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

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## **Editorial: In All that We Do**

In all that we do, we must do it in love. God is God of love. Christ loved us while we were yet sinners He gave His life, His blood and His body on the cross. So we can rest assure this that God is the God of love and we need to be rooted and grounded in love in all that we do. Being rooted and grounded in love means loving God with all our heart, loving our fellow saints with all our strength and loving our fellow humans with all our minds and ability. Let all that you do be done in love (1 Cor. 16:14).

In this issue we will be reading about, "Being Rooted and Ground in Love" which is the theme of CBCNEI for the coming year 2015. It includes an article on love by Rosemary Mattingley. She defines love and offered some techniques of loving people and said the suggested techniques help prepare our minds and being to open our hearts to love. It includes a Bible Study on the theme, "*Celebrating the Past, Envisioning the Future*" based on Rev. 21:1-3 *New Heaven and New Earth* by the Rev. Dr. Pratap Chandra Gine, presented during the India Mission Summit (IMS) held in Kohima from October 2-5, 2014 in commemoration of the 200 Anniversary of the International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches and 175 years of mission partnership and existence of the Baptists in India. It also includes panel presentation on the,

“21<sup>st</sup> century India Megatrends” by the Rev. Dr. Vason Thampu during the Summit in which he mentioned that to face the present megatrends today the church needs to integrate hearing and doing; live the Kingdom culture here on earth and beyond; and cultivate the culture of love that will transcend the dualistic worldview and return to creativity or wholeness. Our mission task is not to fight or eradicate the trends, mega or micro of the world. It is to establish the mega-trend of God. Love is the foremost resource for this mission task. It also includes the sermon preached by the Rev Dr A. K. Lama on the last service of the IMS on the theme, *“Envisioning the Future”* in which he focuses three biblical aspects of the future—the hope of the future, the reality of the future and the preparation of the future. The issue also includes number of news updates and activity reports of CBCNEI.

I believe that this Issue of Baptist News will enrich all our readers. Through the Baptist News, we desire to connect Baptist family with one other. It will happen when Churches, Associations, Convention would begin sharing their news and pictures with the editorial team. We also desire to encourage our members to think, reflect, articulate their Christian views, write, and publish.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Blessings

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi

# BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE

(Eph. 3:17)



*Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI*

*Eph. 3:14-19 “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

Verse 17 says, *“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love...”* The theme of CBCNEI for this next year is on *“being rooted and grounded in love.”* God is a God of love. Christ loved us while we were yet sinners. He gave his life, his blood and his body on the Cross at Calvary. So we can rest assure this that God is the God of love and we need to be rooted and grounded in love in all that we do.

Today we are living in a world where there’s a lot of hatred. There’s a lot of anger. Anger is everywhere because of corruption, discrimination and injustices. But what we need to remember is that the Bible says anger rests in the bosom of fools. We must know and believe that God is not the author of confusion. He’s the author of our Salvation. Remember that

God is a God of love. We are living in a critical time today where human lives have no value and respect. In Matt 24:12 *“and because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.”* Sometimes we get to look at all the bad things that are going on in this world and it can make our love grow cold. But we need to be rooted and grounded in love. If we want to act in our anger then we are acting like the devil. If we want to hate somebody, we can’t be a child of God.

2 Tim. 3:2 *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves...”* We’re living in a time where everybody wants to put themselves first. But what did Jesus do? He came to give his life for us on the cross of Calvary. The Bible says He was made lower than the angels. Christ didn’t come to be number one. He came to be the least. But we want to be number one. If you have the love of God being rooted and grounded in you, you’ll put everybody else before you. You’ll do unto others as you’d have them do unto you. Our churches and Christians today need some love. There’s nothing any better than to tell somebody that you love them and you’re praying for them.

2 Tim. 3:4 *“...men will be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”* God needs to be first and everything else needs to be last. A lot of people say they have the love of God. How do they know if you don’t show it to them? The Bible says not to just love in word or tongue but let us also love in deed and in truth. God loves us and wants us to express the love that he gives us to others. We need to possess his love and express his love.

*First*, we need to love Him. You’ll find in Matt. 22:37 *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* If we love him, we ought to show it to somebody else. There are a lot of people who say they love God and then they don’t act like it. People don’t love God like they used to. If they did, they’d love the Lord’s house, they’d love the Lord’s people and those who have not come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We love him because he first loved us. I found out this in Prov. 8:17 *“I love*

*them that love me.*” The more you show your love to him, the more he’ll show his love to you. There are a lot of people that have been transformed by the Grace of God but they don’t have any love toward the Lord. The Bible says that if you love the Lord you’ll keep his commandments. What is his second greatest commandment? Love thy neighbor as thyself. You can’t love God and hate everybody else around you. The implication of this statement is that we find who our neighbor is and according to the parable of the Good Samaritan, our neighbors are the people who desperately need our help and support.

*Second*, we need to love the Saints. There are so many churches today that have split because of the anger and people not loving one another. There are associations and conventions that have been divided due to pride and misunderstanding. It doesn’t matter what they do, you still have to love them. If you love God, you’ll love the saints. You get those people who say, “Sir, they made me mad.” It’s okay to be mad. It’s okay to be angry. But the Bible says to be angry and sin not. Don’t you take your anger in the Spirit and let it come out in the flesh and become the will of the devil. Heb. 13:1 says “*Let brotherly love continue.*” I’m not saying that you have to agree with everything they do. You’re going to have disagreements. But if we’re rooted and grounded as one, we should be able to come together as one and say, “Lord, what’s best for your church?” I don’t base my life on what’s best for me and my family. I base my life on what’s best for God. John 13:35 “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you have love one to another.*” You see we’re all in the body of Christ and no one is above anybody else. Even the least of the members is just as valuable as the most. Christ puts us on the body as it pleases him. I want to be satisfied with what God has me to do. 1 John 4:21 “*And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.*” It goes on down to say, “how can you hate your brother whom you have seen and love God whom you have not seen?”

*Third*, we need to love the sinners. People don’t have the

desire to reach out to the people who are without Christ anymore. You hear these statistics about people getting killed every day. So many people die every second of the day in our life time. What we need to be concerned about is. Do they know Christ? We can't fall in love with what the sinners do and how they live their life but we can fall in love with their souls. Because we're not sharing the gospel with them they remain ignorant of the love of Christ. Because we don't love them enough they are not reached with the Gospel. Everybody in the member of Christ is a minister. We are called to minister for Christ. There are many ways to witness Christ through our daily life and conduct. When we intentionally witness Christ to other, God's Spirit starts working with them.

Matt. 5:46 *"If you love them which love you, what reward have you?"* We can't just love those that love us. We have to love those that don't love us. The Bible says we have to love our enemies. Prov. 10:12 *"Hatred stirreth up strife but love covereth all sins."* We need to love God, our Savior. We need to love the Saints and we need to love sinners. 1 John 4:8 *"He that loveth not, knoweth not God for God is love."* If we don't know how to love it's just like saying we don't know God.

## Conclusion

Dear Christian friends, when we say we love God, we love our neighbors and we love sinners, we must seriously seek to know who our neighbors are. Our neighbors are the people who are oppressed, discriminated, and outcaste. These are the Dalits, the tribals, women, poor and needy in India and in our churches. Life of fullness has been denied to them. There have been lots of protest and agitations for the liberation of these sections of people. However, the full liberation is still far off. We have no moral right to demand equality and fight for their freedom unless the church fully accept all group of people as God's people created in the same image with equal status and dignity. In such a context, the church in India needs to rethink of its actions for their liberation. The churches in India must hear

the suffering voices of the lowly afresh and respond to their cries and focus on the united struggle and be united in prayer for their full liberation. We as Christians must express our solidarity and extend our help and support them so that they can be fully liberated from the oppression. The churches in India must recommit to serving as zero tolerance zones for casteism and caste, and gender based discrimination and our churches should develop policies on social inclusion. This is to say that our institutions should become sites that practice preferential option for these groups of people in admission, employment and in perspective. To be able to implement all these, these issues must be owned by all the churches in India whether they fall under these categories or not. The Churches in North East India are not much aware of the Dalit issues and many other issues and therefore publicity and awareness must be done much more so that the Churches in NEI can support the cause of the Dalits and the exploited section of the people. The Church must reassess its role and activities in doing missions to the deprived, given the political changes that are occurring in India. While the goal of mission to bring justice, peace and salvation has not changed, the church's modus operandi must evolve if it is to play a significant role in bringing justice to the oppressed. The church must move from a passive to an active role in obeying the Great Nazareth Manifesto. This implies that churches are to be encouraged to raise funds exclusively for the mission among these sections of people and use it wisely considering the specific needs as well as considering their own specific identities and cultures. Christians must have a dream that one day all people here in India will be equally treated and accepted for God has created every human being with equal status, dignity, respect and freedom. Being rooted and grounded in love let us love God with all our heart, let us love our fellow saints with all our strength and love all humans with all our minds and ability.



# What is love?



*Rosemary Mattingley is an Australian interfaith and peace activist, bridge-builder, translator, editor and massage therapist. She has been involved with Quakers (Religious Society of Friends) in South Africa and Australia, including facilitating Alternatives to Violence Project workshops.*

*She was invited to speak at the Interfaith Peace School held by the India Peace Centre in Guwahati in 2013. While in Assam, she was given much food for thought about the history, issues and seeds of conflict in north-east India, and especially of the centuries-long effects of seeds of conflict.*

*Blog: <http://nur810.wordpress.com/>*

How do I define Love? Is Love different for different cultures or even from person to person, through words, concepts or actions? Do these differing words, concepts and actions translate across cultures? What happens when they don't? Is Love implicit through actions or attitude even if a culture has no word or concept for Love? Can I accept something done or given with loving intent even if I feel it isn't right for me?

One of my greatest memories of love is of a Muslim family 20 years ago in a Middle Eastern country now horrifically devastated by war. The tourist guide fiancé of one of the

daughters took me, a foreign guest in their country and an absolute stranger, to visit the family. I stayed with them for a few days; they fed me, scrubbed my back in the bath, and talked to me. These seem to be simple acts of kindness, yet they were permeated with love. I can't say how this love was conveyed so strongly. I can say that we still keep in contact when their situations allow it, and their love continues even today. It shows in their concern for my well-being through some of my life's difficulties and in their offer to help fund my trip to Assam last year to speak at an interfaith peace event. All this is despite one family member having fled the country as a refugee, another suffering severe ill health, the husband of yet another having disappeared, and those still in the country living their lives in a war zone.

Can I love...

- Family, friends, people who think the same way as I do, and others whom it's easy to love
- Those I don't get on with, who don't think the same way as I do, or who have hurt me
- Myself

Some general techniques to root and ground myself in love:

- Attitudes and actions, based on scriptures, teachings, insights, example of others
- Listen to my inner voice/conscience
- Listen to other people without judging
- Respect and integrity in dealings with others
- Trust in and openness to life's process
- Discern other people's motives, thoughts and actions
- Discern right action for myself and for interacting appropriately with others

These techniques may be relatively easy to apply for the first group of people, those who think the same way as I do and it's

easy to love. However, they might not be as simple as they seem at first glance. Is it really easy to listen without judging or interrupting? Do I respect the other person when their viewpoint or actions are not how I would think or behave?

