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Baptist News

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Editorial



*Mr. Atungo Shitri
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Dear Fellow Co-workers in Christ!

It is with great joy we wish you shalom! It is time for us once again to share God's faithfulness in our ministries and thoughts about Church as unified Body of Christ.

Recently, I started to think about the theme, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism..." which is an extraction from Ephesians 4: *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all* and wanted to look from the perspective of unity of the church. *In this write up, I would like us to look at the church as a segment or group of people coming together to form a congregation.* I began by asking what is unity and why unity? Even without looking up the dictionary meaning of the word unity each of us may be able to define what it is! The simplest way is by looking at its antonym word disunity. Disunity means disagreement or state of difference of opinions, beliefs, practices etc.

The unity of the church can be challenged by various issues and circumstances. These issues may be over beliefs, practices,

or structural matters of the church building etc. We may pause and ask, are the issues crucial to the very existence of the church? Are they overtly important that they are not to be ignored?

Unity in the context of the church is often talked about when there is an apparent disunity among members or groups of persons over certain issues. The gravity of these issues determine the intensity of the conflict and hence the disunity. And disunity if not settled in time leads to the separation, the cause “irreconcilable difference”.

Thinking of the importance of the church unity I started to read the scripture portions on church as a body of Christ and Christian articles from various magazines and I stumble upon this article —written by Peter Cordle in the Grace Magazine, *Who is Right? A Parable on Church Unity*, (www.gracemagazine.org.uk) and was impressed by what he wrote about *why church unity* and I want to share it with you all. In the article he wrote, “Once upon a time there were two Reformed Baptist churches at opposite ends of the country. They were very similar. Both believed, loved, and taught the doctrines of grace. Both were involved in gospel outreach. One was led by a pastor with a team of elders, the other by a pastor and deacons. We shall call these the leadership teams. Mr. X was a member at one church and Mr. Y at the other. Both were godly men who cared deeply about God’s honor, truth, and cause. One summer holiday they both happened to read a biography about George Whitefield, and were horrified to understand more fully the violent opposition of John Wesley to some of the precious doctrines of grace. They could hardly believe the vitriolic way in which John Wesley denounced parts of God’s truth. They were reminded of how

close John was to his brother Charles. Quite independently they both concluded that it was wrong for their church to sing hymns by Charles Wesley. They could both see that an important point of truth was at stake. Not to deal with this issue would be the beginning of a slippery downward slope in which standards would be increasingly compromised. They were both sure they were right. They were sure others would agree with them.

On his return from holiday Mr. X shared his new conviction with some close friends in the church. After much discussion some of them strongly agreed with Mr. X. During this time Mr. X became more and more concerned about the wrongfulness of singing Charles Wesley's hymns. He stopped singing these hymns whenever they were chosen at chapel. His personal quiet time often became dominated by this issue.

Eventually he went to the leadership team, explained his grave concern, and asked them to agree not to sing Charles Wesley's hymns at chapel. After prayerful consideration this request was rejected. Mr Black was very upset about this and felt he was being attacked. However, he was encouraged by two Bible verses: No weapon formed against you shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17) and Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

He therefore raised the matter at the next church meeting. He got some support. However, the church endorsed the view of the leadership team. Mr. X found he could no longer profit from the ministry and shortly afterwards he and some of his close friends left the church. He was sad but thankful because he believed he had pleased God by doing what he could to promote righteousness.

Mr. Y took a different course. On his return from holiday he

prayed over his concern. He felt that concern continuing, so therefore decided to raise the matter as soon as possible with the leadership team and before speaking to anyone else about it. During this time he heard a sermon from I Peter 5:5 - Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility.

Mr. Y went to a great deal of trouble to explain his view as clearly as possible to the leadership team. However they rejected his request to stop singing Charles Wesley's hymns. They pointed out that the hymns of Charles Wesley that they sang were all truthful on points of Christian doctrine and experience. Mr. Y was initially very upset, but he unreservedly accepted the decision, put the issue out of his mind and continued his active service in the church. True, there were some occasions when singing a hymn by Charles Wesley that his mind would go back to that summer holiday and what happened afterwards. However, he was helped to focus his mind on three things:

(1) It was possible that he was wrong. No Christian is perfect. Nothing erroneous or unbiblical was actually being sung in the worship life of the church. The leadership team were godly men who had come to a careful and prayerful decision. In that decision they had sought to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of his Church and to the Bible as the Word of God. They had sought the leading of the Holy Spirit as to what was the right thing for their church at its particular stage of development. They had sought to submit to one another in the fear of the Lord.

(2) Even if he was right, he had adequately discharged his responsibility. At that great and awesome Judgment Day he would be free of any failure (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). The

leadership teams were accountable to God for giving a lead to the church. If they had got it wrong then they, not he, would be responsible. He had fully discharged his responsibility by raising the issue with the leadership team as clearly as he could, and then cheerfully and unreservedly submitting to their decision.

(3) Even if the leadership team had made the wrong decision, he could rest content that God will ensure that Jesus gets all the glory that is His due. God's ultimate purposes can never be thwarted. Nothing can rob God of His glory."

What about us? Our issue may be different. Is it the choice of a different Bible version; or a new hymnbook; or singing hymns by a particular author; or some other proposed change to present church practice? Or should contemporary instruments be used in Sunday morning devotion? We long to see God mightily at work, converting unbelievers, building up his people. These blessings only come in the context of church unity (Psalm 133). Church unity requires effort - Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). That effort includes mutual submission (1 Peter 5:5). There are issues on which true Christians will come to different conclusions as to what is the right thing for a particular local church.

When did we last cheerfully submit to something in church life that was strongly contrary to our personal convictions or preferences? Who is right: Mr. X or Mr. Y? Which one will we be?





Role of the Church in Peacemaking in the Society

Dr. Leban Serto

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The church as the body of Christ is endowed with leadership according to the Holy Spirit; it must impart leadership of gifting, and authority affirmed by the body rather than achieved by vocation, education or election. To recognize the boundaries of pastor and leadership roles, to encourage service by spiritual gifting and interdependent, collaborative team efforts rather than autocratic fiat or democratic autonomy should be emphasized by every church.

Reaching out to Community

The church must fervently endeavour to recover community renouncing the widespread cultural syncretism of individualism and autonomy and replace it with redemptive community

where God inhabits with His people; and works in spatial ways to love, heal, forgive, encourage, and grow a community of believers with the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit guiding the people to be His witnesses.

Restoring Holiness

The church must restore its holiness where God will actively transform His people to people of character and to form a community of called-out, called especially who would embody the truth.

Spiritual Gifts

The church must revive, exercise and reaffirm the authority of spiritual gifts, every member serving by gifting the Holy Spirit according, to his 'measure of faith'.

Genuine Confession

The church must be a

confessional community; to be a community of forgiven saints gathered around a common confession of sin and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. By confessing sin, the truthfulness of forgiveness manifests; in proclaiming Christ, we describe a specific kind of people, separated unto Christ, living in a world formed by the power of His resurrection. In confession the church embodies a living, sustaining reality, a commitment to a special way, truth and life.

Reclaiming the Scripture

The church must feed upon the scriptures as its rightful place as the historical, life-giving description of what it means to follow Christ truthfully. Reclaiming the scriptures as the transforming revelation of God's salvation history, where truth and rightful authority are borne out in a way of life. Scripture offers a new reality based upon the specific history of Gods called-out people, transformed by the power

and wisdom of the resurrected Christ.

Re-establish Witness

The church must be a living witness to the world, a people truly separate, demonstrating salvation, justification and sanctification as a life journey not an event alone; a way of life, not a status achieved. The church must be a "life space evangelism" to put salvation on display through the active life and authentic word of distinctly Christian character and community.

