan 12-15, 2010) early this year on the importance of listening to God through reading the Bible. Ron reads his Bible cover to cover twice every year. He calls it “Relational Reading,” which means reading through the Bible to simply listen to God. His listening to God does not include analytical studies or research but simply reading ten to fifteen chapters a day. I must confess that lately I had become very analytical and selective in my Bible reading. My familiarity with the text had become an obstacle in keeping myself abreast from the details of the Holy Scripture and from discipline of listening to God. I am glad I am back to reading now. I hope you are already keeping it up.

**I am glad to inform you that the Baptist members in the pew continue to have a great appetite for the Word of God. We need many more leaders who are also sincere exegetical preachers. In order for a Church to become strongly mission minded Church, she needs only two things: the work of the Holy Spirit and the faithful ministry of the Word. However, if she lacks the ministry of the Word, it is most likely that she will miss both. For it is certain that wherever the ministry of the Word is ignored, the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be resisted, restrained or misrepresented. Let us pray that God will raise leaders in CBCNEI family who are sincere exegetical preachers of the Word of God.**

The year 2009 has been one of the busiest and the most fruitful years for me. I am grateful to God for the opportunity of ministering in 17 major events, besides numerous invitations to preach on Sundays and other one-day events. Of these, I hosted 5 programs personally and the rest were hosted by Churches, Associations, Conventions, and other para-church organizations.

***Mission is about meeting others needs not simply of ourselves.***

I am glad to inform you that CBCNEI Council has decided to work in partnership with Wycliffe, SIM, World Vision of India, and the Transforming Leaders in Asia (TLA). This year, with the help of TLA, we could give motorbikes to six of our evangelists from remote areas. We also conducted training seminar for 29 evangelists so that their ministry will be more holistic. In the days to come, we expect our evangelists to work also as a Community Development Workers (CDW), who will train the villagers in Bee Keeping, Mushroom cultivation, fishery, and other capacity building skills. We desire to see that our evangelists may bring good news not only for the soul, but also for the body and the mind.

*How can we help poor Churches and Associations? I have visited some Churches and associations within CBCNEI family who are literally very poor, while others have enough. Yet our budget allocation, comparatively, too little for MISSIONS! We know that the Cross, the symbol of selfless sacrifice, makes our faith unique. Yet in the Baptist family, we need to be reminded about it. Sacrifice is not easily practiced and hence MISSION suffers deficit always. The gap between “have” and “have not” continues*

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*to remain big. Pray that the CBCNEI family members will assume greater responsibility in helping its weaker members sacrificially.*

Mission is about meeting others needs not simply of ourselves. In some CBCNEI institutions, we have hit the bottom: SURVIVE (Pay the salary!). When a Christian institution fails to become a blessing beyond its own existence, it loses its RATIONALE for existence. Either the leadership must be changed or the institution must be shut down. The latter is not the best choice. The CBCNEI family needs young visionary leaders who can take its institution beyond itself to serve the CHURCH at large. I believe that our Church is capable of providing such leadership.

***I am looking forward to the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of CBCNEI from April 16-18, 2010 in Williamnagar. This year our theme is “Baptist Unity.” I dream of a strong and united Baptist family in the northeast. It must begin within CBCNEI first.***

The Baptist News is one of the important links to get us connected. Please send us the news and articles from your Churches, Associations, and Conventions. I apologize for the delay of this issue. We are publishing the two issues together this time. However, the editorial will owe you one extra issue.

Please pray that we will have a full time Assistant Editor who will help us publish the Baptist News.

Sincerely yours

Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama

***Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.***

***Psalms 63:3 (NIV)***

## **THE CHALLENGES BEFORE CBCNEI MINISTRIES**

*- Rolland G. Momin  
Finance Secretary, CBCNEI*



The leadership of CBCNEI is facing tough challenges from its suffering ministries. The challenges are of various types. Some ministries are seriously sick, needing medications. Others are gasping for oxygen. Still others are abandoned and disowned. You may be wondering which might be the ones just mentioned.

We are grateful to God for the inheritance that has come to CBCNEI from the American Baptist Foreign Missions Society. Presently, the following ministries are still with the CBCNEI:

### **Healing Ministry:**

**Six Hospitals** – Tura Christian Hospital; Kangpokpi Christian Hospital; Satribari Christian Hospital; Impur Christian Hospital; Jorhat Christian Medical Centre; and Babupara Christian Hospital.

Tura Christian Hospital also runs an Orphanage and Jorhat Christian Medical Centre runs a Leprosy Centre.

### **Nurses' Training:**

Four Schools: Satribari(GNM), Jorhat(GNM), Tura(ANM) and Kangpokpi(ANM)

### **Hostels:**

Three Hostels – Lewis Memorial Hostel(for Boys), White Memorial Hostel(for Girls) and Shillong Tyrannus Hall(for Boys)

### **Theological Education:**

One College – Eastern Theological College, Jorhat (Assam).

### **Literature:**

One Literature Ministry – Christian Literature Centre with five Centres, i.e. Guwahati, Imphal, Dimapur, Ukhrul, and Churachandpur.

These ministries in their respective fields, were the pioneering works of the American Missionaries. When these were handed over to the national leaders of the CBCNEI, they were at their peak of performance, name, and fame.

Nobody had an inkling of what would happen to these establishments in the

next 50 years to come. For instance, in 1950, nobody would have ever thought that Satribari Christian Hospital would be incurring operating losses and accumulating liabilities to such an extent that closing it down might become imminent. Nobody would have imagined till 2008-09 that the respective State Nursing Councils would be ordering closure of two of CBCNEI's Nursing Schools for want of basic infrastructure and qualified teaching personnel.

What ails the administration of the CBCNEI Ministries? There are two: first Systemic, and the second attitudinal. Structurally, CBCNEI consists of 6 Conventions. There are altogether 101 Associations under the Conventions. The total number of Churches under the Council in 2009 was 6,985 with a total membership of 10,33,520. These make the CBCNEI as the biggest Baptist family in the whole of Asia. Each of these member churches is independent and enjoys freedom to minister locally, regionally and even internationally. This kind of loosely federated system contributes to the weakness of the Council. It is, therefore natural for the Churches to care for their own babies. Often, they are not concerned for the CBCNEI's ministries and certainly not for the American Baptist Foreign Mission's legacy. That brings us face-to-face with the second predicament of the administration of CBCNEI's ministries. The Conventions, Associations, and Churches rather desire their programmes and ministries be taken care of by the CBCNEI and the Board of International Ministries.

The following comments by Rev. Dr. Frederick S. Downs, historian, from his article "History of CBCNEI" tells all about the attitudinal problem underlying the present status of the CBCNEI ministries:

*"Many still regarded the Council as something apart from themselves—something from which they should receive, not something to which they should contribute. The failure of the churches to raise even that small portion of the central budget allocated to them each year was evident enough of this. Consequently, while at the local associational and convention levels the structure was almost completely self-supporting, at the central level there continued to be reliance upon grants made by the American Baptist Churches."*

So, how is the CBCNEI managing its ministries? No, CBCNEI no longer manages its ministries. CBCNEI is perforce made to preside over their termination. In fact, it has been doing just that ever since the national leaders

took over the Ministries at their peak performances. Any ministry, of the magnitude that of CBCNEI's requires capital infusion at various stages of development. When in the first place there was no ownership, there can hardly be any management of the ministries.

Cases in point:

a) CBCNEI received budget contribution from the member churches in coins @ Rs.0.50p per member till 2007-08. It was decided in 2005 that the budget contribution to CBCNEI will be revised to Rs. 1/- per member from 2008-09. None but one Convention paid the budget till the end of the year.

Then, subsequently in the mid-year, the Executive Committee found that the Rs. 1/- per member budget was too heavy for the Conventions to honour their commitments to CBCNEI. It was, therefore decided to revert to the earlier formula of Rs. 0.50p per member. Someone even suggested that CBCNEI should start contributing financially to the Conventions. Now, the CBCNEI can expect to receive Rs. 5,17,000/- per year from 10,33,520 of its members. In other words, this amount can meet two months' salary of its Headquarters staff, or one laparoscopic machine or one medium-sized generator set or one microscope.

b) The Satribari Christian Hospital could not pay salary to their staff for the month of November even upto the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, 2009. They had to be bailed out by CBCNEI by making payment from the land sale proceeds – which is as good as selling land and making payment of the salaries. The financial position of the hospital is such that they will not be in a position to pay the salary for the month of December even by the end of the following month.

c) ETC is struggling to pay salaries and had to resort to fund-raising by visiting churches as is done every year. They are advantaged in this because a number of serving Pastors happened to be the graduates of ETC. But unlike ETC, the Hospitals cannot go to their patients for fund-raising.

d) One young Pastor of a new Church under CBCNEI told the writer of this article very recently that the members of her Church were willing to give but not giving because the leadership would be investing the fund in the Bank instead of investing in the Ministry of the Church;

e) Three years back when the Convenor of the Planning Committee of a Church proposed Cross cultural Missions, the leadership of the Church

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tried to cow it down, saying that the Church had, recently started evangelism work amongst their own people and it was too untimely to start cross cultural missions at that stage, ignoring in the same breath, the latent strength the Church is exuding and the bestirring opportunities the Mission field was holding out.

Well, in the first place, if the Churches are endowed with ample resources, then, who or what has got the claim over those?