For the second group, those I don't get on with or who have hurt me, I would add:

- Acknowledge hurt or difference, voice it as many times as necessary in whatever way possible without hurting others, and move on, little step by little step.
- Distance myself, set the intent to love, ask that love flows to the other, whether by simply asking the Divine or by an informal ritual, such as lighting a candle, so that what may seem an impossible burden is placed elsewhere.

For the third, self, I would add:

- Take care of myself in terms of health, time, space and activities that I need to function as well as possible, for myself and for others. No-one else can do this for me.

I would like to conclude with a Quaker saying, "*Come with heart and mind prepared.*" I feel that I am better rooted and grounded to give and receive Love when I use both heart and mind. The suggested techniques help prepare my mind and being to open my heart to Love.



**You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

**Matt 5:43-45**

# **Bible Study**

**Text:** Rev. 21:1-2  
**Theme:**  
“Celebrating the  
Past, Envisioning  
the Future:  
New Heaven and  
New Earth”



*Pratap Chandra Gine, Vice Principal (Theology), Serampore College*

## **Introducing the theme:**

We have before us one great occasion but two great themes. The great celebration is the 200<sup>th</sup> year of ministry of the American Baptist International Ministries, and two themes are “*Celebrating the Past, Envisioning the Future*” and “*New Heaven and New Earth.*” For our convenience we would like to consider these two themes in two constructive forms. Let us take “Future” and “New” in one cluster, and “Past” and “Old” in another cluster. For the convenience of our understanding, we would like to begin from the end.

## **Understanding the “New”:**

What is “New”? Or, to be more specific, what makes “New”? What is the longevity of “New”? When does “New” become old? Is there any way to retain the newness of the “New” forever? In order to find answers to all these questions, we have to first find the root of the word “New,” and side by side, we have to tread the semantic region of that word “New.”

We understand that the word “New” is the translation of the Greek word *kaine*. *Kaine* refers to that state of very existence which is not only by itself *new*, but also makes others *new*, even without the knowledge of the possessors. In other words, *kaine* has the power and potentiality to make things *new*. It is the prerogative of this word to make things *new*, and it is the responsibility of the possessors to see that the things remain *new* forever.

Is it not absurd to expect the things to remain *new* forever! Is there anything on earth that can remain *new* forever? We see a lot of ads on TV how to keep things ever new. We watch how with the application of different cosmetics one can suppress aging of the physical body, and can remain “young” for long. And we know the reality how deceptive its method is. Now, if it is not *new*, then what do we talk about? Let us come to the reality.

The Greek word that we used (*kaine*) has been used to indicate New Testament. When we talk of New Testament, it does not ever become old; it continues to be new. Ever since the New Testament Canon was approved and accepted, it remained forever “New.” What is there in this *newness*? About this *newness* only Paul says that this newness is in Christ, and about this only the writer of the Book of Hebrews says “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8); about this only God is known as Yahweh, i.e., who was, is and ever shall be (world without end). That is, the evernewness is only in God and in God’s begotten son, Jesus Christ. This newness is to be found and received in and through Jesus Christ. So Paul says, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation (2Cor. 5:17). Everything is created then new in that person and all old passes away instantly.

This *newness* also means, it is not to renew the old. That is, *kaine* does not communicate anything “renewal” type of thing. It removes the old altogether, and makes things new. It also means that the old and the new cannot co-exist. One has to make way for the other. If the old does not pass away how can

newness can be found only in Christ.

### **New Heaven:**

The writer of the Book of Revelation talks about “new Heaven,” without referring to the “old” heaven. The text, no doubt, implies this meaning. What is, then, the *new heaven*? What is *heaven*, after all? The Scripture talks of *ouranos* as the abode of God. It is the place where God is surrounded by the angels and archangels continually praising God. It is the place where humans long to go, and only God who can make people to enter only when they are allowed. The author of the Book of Revelation is referring to the same heaven, but the expression *new heaven* is something new, as it communicates altogether different thing. What is this “new heaven”?

According to Revelation, it is a new existence; it will be created at the Return of Jesus (*Eschaton*). It is to take place only when the Christ returns and establishes his kingdom. It will then be opened for the believers of Christ who have gone through persecution and tribulation, and bore everything for the sake of Christ. This would be the time for rewarding those who have suffered, even to the point of death, for the sake of Christ.

The *eschaton* claims to possess all that we don't have, but would lead to the *new*:

1. The future: Where does it begin, really? Are we part of future? Do we create future? Do we see future? What qualifies us to experience the future?

2. The certainty: Who provides us certainty? Can there be anything on earth which can be ascertained? When everything on earth is constantly changing, is this changing confirming certainty? How come “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” in the midst of changing world (Heb. 13:8)? Then, is this Christ's unchanging form ascertaining our changing or unchanging?

3. The assurance: What can be assured on this earth? Who assures us? Do we have the surety that we will never be

deprived of the things assured to us?

4. The “new”: Where does the *new* begin? Are we in a position to welcoming *new*, leaving behind the old and the obsolete? Where does this “new” come from - within or without?

5. The new heaven: What is its identity? Where is it now? Is it in contrast to the “old” one? Is there any “old” heaven? Is this “old” synonymous to “the first”? How did this first heaven become old? What would necessitate the “new” heaven?

6. The new earth: Is it going to be in continuation of the existing earth? Will this earth be dissolved or destroyed? Is it going to be against the Covenant made with Noah immediate after the flood in which Noah’s family was restored?

7. The new Jerusalem, and what not!: Is this “New” Jerusalem continue to be God’s chosen city? How is this “New” Jerusalem going to be different from the existing one? Is this “New” Jerusalem an indicator of anything radically different? What is it? How is it going implicate the concerned people?

All these points/questions mentioned above are natural and yet thought-provoking. They are related to *eschaton* as well as the causes of *kaine*. In other words they together work for reformation or transformation of the whole human life. We need to question ourselves whether or not we are prepared to welcome this “new” and the “future”. If we are prepared for these, then we are in a position to look back to the past. And then only we are called to celebrate the past.

### **Understanding the “past”:**

We need to unfold the “past.” Let us begin with a simple question: When does this “past” begin? Is it depended upon the present or the future? Is the “past” important at all for human beings? The basic thing we require is to define the “past.” How do we define it! We define it in the following ways:

1. Past is olden days which have gone passed by and never

to return

2. Past is beyond our reach. It is the *dead* event in human lives

3. Past is an identity which is *locked* and therefore cannot be rescued or remember

If these are what we think to be the past, then what is there to celebrate? In fact, the past redefines itself. When past is to be celebrated, it should have something to celebrate. It should have the following criteria:

1. It should have glorious history

2. It should have achieved what others could not

3. It should be able to provide “feel good” type of feeling to the present

But then, we stumble at its first point. Is all past glorious? Can all past be celebrated? Let us look at the Greek expression of the old or the past. It provides with the following meanings and implications:

1. Old which is to be altogether discarded, because it proves to be obsolete

2. Old that is left behind and need not be remembered again

3. Old provides the base for the new

4. Old which necessitates the new

5. Old which proves its worth, i.e., old is gold

Now, if we consider all these points mentioned above, we would necessarily face certain problems. We note in Luke 9:62 where Jesus instructs, no one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God. That is, once a person decides to go for a new step leaving behind their old life and/or profession, there cannot be any reason to look back to the past. And if anyone looks back, the person concerned stands disqualified. In other words, the past must

be allowed to live in the past; past must not be brought back to the present to act as the stumbling block for the future.

Paul speaks likewise, "... I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead" (Phil. 3:13). We can have three basic points from this verse:

1. Paul has not attained what he aimed at
2. He laid simple principle of achieving the goal in future
3. He attempted forgetting the past because it disturbs

From the above analysis it might become clear that Paul found "forgetting the past" was the best means to go ahead. From his different epistles it becomes evident that past is old, and old creates blockage to the new.

But what did he forget really? Did he forget the saving experience that came from his encounter of Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus? Did he forget his own testimony when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..." (Gal. 2:20)? No, he neither forgot Jesus nor his testimony about Jesus. What he forgot was his old/past that disturbed him continually.

Paul sees old/past in different ways:

1. Old/past is old way of life (Gal. 1:13)
2. Old/past cannot stay when new arrives (2Cor. 5:17)
3. Old is dead to sin, and cannot live again (Rom. 6:2)
4. Past is circumcision and present is un-circumcision, but they mean nothing (Gal. 6:5)

What he forgot was his old way of life; his *fleshly* behaviour, because he has no confidence in flesh (Phil. 3:3). He did not want to go back there.

Moreover, he recollects his pride as a Jew: he was circumcised on the eighth day as per the Law; he was from the tribe of Benjamin; he was a Pharisee; he was a Hebrew of the He-

brews; and therefore, according to the law he would be found faultless. Yet he did not consider all these as gain, but considered as a loss, because these entire matters he considered as garbage or rubbish (Phil. 3:8). And if it is garbage, who on earth would like to recollect and remember it? Whether it is loss or gain, Paul considered all these as matter of flesh, and so garbage. These are old; these are past; and these are to be forgotten.

Then the question is: Was there nothing *good* in the “past” in Paul that he could celebrate? Could Paul find anything good in the past worth celebrating? Yes. Paul saw Christ’s sacrifice as saving activity, and although this is a past event, this has to be remembered continually in reverence. Paul wanted every believer to remember this simple fact. We remember how Paul reacted when the Galatians forgot this glorious past, the past to celebrate. He abused the Galatians because they forgot what Christ did for them. He accused them saying, they were foolish. They forgot the crucified Christ, and instead they were found bewitched by the Judaizers. Forgetting one significant past can lead to the forgetting of multiple events. And that’s what had happened with the Galatians (cf. Gal. 3:1-13).

They forgot the saving sacrifice of Jesus

- They forgot that the Law of Moses did not save them
- They forgot that by hearing of the law they were not saved
- They forgot that because they began with the Spirit, they were not to go back to the flesh to finish it with human effort
- They forgot that by hearing the Word of God and believing what they heard, they believed God, and not by observing the law
- They forgot that Abraham also believed God and that act of believing was credited to him as righteous

- They forgot that they were also children of Abraham by faith

Paul reminded the Galatians that by forgetting God's saving act and other related activities, they have fallen short of the glory of God.

Paul exhorted Corinthians almost from the same ground. He upheld the past event of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. He narrated verbatim the passion of Jesus. He appealed to the Corinthians that they remember this glorious past by taking part in eating the bread and drinking the cup. This must be done as often as they could, because this would proclaim the "Lord's death until he comes" (1Cor. 11:26). This is an act of the past which is to be celebrated. The churches all around the world do not "observe" the Lord's sacrificial death, but "celebrate" it. The past event of Christ is celebrated.