Every church a peace church

We are all sinners and have fallen short of the glory of God. The conflicts in our churches and violence in our communities all trace their causes to our selfishness but the scripture calls us to be a redemptive Community seeking the Lordship of Christ and redeem our lives and community.

For the church to be true peacemakers, we must repent and reaffirm the role of the church as stated

above so that we can be instruments for His glory, reaching out to heal, reconstruct, reconcile lives and those who are torn asunder. Peace is the fruit of God's spirit formed in a biblical community. Making peace is the result of God's people being claimed by and putting into practice the Gospel story. Reconciliation is a way of life that claims our personal and private

lives; it will affect our marriage and our single lives, the way we raise children and express our fellowship. It will affect how we worship. The church just after Pentecost comprised the people who constantly submitted to God's Word, His spirit and each other (Acts 2). This is the fellowship that must be restored for the church to be redemptive and alive.



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The Path toward Unity in Christ

(A bible study on Col 1:24-29)

Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama
[General Secretary, CBCNEI]

I. Introduction:

The Church of Jesus Christ has been under attacks on unity ever since it is born. St Paul has addressed this issue in most of his letters. Let us consider his letter to the church at Colossae. Let us read **Colossian 1:1-29**. Colossae was about 100 miles east of Ephesus and 12 miles away from Laodicea and Hierapolis. It was located in the Lycus valley. Epaphras, the church planter and a disciple of Paul from Ephesus, visited the city and then went to Rome to meet Paul (**Acts 28:30**). He brought some good as well as bad report. This initiated Paul to write this letter sometime during AD 60-62. Paul had never

visited the city (**1:7; 2:1; 4:12**) but he wrote to them (**4:18**) as if he has been their pastor for a long time. The church at Colossae was a believing community. Paul called them as *holy and faithful brothers* (sisters included) *in Christ* (**1:2**). He thanked God for their *faith and love* which sprang from their heavenly hope in Christ (**1:3-5**). He acknowledged that the gospel is growing and bearing fruit among them (**1:6**). Yet the church at Colossae was not a perfect church. It had problem. Some commentators name the problem as *Colossian Heresy* but I would like to differ from them. The problem mentioned in the

text is neither unique to Colossae nor it is of a heresy. I believe that it is a problem of any young immature church. It is a pandemic problem, rampant even in our times. A little deeper reflection shall enable us to find our own churches deep into it. It is a problem that compromised the primacy of the core values of christian belief. When any teachings, theological debates, arguments, religious practices undermine Jesus Christ and his two great commandments on love, they are likely to cause a serious threat to the church.

Indeed, the problem of the church at Colosse was of serious nature. The proponents of this new ideology were trying to win converts to their school of religious preferences.

* They were stressing the

“Christians are so aggressive in converting others that they don’t even spare their own.”

need for observing some Jewish Laws and ceremonies (**2:11-12, 16-17**).

* They were laying emphasis on some special or deeper knowledge (*gnosis*).

* They were promoting the need of angels as mediators to God. (**2:18-19**)

* They were exclusivist. They believed in the special privilege and “perfection” of those select few who belonged to these philosophical elite (**2:8, 18-19, 23**).

Many immature new converts would become victim of their trap, because their teachings, humanly speaking, had three attractive elements.

1. They had fine sounding arguments (**2:4**)

No matter how sound the argument may be if it is done at the expense of unity

and love, it is not worth. Paul wrote to Timothy; *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work— which is by faith.* ⁵ *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* (1 Tim 1:3-5)

2. They followed the human traditions and the basic principles of the world (2:8, 20-23).

The emphasis was on religious practices, such as circumcision which was already part of their cultural tradition. Hence it was convincing to them.

3. They followed certain religious practices, rituals, festivals, popular celebrations (New Moon or Sabbath Day), practice of

piety, humility, worship of angels, ecstatic spiritual experiences (contemporary worship/seeker sensitive worship). These practices had visible impact on others. And they could meet the needs of human sensuality. Paul considered them wrong for two reasons:

A. They undermined supremacy and sufficiency of Christ (1:15-19; 2:9-12); the

headship of Christ (2:8), and the finality of the work and the authority of Christ (2:20-23).

B. They made one self-absorbed rather than Christ absorbed. They promoted human traditions and the basic principles of the world (2:8). People were judged on the basis of externals and one's human ability to practice religion (2:16-17). These practices encouraged sensual indulgence (2:23).

On the contrary, the followers of Jesus Christ

were expected to put to death their earthly nature on a daily basis (3:5-10). Paul feared that these practices would lead the church astray from the simplicity of the faith and obedience in Jesus Christ. Whether the teachers and proponents of these were sincerely ignorant or carnally motivated, it was sure that they would cause confusion and division in the church.

As the General Secretary of 7000 Baptist Churches, I often face challenges from within. It is sad to notice that some Baptist Churches from a Baptist Conventions in Manipur have changed their affiliation to another protestant denomination within NCCI family. For last twenty years, several Baptist churches have switched their affiliations to other protestant churches in Assam, Aruanchal, and Karbi Anglong. Whatever the cause may be, we fail to reflect the unity of Christ by

switching from one denomination to another. Some rejoice in gaining more membership while others become bitter as they lose their members.

Commenting on such happenings, one of the critics from other faith said, "Christians are so aggressive in converting others that they don't even spare their own."

Unfortunately, there are some engaged in the so called mission at the expense of unity. The high priestly prayer of our Lord does not hold any importance to them.

In a problematic situation like ours is there any hope? What should be our attitude? What should be our strategy? What is the road map in the Bible? What was Paul's response for such a threatening situation?

A. The First Response: Pray for Virtuous Life

Paul responded it with **Prayer**. We read them in

1:10-12.

The **first solution** of the problem in the mind of Paul was **prayer** for Colossians; *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

Paul prayed for five things, that

— *they may live a life worthy of the Lord*

— *they may please him in every way*

— *they shall bear fruit in every good work*

— *they shall grow in the knowledge of God*

— *they shall have great endurance and patience*

These five are the precursors for unity in Christ I wonder, how many times we pray like Paul. Our prayers are often about activities, achievements, and mission adventures, rather than our life, our ways, our fruits, our knowledge of God, our endurance, and patience with each other.

The churches across the globe and especially the young churches need continuous prayer support. Those who are saved also need to be continuously saved so that they shall be finally be saved. We, the Baptist, believe that once saved is saved for ever and that is biblically correct, but that is only a half truth. We are saved once for all from the penalty of sin only, but we need to continuously be saved from the “power of sin”, so that we shall be saved from the very “presence of sin” on the last

day. We need prayers for continued salvation. Jesus taught us to pray: *Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*

What is the second response of Paul for the problem impending disunity at Colossae?

B. The Second Response: Preach and Teach the Mystery of our Unity in Christ

Paul took the believers at Colossae back to the Bible. He told them about Jesus Christ once again. That Jesus is the supreme and the sufficient. We think that all Christians know about Christ but that is not entirely correct. Paul mentioned explicitly about the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ:

Notice **1:15-20**;

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Paul believed in the sufficiency of Christ so much that he goes on to say in verse **24**:

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you

I must admit that I have often become cynical about the chronic problems of disunity among Christians and I begin researching for new insight, new idea, new methodology of Church

management and administration etc., but Paul corrects me when I read **1:24**.

Paul still rejoiced in the work of Christ. He was hopeful and positive. He rejoiced in what was suffered by Christ for the Colossians, because he believed in the efficacious work of Christ.

Jesus Christ suffered for us individually as well as for the corporate church, the believers at Colossae, the body of Christ in Colossae and in the world.