In '*God and Mammon*' (Christian Mastery of Money) by K.F.W. Prior, the author lists 4 heads which are considered the rightful claims on the use of the Churches' Resources. They are:

- a) The Spread of the Gospel outside the parish;
- b) The support of the Ministry;
- c) The maintenance of the Church Property, and
- d) Those in need.

So what now?

If nobody comes up to claim ownership of the bequeathed ministries through their prayers and financial contributions, then a time will come when the ministries will have to be closed down and the properties dispossessed, or sold. The prophecy of doom being fulfilled, CBCNEI may be able to contribute to the Conventions from the sale proceeds of the properties, as suggested by someone. But by then the common legacy, that is CBCNEI, would be gone forever. The united and shared witness through ministries and the umbrella of fellowship will have to be shut down. We will all be happy in our dear small corners with nothing to cherish from the past of our common Baptist heritage.

Finally, one wonders if there would be one Church or a member of CBCNEI who would like to be different. Will there be someone who would protest that what Dr. Frederick S. Downs described as the attitude of the Churches, is no longer valid now? Will there be some Churches that would contest the statement that they had disowned the ministries of the CBCNEI? Will there be someone amongst the members who would be willing to give more than 0.50 paise to the CBCNEI ministries that are still bringing blessings to others?

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## **Rebuild, Renew, and Restore**

*Text: Isa 61:1-4*

**- Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama**

*General Secretary, CBCNEI*

[This is the third section continued from the last issue]

### **B. The Ministries of Servant (v.1c-3a)**

After the servant is anointed, he shall carry out more than one ministry. These ministries are represented through seven *infinitives* in verses 1c to 3a. Probably, the number seven represents *completeness*. In the world of specialization, often a minister tends to focus only one aspect of need. Evangelicals tend to focus on the spiritual need and often ignore the physical, mental, and social needs.

Depending on the contextual need, our ministries must have more than one dimension. While keeping our priority straight, we must also be sensitive to our social and political context. We must be willing to shape our ministry according to its contextual need.

As Christians, our call is to represent our creator God who loves us and is compassionate towards all. He is concerned for our emotional, physical, and social needs as well. The purpose of anointing the servant and sending him is to meet every possible need.

In the text we notice that the people of God have become poor. Their poverty may be economical, but the emphasis here is on their social and political status. They have suffered long in the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Their status as refugees and slaves has afflicted them psychologically and spiritually. They have low self-esteem and they are without any spiritual help. Some are brokenhearted, others are captives, and still others are in darkness (v.1). Some are mourning (v.2), others are grieving (v.3), and still others have covered themselves with the ashes that represent sorrows or shame (v.3). There is spirit of despair (v.3) among the people of God. In verse 4, their despair is also reflected through the devastation and the ancient ruins.

People of God are hurting. Their needs ought to be met at more than one level. Their broken heart needs to be healed. They should to be freed from the captivity. They need good news of justice. They need to be comforted and given a new hope.

What makes our ministry relevant to our generation in our time? Exegesis does not start from the Bible but it starts from our social and political context in which God has placed us as his servants. The Church must never be preoccupied inwardly, rather be relevant to the community living around her.

I was in Arunachal, visiting one of the most remote areas called Tuting, where we have a large number of Buddhists community living in the remote Himalayan villages. The Churches have placed two evangelists in that area, paying about Rs. 3000/- per month. However, it is not working. The evangelists are not welcomed in the villages. Recently, some Buddhists leaders from Europe have built a school, which houses more than 150 children. They provide free education with food and lodging. They have been able to attract children and their parents from remote villages to Buddhist faith.

We are called to ministry. the protestant Churches have to School

One must ask the question; how would the emerging leaders today be passionate about rebuilding, renewing, and restoring our society?

ministries, not a Unfortunately, evangelical become allergic Building

projects. They have fund only for Church planting. Indeed Church planting must be our top priority but it must be done through the preaching of the Word and the foundation for the Word of God can be best given among the Children between 5-12 years of age. We fail to understand that the Church is planted in more than one ways. Often the method that produces instant result lacks strong foundation.

There is no doubt about the priority of the Word of God in the ministry. Ministries of an anointed servant must find it's first and foremost resource in the preaching of the Word of God. Notice the first infinitive, (עָנִיִּים) (לְבַשֵּׁר) to preach to the poor. The infinitive לְבַשֵּׁר is purposefully placed before all other infinitives. Any ministry which fails to find its primary source in the Word of God is likely to lose the very essence of its existence and become secular or pseudo secular institution.

For this reason the Churches and seminaries need more men and women trained well in the biblical studies. We need more pastors and evangelists who can correctly handle the Word of God. The primacy of preaching of the good news is relevant for all contexts and for all situations in the human history. And hence we need not be merely an evangelical (which

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means believe in the good news) but also evangelistic (which means believe in telling the good news) as well.

The power lies in the Word of God. It has the power to turn ashes into the crown of beauty, the mourning into gladness, the spirit of despair into garment of praise. But most of all the preaching of Word of God must bring transformation in the character of a preacher himself first and then the listeners. Character must precede Charisma.

The task of an anointed servant is not only to meet the political, social, emotional, and psychological need of the afflicted people but also to ensure that in the process that they themselves are transformed.

This is why we must ensure that our ministries of charity and social action must be good work plus transformation of lives, which is possible only through the ministry of the Word.

In verse 3, we read the promise, that as a result of the preaching of the good news, they will be called Oaks of Righteousness, a planting of the Lord which will display the splendor of the Lord (v.3).

In verse 6 we read that they will be called priests of the LORD, ministers of our God. In other words, the servant, who is anointed in verse 1 and sent to preach the good news will no longer be alone, but he will be joined by those who will be transformed by his ministries.

This leads me to the third subheading

## **2. The Multiplication of Servant (vv.3b-4)**

In this text we notice that a servant begins his ministry in the verse one but in verse 6 there are more than one servant who are engaged in rebuilding, renewing, and restoring.

The verb changes from singular to plural. They will **rebuild** (וּבְנוּ) the ancient ruins, and **restore** (יִקְוֶמוּ) the places long devastated; they will **renew** (וְחָדְשׁוּ) the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

True gospel preaching regenerates, replicates, and reproduces. True gospel preaching also brings transformation that produces character, justice, and purity in the lives of people. When such things happen among the emerging leaders, the Rebuilding, Renewing, and Restoring of a society becomes possible.

In the early Church, personal transformation was the key to growth of the Church. Paul said, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” As a result of Paul’s ministry, there was a young man called Timothy, who was one of the most important historical link between Paul and the later Churches.

Paul writes about Timothy in 1 Corinthians 4:17, *For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.* Timothy was a living extension of Paul’s life on earth after his death. Multiplication of leader is the greatest need of this century.

One must ask the question how would the emerging leaders today be passionate about rebuilding, renewing, and restoring our society? Will they need mentoring? Will they need a role model? Will they need transformative power of the Word of God?

Without a transformed leader today there is no transformed leader tomorrow. It must begin from us, with us, in us, and through us.

The anointed servant in this passage says, *The Lord has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and to provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*

### **III. Conclusion**

The anointed servant engages in a complete package of ministries of transforming lives because his ultimate goal is to see that the people of God are empowered to engage in Rebuilding, Renewing, and Restoring.

Change will come in our society not merely through a political resolution. Not merely through social reformation. Neither merely through an intellectual brainstorming, nor through superficial ministries, but through a Servant who

1. is anointed by YHWH with the Holy Spirit
2. is committed to the primacy of the preaching of the good news
3. is willing to engage in the lives of people to multiply the vision and bring change.

May God help us.



## THE JUST GOD

- Atungo Shitri

Justice & Peace Secretary, CBCNEI

If we scrutinize the magnitude of injustice in the world today, it is colossal and is complex as well. The stark reality involves human beings just like you and me, persons created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27) A girl child sold into prostitution, a woman forced into prostitution, a person murdered extra-judicially, an innocent girl raped and murdered, an innocent boy murdered in ‘fake encounter’ are all people just like you and me, God’s own special creation. What do we think how God feels when one of his child is enslaved or abused or raped or murdered? The Bible says, God detest such cruelty. In Isaiah 61:8 the Lord declares, *“For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity”* Psalmist wrote in 10:14, *“You, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.”*

To seek justice is to know God. Jeremiah records this in God’s own assertion: *“Does it make you a king to have more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?”* (Jeremiah 22:15-16)

James 1:27 says: *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”* In real meaning, James says that God wants us to be Holy—to be set apart from the

### ANNOUNCEMENT

CBCNEI Sponsorship Application forms for Theological Education, scholarship continuation form, Medical, and application forms for Lewis Memorial Hostel, White Memorial Hostel, and Shillong Vacation House are now available for download from [www.cbcnei.com](http://www.cbcnei.com)

things of the world and set apart for the things of God, and to take care of or “look after” those who are defenseless and weak.

*To love our neighbor means to make the persecution, suffering, and injustice of our fellow human beings our own. It is the business of all who follow Christ.* — Marvin Williams

It is not difficult to know how God feels on most matters as He portrays His character and heart throughout His Word. He said: “*Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise. I will protect them from those who malign them*” (Psalm 12:5) This, then is the good news we have from God and summons us to participate in the work of seeking justice.

In fulfilling the word of God and participate in the work of God’s justice, CBCNEI family needs to work together to combat injustice. Finally, let us revisit and envision Micah 6:8 which say, “...*what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God*” and make decision to follow and live for Christ in the way He wants us to.