**Implication:**

We came from different parts of the country and the world and gathered together in Kohima to celebrate the glorious 200 hundred years of the American Baptist International Mission (ABIM), an event of the past. We remember what God has done to these brothers and sisters, and moreover we remembered what the ABIM has done for this northeast region. We can say with surety that, had there been no ABIM, there would not have been any trace of Christianity in this part of the world. As we remember the past activities of the ABIM, so we humbly express our gratitude to those God's men and women who suffered for us and gave their lives of "today" for our "tomorrow." We express our gratitude to God for sending these devoted men and women to this part of the world to preach the Gospel of Christ. What we are today is just because of them. There are enough reasons to celebrate this glorious past. And this glorious past will lead us to envision the future.

The Elder John, the writer of the Book of Revelation, has envisioned the new heaven and the new earth. To John, this

signifies the following:

1. It is a renewed world; rather it is a new world with wider dimension
2. It is that world which would bring renewed relationship between God and humans
3. In this new world there would not be any evil work, that is, the existence of devil would be made null and void
4. This would establish the Messianic Age (cf. Isaiah 65:17 & 66:22)
5. It is that new world where there would be no Satanic force, rather this would be transformed world through Christ
6. Glorious church in the symbol of Holy City, the New Jerusalem, would come into existence.

It is our earnest prayer to God that God continue to bless the ABIM and all its constituent bodies and believers to celebrate the past and enable them to envision the future for God's glory.



**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."**

**Mark 12:30-31**

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century India Megatrends



*Rev Valson Thampu, Principal, St Stefan's College, University of Delhi*

*The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed.....” Matt13: 31*

## **A BRIEF COMMENT ON, “CELEBRATING THE PAST, ENVISIONING THE FUTURE.”**

To celebrate, in the Judaeo-Christian sense, is to exemplify gratitude. It is the sacrament of thanksgiving that we celebrate. The Past is a memoir of God’s faithfulness. It is also a record - mixed up, though, in so many ways it is- of our struggle, our sacrifice, our shortcomings and our having endured, somehow. The Past is not really past. It has not left us. It survives in our sanctified memories. Hence it is that the Biblical worldview attaches great importance of memories, whether it be the ritualistic recounting of the Exodus story by the Jews or the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which is essentially a sacrament of memory (cf. “This you do in remembrance of me.”)

The Past is a paradoxical category, nonetheless. How are we to claim it, or to relate to it? We have not experienced or lived this Past that we celebrate in a personal sense. This Past was not, in the main, our Present, except in a pale and distant fashion. The experiences of the Past are not, therefore, our

own personal experiences in an individualistic and immediate sense. Yet they are our experiences too; else celebrating it will be pretentious. The Past is like the acorn to an oak. The oak was there in the acorn, so to speak, in the past. The acorn, likewise, is still in the oak. And several acorns (of the future) are in the oak already. The past, present and future are not water-tight compartments, after all. It is like the mustard seed that Jesus talks about in Matt. 13:31. It becomes a tree and gives shelter to the birds of the air. The birds cannot make their nests inside the mustard seed. But the mustard seed holds, nonetheless, the shelter for the birds. The link between the mustard seed and the nest for the birds is growth. So, in a real sense, it is not the Past as past that we “celebrate.” It is, instead, our growth as a people of faith; a growth measured in our experiences of God’s faithfulness and our own struggling, faltering efforts to be faithful as a people. This is quite different from celebrating the past of an individual. It is our growth in faith as a people centred on Jesus Christ that we celebrate. And that celebration has to be “in spirit and in truth” (John. 4: 24). The truth of our forbearers in faith embraces the truth of our life of faith. It becomes a celebration, or an act of true thanksgiving that is already enlivened by the possibilities that tomorrow holds.

There is, hence, some logic to envisioning the Future. Many of us may not survive physically into the Future we envision today. It is the Future we envision, but it may not be our future in an individualistic sense, though the ‘envisioning’ has to be done by us. (Moses envisioned the Promised Land. What does it matter that he did not set foot upon it?) In this “envisioning” process we consent to be the mustard seeds that will sprout in due course and become home to the birds of the air. This is the discipline that the Lord has set and we dare not alter it. If we cannot intuit the link between us and the birds of the air -the homeless refugees of the morrow- we are not fit to ‘envision.’ The moment this leap of faith is lost envisioning becomes little more than calculating, which makes the mustard tree look like the fig tree remembered only for

its fruitlessness and the curse it attracted (Matt. 21: 18,19).

## MEGA-TRENDS

Trends, or patterns, are of 2 kinds-

**1. Archetypal, or Eternal Patterns** -patterns that keep repeating themselves, even if with superficial variations. Individuals and groups preferring the way of death to the way of life (Matt. 7: 13, 14) is an archetypal pattern. It will happen in all ages and generations. Conforming to the pattern of the world rather than being transformed (Rom. 12. 1,2) is yet another such pattern. Serving Mammon rather than God as well as choosing a part and neglecting the whole too are patterns. All these trends are embedded in the Fall.

**2. Trends peculiar to an age.** Fashions in food and costume, lifestyle patterns and issues, trends in arts and schools of thought, forms and structures of governance, social and political organizations, modes of economy and types of governance, and so on, belong to this category. From the perspective of our eternity, trends of this category are of a transitory, fleeting nature even if they linger on for a while and cover the span of a generation or many generations.

So we need to define the scope of the prefix “mega.” From the perspective of the world, the scope of this concept pertains almost wholly to scale. Mega-trends are trends that take place on a large scale and affect a large number of people. Individuals feel helpless in respect of them and they take on the air of fate. From the spiritual perspective, though, scale is not the decisive concern. A tsunami, for instance, may affect several million people. While the suffering it generates is a matter of concern, its spiritual scope is limited, unless we argue that natural disasters are provoked by human depravity. Our concerns in the two sessions on the topic pertain to mega-trends from a spiritual perspective. These patterns affect the very stuff of our humanity. Or, trends that issue from the fallen-ness of our species.

In a sense, no trend is altogether new. The depravity lurking

beneath the surface of urbanisation, for instance, is portrayed intensely in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. The principle that power corrupts is writ large over the decline of Jewish monarchy. Judas, the inside traitor, reflects the scope of human nature in all ages. The contextual details -the local colour and flavour- may vary but the deep patterns remain virtually the same.

Trends being diverse and many, a selection from them has to be made. Selection presupposes a perspective. Our perspective is missional. What are the trends of our times to which we may respond with the resources of faith? And what are the resources for such responses in the future that we envision? Also, how are we to envision this future? Like the Rich Fool who envisioned it in terms of the plenty hoarded in his barns? Or, out of our faithfulness to the Lord, who has called us to send us out. Sent-ness has a reference to today and tomorrow, the present and the future.

Jesus clearly identified the futuristic dimension of our 'sent-ness' with the dynamism of 'seeking' (Matt. 7:7). Unless we develop a seeking outlook, we shall not envision anything at all. Biblically, seeking is of the nature of God. Jesus builds up a contrast between 'worrying' and 'seeking' (Matt. 6: 25-33). The pattern of the world is to live worrying about what we shall eat, what we shall wear. The children of God seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (v 33). It is from this spiritual dynamism that we need to envision the future of our missional engagement with the world.

"Sent-ness" complemented by the outlook of "seeking" comprise the discipline from which we ought to identify and engage with these trends of our times. Our reckoning of these trends will, otherwise, become merely academic. In a missional sense to "envision" is, hence, to be willing to be sent out, "in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth." To 'envision' therefore is also to prepare oneself to engage with these trends and to make the Will of God prevail in the life of people.

A few of these mega-trends are-

## 1. Existential Vacuum in the life of the people.

*Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life and life in all its fullness" (John 10:10b)*

Having a sense of meaning and purpose is basic to our life as a people created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1: 27). Meaninglessness degrades life into a burden (Mtt. 11: 28). This is a serious matter and our Lord responds to it by inviting all who are burdened and life-weary to find their rest in him. This rest is not rest as cessation of work, but rest as the realisation or regaining of the meaning and purpose of one's life. Globally people, especially people in the prime of their life, are afflicted by this disease, of which the Rich Young Man in Matt 19: 16-21 is an illustrative example.

In such a state human beings are vulnerable to two trends-

(a) Surrendering oneself to the animal instinct, to lose oneself in unbridled indulgence. To live only at the level of sensations, perhaps like the woman of Samaria. Addiction is, mostly, the outcome of this existential vacuum. Various means and forms of addiction -drugs, alcohol, sex, crime, acquisitiveness, mindless indulgence in pleasure- are resorted as palliative means.

(b) Alternately people surrender themselves to tyrannical and oppressive forces, which is the genesis of totalitarianism. The attractiveness of totalitarianism is the total surrender of personal freedom and responsibility to a force or person deemed larger than life, as in the case of Germany under Hitler.

Meaninglessness is an epidemic. It has two major expressions: boredom and depression. The current strategies of compensation-

**God's strategy to re-invest meaning and purpose in our lives:** Partnership in mission. The alternative to emptiness in life is "being in mission." Only a godly mission can 'fill' our life. It is a blessing to have a mission in life. Life becomes a precious and blessed gift when there is a purpose or cause great enough to live for. Jesus calls us into mission-partnerships

(cf. The testimony of Viktor Frankl, the Viennese Psychiatrist who survived Auschwitz. The intense desire to re-create and publish his manuscript. A fellow internee who survived-the eager longing to meet with a loved one who was waiting for him-Logotherapy).

**2. The tyranny of matter/ the snares of materialism.** The essence of materialism was stated crisply and boldly by Joseph Conrad, “Matter alone matters.” So, lifeless matter becomes the saviour of the living! This is prefigured in the Fall- the fruit will make man wise and equal to God! A small part of creation will make us equal to the Creator. So much for our logic! The truth is stated by Jesus, “Man does not live by bread alone.” The problem with living by bread alone - A life of chronic worry -Matt. 6: 25-33. The reason: we stay stunted and under-developed. Worrying about the trivia of life is a sign of human backwardness. In such a life the mustard seed will not sprout and the grain of wheat will perforce remain alone (John. 12: 24).

Being in mission is the way to abide in the Lord John 15:4. It hallmarks fruitfulness. Mission thus ensures the fruitfulness of our life. -The meaning of fruitfulness. The alternative is dramatized through Zacchaeus: the dwindling stature of man.

The three symbols: (i) The Titanic (ii) The Cell phone (iii) TV  
The price we pay- multiplying insecurity, growing alienation and the famine of experience. We are becoming mere spectators of life, something that Jesus has already warned us against. See John 12: 20- 25.

What a stark contrast to what God intends for us, which is life in all its fullness (John. 10:10b)!

**3. Unprecedented rapidity of change and the escalation of obsolescence.** { cf. Allvin Toffler, “Future Shock” (cultural)}

Consider this-

In 6000 BC, the fastest transportation available over long distances was the camel caravan averaging 8 mph. By 1600

BC.the chariot was invented and maximum speed rose to 20 mph. By 1825 the first steam locomotive was introduced in England. Top speed of 13 mph. By 1880 it attained a top speed of 100 mph. By 1938, man, airborne, cracked the 400 mph limit. By 1960, rockets reached 4000 mph.

This explosion of speed is not the only thing. Consider further how we are hurtling along the time graph-

The time gap between an idea, its application and its dissemination has been shortened.

The first English patent for a typewriter was issued in 1714. But a century and a half elapsed before typewriters began to be commercially available.