Paul rejoiced in the fact that the suffering of Christ is not just *an ordinary suffering*. Jesus Christ is not just any sufferer or one among many, but **the suffering** that sets humanity free from the clutches of sin. In other words, Christ's suffering

* has released us from the dominion of the power of darkness (**1:13**).

* has given us the

redemption and forgiveness of sins (**1:14**), and now we are members of the family of God.

* has reconciled us as the community of believers in God. Once we were alienated from God and in our mind we were enemies of God (**1:21**), but now we are members of one family.

The finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross has the power to bring necessary transformation in us.

Because Christ's death is sufficient and in Him all our needs are met, we do not need to look at anything beyond and outside Jesus Christ. We do not have to run away from each other in search of our "needs" or run against one another to meet our need. But we can rest in Christ together in spite of our differences. We can become one in Christ if we choose to simply focus on Christ alone.

Paul saw Jesus Christ as the mystery of God revealed.

Only by understanding this mystery, the divided humanity shall find their unity. Paul considered himself as an appointed servant (**1:23, 25**) of this mystery. He saw himself as commissioned by God (**1:25**) for the task to present Jesus Christ, the Word of God in its fullness—the mystery revealed, to counter the divisive teachings that germinate in soils of ignorance.

According to him, the antidote to the confusing division in the church is the Word of Christ. The Word of God in its fullness is the *mystery* revealed in Christ. And this mystery is the key to the unity of not only churches but all humankind. What is this mystery? The Greek word *mysterion* simply means *hidden thing*. In its usage, in Paul's time, the word *mysterion* meant secret religious matter confided only to the initiated, or entrusted to the select

and not meant for the ordinary. The *mysterion* is *not obvious to the understanding* of the common. It is hidden from the ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly. In our context it is not yet plain to many immature believers. Our ministry is to make it plain to them.

The word *mysterion* appears fifteen times in Paul's writing (**Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Co. 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3f, 6, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26f; 2:2; 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:16**), seven times in Ephesians and **four times in Colossian**. The context of all the references is God's plan of reconciling all nations to himself. The mystery was hidden but it is now made known in and through Christ. That in Christ, Gentiles are also included. God has now removed all barriers. God wants to bring all humanity under Christ.

St. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth:

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸
All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:17-19)

Paul was precise in **3:11**. He wrote, *Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

This *mystery* was kept hidden for ages but now God has chosen to reveal it to his saints, who are not only Jews but also Gentiles. (**1:26-27**) They are from all the nations. They all belong to Christ. It might have been upsetting news for the Jews in the first century. It may be upsetting for some so called exclusivist, holier than thou,

sheep stealing groups coming from the churches of our time.

According to Paul, the glorious riches of the *mystery* are found in Christ himself. This Christ, who is the supreme and sufficient, is the hope of glory. R. Lucas wrote:

This 'mystery' is nothing more nor less than the gospel of Christ: and it is brought to people not by semi-secret rites but by public proclamation. The power of its ministries lies in their work of instruction, correction and training. It is true that this 'mystery' involves a satisfying and present experience for the heart (Christ in you) but its glory lies in its gift of hope for the future (verse 27). Its benefits are not for some believers, a spiritual elite, but for everyone in Christ (verse 28)

— R Lucas (p.69) in *The Message of Colossians and Philemon*, IVP

Paul wanted all believers to understand this *mystery*. He required them to comprehend the implications of the sufferings of Christ, grow in maturity, and be united to each other in love. And thus, enjoy the fullness of Christ. In fact, the fullness of Christ in us requires us to die in Christ so that we may fully unite to Christ and hence unite to all his followers. Paul was forthright about it in the following three passages:

1. Notice 3:3-4

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

2. Notice 3: 11

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

3. Notice 3:15-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Hence the solution is in Jesus Christ alone. Christ's suffering is efficacious and sufficient. The Colossian do not need anything more. No new philosophy, new religious experience, new theological debate, or new denominations. They need Christ only. Neither I, nor you need anything more. All that we have, we must bring them under the headship of Jesus Christ. He is the Supreme and the Sufficient. And as we bring to the

headship of Christ, we must be willing to suffer for this cause. Therefore, Paul's third response to the evil attack on unity of the Church was his willingness to suffer for Christ.

C. The Third Response: Willing to Suffer

Then, he said, *I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions.*

What is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions?

Obviously, Paul having so clearly presented the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ, did not mean that there was something lacking in the vicarious and atoning death of Christ that he could complement by his human effort.

Rather, may be Paul could perceive and see in regard to Christ's afflictions in his own life, in the life of the believers at Colossae, and in our life.

Regarding Paul, God spoke to Ananias, *"I will show him how much he must suffer for*

my name." (**Acts 9:16**) At the same time, Paul had great ambition to know the fellowship of sharing in Christ's suffering (**Phil 3:10**). In fact, he commended Philippians, *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him* (**Phil 1:29**).

The believers in Colossae lacked the deeper understanding of the event, or implications of Christ's afflictions in their life. For the sake of the body of Christ, the Church, which is young, immature, confused, misled, and at the verge of being fragmented, Paul wanted to do all that he could do with his flesh in order to make all believers comprehend it. Perhaps, this is why he wrote, *I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions.*

It is much harder to keep the church faithful to the simple gospel of Jesus Christ and to

apply the implication of believing in the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ. Our Churches need constant reminder. They need to be told that *In Christ the fullness of Godhead is dwelt. He is the mystery unfolded. His commands are simple. We are called to deny ourselves and walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.*

Therefore, Paul said, *for the sake of his body, which is Church*

I have become its servant . . . (1:25)

I labor struggling (1:29)

I am struggling for you and for those at Laodoea (2:1)

Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (4:4)

Paul had become a servant. He labored and struggled because he wanted the body of Christ to attain the perfection in Christ.

In **1:28**, Paul wrote, *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may*

present everyone perfect in Christ. For Paul, the maturity in Christ was unity in love with the fullness of enrichment in Christ—a state in which the Church might fully actualize the hidden treasure of wisdom and knowledge of knowing Christ. It is one thing to know Christ and be theologically well informed, but it is another thing to know Christ and live with the wisdom of Christ. Unfortunately, we tend to major on the theological knowledge these days. However, *theologia* (knowledge) without *sapientia* (wisdom) will not produce good fruit for the Church. In **2:2-3**, Paul wrote: *My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom*

and knowledge.

To that END, to that GOAL, he said, I LABOR, or I am working hard like a daily wager.

If the agents of disunity work so persistently to induce division in the body of Christ, how much more the agents of reconciliation must work harder. It is easier to destroy than to build it up.

On the one hand, we are constantly under the attack by the things that undermine the simplicity of faith in Jesus Christ. Attractions such as:

- * the glamorous riches of the world that has entered into Christian world
- * the power of media and technologies
- * the impressive skills and devices of the secular knowledge,
- * the fine sounding theological debates

On the other hand, our shallow knowledge of Christ

can fragment us into religious groups who are at odds against each other. We shall be unable to realize the fullness of the richness in Christ that is found when we are united in Love (2:2-3).

Conclusion: So like Paul, it is our turn now:

First to Pray consistently for the virtuous life of the followers of Jesus Christ

Second to Preach and Teach the Mystery of our Unity in Christ

Third be Willing to Suffer for Christ

And as we are willing to suffer for Christ,

1. We must labor struggling with all his energy to help the Church grow mature.
2. We must make the Word of God known in its fullness.
3. We must help the Churches to focus on the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ

Let us refrain from any teaching that causes disunity. No matter how

sound they may be, it is not worth when our Lord's Prayer urges for love and unity. Let us not emphasize any religious rituals, practices, spiritual disciplines of piety that makes one self-absorbed undermining the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ. Let us major on the major teachings of Jesus Christ and not get distracted by petty small religious practices and theological preferences.