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**~ Circulation Manager ~**

***Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe***

***Hebrews 12:28 (NIV)***

## News Capsule

### **CBCNEI Relief Work at NYIGAM Village, BASAR, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh**

The Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI) in collaboration with Church Auxiliary for Social Action, Guwahati, Assam (CASA) conducted a relief work at Nyigam Village on 21 November 2009. This relief work was initiated by Arunachal Pradesh Baptist Council of Churches (ABCC), and CBCNEI and CASA provided the relief materials for the rehabilitation of the victims.

The Justice and Peace Secretary, CBCNEI, Mr. Atungo Shitri along with Rev. Modam Dini, the Regional Secretary, ABCC; Mr. Pradip Surin, Field Officer, CASA; and Mr. Jatin Gogoi, Office Assistant, CBCNEI with local people assistance conducted the relief work. Relief



items of more than Rs. 3,03,995/- were distributed among the victims.



All ninety-six families were given one bundle each of CGI sheets and one packet each of CASA relief materials (utensils, blanket, etc).

Overall, it was a very peaceful and satisfying relief work. The reports from the locals and victims alike suggest that they were greatly relieved to receive the relief materials. One local leader, who is not a believer, commented that they never expected Christian group to show such kind of love and concern and it is truly a manifestation of God's love. Another local *Panchayat* leader who is also not a believer confessed that in the past the villagers made mistakes and wronged the Christians and asserted that such things should not happen again because of this act of the Christians. Many others also commented our work because so far no organization has done a major contribution towards the rehabilitation of the fire victims. Overall, it was an overwhelming



response from all sections of the people.

CBCNEI would like to thank all those who have participated in this relief work and also those who have prayed for the team. CBCNEI also specially thank BIM; Miriam Weber; Shalom Bible Seminary; UBC, Kohima; MBC, Manipur; ABC, Golaghat; GBC, Tura; Mr. C. Khalong Ao and family for their generous donation without which relief could not have been possible. Finally, we urge you to continue to pray for the villagers for their well-being.

### **CBCNEI Executive Meeting (22-23 Oct, 2009)**

The Executive Committee of CBCNEI unanimously decided to introduce some changes for strengthening the ministry of CBCNEI. The new changes will strengthen the corporate unity of the Baptist Churches and make us a good steward of the little resources

that we have.

1. Re-structuring of ETC Board.
2. Re-Structure of CBCNEI Executive Committee.
3. Re-Structure of Medical Board.
4. Re-structure of Local Administrative Committees of Hospitals.

The EC resolved to create a post of President for the Eastern Theological College, Jorhat. The President shall be the administrative and the pastoral head of the institution. He/She shall be responsible for the spiritual nurture of the staff and the faculties, establish a healthy relationship with the Churches under CBCNEI, and strengthen the ETC Alumni Association. It is also decided that until the end of April 2010, Rev. Zhabu Terhuza, the Interim Principal, shall discharge all the duties of the President.

### **Discipleship Training and Baptism Program (28 - 29 Oct, 2009)**

The Neighborhood Ministry of CBCNEI organized a “*Discipleship Training and Baptism*” program at Kasikhagra Baptist Church, Navang at West Garo Hills, Meghalaya for the villages from Goalpara, Barpeta



and Bongaigaon district. 20 persons attended the program. The Resource Persons were Pawan Bhuyan, Lohit Basumatary, Imli Jamir, and Rabindra Basumatary.

### **Good News Preaching (31 Oct, 2009)**

Around 40 people from Bagdoda took part in a program organized by CBCNEI's Neighbourhood Ministry. The program was focused toward preaching the gospel to the unreached people. Few local leaders of their respective Mosque also were part of the program and they were listening to the Word of God for the very first time. The group was led by Pawan Bhuyan, Nurul Haque, Khursheed Alam, Sukumar Momin, Lohit Basumatary & Rabindra



Basumatary.

### **National Workshop on Church's Understanding on Climate & Global Warming**

The Secretary Justice and Peace, Mr. Atungo Shitri attended National Workshop on Church's Understanding on Climate & Global Warming organized by Church Auxiliary for Social Action, India held at Ecumenical Sangam, Nagpur from November 4-6, 2009.

In the workshop various issues like Christian Faith and Climate Change: Theological and Biblical Imperatives, Critical Introspection, Mission Imperatives, Politics of Climate Change, and role and response of the Church to climate change and other practical responsibilities were deliberated on. Various church representatives from Presbyterian Assembly, Baptist Council, CNI, CSI, Lutheran and other orthodox churches attended the workshop.

The participants resolved to take initiative in bringing awareness on climate change and global warming to respective congregation and approach it with pro-active involvement to mitigate the complex problem threatening our very existence.

## Baptist Women Fellowship, NE India

The 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of Baptist Women Fellowship, NE India, was held at Imphal from 6 - 8 Nov, 2009. The theme was “*Women in God’s Design*”. About 500 women leaders from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya & Nagaland participated in the conference.

In the light of the loss incurred by the student community in Manipur due to the “*Boycott Classes*” call given by the Student Bodies in Manipur following the July 23 fake encounter, the BWFNE decided on Nov 29, 2009 that one day fasting & prayer for peace & justice in Manipur to be observed by all the churches of CBCNEI.



The conference was aimed at preparing women to face the present day challenges in our society. Several issues affecting the lives of women and children were addressed

during this conference. The BWFNE resolved to declare 2010 - 2020 as “*A Decade of Women for Change*”.

One of the organizers wrote,



*“Participants had thrilling experiences of an ensemble of Manipur folk dances, and gospel songs presented by Youth Ministry and Sunday School department of MBC. The conference called upon Christian women to be rooted in the Word of God, extend helping hands at the times of injustice and atrocities committed against women and children and be of service to those suffering across communities and states.”*

Further deliberations encouraged women to explore their abilities and potentials for building up of families, churches and the society and helped in making them become aware of their God-given gifts.

## **The Students Mission Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh (11 - 14 Nov, 2009)**

First time in the history of Bangladesh Churches, 200 youths from 18 denominations gathered to



consider Mission as Call of God for the youths of Bangladesh. Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama had the privilege to present a workshop on Mission and preach three evenings' challenging the youths for Missions. Almost all students made decision to be involved in Mission in the days to come. An organization called "*Vision Momentum*" under the initiative of Bangladesh Students Fellowship and Wycliffe sponsored the program.

## **NCCI Consultation Meeting on Violence and Violation of Human Rights**

The Secretary Justice and Peace, Mr. Atungo Shitri and Adv. Alin

Kamei participated in the Regional Consultation on Violence and Violation of Human Rights: Patterns and Perspectives for Peace organized by NCCI in collaboration with SAEPP and PCI held at PCI Assembly, Shillong from November 24-26, 2009. Various church representatives from Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran and other denominational group participated in the meeting. The members present discussed on wide range of topics like violence and violation of human rights in NE India, violent atrocities committed against NE people in other parts of India, racial profiling, inhuman laws like AFSPA, tribal and minorities rights, those so called "religious freedom" acts, the threat of global warming and climate change, and ethnic conflicts of the region. The participants resolved to take a pro-active involvement on the aforesaid subject matters and try to bring about constructive change and sustainable peace in the region in particular and in greater India in general.



## Seminar on Biblical Counseling



A seminar on Counseling was conducted by TLA Ministries at CBCNEI Conference Centre from November 27- 29, 2009. 27 delegates from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Nagaland participated in the following sessions:

- i. Counseling Skills (Dr. Asangla Ao)
- ii. Virtues of a Counselor (Jim Thomason)
- iii) Counselor as a disciple (Scott Johnson) &
- iv) Pastor as a Counselor and Use of Scriptures in Counseling (Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama)

### Training for Evangelist (30 Nov - 03 Dec, 2009)

"Transforming Leaders in Asia" Ministries in collaboration with "Council of Baptist Churches in North East India", organized a training program focused towards the evangelists working in the most

interior places of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. 35 evangelists from these two states attended the training program. The resource person for this training program were: Jim Thomason, Scott Johnson, Edward Aw, Dr. Galen



Currah, Dr. A. K. Lama, and Dr. Asangla Ao. The evangelists were trained on "Evangelism Skills", "Evangelist as a Counselor", "Virtues of an Evangelist", "Technique of Preaching Gospel" and "The Doctrine of Holy Spirit".

### Motorbikes for the Spread of Gospel (4 Dec, 2009)

In order to facilitate the ongoing ministry of some Christian workers, TLA Ministries distributed four (4) motorbikes. The beneficiaries were:

1. Atul Gogoi from Assam
2. Honman Wongjen
3. Nokthom Wangsu &

4. Tatung Taki from Arunachal Pradesh.

Mr. Jim Thomason, Chairman, TLA Ministries handed over bikes



keys to them.

### **Neighborhood Ministry of CBCNEI**

**(13 - 16 Dec, 2009)**

Sponsored by YWAM and CBCNEI, a four/(4) day training program was conducted for the grass-root workers at CBCNEI's Worship Resource Centre, Guwahati. All together 19 believers participated in the training out of which two/(2) of them took baptism. The resource persons were Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, P. Bhuyan, I. Jamir and R. Basumatary.



### **ABC MISSION CONFERENCE**

Assam Baptist Convention had a three days Mission Conference from January 27 - 30, 2010 at Golaghat Baptist Church, Assam. The theme of the conference was "**JOINING HANDS FOR A BIG CATCH**". The resource persons were Mr. Edward Aw from Arizona, Mr. Micheal James Jackson from Delhi, Lt. Col. Arun Kumar from Bangalore and Rev. F. Ramdin Mawia from Mizoram Baptist Convention, Aizawl.