Today such delay between an idea and its application is unthinkable. Today R & D wing is integral to all major corporations. The case of computer. .... came in 1950.

The case of cell phones! Analogous to car in Ford's America.

Take the case of publications-

Europe, prior to 1500, at the rate of 1000 titles per year.

1950.... 120,000 titles a year.

1965, ..... 1000 titles a day.

This speed is adding to the burden of our life. We have to run desperately to remain stationary. (Alvin Toffler, *The Future Shock*).

In such a context, no one takes root in anything. We simply skip on the surface of life and condemn ourselves to fruitlessness, ref. Matt. 13: 1 ff. The Parable of the Sower. The afflictions of speed and hurry have turned the deep soil of life into the way-side of mere existence.

#### **4. The erosion of a caring culture. Everyone for himself/herself, no one for me!**

As compared to all other animals, the life and nature of human beings are established on the foundation of care-giving. No other animal needs as much care and nurture as we need. The

duty to care is, besides, written into our creation. Adam was designed to till the land and to take care of the garden. Man is nothing, if not a caring animal. It is this defining capacity that we have lost universally. The symptoms are there for all to see.

The alternative to caring is cruelty. Cain kills Abel.

Caring as well as propagating a culture of caring is basic to Christian mission (cf our mission in education and health care. We are at peril of losing our essence. We are at the point of becoming the lost that has lost its saltiness.)

The secret of Jesus power/authority was his caring, compassionate spirit Vs. Zacchaeus - dwindling stature of man. He grows in stature when he begins to care for others.

The caring culture sustains life. But human beings have lost it. (cf. Human homelessness). We are homeless at home.

The rise of institutions of surrogate care.

These (and many more) trends are not isolated patterns. They are the many sides of our alienation from God. Unless we abide in God, and He abides in us, we shall choose death to life. The mega-trends we have examined briefly bespeak the death-orientation of life. Jesus came as the light of life. No wonder he wept over Jerusalem. The tears of Jesus water the missional life of the church. It is when the agony of God rains over the earth that New Life springs up. We are the co-working farmers of this New Life, this New Creation.

## **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS WE SHOULD ENVISION?**

Our task is not merely to read the trends of the time, or to read the writing on the wall. We are to be, also, the redeemers of time -today and tomorrow. The biblical vision is neither a backward looking faith (cf. the plight of Lot's wife) nor a journalistic mirror held to the world around us. Its dynamism is in the unequivocal exhortation, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). We look forward to the consummation of the Kingdom and the unveiling of a "new heaven and a new earth". That given, what are we to do?

**1. Integrate hearing and doing.** Matt 7: 24-28. From Jesus' point of view the foremost weakness in the spiritual calling is this discontinuity. The reason for this discontinuity is our unwillingness to obey. So we have become experts in hearing without listening. As a result we neither understand nor practice what we have been told. A universal feature of our species is that we "know not what we do" (cf. the First Word from the Cross). We are ignorant, not because we do not hear, but because we do not do what we hear. Spiritual matters, insofar as they pertain to life, can be understood only by doing. The bridge between hearing and doing is obedience. It is not more knowledge that we need, it is the willingness to obey the Lord.

The foremost trend we need to inaugurate is, therefore, the trend to obey! Joyful, eager obedience to the Lord must become the Christian mega-trend. This is the only eligibility that Jesus expects of his followers. Mark 1: 16-18. John 2: 1 ff. Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1 ff.

Without the strength of obedience life is like the mansions built on sand. We must begin to build them on the rock of obedience. Obedience (issuing from the fear of the Lord) makes us wise (Psalm 111: 10). Obedience to the will of God is perfect freedom. Without this freedom we cannot be Christians. It is into the freedom of obedience that Jesus has called us. Galatians 5: 1.

**2. Live the Kingdom Culture.** The Kingdom of God has a present and future dimension. It has already come and is still coming. It is here, but not yet. Hence it is that Jesus mandates seeking fullness as the culture of the Kingdom. The kingdom of man -the cultures of the world- are blighted by the preference for the partial. Wilful or ignorant self-confinement to the part is the seed of the giant agony of the world. What spiritually unenlightened man seeks is the part, mistaking it to be the whole. Those who seek only the part can only be partial. God is not partial because he embodies the fullness of everything, which characterises peace and truth. The obedience that God

enjoins on us is the bridge between today and tomorrow, what is and what can be, the real and the ideal. Seeking is the other side of such obedience. To seek, in its spiritual sense, is to obey the will of God. It is God's Kingdom and justice that we are to seek. It is this that we pray for. Cf. The Lord's Prayer.

Obedience to God inverts the culture of man with all its mega-trends! Death-orientation, for instance, was the "mega-trend of Nineveh." As the people repented and returned to an obedient relationship with God, they were re-oriented from death to life.

Obedience to man is born out of fear. Fear enslaves, paralyzes and degrades. Obedience to God issues from love. Love casts out fear. It empowers and facilitates growth and fullness. Obedience to God is the secret of perfect freedom.

**3. A culture of love.** The mega-trend at the time is that of organised lovelessness. The evident signs of this spiritual epidemic are the growing taste for hate and violence, intolerance, apathy to the suffering and needs of others and spiritual paralysis. It is because the world is habituated to the denial of love that loving has to be instituted as a duty, as in the two Cardinal Commandments to love God and to love one's neighbour (Luke 10: 27).

Love holds the secret of our development and empowerment as human beings. Growth results in fruitfulness. Fruitfulness eventuates into joy.

Power, not love, is the shaping paradigm of the world. The Christian task is to invert this world order. It is to rebuild the world on the foundation of love. This task is so crucial that we are to love even our enemies. The Peaceable Kingdom, the inspired vision of Isaiah, needs to be the "mega-trend" of the future. Jesus came to deliver mankind from the love of power and to school them in the power of love.

The hallmark of love is its willingness to suffer for the sake of the other. Power, in contrast, inflicts suffering on others in order to dodge one's own suffering. Power creates a society

of scapegoats. Love ensures justice for all.

**4. Transcend the dualistic worldview.** The mega-trend that we need to envision for the future is that of the transcendence of all forms of dualism. This is the very essence of the radical vision that Peter was given (Acts ch. 10). Dualism inheres in the worldview that we are nurtured in. Neighbour vs. enemy, Jews vs. Samaritans, Word vs. flesh (John. 1.14), clean vs. unclean, Sinner vs. saint, Jews vs. Gentiles, God. vs. man, Sabbath vs. the week-days, the body vs. the soul, and so on. The dualistic mind-set is inherently intolerant. It mistakes neighbour for enemy. It is incapable of living at peace (ref. John 14: 27, My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives....). It is incapable of doing justice to one's neighbour. It is incapable of seeing or knowing the truth. The hallmarks of this mega-trend that we need to establish are-

(i) *Transcend the self.* Mission involves a transcending of dualism. Paul, all things to all people. Jesus destroyed the middle wall of division.

(ii) *Perfect freedom.* Dualism is a wall of division that stands between us and others. This has affected the mission to “preach and to heal” (Matt. 10:7 and 8). Jesus is Emmanuel, which means “God with us.”

(iii) Dualism, not primarily leprosy or HIV/AIDS- is the disease of the world we are called upon to heal. The establishment of the Kingdom of God involves our species repenting of its dualistic worldview and mind-set and embracing *the Christ-centred oneness of the created order*. It was the sword of dualism that Jesus denounced and rejected in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 52, “Put down the sword....”). Peace, like truth, is impossible in a dualistic scheme of things.

As a Japanese saying goes, “My barn having burned to the ground, I can now see the moon.”

The two biblical symbols that point to the future: (i) the baptism of Jesus (ii) the crucifixion, the rending of the Temple arras. Consider the Hassidic saying,

When the ax came into the forest, the trees, upon seeing it's wooden handle, said, "Look, one of us"!

The transcendence of the dualistic paralysis must begin with **repentance**: the realization that we are infected by this Mother of all Sins-

"The dividing line between good and evil passes," wrote Lanso Del Vasto, "not between the other and me, but right down the middle of my forehead, between my left side and the right."

Jesus is the manifestation of the power and peace of a non-dualistic or holistic attitude to life and human destiny.

**5. Finally, the return to creativity, or wholeness.** The importance of work and the workplace. The biblical vision of work is profoundly liberative and empowering! Creationally, we are workers. Only when we become workers, in the true sense of the term, will life become a Garden. To corrupt work is to risk the forfeiture of the Garden of Life. That being the case, our most urgent spiritual task is to transform the workplace into a Garden of life, rather than a theatre of war! This can be done through the creativity that spirituality empowers in us.

The tragedy is that creativity, which is the essence of godliness or wholeness, has been expelled from work and Mammon has become the presiding deity of work. The genius of Mammon is the very opposite of the creative. Mammon is the god of the mechanical. The mechanical is shallow. It creates a scheme of things in which we shall be like fish out of water. We were not made or meant for this! Creativity is the hallmark of godliness, as is evident in the case of Jesus of Nazareth. His public ministry is punctuated by the power and riches of creativity: the way he taught, healed and transformed lives!

Creativity holds the secret of "fullness of life." The mechanical is doomed to live partial and incomplete. It can never afford the joy and fulfilment that we crave for. What used to happen beside the well of Jacob (John 4) before Jesus made a visit

there was the death-dance of the mechanical in human relationships. In the mechanical, as against the creative model, relief and riches are measured in quantity (or numbers). Five husbands the Samaritan woman has had already. The sixth is a shade worse. Well, that is how it is in the mechanical model. It can only get worse, unlike the creative model in which water can turn into wine, as in the wedding at Cana of Galilee (John 2).

## Conclusion

This, then, is the quintessence of Christian mission. It is, certainly, not to conform, much less legitimise, the patterns or trends of the world. It is not to spiritualize the bandwagons of the times. It is to see ‘visions and dreams,’ -the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. This is the mega-trend of the Kingdom of God.

The crucial factor in this “total revolution” is not what the world does or how it is. It is, who we are. Jesus came to open our eyes. It is to open the eyes of those who see. Our basic problem is not that we do not have eyes to see. It is that we do not see with the eyes that can see. We have eyes that see not. (cf. The Parable of the Sheep and Goats) Our vision is distorted and our range of vision is narrowed to an absolute minimum. We have become prisoners and captives to the existing scheme of things that is at enmity with God.

Our task, or the mission at hand, is not to fight or eradicate the trends -mega or micro- of the world. It is to establish the mega-trend of God. Love is the foremost resource for this radical mission. Obedience to God is its discipline. Wholeness of life (the non-dualistic vision of life) is its culture. Hence it is that we are taught to pray,

“Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth,  
As it is in heaven.”