4. We must teach them to put to death their self and put on Christ on a daily basis.

5. We must encourage them to seek peace. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matt 5:9).*

6. We must guide them to seek the wisdom of Christ and obey.

7. We must teach them to pursue unity in divine unconditional love for enrichment in Christ for that is the hope of the glory for all humanity.

Prayer:

Almighty God! please help us to live a life worthy of you, enable us to honor you in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in your knowledge and wisdom, having great endurance and patience with one another, living as one family, witnessing one Gospel, representing one Church, and serving one another and serving the one and the only Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

[Adapted from the paper presented by Dr. A. K. Lama in the NCCI Integral Mission Seminar in June 2011, the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Unity, July 2011, and an article published in the Baptist New Issue 62/ volume 01 2011]





DOCTORS WANTED

- * Doctors both MD and MBBS are required.
- * Invitation for the Professionals who aspire to work in Mission Hospital.
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Post vacant at the following Hospitals:

- √ Kangpokpi Christian Hospital
- √ Tura Christian Hospital
- √ Impur Christian Hospital
- √ Jorhat Christian Medical Centre
- √ Babupara Christian Hospital

Contact immediately:
Mr. Lokho Mao (Medical Secretary)
eMail: nlmao@cbcnei.com



COUNCIL OF BAPTIST CHURCHES IN NORTHEAST INDIA
PANBAZAR, GUWAHTI, ASSAM - 781001

Maintaining the Unity of the Church

Rev. Zhabu Terhuja
[President, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat]



While on an off-station trip, a call came asking me to write simple-reading few paragraphs on the subject stated above. Therefore, following are the splash of few thoughts gathered on a jotter. Without getting into explanation about local church, denominational church, or universal church, let us straight away hold our discussion on the church as the Body of Jesus Christ. During the early church in Jerusalem, there were only two main people groups; the Jews and the Greeks. But today, ethnic groups from different cultural backgrounds live together. Then church groups are gradually increasing. In fact, it is painful to see that in a small colony, people belonging to the same tribe are unable to worship together. It is indeed proper

to ponder on what the Scripture says about unity of the Body of Christ

A Picture from the Old Testament

King Solomon recognized that heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain the great God, and much less is the Temple he had built (2Chr 6:18). Yet, in the Old Testament times, God gave detail instruction as to how the Temple was to be built. The people were made to understand that God can be worshipped in that house. In fact, subsequent to the prayer of King Solomon, God said, "My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to prayer made in this place." (2Chr 7:15). Temple means the abode of God. Therefore, destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem was a great disgrace to the Jews before other nations. Both

Jews and Samaritans took great pride in their Temples. While the Jews had their Temple in Jerusalem, Samaritans had their Temple on Mount Gerizim.

New Shift in the New Testament Time

In the coming of Jesus, a radically new order took place. In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said, "The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father." (Joh 4:21). In the OT times, the Temple was the axis of spiritual activities of the people. But now, the shift is on to the community of all those who are washed in the blood of Jesus as a Body of which Christ himself is the head (Acts 20:28). God the Holy Spirit is everywhere with the people of God, because Jesus said, "Lo, I shall be with you till the end of the ages." Construction of worship building still continues, but the main intent of God now is to let His people declare the

Kingdom of God in the world. From the OT Temple, Jesus has sent his people into the world. Temple alone is no more the abode of God, but the people of God are.

Some years ago, church growth was a subject that attracted lots of attention. But now, church health has become an important topic. Just like a human being physically growing with many ailments, a church could be growing even though it is not very healthy. Therefore, pastors must examine their congregations to see how healthy they are. Certainly in a healthy church, members shall remain united through thick and thin.

Unity of the Body of Christ (I Cor 12 & Eph 4)

When we are made one in Christ, why is there disunity among members in the Body? The early church went off so smoothly and powerfully. But when it comes to Acts chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira became dishonest to the

Holy Spirit. In chapter 6 Hellenists and the Jews got divided. There is a human nature of sin that is so difficult to die. Dissension shows a picture of tearing apart the body of Christ. Because of division, Paul called members of the Corinthian church carnal. Self-assertion, cultural diversities, tribal feelings, envy, comparative and competitive spirit, and many others can easily keep us divided.

How to maintain unity of the church? There shall be hundred ways to keep the unity of the church according to different situations and circumstances. We cannot go into detail, but let us draw a point or two from 1 Corinthian 12. Describing the unity of the Body of Christ, the chapter uses again and again words such as 'same', 'all', 'every', 'each', and 'one'. In order to maintain unity, Paul calls upon his readers to recognize the diversities. It

means you cannot expect the other member to be just like you. If all members happened to be same the fellowship would become very monotonous. What Paul says is to accept what gift you have and appreciate the gifts in others. Diversity is a celebration if seen in the right perspective. Problem begins when some roles or figures or opinions become too dominant so that other reasonable ideas are ignored.

If we look at the writing of Paul, the most honored parts of the body, the Church, are not the head or the hands, which lead and control. The most important parts are the least presentable parts. That's the mystery of the church. Very often, the least presentable parts are ignored. This allows formation of various cliques within the congregation. When the church becomes irrelevant for the poor, the poor become irrelevant to the church, and they venture

out to other places to find satisfaction.

The church is holy, but tainted. It shall become perfect on the day the Bridegroom returns. Until then, sometime the church can hurt. Someone may say, "I love Jesus, but I hate the church". But this is wrong. One cannot love Jesus while hating his Body.

In Ephesians 4, Paul cites four temperaments in keeping unity of the Body. Let me mention two: lowliness and meekness. These do not mean weakness but elimination of self-assertion. Once we try to assert ourselves, it pushes others off. Paul lists again 7

unities. These are what we have in common which should bind us together.

When we say unity of the Body, that Body crosses over local church or Association boundaries. It even crosses beyond our denominational confines and traditions. Therefore, there is no reason that one tradition should despise the other. "There are diversities of gifts, but the *same* Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the *same* Lord. There are diversities of activities (different styles of doing the same job), but it is the *same* God who works all in all (1Cor 12:4-6)."



We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.

Benjamin Franklin

Biblical Approach to Conflict Resolution

Source: Peacemaker Ministries 2590 Holman Ave Suite A Billings, MT 59102
Website: <http://www.peacemaker.net>

Contributed by Mr. Atungo Shitri, Secretary, Justice & Peace Ministries

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Matt 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal 5:19-26). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4).

Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to responding to conflict according to the following principles.

Glorify God

Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will

rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love, as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil 4:2-9; Col 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12).

Get the Log Out of Your Eye

Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any

attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Prov. 28:13; Matt 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9).

Gently Restore

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Prov. 19:11; Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; James 5:9).

Go and Be Reconciled

Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving

others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matt 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4).

Seven A's of Confession

Matt 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13

ADDRESS everyone involved

AVOID if, but, and maybe

ADMIT specifically

ACKNOWLEDGE the hurt

ACCEPT the

consequences

ALTER your behaviour

ASK for forgiveness

Four Promises of

Forgiveness

Matt 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32

I will not dwell on this incident

I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.

I will not talk to others about this incident

I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Pause Principle of Negotiating

Phil 2:3-4; Matt 7:12

Prepare

Affirm relationships

Understand interests

Search for creative solutions

Evaluate options objectively and reasonably

Principles in Reconciling Broken Unity

PRINCIPLE #1: When the Holy Spirit points out and/or reminds you there is an offense between you and another, even while in the process of worshiping, you must stop and go and do all you Biblically can to be reconciled to that person first, then return to worship. *Matthew 5:23-24.*

PRINCIPLE #2: When error or sin is perceived, it is a Christians' responsibility of love to act. God commands it! *Matthew 18:15, Luke 17:3, Galatians 6:1, 1Timothy 5:19-20.*

PRINCIPLE #3: When a believer knows of a Christian's errors, sins, even if it's a personal offense, it's the responsibility of the one

who knows and has been unsuccessful in accomplishing repentance and reconciliation (Step 1 of Matthew 18), to take two or three witnesses and confront the erring Christian a second time. Matthew 18:16.