The purpose of the conference was:

- 1. To enlarge the vision of reaching Assam.**
- 2. To connect the Harvest Force to Harvest Field.**
- 3. To identify the harvest field of Assam in a wider perspective.**
- 4. To make systematic and collective strategy for Assam.**

It was an amazing time for the Assam Baptist Convention to have a wonderful participation of 98 delegates from the House Churches and Traditional Churches. The House Church leaders were from the '3 deep levels' and they were 37 in numbers. The participants from the traditional churches were

encouraged by seeing the House Church leaders in growing numbers. Participants were challenged by the teaching of the resource persons and they confessed and dedicated themselves to go for a BIG CATCH in Assam.

There was a Prayer Walk on the last day and participants were sent out to pray for entire city of Golaghat.

The vision which Assam Baptist Convention wants to enlarge through this Mission Conference was successful and the mighty Lord blessed all of us to extend His Kingdom throughout Assam and we believe that we will win many souls to Christ in the days to come.

### **Women Conference, United Baptist Church Association(UBCA)**

The United Baptist Church Association(UBCA) organised the first women conference-cum-advent Christmas celebration from December 11 - 13, 2009 (sponsored by United Revival Fellowship) at the UBCA Mission Centre, Kuthakuthi (Goalpara), Assam. Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, General Secretary of CBCNEI, ministered the Word of God. He also inaugurated Chokabaha Baptist Church, a new

Church of 24 members. Later, the General Secretary, CBCNEI, presented the gift from CBCNEI: Assamese Bible(15 copies); Worship Hymnal(35 copies) to the pastor of the new church.

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### **The Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI) invites committed Christians for following jobs to apply**

1. Assistant Editor,  
Qualification: Major in English  
or Journalism.

2. Doctors, Qualification:  
MBBS/MD/MS/OBG/ORTHO/  
ANES. Willing to relocate in  
Jorhat/Guwahati/Tura.

3. Nurses with work  
experience in ICU. Willing to  
relocate in Jorhat/Guwahati.

Salary is negotiable as per the  
need, qualification, and experi-  
ence. Please send your resume,  
copy of certificates, photo, names  
and phone number of your previ-  
ous employer to:

**The General Secretary, CBCNEI Com-  
pound, H. B. Panbazar, Guwahati  
781001, Assam.**

## **18th Triennial Conference of the NAGALAND BAPTIST CHURCH COUNCIL**

In the 18th Triennial Conference of the NAGALAND BAPTIST CHURCH COUNCIL, hosted by USBLA at Yangli from January 29-31, 2010, the following five RESOLUTIONS were unanimously passed:



### **1. Resolved to keep on record our appreciation and gratitude to the following:**

(a) The United Sangtam Baptist Lithroti, Ashimukhong (USBLA) for hosting the 18<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC)

(b) The speakers Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, Rev. Malsawma Vanchhawng & Rev. Kuzierang. The Choirs, singing group and all the participants of the program.

### **2. There is an urgent need to educate our members with the**



### **Word of God and protect them from being led away by heretic teachings and evil forces that has infiltrated our Land. In this regard we resolve to:**

(a) Educate our churches to be wary of all heretical teachings and particularly the heretical group "Good News Mission" led by Ock Soo Park who is known as a heretic by Christian Council of Korea (CCK)

(b) Stand firm on sound biblical teachings and uphold Baptist distinctive.

(c) The local Churches will verify from NMM/NBCC the credentials of individual/organization with whom they plan to associate/partner with.

### **3. In order to commit ourselves as believers and to "launch out deeper" in our prayer life, involving all Churches, families and individuals we resolve to undertake the following activities:**

(a) Evening prayer meetings indicated by church bell ringing in every Church

(b) Chain of prayer the whole year

(c) Bible Reading

(d) Dawn Prayer

**4. The lack of proper understanding of Baptist local church autonomy will go against the larger interest of the Baptist solidarity/fraternity and therefore resolve that there is a need to have an exhaustive knowledge and teaching about Baptist heritage in our Churches.**

**5. Resolved to reaffirm our commitment to support the peace**



**and reconciliation effort among the Nagas.**

Nine persons from the Nagaland Missionary Movement were commissioned to be missionaries to foreign land at the conference. The names are as follows:

1. Janbeni Humtsoe
2. Kevilesie
3. Asenla

4. Amenla

5. Avika T. Sumi

6. Ngachu Phom

7. Ato Angami

8. Neikosa Tase

9. Neiwete Chirhah

### **125 Years of Angami Baptist Church Council (Feb 4-7, 2010)**

Angami Baptist Church Council (ABCC) celebrated its 125th years of glorious ministry at Kohima Local Ground. More than 5000 members of Angami Baptist Churches attended. Rev. Reid Trulson, Rev. Benjamin Chan, Rev. Karen Seling, David and Betsy Perkins, Rev. Dr. V. K. Nuh, and Rev. Keviyekielie Linyu ministered the Word of God. Rev. P. Bony Resu, Gen. Secy. Asia Pacific Baptist Federation; Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, Gen. Secy, CBCNEL,





Rev. Dr. Anjo Keikung, Nagland Baptist Church Council, the Executive Secretaries of other Baptist Churches Associations, and many other distinguished guests were invited to bring greetings. Mr. Amrit K. Goldsmith, the Chairman of CBCNEI, who is grand son of Rev. Henry Goldsmith, an Assamese missionary to Angamis in 1882 also spoke on this occasion. He was accompanied by his son David. On the last day, Rev. Keviyiekielie Linyu, the Executive Director of ABCC led the conference to declare three fold resolutions. The Conference collected Rs 4,02,227/- for the victims of Haiti and Rs. 2,72,303/- for Baptist International Ministries (BIM). The best attraction of the conference was a display of history that contained pictures, documents, and personal

belongings of American missionaries who toiled hard among Angmis.

### **A Visit of the Former General Secretary**



Rev. Dr. J. M. Ngul Khan Pau, the Former General Secretary of CBCNEI, visited CBCNEI on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2009. He led the morning devotion and shared about his work and experience in the USA. At present he is attached to Fuller Theological Seminary as a research scholar. Continue to pray for his ministry and family.

**Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.  
Amos 5:14 (NIV)**

## **CBCNEI Archive and Library**

CBCNEI Archive and Library is situated at the old office building of CBCNEI. It has a huge collection of documentary heritage of early missionaries of the 1846 till the present time. It was established during the time of the missionaries and continues to be a resource and research centre for Christian Scholars. The Archive and Library has a collection of more than 1000 documents including past records, correspondences, manuscripts, books, maps, photographs etc. It has also collections of English, Assamese, Garo, Naga (Ao, Lotha, Sema, Tangkhul, Angami, Anal, Mao, Mzieme, Rengma, Sangtam, Thanggal Naga, Chang), Adi, Abor Miri, Dafla, Hindi, Mikir, Manipuri, Nepali, Rabha, Thado Kuki, Oriya books and some indigenous tribes of North East India.

For long-term preservation of the rare documents, we are actively digitizing the collections. We have a special machine for scanning books (Plustek Optic 4600), with which a large collection of the archive have been scanned and digitized. Some of those worth mentioning are American Baptist Missionary Foreign Report from 1923 to 1937, some rare photographs, books and old maps.



**Barnett Banglow (now CBCNEI Conference Centre) in 1897**

### **What is our Future Plan?**

We desire to preserve these priceless treasure by traditional as well as digitizing process. We also intend to make these documents available to researchers and scholars. We also plan to build a Digital Library which will be accessible



through Internet. We will need your prayer and financial support to materialise these plans.

#### **SHORT TERM VOLUNTEER AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AT CBCNEI**

1. **INTERNSHIP UNDER THE GENERAL SECRETARY:** Work closely with the General Secretary in the day to day affairs of the Council.
2. **WORSHIP MINISTRY:** Coordinate training of worship leaders, visit churches, network with other international worship ministries.
3. **IT DEPARTMENT:** Maintain and troubleshoot the IT and communication equipment, web design and content management.
4. **JUSTICE AND PEACE DEPARTMENT:** To work with the Secretary of CBCNEI Justice and Peace Department for 3-6 months. Eligibility: Law graduate and students.

***Contact CBCNEI office for further information.***

***But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.***

***Psalms 59:16 (NIV)***

## **CBCNEI DAY OF PRAYER**

CBCNEI is observing **21st March of 2010** as a day of prayer. We urge our **churches** and **associations** to join with us in praising as well as praying to God by observing this day. Please include the following praise and prayer points in your worship:

### **PRAISE THE LORD FOR:**

1. His Faithfulness, Mercy and manifold Blessings during the year 2009.
2. The Interim Principal of ETC, Jorhat, Rev. Zhabu Terhuja.
3. The Faculty, Staff, and Students of ETC.
4. Ms. Anupama Chetia who has joined CBCNEI office as a volunteer to help set up the CBCNEI ARCHIVE.
5. The successful Missionary Training Program conducted in the month of August, 2009 at CBCNEI.
6. NC Hills Relief For Conflict Victims & Arunachal Pradesh Relief for fire victim.
7. Babupara Christian Hospital Eye Care Unit Launched on September 5, 2009.