# Envisioning the Future



*Text: Heb. 11:37-12:3; Rev. 1:1-8  
(A sermon preached by Rev Dr A.  
K. Lama, during India Mission  
Summit, Kohima, on October 5, 2014)*

The theme of my sermon is **Envisioning the Future.**

## **I. Envisioning the Future**

I want to focus three biblical aspects of Future—

- 1. The Hope of the Future**
- 2. The Reality of the Future**
- 3. The Preparation for the Future**

We cannot do anything about the first two aspects because God has already pre-designed it. But the third aspect is our responsibility and so I will focus more on that. Let us talk about the first aspect:

### **1. The Hope of the Future.**

Our theme is taken from Rev. 21:1 but I realized that we did not pay full attention to the text. We Baptists are notorious in going around the text very often. The text must always be read in its biblical context first, before we try to read in our social context. It is difficult to understand what John wrote in the first century while he was imprisoned on the Patmos Island because we have not gone through a similar situation. Most of us will return tomorrow back to our daily mundane of life—the

same family routine, the same neighborhood, the same society. As long as we are ready to make little compromise, the life will turn out to be good. And then we will go to the same Sunday service, where the worship leader will shout—God is good—and we will respond—All the time!

Sometime I feel like asking: Really? Really?

Imagine a situation of John the Disciple, incarcerated on the land of Patmos and the evil Roman emperor who has snatched away all his freedom. The sword hangs over his head. In the city of Rome, newly converted Christians were beaten, their houses were burnt, they were sawn into two, they were thrown before the lions, and they were burnt alive. Imagine the fear and the agony of the Christians in the first century!! In such circumstances, can we still say “God is good all the time?”

The Christians of first century were perhaps thinking:

Is Jesus really the Lord or is it the Emperor Nero? Who is in control? Is Jesus the coming King? Is he really coming? When he is coming? Is there any hope for Christians?

Christians in fear and frustrations have option to run away, abandon and denounce their Christian faith, join the evil and corrupt system of the society, reconvert themselves back to pagan religion. Such is the context in which God gives a revelation to John—I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The book of revelation is an apocalyptic genre. We cannot interpret it literally. Its meaning has to be found in the context of the whole of its literary genre. What is the message of God through John to the suffering Church?

God is giving hope to the suffering hopeless Christians. Through the Revelation, the Lord is saying to the suffering Christians:

My beloved, the dominion of wicked and evil that you see is not going to last forever. I will destroy the evil and the wicked. One day there will be the day of Judgment and the former heaven and earth which encompasses the kingdom of the wicked, which inhabits the evil world order, I shall bring to an end. The sea that represents the chaos and power of destruction

shall no longer exist. I will bring a new heaven and a new earth that encompasses a new world order, a new rule in which I will myself pitch my tent among you. And I will be your king and your ruler.

There won't be any more evil emperor like Nero. There will be no more injustice, no more persecution, no more pain. I shall personally make sure to comfort you, wipe your tears and take away your pain.

And in this new world order I want you to know that there will be a new Jerusalem, not the old Jerusalem, the city of peace, established by David where I was confined in the gorgeous Solomon temple worshiped by only Jews as a chosen nation and the gentile as an outcast.

The new Jerusalem is the Holy city, which is the beautiful bride, my body, the universal Church.

**Christian  
ministry cannot  
afford to have  
lazy,  
complacent,  
and careless  
people**

In this Jerusalem, I will make my dwelling and I will provide water of life.

In fact, God is saying: "Cheer up faithful Christians!

This new place is especially designed for you because you are the over-comers. You have been faithful and your names are written in the book of life. Yes you are suffering physi-

cally, economically because you have chosen to serve the Almighty God. You have chosen to live a righteous life. You shall be rewarded. Your suffering shall come to an end."

This is the promise of the future which is our hope. This message is ours. It is a promise in the times of hopelessness.

Christians do not live merely dictated by the reality of this world, but also dictated by the reality of the hope of eternity.

We are men and women of faith. We walk not by sight but by faith.

At the same time this text in Revelation also tells us about the reality of the future.

## 2. The Reality of the Future

The new world order is not open for all so called Christians.

We read in verse 8,

. . . but to those who are coward, who have compromised for the fear of life. Those who are unbelieving, and those who are sexually immoral, practicing idolatry, they shall not enter this place.

There will be a judgment day even for those who are so called people of God. The wicked will be punished.

Our membership in the Church, our Baptism certificate, our ordination, and our theological degree shall not be able save us.

We may be able to hide ourselves from people around us. And people in general may not say anything to us now because they don't want to confront us or hurt us.

But make no mistake, we shall not walk away from the reality of judgment. There will be a day, when goats will be separated from the sheep. Every penny that is stolen from public treasury shall be revealed. Every act we have performed in darkness will be exposed. Every injustice that we have done to others shall be brought to light.

That day we will have to go through the x-ray machine and our nakedness shall be exposed.

The Reality of the Future is something that we need to reflect upon so that we may repent and return to our Lord.

The second aspect of the Reality of Future is that we do not know when that last day will come.

We do not know the last day of God (the eschaton), nor do we know the last day of our life (our expiry date).

The psalmist in Psalm 90 cries out "Teach us to number our

days . . . for the length our days is 70 years.”

If we divide them symbolically by weekdays; 10 years for Monday, 20 years for Tuesday, 30 years for Wednesday, then one week becomes the span of our life and the Sunday becomes the last day of life.

I don't know where you are. I am in the afternoon of Friday and the Sunday is not far away. Probably some of you have already arrived close to the evening of Sunday.

Some of you look happier than me because you are thinking you are only in Tuesday and Wednesday. Sunday seems to be far away. Please don't be too happy, I have sad news for you. We live in the world of uncertainty, not knowing when accidents, dangerous diseases like Ebola might strike us. Some of us may not see Thursday and Friday, you may hit Sunday directly after Tuesday. I am not scaring you. I am just making us aware of the reality of the Future.

We better recognize the brevity of our life. Be wise and change our life style and reset our life goal.

My professor in US told me once that he had no money to invest for mission because he needs to first take care of his retirement. Little did he know that the Lord would call him before he would retire. He was diagnosed with cancer and within 90 days of diagnosis he was with the Lord.

If the Reality of the Future is so uncertain then what shall we do now?

This leads us to discuss about the preparation for Future.

### **3. The Preparation for the Future**

How should we live in the present for the sake of future?

The Bible has many good examples, but I want to draw attention to the letter of **Hebrews in chapter 11 and 12.**

Five things we must do:

#### **i. Live simple life**

**ii. Live Fearless life**

**iii. Throw off the things that hinder**

**iv. Run for the race marked out for us**

**v. Consider Jesus on a daily basis**

**i. Live simple life**

Heb. 11:13 describes how the heroes of past lived on earth:  
13 that on this earth were like aliens and strangers.

In verses 15-16, we read

If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Notice, God is not **ashamed** to be called their God.

My friends, neither the money nor the houses we own; neither our tribal association nor our families; neither our green card nor our citizenship; neither our General Secretaryship nor our qualifications as Reverend and Doctor can keep our mortal life on this earth forever. Dust we came from dust we shall return.

And if we are born of God then we shall live in the bosom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for eternity. We shall live in the new world order—the new heaven and the new earth.

Yes these Heroes of the past recognized the reality of life. They were wise. Sooner or later we must also recognize the reality of the future.

These great men and women of faith were attached with this world and yet they were detached from this world. They lived simple life, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Hope our God is not ashamed of us.

**ii. Live Fearless life**

The second comment we read about these great men and

women of faith in Heb. 11:36-38

Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— <sup>38</sup>the world was not worthy of them.

They were ordinary people like us but they were fearless and willing to die. Fear of death can make Christian ineffective, and good for nothing.

We can become toothless lion, a blunt and rusted knife, a new Mercedes car without Battery and Gas—

Unproductive barren Christian.

However, these men and women of faith were real people in the real world and yet they were fearless, unwilling to give in but serve the Lord alone.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom but the fear of men is the beginning of foolishness.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that these great men and women of faith has two common things.

They were neither materialistic nor coward, but they were simple and frugal in living and they were fearless and courageous.

Notice that these Heroes were not privileged like us. They did not have the privilege of knowing Jesus Christ. They did not have ministry of the Holy Spirit. They did not have the blessing of having the Whole Bible and the 2000 years of church history to learn from.

Many of our Baptist missionaries of 175 years whom we are celebrating and who have gone before us did not have washing machine, microwave, iPhone6, ipad, and other comforts of life. We are far more privileged today.

Yes, we are human beings. It is possible that a Christian can bend back and shrink back. It is possible that a Christian can

have low morale, weak faith, laid back attitude, lack of zeal for the ministry. Ministry can become a job.

It is possible that the flame may disappear and the spark is hidden by the heaps of ashes.

But sooner or later, we must realize the two fold reality. We are not going to live in this world forever and none of us can escape the death.

The new heaven and the new earth is coming. The new world order is imminent. Jesus is the coming King.

So why not we live simple and courageous life for God. Why not finish the task that is set before us with delight. Why not be confident of our business of the kingdom of God

Our call is a call of excellence in Christian faith. Jesus is same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Excellence in Christian faith is the call of the hour today. Mediocrity of religious rituals and piety has no place in our pilgrimage.

And so the writer of Hebrew says in Heb. 12:1-3:

Do another three things

**iii. Throw off things and sin that hinders**

**iv. Run for the race marked out for us**

**v. Consider Jesus and his suffering on a daily basis**

Let us consider them:

**iii. Let us Throw Off**

The Greek word here could be translated as put off; take off and lay down. We are called to put off two things—everything and sin. Of course the sins that slow us down must be put off but also everything and anything that slow us down must also be put aside. However good that might be, it is not worth if it makes us unproductive Christians.

Let's talk about sin in the body of Christ. Sin exists and prevails in different forms in the Body of Christ:

Selfishness, jealousy, covetousness, superior attitude, favoritism, tribalism, dishonesty, control and possessive nature, and extra-marital affinity or relationship.

The second obstacle is everything. This implies that these things may not be sinful and yet they can hinder our growth. They can become an obstacle. Things that may be even good or may be permissible but not beneficial.

If we are trying to please everybody, if we are overcommitted, if we are overemployed, if we lack the focus, if we are conscious of ethnic pride more than what is good for the Kingdom, they can become an obstacle in our ministry.

We may focus on religious piety and worship at the expense of holistic mission, we may be competitive in missions and in doing so we may duplicate and fail to be good steward of God's resources. There are hundreds of ongoing good things that we see around are permissible but I see them as an obstacle and not beneficial from the Kingdom perspectives. Church and ministry leaders need to reflect and reconsider.

The fourth thing we must do in preparation is to Run

**iv. Let us run with perseverance the race that is already marked out for us**

The Greek word *trekomen* means to rush forward in the line that is assigned to us, to exert oneself, make good progress. Figuratively it denotes stretching of our legs as wide as possible, pushing our chest and head forward with a desire to fly, without forgetting the rules of running in the track. One must reach the finish line without getting distracted—neither by the fellow competitor, nor by the cheering friends

The runner must run by the athletic rules and boundaries. One cannot run anywhere and everywhere. Running with Perseverance means continuity, its not only about a good start but also a good finishing.

Christian ministry cannot afford to have lazy, complacent, and careless people. There must be a sense of seriousness and sense of ownership.

In our running we must know that the race is already **marked out for us**.

What is that race marked out for all of us as a Baptist family in the northeast India?

I see four things that are marked out for us for the future.