PRINCIPLE #4: When repentance and reconciliation are not achieved at Steps 1 and 2 of Matthew 18, it is the responsibility of the individual and the witnesses to tell it to the church. Matthew 18:17.

PRINCIPLE #5: Christ promises us that where there are issues that require the completion of Matthew 18:15-17, and a least two are there for HIM and HIS purposes, that HE will be there to help with the process and the decisions. In effect, helping those involved find HIS answers in a process designed to restore Christian community. ALL issues can be resolved by using the Scriptures. Those seeking

help with reconciliation are to submit to any Biblical resolution exercising Hebrews 13.

Unmet Desires and the Slippery Slope of Conflict

Harmful conflict is usually triggered by unmet desires. *"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it"* (James 4:1-2). Even good desires can evolve into controlling demands or idols that lead us to judge others and then avoid or punish them until we get what we want (see Luke 10:38-42). This progression often starts with minor differences, but before we know it we're sliding down a slippery slope of conflict that can drop off in two directions.

Escape Responses

People tend to use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding unpleasant people or situations than in resolving differences.

DENIAL-One way to escape from a conflict is to pretend that a problem does not exist. Another way is to refuse to do what should be done to resolve a conflict properly. These responses bring only temporary relief and usually make matters worse (see 1 Sam. 2:22-25).

FLIGHT-Another way to escape from a conflict is to run away. This may take the form of pulling away from a relationship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, or changing churches. Flight may be legitimate in extreme circumstances (see 1 Sam. 19:9-10), but in most cases it only postpones a proper solution to a problem.

SUICIDE-When people lose all hope of resolving a conflict, they may seek to escape from the situation (or make a desperate cry for help) by attempting to take their own lives (see 1 Sam. 31:4). Suicide is never a right way to deal with conflict.

Attack Responses

People tend to use attack

responses when they are more interested in controlling others and getting their way than in preserving a relationship.

ASSAULT—Some people try to overcome an opponent by using various forms of force or intimidation, such as verbal attacks (including gossip and slander), physical violence, or efforts to damage a person financially or professionally (see Acts 6:8-15). Such conduct always makes conflict worse.

LITIGATION—Although some conflicts may legitimately be taken before a civil judge (see Acts 24:1-26:32; Rom. 13:1-5), lawsuits usually damage relationships, diminish our Christian witness, and often fail to achieve complete justice. This is why Christians are commanded to make every effort to settle their differences within the church rather than in the civil courts (see 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Matt 5:25-26).

MURDER—In extreme cases,

people may be so desperate to win a dispute that they will try to kill those who oppose them (see Acts 7:54-58).

While most people would not actually kill someone, we still stand guilty of murder in God's eyes when we harbor anger or contempt in our hearts toward others (see 1 John 3:15; Matt 5:21-22).

Gospel—the key to peace

The key to changing the way we deal with conflict is the gospel, the good news that God has made peace with us and between us by sending his Son to die for our sins and give us new life through his resurrection (Col. 1:19-20). When we trust in Jesus Christ, God forgives all our sins and begins to transform our desires and character so that we can break free from the habit of escaping from conflict or attacking others (Ezek. 36:25-27). As Jesus' character grows in us, we can progressively mature into peacemakers who delight in bringing glory to

God by imitating his reconciling love (see Exod. 34:5-7; Col. 3:12-15).

Personal Peacemaking

There are three biblical ways to resolve conflicts personally and privately, just between you and the other party.

OVERLOOK AN OFFENSE-

Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly overlooking an offense. *"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense"* (Prov. 19:11). Overlooking an offense is a form of forgiveness, and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

RECONCILIATION-If an offense is too serious to overlook or has damaged our relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. *"[If] your brother has something against you...go*

and be reconciled" (Matt. 5:23-24). *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently"* (Gal. 6:1; see Matt. 18:15). *"Forgive as the Lord forgave you"* (Col. 3:13).

NEGOTIATION—Even if we successfully resolve relational issues, we may still need to work through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which you and the other person seek to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of each side. *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"* (Phil. 2:4).

Assisted Peacemaking

When a dispute cannot be resolved personally, God calls us to seek assistance from other believers.

MEDIATION- If two people cannot reach an agreement in private, they should ask one or more objective

outside people to meet with them to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. *"If he will not listen [to you], take one or two others along"* (Matt. 18:16). The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but the parties retain the responsibility of making the final decision on how to resolve their differences. ARBITRATION- When you and an opponent cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a material issue, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to your arguments and render a binding decision to settle the issue. *"If you have*

disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church" (1 Cor. 6:4). ACCOUNTABILITY-If a person who professes to be a Christian wanders from the Lord by refusing to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands church leaders to lovingly intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. *"If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not ... go to look for the one that wandered off? ... If he refuses to listen ..., tell it to the church"* (Matt. 18:12, 17).



Unity to be real must stand the severest strain without breaking.

Woodrow T. Wilson

A PROFILE OF IEM

IEM is an organization working in partnership with CBCNEI since an MOU was signed in December 2008.

Full name: Indian Evangelical Mission

Founder and Year: (Late) Rev. Theodore William, on January 15, 1965

What is it? An interdenominational, indigenous missionary organization.

Vision: The Gospel to every person and Church among every people group.

Serves in: A cross-cultural context in 23 in India and in 5 other countries among 70 people groups with 630 workers.

Two objectives:

- Reaching the unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- To challenge Indian Churches to involve in world evangelism.

Ministries: Evangelism and Church planting, Bible Translation and Literacy work, Medical Ministry and community Health work, Short term Bible School, Tribal Hostel Ministry, Radio Ministry, Missionary Training, Developing Local Leaders, Member Care, Motivating Local Churches for missions.

Strategy: Working together in partnership with others through memorandum of understanding.

Contact: Rev. B. Chin Lamthang, State Secretary, IEM, for Assam. H/No.15, Byelane-1, Jayanagar Road, Six mile, near NRL Petrol Pump, Guwahati – 781022, Assam, Mob: 099540-70567 (email. chinlamthang@rediffmail.com)



INDIAN EVANGELICAL MISSION

GOALS

1. The Gospel to every person
2. A Church among every people group

OBJECTIVES

1. Field Ministry : Reaching the Unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Church Ministry : To challenge Indian Churches to get involved in world Evangelism



News Capsule

Silver Jubilee Celebration of Rongmei Naga Baptist Churches Association, Tamenglong (Dec 9-11):

Under the leadership of Rev T. P. Mordecai, the Executive Secretary of RNBA; the leaders, the youths, and the families of RNBA marked the 25th years of accomplishment in a grandeur manner. Several past leaders of RNBA were honored and felicitated for their sacrificial contribution. The youths who had returned home early just for this occasion gave their best in making this event very colourful. Many members of the RNBA from far places came to Tamenglong town just to participate in it. The leaders were very appreciative of the government as they had postponed the Orange Festival to help RNBA celebrate this occasion in a big manner. Rev. Dr. W.

Konghar and Dr. A. K. Lama ministered the Word of God on this special occasion.