### **PRAY FOR:**

1. The CBCNEI Leadership – The General Secretary, Treasurer, Mission Secretary, Property Secretary, Secretary, Justice and Peace Department, the Executive Committee Members, the Board members and the Committee Members of various Committees.
2. The CBCNEI Staff and their family members.
3. All the Conventions, Associations and Churches under CBCNEI and for their ministries.
4. 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of CBCNEI, April 16-18, 2010 to be hosted by Garo Baptist Convention.
5. CBCNEI Library and Archive.
6. CBCNEI New Partnership with SIM, Wycliffe Bible Translation Ministry & Transforming Leaders in Asia (TLA) Ministries.
7. Various Ministries of the CBCNEI, viz.

**Baptist News**

a. Healing Ministry through 6(six) Hospitals - Satribari Christian Hospital, Tura Christian Hospital, Jorhat Christian Medical Centre, Kangpokpi Christian Hospital, Impur Christian Hospital and Babupara Christian Hospital.

b. Students' Ministry through 3(three) Hostels – Lewis Memorial Boys' Hostel, Guwahati, White Memorial Girls' Hostel, Guwahati, Tyrannus Hall for Boys, Shillong.

c. Theological Education through ETC.

8. The Missionary Training in the month of August 2010.

9. The Proposed Church Workers' Pension Scheme.

10. CBCNEI Sponsored Theological Students studying in different Universities.

11. CBCNEI sponsored Doctors & Nurses who have gone for higher studies.

12. Overseas partners such as BIM, BWA and APBF.



*"To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing" - Martin Luther King Jr.*

***Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.***

***Proverbs 4:7 (NIV)***

## FUND- RAISING, THE NATIVE GARO WAY

~ Rolland G. Momin

Finance Secretary, CBCNEI

**Merong Jakkep**, meaning the Handful of Rice, was practised by the Garo women of yester-years. The practice became known as one inspired by God for supporting God's works. But how did it originate or who started the practice?

### Origin of Merong Jakkep

It is said that sometime during 1886-87, Rev. Ramke W. Momin (one of the first two Garo converts) advised his wife, "*In the same way you part with a morsel of food out of your mouth as you feed your child, please remember, for the sake of the needy, to keep a handful of rice from the quantity of rice apportioned for lunch or dinner.*" Rev. Ramke's advice, considered as one coming from the Lord's own compassionate heart, got embedded in the hearts of Suboni B. Sangma, wife of Ramke, and Salje K. Sangma (the well-known bare-foot Evangelist, who gave herself completely to mission work of the Church). This practice of giving a handful of rice was not an easy one as the Garo mothers of those days struggled feeding their children.

### A Sacred Pattern?

The fact that *Merong jakkep* is not just an extra handful of rice but a portion of the family meal kept aside for God's work turned out to be something deeply personal. Every morning and evening as the mother would apportion the rice for lunch and dinner, she would prayerfully take from the apportioned quantity, one handful of rice for every baptized female member in the family. Thus the practice was not only unique, but also was very meaningful to the practitioners as they could have a handful of *Merong Jakkep* not only for themselves, but also a portion of their meal was dedicated to God. A pattern of giving which is personal, periodic (twice a day), sacrificial (sharing own meal) and premeditated, was established.

### Partners in the Mission Field

While the female counterparts were rarely seen working in the mission field, more and more male members went out for mission work and the fund for the mission workers was being resourced from the *jakkep* fund. Every Christian family would bring the *Merong Jakkep* collected secretly and with humility in the privacy of one's homes, to the Church on Sundays; dedicate

it in prayer and would sell the same at a rate affordable to the poor. There was a tacit understanding at work implying that since womenfolk could not be in the mission field let every baptized female member dutifully set aside *Merong Jakkep* so as to ensure a continuous flow of financial support. What a bond of partnership it was! And every practitioner of *Merong Jakkep* knew for sure then that the *Jakkep* fund would go to the mission field.

### **Opportunities at all Circumstances**

As mentioned earlier, Rev. Ramke was the brain behind the *Merong Jakkep* while his wife and her contemporary, Salje, an Evangelist, were the first practitioners. Looking at the life and works of Rev. Ramke, it would seem necessity is not only the mother of invention, but can also be the father of fund-raising for the Lord's work. Burned with the desire to see God's word spread amongst his own people, Rev. Ramke, in his own inimitable way, funded the Lord's work through various ways. It so happened that his son, Dhonsing B. Sangma, suddenly died at his home in Nishangram. His son, at that time, was studying at Serampore College and Rev. Ramke was supporting his son's studies financially. Now that his son is gone, Rev. Ramke remitted a total of Rs. 109/- to Rev. M. C. Mason, from his savings which included little amount that he got from the proceeds of the sale of his son's apparels - with an expressed desire that the proceeds be used for meeting the expenses of sending somebody to work for the Lord in place of his deceased son. The amount was almost equal to his salary as Pastor of Nishangram Baptist Church for one year.

Likewise, when his daughter Sanje died, he collected Rs. 66.10.03 (66 Rupees, 10 Annas and 3 Paise), and sent it to Rev. M. C. Mason urging him to help somebody to work for the Lord in place of his deceased daughter. Bereaved as he might but he never was bereft of ideas for fund raising to do the Lord's work.

### **Holistic Approach**

Not only was Rev. Ramke self-supporting, he wanted the members of the Church to be self-sustaining. The villagers were accustomed to shifting cultivation using the slash-and-burn method and were not self-sufficient in food. So he envisioned for those Christians residing at Nishangram a project to sustain their livelihood. While he showed how to irrigate and do wet land cultivation his wife Suboni and Salje went ahead and brought seeds from the neighbouring villages. He encouraged the villagers to adopt horticulture as

an alternative to *jhumming*. Rev. Ramke was one leader during his time, who “knew the way, showed the ways and walked the way.” As the first generation Christian, it was he who opened a school at Damra in 1864 and started teaching Garo boys, ushering in the dawn of literacy amongst the Garos. The first generation Garo Christians also showed the ways to cleanliness and hygiene. The homes of the converted became the brand name for godliness for the non-christian Garos who were known for being steeped in dirt and squalor.

### ***Merong Jakkep for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

What has the practice of *Merong Jakkep* got to do with the present generation? Is it still being practiced by the Garos? Well, while some are still practicing *Merong Jakkep*, for others the practice is no longer relevant. The issue of *Merong jakkep* as a practice may even be alien to the Generation-X who eat *Pizzas* one day and *Dosas* the next. However, having a deep sense of personal involvement with the Missions of God or as an act of personal worship, which is periodic, premeditated and sacrificial – all reflected beautifully in the *Merong jakkep* - is anticipated as the least possible commitment from every member of the church of God.

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### ***Notes & References:***

a) *The Baptist Missionary Magazine* dated Sept 07, 1887 (Volume LXVII, December 1887 No. 12) Writing in the *Baptist Mission Magazine* of September 1887, Rev M.C. Mason reported that Ramkhe, one of the first two Garo Converts has been bereaved by the death of his son, Dhonsing, the first Garo to be brought up a Christian. Rev Ramkhe is reported to have never asked for mission help for his education, but has sacrificed that he might keep him in school. Dhonsing returned from Serampore where he was reported that he is the best Bengali scholar in his class. Rev Ramkhe wrote to Rev Mason thus:

“If Dhon had lived he would have worked for the Lord. As he has gone, I want to give this money to help support someone to preach in his place.” He sent Rs. 109/- along with the letter :

This has rejoiced me much for Ramkhe does not give it from his abundance. He is himself Pastor of his Church. His salary is ten rupees per month, furnished by the Church. Thus the donation is almost equal to a year’s salary. Ramkhe has for the first been a strong pillar and has most of the time been in the employ of the mission but for nearly two years he has been acting as Pastor, receiving nothing from the mission. I would that our people would remember these efforts in their prayers, and that some would take a lesson from their examples.”

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b) *The Seventy-fourth Annual Report given by Rev M.C. Mason, Rev. E.G. Phillips and wife E.C. Bond in the Baptist Missionary Magazine July 1888.*

*Reporting in the Baptist Mission Magazine of July 1888, Rev M.C. Mason, Rev E.G. Phillips and wife E.C. Bond writes:*

*“We had very good meeting at our Annual Association and work was laid out for the new year, so as to give us hope of more and better work than heretofore. There has been one new self-supporting church organized during the year and a Pastor was ordained for them at the time of our Association. The plan of giving one tenth of their harvest seems to be gaining favour. One poor man said that two years ago, in giving one tenth, he was able to give Rs. 2, this year Rs. 3, and he hoped that next year he could make it more.”*

*“Rev Ramke has been greatly bereaved in the loss of his children, but his faith is strong and his zeal unabated. On behalf of his children he has given Rs. 177-10-3 for the support of gospel preaching, while the church which he himself has served paid him Rs. 144 only.*

c) *Articles titled ‘Rev Ramke W. Momin’ and ‘Salje K. Sangma’ – by Prof L.D. Shira published in the Souvenir issued on the occasion of Centenary Celebration of Association No. 1 of the GBC.*

**AN APPEAL FOR CBCNEI'S NEEDS**

- \* Six book shelves each costing Rs. 7000 needed for rare documents and books at CBCNEI ARCHIVE.
- \* Four air-conditioners in guest house costing Rs. 30,000 each.
- \* The furniture of the guest house needs replacement. Costing Rs. 3,00,000
- \* Repair of mission compound roads estimated to cost around Rs. 7,00,000
- \* The boundary walls are falling. The repair would cost around Rs. 12,00,000

***[Your donations toward any of these needs will be acknowledged with gratitude. You may donate the above in honor of an individual/family name (partly or fully) which will be acknowledged by an inscription]***

### **A Visit of Students from Samford University**

Under the leadership of Dr. Kurt Selles, Director of Global Center, Samford University, USA; a team of 9 students and one faculty visited CBCNEL, Guwahati from Jan 1-3, 2010.