#### **A. We must run for evangelism**

We are called to be not only evangelicals but also evangelistic

Last few months I have been involved in Hindi Ministry in North India where persecution is on rise. Let me give you the news headlines of the two months (Aug and Sept 2014)

- \* *Five Christians Arrested in Madhya Pradesh*
- \* *Christians Repeatedly Attacked in Bihar*
- \* *Pastor Arrested in Chhattisgarh*
- \* *Two Christian Women Arrested in Chhattisgarh*
- \* *Christian girl beaten up in Uttar Pradesh*
- \* *Christians Detained and Beat up in Uttar Pradesh*

What should we do in this changing scenario?

The general observation suggests that the persecution is on rise.

What do we do? Shall we retreat? Change our strategy? Stop evangelistic effort and do only social works?

How can we be confident of our business of preaching the good news of transformation?

How can we tell our beloved Prime Minister that we Christian love our country India no less than any Hindu fundamentalist groups in our country who accuse Christians of being pro-western. That our missionaries have contributed much more sacrificially in building this nation through schools, hospitals, social works and through the preaching of the gospel that transforms character. That even today we are carrying out that legacy of serving our nation through building the moral

fabrics of our society.

Our agenda does not agitate hatred and violence in society but our gospel brings peace and love.

How can we tell our political leaders that if an Indian becomes a follower of Jesus Christ, there will be one less drunkard on the street, there will be one less thief, one less rapist, one less murderer, one less prisoner that would save the tax payers money.

As we present the gospel of Jesus Christ to fellow Indian we do not prostelyz (per se), but we build our nation with character that will sustain.

### **B. We must run for Mentoring to maturity**

Some church leaders told me once, “Dr. Lama we have many baby Christians but we need adult Christians”

St Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus: That we need to keep on building the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:13)

When I was a child I would go to the market with my mother. While my mother is shopping I will be looking for sweets and waiting for her to buy one for me. I must get it before we return to home. If not, I shall fall down on the floor and cry at the top of my voice and publicly humiliate her until I get what I wanted.

Now I am old, I am a mature person. I don't do that. Most mature person when they go to the market, they think about their children and their spouse, and they think about their family. This is the beginning sign of maturity.

However, one must be able to move beyond this point. A mature person is not preoccupied by thought of me, myself, and I alone. As a Christian, if we are only preoccupied with ourselves, our family, our Church, our organizations, and our tribe then we are still not yet mature.

Maturity comes from the in-depth understanding of the Word of God.

I see a famine of the Word of God in the northeast. There is lack of adequate and systematic teaching of the Word of God in many of the Baptist Churches. We neither have good lectionary reading that covers the whole Bible nor we have good exegetical sermons preached every Sunday from our pulpits.

As a result the churches lack spiritual maturity, self-less service, passion for serving others, sacrificial zeal to transform our society.

I see hundreds of Baptist young theologians graduating from seminaries who further need mentoring in oratory skills to serving others sacrificially in love. I see the Baptist Churches fragmented in tribalism, regionalism, and nationalism.

Each one is busy with their little things reinventing the wheels not sharing the resources, not actualizing the potential of unity, uncared and unconcerned of others. Often biased in opinion and choices they make.

I see the disparity of resources between city Baptist Church and rural Baptist Church. There is lack of sharing of resources within the family. Instead, often, there is undercurrent jealousy and competition.

#### **D. We must run for holistic missions of Biblical proportion**

I see that the Baptist churches are still far behind in understanding the mandate of integral mission. Our mission is still far from being holistic missions.

Christian Schools and Hospitals are often left on their own. Somebody told me that “if you see a rundown, broken, and deteriorated school, it is certainly not a Catholic school, certainly not a Seventh Day Adventist, and certainly not belonging to Assembly of God but I can guarantee you 100 % that it would be a Baptist school.”

In most of our Baptist School, it is mostly non-Christian teachers that are teaching. It is interesting to note that the non-

Christian teachers are available to teach with low salary in our schools, but often not Christian teachers. In fact, in some places Christian teachers, after being appointed by the government with good salary sub-contract their jobs to someone else. I see this as failure of the Baptist Churches that we have not taught and mentored our members to consider teaching profession as one of the Christian missionary vocations.

Similar is the case with Christian medical doctors. We have failed as Baptist churches to pass on the vision to the youths of our time. If the American doctors could come in 18<sup>th</sup> century and serve in remote places like Impur, Kampokpi, Jorhat and Tura then why not our sons and daughters of the soil could join? Why some of our mission hospitals have to be sustained by the doctors from other faiths?

Holistic Missions means our role in preventing human trafficking in our society, defending the defenseless, speaking against the corruption, standing for justice and liberty, advocating for the villages that need better roads for communication, better teachers for education, and consistent electricity supply for children to study.

The Baptist Churches must reflect on the percentage of their annual income that is spent for social transformation activities.

While we run the race marked out for us with perseverance, we must consider Jesus.

#### **v. Consider Jesus Christ**

Notice in verse 2 and 3, the writer of Hebrews exhorts us to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ and consider his endurance and suffering. We are not called to fix our eyes on any person, certainly not on dollars.

Let us not fix our eyes on what other ministries are doing but fix our eyes on Jesus Christ.

He is the source of inspiration, strength, and vision. Jesus is the standard set for us. Jesus is our model. He is the author

and the perfecter of our faith. Our faith comes from him, is anchored in him, and complete in him. There is no Christianity without following the life and teachings of Jesus.

Look at him who for the joy set before him—your and our joy, endured the cross, scorning its shame.

His sacrifice is not only an act of atonement but also an act of example for us to follow. Consider him who endured such from sinful man.

We have no reason to complain. We are far better off always. We must emulate the virtues of Christ to pursue excellence in faith.

So my brothers and sisters, I invite you to consecrate your life back to Jesus Christ.

### **III. Conclusion**

We are the one who the posterity must remember with grateful heart and celebrate.

Shall we say Lord Jesus I love You and I give all my life to you.

I am ready to prepare myself for the new heaven and new earth. No matter what I shall live simple life, I shall live fearless life, I shall throw off unproductive things, I shall run the race that is marked out for me, and I shall consider your suffering.

Yes, following Jesus is not easy.

Yes we may suffer and we may be even persecuted to death, but we shall have mind that is set on heaven and heart filled with His Holy Spirit.

Our citizenship in heaven is intact.



**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life  
John 3:16**

# NEWS CLIPPINGS

## **Satribari Christian Hospital Chapel Fellowship (June 29 )**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, preached at Satribari Christian Hospital Chapel. The fellowship was well attended by all the staff and doctors of the Hospital.



## **Student and Faculty Retreat (July 5)**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, attended a Student and Faculty retreat for organized by the Asian Antioch Seminary at Rani, Guwahati.

## **200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Strategic Planning Workshop (July 17- August 10)**

The 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Strategic Planning Workshop of the American Baptist Churches / International Ministries (IM) was held at Green Lake, Wisconsin, USA. The Council was invited to attend the Workshop. Under the leadership the General Secretary, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, some prominent leaders of the Council represented Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) namely: Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, Rev Janang R. Sangma, General Secretary, Garo Baptist Convention (GBC), Luke



**CBCNEI Leaders during the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Strategic Planning Workshop**

Rongphar, Mission Secretary, Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC) and Rev Dr Anjo Keikung, General Secretary, Nagaland Baptist Churches Council (NBCC). CBCNEI leaders were able to sit for a meeting with the IM team concerning the Northeast Christian University (NECU) project.



**Visit to Emmanuel Baptist Church, Minot, North Dakota (July 27)**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, GS, worshipped with the members of the Emmanuel Baptist Church, Minot, North Dakota and shared the great need of support for the Northeast Christian University (NECU) Project.



**Lewis Memorial Hostel (LMH) Orientation and Freshers Day (August 5, 9)**

LMH started its 2014 session with the theme, ‘Renewing our mind,’ with 29 fresher and 28 old borders, representing 25 communities of North East region. Hostel orientation service was held on August 5 where Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, In-charge CBCNEI Students Ministry shared some particle aspects with the boarders. Together with the CBCNEI families, guest and well wishers LMH celebrated the freshers day on August 9 and Pastor Peter Thong Naga Christian Fellowship, Guwahati (NCFG) exhorted the students from the word of God on this occasion. The joyous night ended with a community feast where all the guests and well wishes

of the LMH participated and wished all the boys success and God’s blessing in their stay in the Hostel. The present students are perusing their

studies in the field of Arts, Science, Commerce, BBA, BCA, Civil engineering, 3D Animation, Medical Coaching and law. Pray continually for LMH Ministry particularly students studies and spiritual life.



### **Missionary Training Program (August 12-17)**

***Who are you? And What are you?*** These two were the questions that were put forth on the opening day of the Missionary training program for the Missionaries. Five days of re-learning for both on field and pre field Missionaries was organized by Mission department CBCNEI. All together 37 Missionaries from various

North East Churches working all over the world took part. Awor and Steve Johnson were the resource persons. Apart from the resources person the participants also had the privilege of Mrs. Achila Imchen who was also one of the participants shared on facilitative approach on questioning skills in storytelling. The training program dealt on the techniques of Oral Inductive Bible Study (OIBS), Bible storytelling, shepherding the sheep's and Imperatives of Discipline. Group discussions, practical demonstrations were the daily highlights of the day long activities. In line with the teachings of the resource persons, each individual were given the opportunity to partici-



pate and demonstrate what they have learnt. Certificates were given to all the participants on the last day of the program.



### **Mission Secretary's visit to Lotha Association and some Churches**

**(August 22-26)**

The Yikhum Baptist Church under the Kyong (Lotha) Baptist Churches Association (KBCA) is supporting a missionary, Mr. Atul Gogoi. As an acknowledgement and gratitude to the Yikhum Baptist Church for the unceasing love and support, Mission Secretary Rev Dr Jolly Rimai paid an official visit to the sponsoring Church, Wokha, Nagaland. The Mission Secretary also visited the Kyong Baptist Churches Association, Vankhosung, Wokha and met the Executive secretary Rev. M. C. Kithan and his staff. Through this short meeting with the executive secretary he encouraged the Kyong (Lotha) Association to organize Mission Consultation to strengthen the

Mission department of the KBES with assistance assured from CBCNEI. Rev Dr Jolly Rimai spoke about being a Mission minded Church and Mission members of the church at Old Changsu Baptist church on August 23. The elders of the church pledged to organize a mission. In August 24 Rev Jolly spoke at Yikhum Baptist by ushering words of gratitude to the church leaders and the members for the long partnership in mission with CBCNEI. After the service at Yikhum, he and the Mission board members of the church sat for a meeting.



### **Graduation- NECTAR Cross-Cultural Training**

**(August 29)**

The Graduation ceremony of the Cross-Cultural Training of NECTAR was held in Shillong.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, GS, was the guest speaker of the service. He spoke on, “Guidelines for Successful Graduates” (2 Tim 1:7).



### **Satribari Christian Hospital, Board Meeting (September 4)**

The Satribari Christian Hospital Board Meeting was held at Satribari. Various issues and concerns of the Hospitals were discussed.