The Centenary Celebration at Talloi Baptist Church, (Dec 17-18):

Over a thousand members and visitors from all over India and abroad gathered in Talloi for two days to celebrate the 100th years of rich legacy of the Talloi Baptist Church. Family members, relatives, and students who had come



home for Christmas vacation made the occasion a memorable for the whole village. It was a time of reunion and reminiscing the old memories. Besides community feasts, there were many cultural and recreational programs that made the celebration colourful. Rev. Dr. W. Konghar, the General Secretary, brought the greetings on behalf of Manipur Baptist Convention. Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, Rev. Bucky and Carole Sydnore were the resource persons. In the midst of celebration, the church had a wonderful time of revival.



of the affiliated seminary of CBCNEI. Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama and family joined the TTC Principal, the faculty and their families in Kaziranga for two days staff retreat. It was a good time for physical, mental, and spiritual renewal. Though brief yet it was refreshing time for all.



Christmas at Tezu Baptist Church:

Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama and his family joined their home church at Tezu Baptist Church. This is the mother church of Lohit Mishami Baptist Churches Association, established in early 1950. In spite of arrival of Gospel for more than 50 years in the district



Trinity Theological College Faculty Retreat, Kaziranga (Dec 13-14):

Rev. Dr. Kavito Zhimo is the principal of TTC which is located in Dimapur. It is one



there are less than ten churches in the whole districts. Pray for the ministry of the Word of God in Lohit and Anjaw district



New Year at Meka Model Church:

Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama and his family celebrated the New Year at the Meka Model



Village Church in Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh. He was able to visit with some of the leaders of the Dibang Lohit Baptist Churches Association and encourage them.



The Annual Conference of Mao Baptist Churches Association (Jan 6-8):

Mao Baptists from all over the northeast gathered in Podunamei Baptist Church for the Annual Conference. In spite of the cold weather there were more than five hundred delegates. The theme of the Conference was *You shall be my Witness* (Acts 1:8). Rev. Dr. A. K.



the Langham Preaching Seminars for 53 pastors, leaders, and Christian workers from all over northeast India in CBCNEI Guwahati. Two participants from

Lama preached daily twice to challenge the delegates for evangelistic life style. In a meeting during the conference, Rev. S. K. Hokey, who served the association for ten years, and other secretaries who had completed the term was given very warm farewell. A team of new leadership was installed.

Nepal and one from West Bengal also joined. Dr. Paul Windsor, Rev. Dr. Geoff New, and Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama were the resource persons. The



program was fully sponsored by Langham Preaching Ministry, London.



Langham Preaching Seminar (Jan 8-12):

Dr. Asangla Ao coordinated the first and second level of



Nagaland Police Baptist Churches Association Annual Conference, Chumukedima (Jan 14 - 15):

The NPBCA is a unique association under NBCC which caters the need of police force and their family members. The Conference was hosted by Chumukedima Police Baptist Church and hundreds of delegates including few top officials of Nagaland Police attended the conference. Rev. T. Narola brought the greeting from NBCC and Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama ministered the Word of God. Please pray for the leadership of Rev. Dr. Mong Lotha, the Executive Secretary of NPBCA as the ministry among police is very challenging.



The Annual Conference of Itanagar Baptist Churches Circle (Jan 20-22):

Nine churches around the capital city of Itanagar came together to have an annual revival conference. There were more than 235 participants. Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama ministered the Word of God. There is growing hunger for the Word of God. Pastor Loma reports that on average Sunday, the attendance is continuously growing big. They are in desperate need of expanding the Church.



The Pastors Training of the Wancho Baptist Churches Association, Longding (Jan 25-26):

More than fifty pastors came from all over districts of Longding with an eager desire to learn how to be a good pastor. Most of them had never been to seminary and many of those who had gone to seminary



Wangsu, the Executive Secretary of WBCA visited the Nokte Baptist Churches Association office. Nokte region is the mission field of the Ao Baptist

feel inadequate in the areas of practical ministry. Practical talks such as how to lead a Church, provide member care, manage finance, prepare sermons, and train deacons were taught. Dr. Jolly Rimai and Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama were the resource persons. The program was organized in partnership with the Transforming Leaders in Asia, CBCNEI and WBA.

Churches Association, Impur for more than 15 years. Mr. Chuba Ozukum, the Field Director, his wife and their team would deeply appreciate your fervent prayers for them.



Visit to Nokte Baptist Churches Association (Jan 27):

Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, Dr. Jolly Rimai, and Rev. Noktham



News updates from Assam Baptist Convention:

Greetings from Assam Baptist Convention! We praise God for His faithfulness in all our conducted programs and in the upcoming programs too. Continue to pray with us for the upcoming programs.

Programs Highlights at Glance (January to March):

1. January 13th -15th: Annual House Church gathering.
2. January 13th -26th: General Secretary Visit to South Africa Johannesburg and Durban. Visited number of Churches and spoke several times. Promises of partnership with ABC.

3. United Baptist Churches Association, Goalpara *District* Pastors Training from 27 -29th January'2012.
4. Annual meeting of all 5 Associations of ABC conducted successfully.
5. ABC Mission consultation Jorhat February 16th -18th '2012 .New targets set forth to cover unreached villages in Assam.
6. Nagaland Mission Movement Consultation with Assam Baptist Convention, Dimapur February'2012.
7. Managing Committee meeting of Nagaong Mission High School and Christian High School in March'2012.
8. Pray for ongoing court cases in Nagaong. May the



Baptist News, January - March 2012

lord intervene and settle the cases.

9. Assam Baptist Convention, Women Department annual meeting in Khoontai Baptist Church, Sibsagar District from 16th - 18th March'2012.

10. Assam Baptist Convention, youth and Sunday school department annual meeting in Panikhuwa Baptist Church, Tinsukia district from 23^d - 25th March'2012.

11. Assam Baptist Convention 45th Annual Meeting from 30th March -1st April '2012 at Lumding Baptist Church Nagaon district

12. Annual meeting of United Baptist Churches

Association from 13th -15th April'2012.



News Update from Arunachal Baptist Church Council:

Ollo Baptist Churches Association (OBICA) was formed and inaugurated on 19th February, 2012. Mission Centre at Rapsa, P.O. Laju, District Tirap, A.P. Ollo people are in Tirap District. They also started Rapsa English School at the Mission Centre. Mr. Phawang Lowang (President) and Mr. T. Yangvok (Executive Secretary). ZBCC is working with them in the school and



in evangelism. Pray for God's blessings on their endeavor for the Lord.

Annual General Meeting:

ABCC Annual General Meeting is scheduled from April 13 - 15, 2012 at Galo Baptist Church Council, Basar. Rev. Dr. Hevukhu Achumi, Director, Sumi Baptist Convention will be the main speaker and Rev. Banbo Pertin and Rev. Halli Likha will lead Bible studies. Please pray for God's blessings and guidance.



Seminar on Religious Freedom at Guwahati:

On December 5, 2012, the Secretary Justice and Peace Ministries of the Council attended a seminar organized by the All India Christian Council for Church leaders at Christ Church, Panbazar Guwahati as a resource person. He spoke on the subject of religious

right under international and Constitutional law of India. He said that India being a signatory of International Convention on Civil and Political Rights have the obligation to protect the individual rights of religious freedom. He also said that the religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution of India gives every religious adherent right to profess, propagate and practice his/her religion without any hindrance from the state and/or by its subjects. However, he warned them that it is not an absolute right because the provision is subject to public peace, health etc. The seminar was encouraging one as many participants positively remark the content



of the discussion and accepted their role and responsibilities as law abiding citizens of India while carrying out the charge of the Great Commission.



**Interfaith Advance
Christmas Program:**

With a view to share the Love of God in Christ Jesus with other religious groups and work towards peace building and religious harmony the Assam Baptist Convention with financial assistance from Justice and Peace Ministries of the CBCNEI organized an advance Christmas Programme involving Inter-Religious heads Leaders and District Administration of Golaghat on 13th December'2011. The programme was



conducted in the District Library and it was well attended by many invitees. The Deputy Commissioner, Golaghat on the occasion of Christmas wished a very Happy Christmas to all the invitees.