They were fascinated by the story of pioneer American missionaries who were instrumental in planting Churches, hospital institutions, and starting the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India. They worshipped at Guwahati Baptist Church on Sunday and visited Shatribari Mission Hospital. Dr. Kurt Selles ministered the Word of God in both places. They also visited various places including temples and the slum areas in the Guwahati city to study the life, culture, and religion of the locals.

### **Colgate University Team Visit**

A team of 13 students and a professor from Colgate University, Hamilton, New York came to visit places in Assam where their alumni like Rev. Miles Bronson, Rev. Pitt Holland Moore and others once worked as missionaries.



They visited places like Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, Nagaon Mission School, Nagaon and Tura to see the lasting impression and legacy left behind by their

predecessors.

During the visit to ETC the team leader Prof. John Carter was invited to speak in a seminar. The students also participated with various presentations on the life and work of the missionaries alumni. Besides, the students also had interaction with ETC students and participated in their activities like choir singing and sports. The team also visited Nagaon Mission School, Nagaon Baptist Church and cemetery to see the memorial of some of alumni missionaries. The team observed one minute silence surrounding the memorial.

The team also visited Satribari Christian Hospital and met with the staffs and students of the Nursing School who performed various cultural and traditional



dances for them.

Finally, the team visited Tura to see the works of their missionaries who came to Tura. Besides, the team also visited other religious places

like Khamakhya Temple, Basistha Temple, Kalakhetra, Umananda Temple and archaeological centre like the Guwahati museum. According to the students 'once-in-life-time' experiences like boat ride on Brahmaputra River and safari ride on elephant at Kaziranga National Park were breathlessly entertaining.

Altogether, the students thoroughly enjoyed their trip to Assam and Tura and expressed their desire to come back again in future.

### **NE CHURCHES CONSULTATION MEETING ON THE PLIGHT OF NE STUDENTS OF DELHI**



On Jan 22, various churches leaders and representatives met at CBCNEI, Mission Compound to deliberate on the issue of violent atrocities being perpetrated against North East students and employees in Delhi NCR and to show our solidarity with them. The members

present were from CBCNEI, Guwahati; Arch Diocese; Guwahati; PCI, Shillong; CNI, Guwahati; and Lutheran Church, NELC.

They discussed on various issues relating to the persisting problems and decided to take constructive steps to assist and find sustainable solution for the student community, NE Churches in Delhi. A series of actions were proposed. The members



present also strongly felt and affirmed that the problems being faced by our young people in Delhi need to be addressed at the earliest. Mr. Atungo Shitiri, Secretary, Justice and Peace Dept. CBCNEI, will coordinate the line of action.



*Baptist News*

## ***Baptist News***

A quarterly news letter of the COUNCIL OF BAPTIST CHURCHES  
IN NORTH EAST INDIA

**Please send your articles, letters  
and comments to us at either of  
the following addresses:**

Email: <ed itor@cbcnei.com>

Post:  
The Ed itor  
Baptist News  
CBCNEI, Panbazar  
Guwahati, Assam-781001, India

*Three best among the published articles will be awarded  
Rs. 500/-, Rs. 300/- & Rs. 100/-*

## The Rule of Law: Part I

- Atungo Shitri

Justice & Peace Secretary, CBCNEI

### INTRODUCTION

One argument commonly expressed is that no one is above the law and everyone is subject to rule of law in whatever form it is observed by the community. It may be a written law called positive law or an unwritten customary law or it may be derived from community's moral consciousness or derived from higher law called biblical laws. There is also a widely expressed opinion that where there is no rule of law there is anarchism and human rights violation is experienced at its worse.

Many have talked about rule of law in an open discourse and while many have written about it so this write-up is just to revisit the subject matter.

### CONCEPT

As LexisNexis puts it, the basic idea about rule of law is that no one is above the law. The most important application of the rule of law is the principle that governmental authority is legitimately exercised only in accordance with written and publicly disclosed laws adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedural steps known as due process. This principle is intended to safeguard against arbitrary governance. (LexisNexis)

### THE RULE OF LAW

This following portion of the write-up is an extract from an article written by Dr. L. J. Mark Cooray's titled, *The Rule of Law*. Dr Cooray is a significant Christian intellectual and a legal expert. He has also written many books where he explains key issues affecting contemporary Christianity and provides Biblical answers to discipling the nations to the glory of God. He has deeply impressed me as a Christian lawyer. He has created an impact on me for the fact that his writings have been quoted by the House of Lords, the Indian Supreme Court, the Sri Lankan High Court and Supreme Court and in the Parliament of Australia.

### ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The rule of law in its modern understanding and practice owes a great deal to the late Professor A.V. Dicey\*. Professor Dicey's writings about the rule of law have enduring significance in our present day democracy.

According to Professor Dicey, the essential characteristic of the rule of law

are:

I. The **supremacy of law** is an understanding that everyone is subject to the rule of law. This principle is a further development of the principle of equality before the law. Laws should not be made in respect of particular persons nor should it be too easily changeable. Stable laws are prerequisite of certainty and confidence which form an essential part of individual freedom and security. The rule of law ensures that individuals have a secure area of autonomy and have settled expectations by having their rights and duties pre-established and enforced by law.

II. A **concept of justice** has three facets - interpersonal adjudication, law based on fault and an emphasis on procedures.

First, the concept of justice is based upon the rights and duties of the individual person and is an interpersonal one-resolution of conflicts between individuals. Individuals can suffer or perpetrate wrong. Individuals can be punished, protected and granted restitution. Thus justice is an interpersonal thing. Second, the concept of justice is that a person should not be disadvantaged or punished except for fault like in the case of intentional, reckless or negligent wrong doing. Third, the concept of justice is the emphasis on procedures. Procedures provide limitations on power-before judicial, legislative or executive decisions are taken, a series of checks and balances are put in place to stop decisions that may be taken hastily, ill-conceived or based on corruption, passion or ideology.

III. **Restriction on the exercise of discretionary power** is the concept that those in authority do not go over-board in their exercise of allotted power. Discretions need to be exercised only on the basis of justice. An unfettered discretion creates an opportunity for temptation and for arbitrary, insolent, discriminatory, intrusive, socially engineering and corrupt, governance.

IV. The **doctrine of judicial precedent** is at the heart of the common law system (like the Indian legal system) of rights and duties. The courts are bound within prescribed limits by prior decisions of superior courts. Adherence to precedent helps achieve two objects of the legal order. First, it contributes to the maintenance of a regime of stable laws. This stability gives predictability to the law and affords a degree of security for individual rights. Second, it ensures that the law develops only in accordance with the changing perceptions of the community and therefore more accurately reflects

the morals and expectations of the community.

*\*Albert Venn Dicey (February 4, 1835 – April 7, 1922) was a British jurist and constitutional theorist.*

*To be continued in the next issue....*

\*\*\*\*\*

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**THE ABUSE OF SCRIPTURE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**  
**IN GENDER INEQUALITY**

[Dr. Manfred T. Brauch, former president and professor of biblical theology at Eastern Baptist (now Palmer) Theological Seminary, has recently published a book called “*Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible* (InterVarsity Press, 2009)”. In the paragraphs below, he briefly introduces us to several abusive readings of Scripture.

To abuse Scripture is to do violence to its message and meaning so that its redemptive truth regarding God’s intention for the absolute equality of men and women in all areas of human life is twisted and distorted.

One such abuse is “the abuse of selectivity.” This abuse does not consist of an outright distortion of the meaning of given texts, but entails ignoring or rejecting other parts or passages of Scripture that support a different teaching, present an alternate perspective, or advocate an opposing view. Thus, supporters of gender inequality claim the authority of biblical passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 or 1 Timothy 2:11-14, where the voice of women is restricted, but close their minds and hearts to the clear teaching or implication of biblical texts that show women as the first carriers of the good news of Jesus’ resurrection to his male disciples (Luke 24:1-11); as active participants in leadership in the early church (Rom. 16:1-7); as gifted by the Spirit for the authoritative proclamation of the Word of the Lord (Acts 2:17-18); and as partners with men in the work of the gospel (Phil. 4:2-3).

The “abuse of words” has contributed significantly to the perpetuation of gender inequality within Christian communities. This abuse happens when words or expressions in the biblical text are “decoded” in ways that are not faithful to the original “encoding” by the biblical authors. A clear example is the way in which the designation of the woman as man’s “helper” (Gen. 2:18, 20) is traditionally understood as “assistant” or “servant,” designating someone in a secondary, subordinate position. However the Hebrew word for “helper” (ezer) does not carry this meaning at all. The term is used throughout the Old Testament exclusively as a designation of God who upholds, redeems, strengthens, and rescues Israel. It is clear from these texts that God is not depicted as Israel’s “assistant.” Thus, the word “helper”—rather than indicating a

subordinate status—implies strength. In Genesis, woman is presented to the man redemptively, to save him from “aloneness.” She is “fit for him” (his partner). There is no hint of secondary or subordinate status.

“Theological contexts” are all too frequently abused in the interpretation of texts and this happens when the larger theological perspective of an extended passage (such as Eph. 5) is not considered in the interpretation of a specific text (such as Eph. 5:22-25). Ephesians 5:22-25 can be used to require the submission of wives only when the larger theological thrust of the entire chapter is ignored. Chapter 5 concerns an admonition to “be imitators of God” and to “live in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.” These passages celebrate Christ’s servanthood, which is the larger husbands and wives are to “give themselves over to one another in servant love.”