### **Peace Committee Meeting (September 5)**

Peace Committee members: Rev Kari Longchar, Mr Bernard Marak, Mr Aziz-ul Haque, Rev Amos Humtsoe, Mr Kathar, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi and Mr

Atungo Shitri sat for a peace meeting to discuss on the peace issue between Nagaland and Assam. Rev Kari Longchar the chairman of the committee with his vast knowledge and expertise in peace mission shared on Peace, comparing between secular way of peace which is arbitrary, and Christian way of peace which is based on the love of God and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. The committee resolved to strongly voice out for peace and seek to bring peace in Northeast India and beyond.



### **National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) (September 7-12)**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, GS, attended the NCCI Executive meeting and its Annual General



**Peace Committee Meeting in progress**



National Council of Churches in India AGM

Meeting (AGM) held in Hyderabad.



### **Solidarity Peace Visits by Peace Committee of CBCNEI September 9-12**

In order to show solidarity the peace committee decided a solidarity peace prayer fellowship visits to Nagaland-Assam border in between 2014 to pray for them. The peace committee of the Council consists of Mr. Bernard

Marak, Rev. Kari Longchar and Rev. Amos Humtsoe, Mr. Sukumar Momin and Mr. Atungo Shitri represented the committee. Mr. Bernard Marak and Mr. Sukumar Momin coordinated on the Assam side (Uriamghat under Golaghat district) and Rev. Amos Humtsoe, Rev. Kari and Mr. Atungo Shitri coordinated on the Nagaland side (Ralan Area under Wokha district) and conducted prayer meetings and peace meetings.



Peace meeting organized by CBCNEI





Tyrannus Hall Meeting

**Tyrannus Hall Meeting  
(September 17)**

The Shillong Tyrannus Hall Meeting was held in Shillong. Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi attended the meeting to see the various needs of the hostels and to observe the progress and development of the Tyrannus Hall.



**Diverse Spiritual Tradition-  
Promoting Human Values &  
Inter- religious Harmony  
(September 18-22)**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, GS, participated in a meeting of the Diverse Spiritual Tradition-Promoting Human Values & Inter- religious Harmony in Delhi where he was able to interact with the Dalai Lama and various other national and international leaders.



Diverse Spiritual Tradition



Medical Board Member

**Medical Board Meeting  
(September 23-24)**

Council of Baptist Church in North East India (CBCNEI) Medical Board met at the Conference Hall, CBCNEI for its executive meeting. Under the Secretarialship of Dr. Lucita Momin, the members gathered and deliberated on the projects and activities of the Council's Healing ministries. Reports from various hospitals were presented by the members of respective hospitals.

**Visit to Karbi Anglong Baptist  
Convention (KABC), Karbi  
Anglong, Diphu  
(October 7-9)**

The General Secretary, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, made his first official visit to his own Convention KABC after he was installed as the GS of the Council. He was warmly welcomed and encouraged by the members of his own congregation.





Ms. Connie Gates visited JCMC

**Visit to Jorhat Christian Medical College (JCMC), Jorhat (October 9)**

Ms. Connie Gates, Special Assistant in Community Health Care, International Ministries (IM), Jamkhed, Near Pune, Maharashtra along with the General Secretary, CBCNEI, visited JCMC and interacted with the staff members.

**Eastern Theological College (ETC) (October 10)**

The ETC Board met at ETC, Jorhat, to discuss the various issues concerning the administration, development and academic progress of the College.



ETC Board Meeting

**Baptist Youth Fellowship of North East India (BYFNEI) (October 13)**

The first BYFNEI executive meeting was held in CBCNEI, Mission Compound under the presidentship of Rev Mathotmi Vasha and Mr Vihuo Rhi as the Secretary. Youth Secretaries from different conventions



came together to deliberate on the affairs of the Baptist Youth under Council.

**World Vision Orientation and Lesson Learnt Workshop (October 16)**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI led a Bible Study on “*T e a m Building from Biblical Per-*

*spective,*” at the World Vision Orientation and Lesson Learnt Workshop organised by World Vision at Six Mile, Guwahati.

**Christian Literature Board Meeting (CLC) (October 20)**

The Christian Literature Board Meeting sat for its last meeting with the outgoing Director Rev K. Mahangthei with all its members. The board bid farewell to Rev Mahangthei with words of gratitude and acknowledgement. The board also participated in an active discussion on the welfare and development of CLC.



CLC Board Meeting



Strategic Planning Consultation

## Strategic Planning Consultation

(October 20-21)

CBCNEI Executive Committee members and leaders from various renowned organizations participated in a two day strategic planning consultation held in CBCNEI, Mission Compound. This was a consultation to elaborately discuss on the five year plan of the Council prepared by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI. Rev Bonny Resu, General Secretary, Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF), led the delegates into a soul searching three part message on the theme, "Behold I will do a New Thing," based on Isa. 43: 18-19. Mr. Sundar Sangma, Vice President, International Ministry Development

for Haggai Institute, was invited to moderate the entire Consultation. The topics discussed during the Consultation were:

- i. Mission and Evangelism
- ii. Spiritual and Ministry Development
- iii. Leadership Development
- iv. Educational Development
- v. Revival and Restructuring
- vi. Relationship Building
- vii. Facilities Development
- viii. Communication and Information Development.

Various findings and recommendations were brought out after long intensive consultation and put up to the Executive Committee for approval.





Memento presentaion to NBCC during the EC meeting

### **Executive Committee Meeting (EC) (October 22-24)**

The Executive Committee meeting was held in CBCNEI. This was the first meeting with the new General Secretary, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi. The Strategic Planning Consultation organized by the General Secretary was received well by the members of the EC. The findings and recommendations brought out during the Consultation were taken into consideration and suggested for

precised recommendations. The EC also took this time to bid farewell to Rev K. Mahangthei, the Outgoing Director, Christian Literature Centre (CLC). A memento with a note of appreciation was presented to him for his service rendered to the ministry of CBCNEI through CLC. A citation with a memento was also presented to the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), for hosting the India Mission Summit (IMS) on behalf of the Council.



### Satribari Christian Hospital Staff and Students' Retreat (October 25)

The General Secretary, CBC-NEI, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi spoke on the occasion of the Satribari Christian Hospital Staff and Students' Retreat



held at Borbituli Baptist Church, Sonapur. Basing on the theme of the retreat, "Seek and Ye shall find," he spoke on the topics, "The best of life for the rest of Life," (Matt. 6:33) and "The Power of Persistent Prayer," (Matt 7:7). One hundred thirty students and staff attended the retreat.



### Interfaith Prayer for Peace (October 26)

An interfaith Prayer for Peace was organised by the Interfaith Prayer Fellowship along with the Hindus and Muslims communities at Boko, Assam. Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, participated as the resource person in the event. A portion of the Quoran and Bhagavad Geeta were read by

the respective religious leaders. Rev Solomon Rongpi preached on the importance of keeping harmony, fellowship and peace as the primary duty of Christians in relation to the promises of God's protection, grace and peace based on Num. 6:24-27.

the respective religious leaders. Rev Solomon Rongpi preached on the importance of keeping harmony, fellowship and peace as the primary duty of Christians in relation to the promises of God's protection, grace and peace based on Num. 6:24-27.



Interfaith Prayer for Peace

# 37 Years of my Ministry in Christian Literature Centre (CLC) (1977 - 2014 )



*Rev K. Mahangthei, Outgoing  
Director, CLC*

First of all I thank God for calling me and using me for CLC Literature Ministry. Secondly, I would like to thank CLC Board members, Executive Committee members and General Secretaries of the Council. Because of their moral and prayer support, today CLC ministry is growing well. I have served this ministry of the council for 30 years.

I was appointed as a Sales Manager at CLC Imphal. I took charge of Bibles and other books stock worth about ₹10,000 and total sales of CLC Imphal in 1976 was ₹24,000. I was promoted to the post of Dy. Director as Rev John, Director had to leave CLC. About two decades CLC Guwahati and Dimapur were suffering acute financial shortage. In July 1, 2010 I was appointed as Director of CLC by the Council. Under my Directorship by the grace of God I was able to oversee the following important CLC developmental works:

1. 07/09/2010: The RCC building of Seagate was renovated and furnished book racks and other furniture that cost ₹2,30,000. Rev Dr A.K.Lama dedicated the building to the Lord for CLC ministry. All the Board members of CLC attended in the dedication service.

2. 28/05/2012: CLC Guwahati book room was renovated and the dedication was grace by Pastor Aziz-ul Haque of GBC/CLC Board member.

3. 25/08/2012: CLC Dimapur branch and NBCC building was fully renovated and CLC guest room and Canteen were opened and new book racks were replaced which cost about ₹22,00,000.

4. 19/06/2014: CLC purchased a plot of land at Dimapur near Purana Bazar area 57,600 sq.ft. at the rate of ₹100.00 per sq. ft. for future development of the CLC ministry.

5. 31/03/2014: Sales ending for the year 2013-2014 was ₹12,25,61,308.00 having a net profit above one and half crore which was the highest sale in the history of CLC for the last 45 years :

Sales on branch wise :

- i) CLC Publications ₹15,91,587
- ii) CLC Guwahati ₹1,68,52,814
- iii) CLC Dimapur ₹82,68,516
- iv) CLC Imphal ₹7,12,79,468
- v) CLC Ukhrlul ₹1,81,89,033
- vi) CLC Senapati ₹63,79,890

As I retire I would like to thank God because He used me for 37 years for the Literature ministry. He granted me a good health, knowledge, sound mind and joy. Specially, God gave me joy in working with CLC. I enjoyed working with CLC staff, Publishers and customers. I gave reports of some of the important events and accounts of CLC to prove that CLC is moving toward to the goals: achieving the goals one after another. CLC success is progressing every year. CLC's work nature is team work and team success. CLC budget for the years 2014-15 is above 14.5 crores and budget for 2015-16 is above 16 crores. I am sure that CLC will achieve these sales targets. I wish and pray that God may help CLC ministry to grow more and more forever.

## My experiences:

i) **HARD WORK:** To me hard work is the key to success. It may begin from the top to improve CLC Work Culture.

ii) **UNITY:** To me unity of the staff is the strength of CLC. It is Important for building up the society.

III) **RELATIONSHIP:** To have a right relationship with GOD and with the people is very important because CLC is GOG's Ministry.

IV) **POLITENESS:** Politeness is the most important in business management like CLC. It values BILLIONS so Practice it always.



## CORRIGENDUM

Issue 65, Vol 2

Page no. 77

The title of the report, "Brief Report of the Eastern Theological, Jorhat," replace the picture and name with the picture and name below:

1. Picture



2. Name: As reported by Rev Zhabu Terhuja, President, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat.

# Celebrating 175 years of American Mission in India: Council of Baptist Churches in North East India - Past and Present

In the spring of 1836, on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, four people set foot on the banks of Brahmaputra at Sadiya. Nathan and Eliza Brown; Oliver and Harriet Cutter left their families, friends and country to make Northeast India their home. They confronted dense jungles, hostile tribes and rugged hills. Yet, believing they had been led to a fruitful place they began to learn Assamese, set up their printing press and gave themselves to the task of translating, publishing and teaching. Thus they began evangelizing Northeast India. They planted the seed of gospel in northeast India and some of them lived to see the seed sprouting. The nineteenth century was a time of planting, a time of struggle and moreover a time of bitter disappointment but slowly the gospel began to penetrate into the deep jungles



of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. By the beginning of twentieth century the gospel spread across northeast India although the numbers of believers were less. With the increase of Christian community there was a need to develop trained local leadership. Therefore mission schools and bible schools were established. There was also expansion and institutionalization of Christian health services. Missionary doctors and nurses established hospitals and nursing schools. Tura mission hospital was the first mission hospital established in 1910.