The programme was also addressed by the other Religious Head. It was the first of its kind. A skit on nativity was presented by Sacred Heart Sisters and Students. The General Secretary of ABC brought a short Christmas message.



**Peace Education
Workshop at Eastern
Theological College:**

On 27th January 2012, the Justice and Peace Ministries of the CBCNEI organized a workshop on Peace Education at Eastern Theological College where 64 final year students from M.Th. and B.D attended. The resource persons Rev. Dr. Daniel Buttry, BIM Global Consultant and

Dr. Leban Serto, Lecturer, MLCU spoke on experiential education in the peacemaking ministry, and the impact of globalization on the NE states in the area of peacemaking respectively. The participants expressed their desire and the need for peace education for the church leaders and peacemaking ministry in the local churches. The faculty of ETC and the resource persons had a meeting after the workshop and made a resolution that the College program committee will make an effort to include peace education subject in the course study and work on the curriculum and start the program in the coming semester. Dr. Leban Serto will facilitate in the curriculum building; Dr. Daniel will assist in training programs and the Secretary will work on the financial need and study material and adjunct teaching faculty with Dr. Razou.



The purpose/goal of the study and course is to advance interdisciplinary knowledge and academic research on the conditions of peace and the causes of war and violence in all their manifestations. To also inculcate the teaching of Christ and peacemaking as one of the important components of theological studies in North East India in the present century. The course will focus on enrichment of the content of theological studies to give some practical skills relating to conflict resolution and peace building mechanism which would enhance their understanding and leadership qualities as leader of communities and pastoring in churches.



Workshop on FCRA Rules and Direct Taxation (Feb1-2):

With the growing need to know about the changes in FCRA and DT rules by the government of India, the CBCNEI hosted a Workshop



for the member Conventions, Associations, and Churches. Others Baptist members were also welcomed. 38 participants attended the program. Mr. Manoj Fogla was the resource person. All participants highly appreciated for the initiative taken by CBCNEI and urged the CBCNEI leaders to have more of such workshop in future

Mission Consultation of ABC: The Assam Baptist Convention churches have started mission work in their own capacity. Therefore, there was the need to help them streamline the mission

work. In regard to this, the Assam Baptist Convention in Partnership with CBCNEI organized a Mission Consultation for church leaders on 16 to 18th

February'12 at ETC Jorhat. Around sixty church leaders attended the consultation. A follow up program of series of consultations have been proposed for ABC



Associations and church leaders.



Seminar at Amri Karbi Association:

On 25 February 2012, the Justice and Peace Secretary of the Council attended a seminar organized by the Amri Karbi Association at its Samota Pathar (Lalmati) Sonapur mission compound for the Churches leaders as a resource person. The Secretary spoke on the Constitutional rights of the citizen involving religious freedom-The religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution of India gives every religious adherent right to profess, propagate and practice his/her religion without any hindrance from the state and/or by its subjects. However, he warned them that it is not an absolute right because the provision is subject to public peace, health etc. He also said that India being a signatory of International Convention on Civil and Political Rights have the obligation to

protect the individual rights of religious freedom.

The seminar was encouraging one as many participants positively remark the content of the discussion and accepted their role and responsibilities as law abiding citizens of India while carrying out the charge of the Great Commission.



KABC Annual Conference:

In the annual gathering of Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (March 9-11), held at Belapara Baptist Church, over a thousand members gathered. Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai, Rev. Taku Longkumer and Rev. Athang



Sebu were the main speakers. In a special meeting, Rev. Athang Sebu, Mr. Anderson Tokbi, and Ms. Rojoni Kropi were given farewell. Rev. Davidson Ingti was installed as the new General Secretary.



Mr. Luke Rongphar shall be the new Mission Secretary and Ms. Esther Rani Rongpipi shall be the new women secretary.



Pastors Conference:

59 Pastors stayed four and half days learning how to preach, how to disciples, and how to lead the Church for global mission. Rev. Jeremy Griem, Rev Dr. Gary Harvey, Rev Chris Horton, Mr. Greg Olexa, and Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama were the resource persons. Seventeen pastors were from Mumbai. The program was fully sponsored by TLA ministries. Dr. Asangla and Mrs. Boinu Singson coordinated the program.

In the evaluation session, most Pastors were very grateful for the program. They told that they have not attended such an excellent program before. They requested for more of such trainings in the days to come.



Sunday School Teachers Training:

53 Sunday school teachers came to learn how to be an effective Sunday School teachers. The program was organized in partnership with CBM, New Zealand, and fully sponsored by CBCNEI. The resource persons were Mrs. Evangeline Odyou, Ms. Binu P. Sinha, and Ms. Moalem Aier. Mrs. Boinu



Baptist Church, Halflong. Rev. Dr. A.K. Lama and Rev. Taku Longkumer were the resource persons. Over 130 leaders participated in the Seminar.

Singson co-ordinated the program. The teachers enjoyed and requested for more programs of this kind.



Mission Consultation for ABCC:

A two-day mission consultation was conducted for the Association leaders of ABCC on 28-29th March '12 at CBCNEI Conference Center. Topics such as; 1. Integral Mission, 2. Mission Project Planning, 3. Mission Strategy, were discussed in the consultation. Many Association leaders attended



Mission Leaders' Seminar at KABC:

On the Theme "The Heartbeat of God" (Mt9:36), the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention in partnership with CBCNEI Mission Department, conducted a Mission Leaders Seminar on 24-25th March 2012 at Town



**CBCNEI INVITES APPLICATIONS FROM BONAFIDE CANDIDATE
FOR THE FOLLOWING VACANCIES:**

Vacancy	Qualification	Requirements	Last Date
Assistant Director, CLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Graduate. * MBA * At least 3 years Experience in Literature Business. * Age: 35 - 45 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Character Certificate from the pastor. * Recommendation from the Convention Leader. * Health Certificate * Copies of all Educational Certificates. * Recommendation from previous employer. 	Before May 31, 2012
Office Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * At least 5 years of Work Experience as a Manager * Age: 30 - 45 years 	Same as above	Before May 31, 2012
IT Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Graduate * At least 2 years of Work Experience in IT Management * Knowledge of graphic designing, Pagemaker, PP Presentation and Excel * Age: 25 - 35 years 	Same as above	Before May 31, 2012
Driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Class X * At least 2 years of Experience of driving * Age: 20 - 30 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Same as above * Driving Licence * Bachelor 	Before May 31, 2012



the program, and we were blessed through the program. Through this consultation Recommendations were sent to the Executive Council of ABCC for furthering of God's Mission in Arunachal Pradesh.



Pillangkatta Baptist Church Mission News

Pillangkatta, a small Garo village is located in the outskirts of Guwahati city on the border area between Assam and Meghalaya States and about 15 kilometers from Panbazar CBCNEI campus. According to the history, it was started as a small Christian Fellowship in 1957. One of Founders, Shri

Welson J. Sangma is still alive. After his retirement from CBCNEI, Rev. Dr. L.J. Sangma moved in and settled down there in 1999. Then, the congregation was

about 130 members only. However, the church began to grow and expanded twice during the last ten years. On 29th October, 2000, it was established as 'One Congregation' – One Church basis and affiliated to the Kamrup Asomia Baptist Sobha.

The Pillangkatta Baptist Church is now 54 years old. On 16th August, 2011, Rev. Kullendra Marak was appointed as the first evangelist especially for the non- Garo Communities, living in and around Pillangkatta.