Several other abusive readings which lead to a patriarchal (over-under) understanding of the male-female relationship are the abuses of literary, historical, and cultural contexts. What I seek to show throughout my book is that the cumulative weight of these various abuses of Scripture are an offense to the God who created man and woman in his image; called them into equal and complementary partnership; and in Christ came to set them free from the cursed, demeaning, and lessening reality of hierarchical bondage. The continuing denial of this absolute, essential, and functional equality in large sectors of the Christian community worldwide continues to contribute to, abet, and reinforce the widespread abuse of women, and is therefore a major roadblock to the advance of the gospel.

[Source: <http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/abuse-scripture-part-i>]

*You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.*

*Psalms 119:4 (NIV)*

## **Christian Education Secretaries' Workshop**

**WHEN?** - From 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2010

**WHERE?** – At CBCNEI Conference Hall, Panbazar, Guwahati.

**WHAT IS TO BE DONE?** – Pray, Fill out the enclosed Registration Form and return the Same to the Finance Secretary, CBCNEI, Panbazar, Guwahati 781 001, come, attend the Workshop and be Blessed.

**Expected TIME OF ARRIVAL AT GUWAHATI** – 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 (Afternoon)

**Expected TIME OF DEPARTURE FROM GUWAHATI** – Afternoon of 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2010.

**WHAT TO BRING?** – REGISTRATION FEE OF Rs. 200/- per head & Holy Bible.

**WHAT TO EXPECT?** –

- i) REIMBURSEMENT OF ONE-WAY BUS/SUMO/AC III TIER TRAIN FARE & LOCAL CONVEYANCE CHARGES.
- ii) FREE LODGING AND FOOD FROM DINNER ON 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 UPTO LUNCH ON 18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2010.
- iii) A TIME OF INTERACTION, FELLOWSHIP AND SPIRITUAL PREPARATION.

<b>RESOURCE PERSONS</b>	<b>SESSIONS/TOPICS</b>
<b>1) Rev Dr. A.K. Lama</b> General Secretary CBCNEI	<b>LEADERSHIP QUALITIES MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>2) Rev Bendang Toshi Longkumer</b> CEEFI	<b>TEACHING METHODS</b>
<b>3) Dr. Asangla Ao</b> TLA Ministries	<b>COUNSELLING</b>
<b>4) Dr David R. Bess</b> USA	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SECRETARIES</b>

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## THE ROLE OF NATHAN BROWN IN ASSAMESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE



~ Aziz-ul Haque

Pastor, Guwahati Baptist Church

[azihaque@yahoo.co.in](mailto:azihaque@yahoo.co.in)

The activities of Christian missionaries in India are both appreciated and criticised. They are often accused of destroying the traditional culture of the native people. Whatever the criticism may be, the contributions of these missionaries cannot be overlooked.

Rev. Dr. Nathan Brown played a very significant role in the history of Assamese language and literature. Dr. Brown was born on June 22, 1807 in New Ipswich, New Hampshire, US. He graduated from Williams College in 1827 securing the highest position in the class. He married Eliza Ballard on May 5, 1830. For few years, he was the Associate Principal of the Bennington Seminary and editor of the weekly newspaper called *The Vermont Telegraph*. He attended Newton Theological Institute to prepare himself for missionary work and graduated in 1832.



Upon his graduation the American Baptist Missionary Union appointed him missionary to Myanmar in 1833. Having greatly contributed to the literary and spiritual life of the people in Myanmar within a short period of time, he headed for Assam upon the request of Captain Francis Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam. This request was made with the purpose to launch the Shan Mission and help the British administration to civilize the warrior tribes of Shan, Khamtis and Singphos. Dr. Brown and his associate Oliver Cutter carrying their printing machine sailed to Calcutta. After a stopover at Calcutta, they set out for Sadiya by river. After a long, tiresome and dangerous trip by a country boat on Brahmaputra river they finally reached Sadiya on March 23, 1836.

With the establishment of the first printing press in Assam, Dr. Brown's arrival ushered in a new literary development in the region. Due to inadequate assistance from the Mission and tribal aggression in Sadiya, Dr. Brown had to shift his base to Jaipur near Naharkatiya in 1839 and then to Sibsagar in 1843. He found Sibsagar to be the most suitable place for his missionary

work. Making his base on the bank of Dikhow river he worked until 1855. Towards the end of 1844, Dr. Brown travelled on foot from Sibsagar to Guwahati and visited many villages to study personally the characteristics of diverse cultural and racial elements of the local people. He along with two other missionaries, Miles Bronson and Cyrus Barker, organized and founded the first Baptist church at Panbazar in Guwahati on January 25, 1845. He also pioneered in establishing schools in different parts of the state. He established 14 Assamese medium schools in and around Sibsagar by 1846.

Dr. Brown was a linguist par excellence. He mastered the Assamese language within a short period of his arrival to Assam. He was so impressed by its open, agreeable vocalization, picturesque, Sanskrit characteristics, quaint inflections and idioms that it became native to him. He also contributed significantly in teaching, translating and preparing books in Assamese. He translated and published a catechism in Assamese. A good number of his translated hymns are still sung in many churches in Assam today. In 1848, he published Grammatical Notices of the Assamese Language which served as the first Assamese Grammar book. In the introductory of this book, he wrote, "For beauty and softness, the Assamese language is much superior to the Bengali", showing his keen love and appreciation of the language.

In his literary research, Dr. Brown found out that the Assamese Bible published by William Carey, which was in circulation at that time, was full of Bengali and Sanskrit terms and was idiomatically inadequate so he undertook to translate the Bible and published the New Testament into pure and simple Assamese in 1848. He was also a pioneer in writing schoolbooks. He wrote books on elementary arithmetic called *Pratham ganana*(1845), *Dutio ganana*(1855) and geography called *Bhugulor biboran*(1851) which were much superior to Bengali books used in the schools at that time. He translated John Bunyan's famous Pilgrims Progress into Assamese. his wife Eliza, opened boarding school for girls. She was also actively involved in literary work. She translated a dozen tracts into Assamese and wrote arithmetic and story books for children.

The *magnum opus* of Dr. Brown was *Orunodoi* means 'the dawn'. It was the first news magazine in Assamese published from Mission Press, Sibsagar, beginning from January 1846. Brown did the editorial work whereas Cutter was involved in printing and publishing the magazine. The magazine was devoted to Religion, Science, and General Intelligence, and was printed and published at the Sibsagar Mission Press by O.T.Cutter, for the American

Baptist Mission in Assam. The columns of the magazine brought various news from all corners of the globe. With illustrative articles on science, geography, astronomy, history and many other topics it soon found an encouraging readership among the Assamese intelligentsia and thereby paved the way for Assamese journalism. Many Assamese scholars like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baruah and Hemchandra Baruah also contributed articles in this magazine that became a launching pad in the struggle for restoration of Assamese language. Dr. Brown was the editor of this magazine until he left for US. After him, the magazine was in circulation with occasional breaks until 1880. Following the example of *Orunodoi*, several news papers and magazines were published in Assam in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prominent among these were *Asam Bilasini*, *Asam Darpan*, *Asam Bandhu*, *Asam Deepika*, *Jonaki* and *Assam News*. Dr. Brown also pioneered in unearthing old manuscripts and editing and publishing them. Under his able editorship, *Orunodoi* published history by bringing out the texts of old chronicles in properly edited form such as *Chutia Buranji*, *Purani Asom Buranji* and *Kamrupar Buranji*. Through his encouragement, some Assamese scholars published their books. Among these publications, *Kashinath Tamuly Phukan's Asom Buranji* (1842) and *Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's Asomia Lorar Mitro* (1849) and *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on Vernacular Education* (1855) printed at the Mission Press in Sibsagar are worth mentioning.

In 1836, the British rulers imposed Bengali as the court language as well as the medium of instruction in Assam. The justification of this imposition was that Assamese was thought to be a colloquial dialect and sub-language of Bengali. William Robinson, Inspector of Government schools, in his book *Grammar of the Assamese Language* published in 1837 stated that Assamese was identical with Bengali. Robinson asserted saying, "*Assamese was essentially the same as Bengali*". Therefore, his book could not be considered as the grammar of the Assamese language. Strangely, except a very few including *Anandaram Dehekial Phukan*, the Assamese people by and large did not protest this imposition. In contrast, Dr. Brown established that Assamese was widely understood vernacular in Assam and that it was a language distinct from Bengali. Moreover, in contrast to the government, the schools founded by him and other Baptist missionaries used Assamese as the medium of instruction. Taking the legacy of Dr. Brown, Miles Bronson

spearheaded the struggle for restoration of Assamese language until the battle was finally won in 1873.

Modern prose-style in Assamese literature to a great extent is credited to the work of Dr. Brown and other missionaries. The currently prevalent standard of Assamese has its roots in the language of Upper Assam, particularly of Sibsagar. Renowned Assamese littérateur Banikanta Kakoti notes, "*The missionaries made Sibsagar in Eastern Assam, the centre of their activities and used the dialect of Sibsagar for their literary purposes*". Since the initial printing and literary activity occurred in Upper Assam, this language was introduced in schools, courts and offices and thus came to be formally recognized as the Standard Assamese. Therefore the language which the missionaries mastered, used and promoted through their literary works became the standard language. Another well known Assamese literary figure Maheswar Neog states, "*...but now in contact with English speaking people Assamese developed modern prose-style; and this should perhaps be considered the greatest contribution of the Baptists to Assamese literature and culture. The everyday language of the people could now be the medium of literary expression, which now began to imbibe the qualities of English rhythm and syntax*". Language is the chief ingredient of culture. The missionaries, rather than threatening Assamese culture, liberalized and preserved it and helped in modernizing the language. Therefore, the historians have termed the era of American Baptist Missionaries as a period of 'cultural progress' in Assam.