Rev. Marak served as Executive Secretary of Kamrup Baptist Sobha for thirty one years. After his retirement from the Sobha,

he served as Chaplain of the Satribari Christian Hospital for three years on a contract basis and later helped in the Mission work of the Pillangkatta Baptist Church. Within a very short span of time, the Almighty God tremendously blessed the hard work of Rev. Marak. On Sunday, 4th December, 2011, fourteen people were baptized from both Garo and non- Garo community.

Fourteen couples, who were living together as husband and wife were also registered and issued a Marriage Certificates under the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1972; and officially declared as husband and wife.

Please remember this small Church in your prayers for the success of her mission so that many more will be added to this Church membership.



New Development of CBCNEI campus

With the growing need for accomodation for conferences and training programmes, the council has started the construction of a dormetory adjacent to the New Block building. The



building is expected to complete by September 2012.

The water tank of the mission compound has also been renovated.



C o n g r a t u l a t i o n !

Ms. Boinu Singson, Program Co-ordinator of CBCNEI and Mr. Jonathan Jamir were united together in a holy matrimony on December 28, 2011.

The staff of CBCNEI wishes them happiness and blessings as they start their new life together.

O B I T U A R Y

1. Dr. A. Hrasel, Former, Medical Superintendent of Kangpokpi Christian Hospital expired on 12th October 2011.
2. Rev. Ngaranmi Risom, Former Mission Secretary, MBC expired on 9th January 2012 (TBCA).
3. R.A. Kaping, MRNBA, Former Secretary, T. Khullen Baptist Church 1st May 2011.
4. Ws. Benjamin, Former Pastor Katomei, Baptist Church expired on 28th May 2011.
5. L. Karaiba, Former Council President, Lairou Baptist Church, expired on 10th August 2011.
6. Mr. WL. Daniel, Former President of ANBA and former Pastor of Hnatham Baptist Church expired on 23rd May 2011.

Change of Leadership in the Manipur Baptist Convention(MBC)

1. Honorary Officers (Newly elected):
 - a. Rev. Longam Chara : President
 - b. Rev. D. Lulun : Vice President
 - c. Miss Ayai : Clerk
 - d. Mr. W. Angkhul : Joint clerk
 - e. Member Atlarge : Mr. Salomon Chingkhai,
Dr. S. Singsit
 - f. Rev.L.Simon Raomai : Necrologist

2. Mao Baptist Churches Association (MBCA):
 - a. Executive Secretary : Rev. K. Koda
 - b. Youth Secretary : Mr. H. Chakho
 - c. Women Secretary : Mrs. Chisa
 - d. Mission Secretary : Mr. S. Chiluyio
 - e. Finance Secretary : Mr. N. Loli

3. Lamkang Naga Baptist Association (LNBA):

Mr. Kumar Khular : Executive Secretary

4. Chothe Baptist Churches Association (ChBCA):

Hranum Kiang : Executive Secretary

5. Maring Naga Baptist Association (MNBA):

W. Angkhul Makunga : Mission Secretary

6. Liangmei Naga Baptist Association (LNBA(M)):

M. Digombou : Mission Secretary



A Reflection from the desk of the General Secretary

Most Baptist Churches in the northeast region are very mission minded. A good portion of their income goes for evangelism and church planting. We might have more than two thousand missionaries and evangelists working cross-culturally. In fact, it is difficult to know the exact number of missionaries as most churches engage in missions independently without networking with their association or convention. Henceforth, the Council has begun a special effort to streamline the mission works of our churches.

In this connection, I was visiting a town where the local convention had organized a seminar on

Mission. I was expected to speak on the theme: *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*, a very familiar text taken from **Matt 9:37**. As soon as I entered the town, I began asking for direction to the church. To my discouragement, everyone whom I asked did not know the location of the church. In fact, some even did not know what the word church meant. I had to rephrase and ask them—*where is the Christian temple?* They knew about Hindu temple and Muslim Mosque not about *Christian temple*. Christians in that town have been existing since long and I wondered why they were so obscure and unknown to the people. Of course, the reason might be because

they have been a minority group. I also wondered if this is true in other cities where our presence is not even felt by the people from other faith. So the question is how can we become known to our neighbours even though we are a minority group?

As I was pondering I felt that the Lord was prompting me to speak not from **Matt 9: 37** but **Matt 9:26**, which reads: *And this news went out into all that land.* In fact it's an obscure text but it raises questions to reflect upon. So when the seminar began, I read **Matt 9:26**: *And this news went out into all that land* and then I asked: *what was the news that went into all that land?* In other words, what was the news about Jesus that in just three years, he had become so popular that the crowd thronged around him? Why it became good news for the common people?

There were more than 60 leaders present in the

seminar and they replied rightly that the good news was about healing, touching the lepers, caring for the poor and feeding them even when it seemed very costly affair to one of the apostles. It was about his amazing teaching and of course his radical life style of sitting and connecting with the

“Has the church, the so called the Body of Christ, herself has become an obstacle in the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ?”

Samaritans, the tax collectors, the prostitutes and of course the “Aam Addami”. He treated them all with love and offered them the gift of salvation.

In fact, at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus outlined the focus of his ministry, his manifesto: ***the blind receive sight, the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised up; and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*** (Luke 9:22) Today, as the body of Christ, what

is our manifesto? What is the focus of our ministry? Are they similar to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? After all we are the body of Jesus Christ and we are expected to carry out his manifesto.

Yes we must carry out the Great Commission of Matt 28:19-20. We must go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that he has commanded. But we are also expected to be his **witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8)**.

We are expected to carry out the compassionate ministry of charity beginning in our town. We must take care of our neighborhood first and foremost then only the crowd will come to us. Only then they would know that we exist in the town. Only then people will know that there is a balm in the Gilead and a Savior who can save sinners. The lamp must

be kept on the height to dispel the darkness. Obscurity whether in humility or timidity is not an option.

I am concerned as I see the parochial and inward swelling of our Churches, Associations, and Conventions. Our needs have become enormous. We need staffs, support staffs, modern gadgets, equipment, vehicles, building, training centers, colleges and universities. They may be genuine and I do not have problem with all these expansionism. What concerns me is the focus of the financial budgets of most churches which reflect very little concerns for their neighborhood they are living in: What percentage of the total income is allocated for the benevolence, compassionate ministry of charity in the neighborhood? I have rarely heard of activities that engage churches in the social services or social reforming activities of our

community. Even if there are they are not significant enough to make us popular in the town.

The Body of Christ, the local church, has grown so big like an institution that she herself needs the major portion of her resources just for the Sunday worship. A local church seems to spend 80% of its income on itself. Has the church, the so called the Body of Christ, herself has become an obstacle in the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ? I raise this question to myself for my reflection. As a church do we need to reflect on our activities in our neighborhood?

On the one hand, we have the challenge to correct the perception of people from other faith who think that Christians are only interested in conversion. We all know that there are powerful organized forces that are systematically engaged in trying to promote this false

perception. On the other hand, we have the challenge to transform the believers in the pew for whom attending worship on Sunday is the only religious engagement. How can we help our lay members to carry out the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ? How can we help them to be the radical reformer that engages with the society to bring transformation in it?

I believe that if someone who was born 2000 years ago in a lowly family of a carpenter can dare to do it then most members of the churches today are, in fact, well equipped to emulate him. Once we follow the footsteps of our Master, the good news will spread and a stranger will have no difficulty in finding the direction to any local Church.

May God help us! Amen.



A Note of Appreciation from CBCNEI

The Council is grateful to all the donors for their sacrificial contribution towards the ministry of CBCNEI during the period Oct 2011- March 2012. We pray that the Lord continues to bless you and your ministry abundantly so that the Word is preached, un-reached are reached to the Kingdom of God. Praise the Lord!

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