Due to ill health and certain problems in Home Mission, Dr. Brown, after 20 years of successful service, finally left Assam on February 13, 1855 for US. His farewell note said, "*One of the hardest partings I ever experienced. If God in mercy restores my health so that I can again be useful, I will return and labour for them till life ends, with all my heart.*" Unfortunately, due to some unavoidable reasons he could not return to Assam, the land and the people that he so loved and cherished. He joined in anti slavery movement there. In 1872, he travelled to Japan where he was deeply involved in translating the Bible into Japanese.

Dr. Brown died on January 1, 1886 at Yokohama in Japan. He is remembered as a scholar, linguist and philologist of international repute. The people of Assam would ever remain greatly indebted to him for his unparalleled contributions to the Assamese language and literature at a very crucial time of its history.

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*Philippians 2:13 (NIV)*

## **History of Babupara Christian Hospital**

*- Contributors : Ms. Hepzibah Sangma & Dr. John R. Sangma*

Babupara Christian Hospital founded in February 1949 and started functioning in May 1949 as American Baptist Mission Dispensary, Nisangram was pioneered by Dr. E. S. Downs, an American Missionary, and Lt. Mr. Genaram A. Momin, a Garo Compounder. It started with just two rooms cottage type house and small almirah for medicine storage.



Initially the dispensary (now BCH) was run single-handedly by Lt. Mr. G. A. Momin for seventeen years from 1949 to 1966 with Dr. E. S. Downs visiting off and on and did Eye check-ups.

As population increased in the village the demand for health care services increased. Foreign missionaries from USA often visited BCH and took keen interest as Lt. Mr. G. A. Momin persuaded them for the needs for medical aid. As a result one building was constructed with three rooms and seven beds and was dedicated by Lt. Dr. Furnam, General Secretary of American Home Mission Board in February 1960. It served for stocking medicine, dressing and treatment of the patients.

List of workers and volunteers in chronological order:

1. Miss Ruth Menon & Miss Nodil K. Marak - December 1963, for ten days.
2. Lt. Dr. Alice Marak - January - May 1966.
3. Dr. C. T. Ao & Dr. Alangla Ao - 1966 for one month.
4. Lt. Mr. G. A. Momin retired in February 1966.

5. Lt. Mrs. Pisoni A. Sangma - Appointed in 1967 as incharge of the hospital without a doctor.

6. Dr. Curzon G. Momin - Appointed in 1968 as medical officer and worked from 1969 - 1970.

7. Mrs. Hingonbala Sangma (ANM) - Worked from 1983 - 1986.

8. Dr. Rosemarina Marak - Worked from 1993 to 1994. Dr. P. Rudra Tariang visited from time to time and checked the patients. Mrs. Emina Ch Momin was incharge of the hospital.

9. Dr. C. Lawrence, Dr. Lucita Momin, Dr. Kevi Angami & Dr. Takemba Ao - Worked in rotation during 1996 and 1997.

10. Dr. Sailendra Singh Massey - Worked from June - July 1999.

11. Dr. John Ritchi N. Sangma - An Eye Specialist from Satribari Christian Hospital was given the dual post of Medical Superintendent incharge of Babupara Christian Hospital and Ophthalmologist, Satribari Christian Hospital in 2008.

It may be remembered that though initially BCH was run without a full-time doctor or Medical Officer it served the needs of the people with much satisfaction. Since there was no delivery room and no light facilities in the dispensary, the Compounder had to conduct home deliveries.



Lt. Mr. G. A. Momin was reappointed just one year after his retirement by the *A.chik Baptist Dal.gipa Krima* (ABDK) Committee members. Dr. L. Norton and Dr. Dogdson, American Baptist Missionaries visited BCH with much interest. One Nurses quarter was constructed and finally inaugurated by Dr. E. S. Downs in January 1967 and it also was

their last mission trip to Nisangram before they left Garo Hills for home (America). The present hospital building was constructed and left half done for many years.

In 1978 BCH was closed down for sometime and the Committee members of the hospital kept it open just for basic health care. As public dissatisfaction grew, Mrs. Prekhilda W. Momin, ANM, was sent from Tura Christian to work



in 1980, at the hospital. She worked for one and half year. Dr. Crozier S. Sangma also worked for one year. BCH was again closed down for some time. In 1980 Lt. Mr. G. A. Momin was again called in to restart the medical service. The hospital was reopened in September 1980 and he worked till his death on April 25, 1990. During his service the hospital building was completed and inaugurated by Rev. Imotemjen Aier (Former General Secretary CBCNEI) in September 1983.

It will be good to mention here how the Eye Unit of the hospital came into service. Dr. John from Satribari Christian Hospital, Guwahati was approached by Dr. Ranjit Ratnaik, a medical practitioner from Adelaide, Australia with a purpose to set up an Eye Unit at Jorhat Christian Medical Centre. The required amount for the OPD Unit was sent to the CBCNEI from the Interlink Foundation, Australia. However, the proposed project could not be materialized as the project was found not feasible in Jorhat. Hence, CBCNEI decided to start the Eye Unit in Tura Christian Hospital.

Meantime, Dr. John also contacted the then Joint Director of Health Services of Meghalaya, Dr. J.V. Basaiawmoit, if any help could be rendered towards the setting up of the eye unit, to which Dr. Basaiawmoit happily agreed and she personally along with Dr. John came to Tura Christian Hospital to survey the site. However this attempt also failed as it was found not feasible due to the lack of an Eye Specialist to monitor the Unit. After much brainstorming Rev Dr. Ngul Khan Pau,

the then General Secretary, CBCNEI, Mr Rolland G. Momin, Treasurer, CBCNEI, and Dr. John jointly decided to set up the Eye Unit in Babupara Christian Hospital (BCH) one of the least known hospitals of the CBCNEI.

BCH is situated at Nisangram village, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya and it is about 120 kilometers from Guwahati. For nearly 10 years it has only one ANM Staff looking after the hospital as doctors do not stay for long period of time due to less pay structure and lack of basic amenities.

Besides BCH, there is a Mini Primary Health Centre in Damra, Assam with one MBBS Doctor and is about three kilometers away from the village. Another Primary Health Centre is in Dainadubi, Meghalaya, with two MBBS Doctors, one Dentist and one Ayurvedic Doctor and is about four kilometers away. There is one Civil Hospital in Goalpara, Assam which is about 50 kilometers away. There is another Civil Hospital in Willamnagar in Meghalaya which is about 80 kilometers away.

The villagers who come for treatment at BCH generally suffer from Malaria, Acute Gastroenteritis, Respiratory Tract Infections, skin diseases, Pyrexia of unknown origin and Hypertension.

Despite many difficulties, CBCNEI with support from the villagers decided to go forward and established the Eye Unit in BCH and Dr. John was entrusted to look after the project from Satribari Christian Hospital.

With the funds of Rs. Five lakhs from Interlink Foundation the OPD was inaugurated on the June 11, 2008.

With the available funds of Rs. Fourteen Lakhs Thirty Six Thousand from the National Program for Control of Blindness as promised by the Joint Director, Dr. J. V. Basaiawmoit, the construction of the operation theater was possible. On September 5, 2009 Mr. D. Vijay Kumar, the Deputy Commissioner, East Garo Hills, along with Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, General Secretary, CBCNEI inaugurated and dedicated the Operation Theatre respectively.

**Letters to the General Secretar, CBCNEI**

you have asked....

*Sir,*

*Greetings in the name of the Lord. I would like to seek an information which is suppose to clarify some of my confusions regarding two of these mentioned below:*

***Has there been any direction from the Council regarding the uniformity in naming the yourth fellowship of a church (for instance CYS or CYE etc..)***

***Also, if there is any direction that the pastor of a church should also remain as the advisor for the youth fellowship.***

*Your valuable information and advice regarding the above mentioned will be most valuable.*

*Sincerely,*

*Ninglan*

*P.O Box 164*

*Dimapur, Nagaland*

***The General Secretary writes....***

*Dear Ninglan,*

*Thanks for your email.*

*I am not aware of any direction from the Council. As you know, the Baptist Churches enjoy the autonomy to a great*

*extent. But you have drawn our attention to the issue that certainly needs discussion. Hopefully we shall move in a direction where we may come up with a paper that will suggest the benefit of certain uniformity in functioning in our Baptist Church. Hopefully, in the days to come the Council will be able to initiate a consultation where all the Baptist leaders from 6 conventions can address the practices that confuse our members.*

*Regarding the pastor being a youth advisor, it depends on the size of the church. The pastor certainly needs to keep in close touch with the youths as they are the future of the church; however, how he/she does shall depend on individual context. Some churches have fulltime youth pastor and youth Committee. It is very important for the youths in the church to feel that their pastor has special heart for them.*

*I hope my answer helps. God bless you.*

Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama

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Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? " declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:24 (NIV)

Please send your articles, letters and comments to us at either of the following addresses:

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## The Baptist News

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