The field work of northeast India was largely the responsibility of American Baptist mission until 1950. In 1914, the national churches form themselves into Assam Baptist Christian Convention. This organization grew in stature and finally in January 1950, the Council of Baptist Churches in Assam (ABCA) was formed by the amalgamation of Assam Baptist Christian Convention under the leadership of its first General Secretary Rev A. F. Merrill. Later the name was changed to CBCAM (Council of Baptist Churches in Assam and Manipur.) Rev Edward Singha became the first indigenous General Secretary in 1956 until his retirement in 1969 following his death on January 12, 1970. In 1959 a new name “Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI)” was adopted as a genuine indigenous body representing the churches in northeast India.

Over the years CBCNEI grew to 7380 churches and 100 associations and 6 conventions with 4 associate members and various partners.

**The six conventions are:**

1. Assam Baptist Convention (ABC)
2. ARUNACHAL BAPTIST CHURCH COUNCIL (ABCC)
3. GARO BAPTIST CONVENTION (GBC)
4. KARBI ANGLONG BAPTIST CONVENTION (KABC)
5. MANIPUR BAPTIST CONVENTION (MBC)
6. NAGALAND BAPTIST CHURCH COUNCIL (NBCC)

## **Associate Members**

1. Evangelical Church of Maraland
2. Mising Baptist Kebang
3. Shillong Baptist Church
4. Zomi Baptist Church

## **Global Partners**

1. Board of International Ministries (BIM)
2. Baptist World Alliance (BWA)
3. Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF)

The council is administered by the General Secretary, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi; President Rev Dr Kavito Zhimomi; the executive members and the secretaries.

The various departments under CBCNEI are:

1. Missions headed by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai
2. Peace and Justice headed by Mr Atungo Shitri
3. Property headed by Mr Pawan Bhuyan
4. Medical headed by Dr Lucita Momin &
5. Finance headed by Mr Vikato Shikhu

## **Ministries of the Council**

**A. Theological College of CBCNEI:** Eastern Theological College (ETC), the premier theological and training institute of the Council has been catering to the ever growing and diverse needs of the region and even beyond in the field of leadership development for the last 100 years. Today ETC boasts of more than 2500 graduates working in various fields of Christian ministry, including more than 800 serving pastors in rural areas.

**B. Healing Ministries:** The Council has Six hospitals which are providing healthcare to the sick and the suffering. They are located in four states in the region.

### **1. Tura Christian Hospital:**

Established in 1909

### **2. Jorhat Christian Medical Centre**



**Kangpokpi Christian Hospital**

Established in 1924

**3. Impur Christian Hospital**

Established in 1912

**4. Kangpokpi Christian Hospital:**

Established in 1920

**5. Babupara Christian Hospital:**

Established in 1949

**6. Satribari Christian Hospital:**

Established in 1926

**C. Justice and Peace Ministries:**

The ministry of the Peace and Justice Ministries is engaged in imparting legal awareness and advocacy campaign programs to the members of the Council in the areas of justice related; religious freedom, anti-human trafficking, child and woman rights, criminal justice system and other social justice related issues of Right to Education, Food Security and Domestic Violence. Legal interventions are also conducted through pro bono legal aids and services to the members of the Council who are in need of help and assistance when they come in confrontation with the law or require drafting of legal documents and filing. Trainings and teaching on legal education are also held for the purposes of educating members to be aware of the local laws as well as legal consultations are held

to help faith based institutions in compliance with the local laws.

The Department is also engaged in peace building and conflict transformation in the area of ethnic conflict in the region. Intervention programs are held to diffuse tensions through peace meetings, monitoring and mapping of conflict areas; trainings of local peacemakers are also conducted to engage effectively during crises period; training on peace education for peacemakers through Eastern Theological College has also started; and relief and rehabilitation assistance are also conducted in partnership with partners both from home and abroad. Interfaith dialogue and reconciliations programs are also conducted to co-ordinate among various faith groups with an aim to foster religious harmony contributing towards positive social change.

### **Programs**

1. Legal Awareness and Interventions Programs (BIM supported)
2. Pro bono legal aid and services (Supported by attorney colleagues)
3. CBCNEI Institutions Legal Consultations (CBCNEI Supported)
4. Peace Building and Conflict Transformation Workshops and Seminars (BIM and BFNA supported)
5. Interfaith Dialogue and Reconciliation Program (BIM supported)
6. Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance Program (BIM, APBF, NEICC and Conventions supported)

### **D. Mission Department:**

Mission Desk coordinates mission activities not only of the evangelists from the conventions, but it also functions as a facilitator for mission partnerships between other mission agencies and the local church associations and conventions. The department also organizes community development works among the poor and needy areas of the Northeast region.

The Mission Department is committed to work with the Conventions/Councils, Associations, Churches, and Individuals who are Baptists by faith. We are also committed to partner with other organizations who believe in the sufficiency of the finished Work of Christ on the cross.

**Activities:**

**i. Mission Partnership:** The Mission Department of the Council explores Mission Organizations and Churches for partnership with our churches. This enables our churches to tap the resources available in our partners. Partnership has been signed with fifteen Mission Organizations.

**ii. Advanced Mission Leadership Training:** This is leadership development of the Mission Department.

**Training includes:**

- Streamlining Mission:
- Legal Issues in Mission and Evangelism
- Caring for Missionaries
- Discipleship Development
- Mission possibilities
- Missionary Training Program
- **Cross Cultural Missionary Training program:** A one-month cross cultural Missionary training program is conducted to train missionary candidates from our churches.

• **Infield and Pre-field Training:** In order to refresh as well as prepare the missionaries those ready to go to the Mission fields and also for those already in the field, a one week missionary training is being conducted for our missionaries sent by our churches.

**iii. Evolve Mission Strategies:**

In order to make our mission relevant to the context of the people and make greater impact in the mission field, we help develop mission policies and strategies for our churches.

- **Community Development Worker concept:** In this

concept, we train the Missionaries on developing skills: farming of different kind. They were also financially assisted to enable them start farm and also help needy families in the mission fields.

- Each one Catch one strategy: To make greater impact in the mission field, the strategy of “Each one Catch one” was developed and envisioned to the leaders. This strategy enables the churches to be more focused and intentional in their mission work.

#### **iv. Resource Center:**

The Mission Department of the council also serves as a Resource Center for our churches in doing Mission work. This is done through:

- Surveying of our churches’ mission work:
- Survey and Mapping of unreached areas:

#### **E. Property Department**

Council of Baptist Churches in North East India is privileged with so much of landed properties wherein we have all the buildings and infrastructure built on by our predecessors “American Baptist Foreign Mission Society”. They spent much time, energy and finance in meticulously locating the prime spots to have all the mission stations in North East India. Amazingly! When we look at and visit all these places we could find the strenuous journey they had to undergo to build these properties and assets which we are now enjoying. During the course of time they have passed down to us the following assets for us to be the steward and carry on with the ministries for the glory of God and for the extension of His Kingdom:

##### **i. Council Headquarter at Panbazar, Guwahati:**

This property is located at the prime area of the city where we have the following facilities in the campus:

**a) Conference Centre Complex:** Accommodation for 115 conference /guests with 50 seat capacity conference hall in 3 (three) buildings along with the Canteen.

b) **Lewis Memorial Boys' Hostel:** Total capacity 57 students in two buildings.

c) **Headquarter Office Block**

d) **Old Office Block**

e) **Jubilee Complex Phase I & II**

f) **Christian Literature Centre Building**

g) **Staff Quarters**

#### **F. Christian Literature Centre (CLC):**

CLC is the literature wing of the Council serving the needs of over 7000 churches through its centre in Guwahati, Dimapur, Imphal, Senapati and Ukhrul. Its Mission is to be “Life Transforming Biblical Christian Resources Centre.”

CLC has five branches:

1. Guwahati, Assam
2. Dimapur, Nagaland
3. Imphal, Manipur
4. Ukhrul, Manipur &
5. Senapati, Manipur



**CLC Activities:** To print, publish and sell in collaboration directly or indirectly with other publishers, producers and booksellers, having similar objectives, for the promotion of Christian literature.

**G. Student Ministry:** The Council runs three hostels for college students. Through these institutions the boarders have the opportunities to attend Bible camps, vesper services, theological lectures, Bible studies, games and sports.

White Memorial Hostel



Ministry, Guwahati, Assam (Girls)

2. Lewis Memorial Hostel Ministry, Guwahati, Assam (Boys)

3. Shillong Tyrannus Hall, Shillong, Meghalaya (Boys)

## **H. Baptist News**

The Baptist News is a publication of the CBCNEI mainly consisting of news and activities of the Baptist family in Northeast India for our members and well wishers to read and get connected with each other.

## **I. CBCNEI Archive & Library**

CBCNEI Archive and library is situated at the old office building of CBCNEI. It was established during the time of Christian Missionaries back in 1847. The main objective of the CBCNEI Archive and Library is to collect, organize and preserve the old historical records of the Christian and Council records. It is a reference and research centre for research scholars, Christian scholars, tribal studies, cultural studies, history, geography, and linguistic.

### **Collections:**

The library has a huge collection of documentary heritage of early missionaries since 1847 till the present time. It has a collection of more than 2000 documents. Some of the rare documents found in this library are given below:

American Baptist Missionary since 1836.

Missionary reports since 1846.

Baptist missionary Magazine since 1887.

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society

Church Record since 1868

First newspaper in North East India: Arunodoi (Assamese) since 1846-1853 8 Vols.

The library has a rare collection of reports of some of the indigenous tribes of North East India like Assamese, Garo, Naga (Ao, Lotha, Sumi, Tangkhul, Angami, Anal, Rengma, Sangtam), Adi, Abor, Miri, Dalfa, Hindi, Mikir, Manipuri, Nepali,

Rabha, Thado, Kerki, Oriya and photographs of early missionaries in North East India. Apart from these rare documents the library has different documents consist of journals, newsletters, reports, reviews, Bible commentaries, Christian education, Bible Encyclopedia, Bible dictionaries, different books on sermons, Autobiographies, biographies and hymns. To keep the history of the works and contributions of early Baptist Christian alive for future generation, the library has digitized all the rare documents. We are looking forward to create a digital library very soon which can collect, organize and preserve the documents in electronic format using a digital library software which is accessible through Internet.

#### **Plan of Action**

1. Eastern Theological College: Upgrading the Library
2. Healing Ministry: Upgrading equipments, human resource and hostels for nursing schools
3. Student Ministry: Expansion of Tyrannus Hall and scholarship for needy hostellers
4. New Christian Literature Centre (CLC) in Arunachal Pradesh
5. Northeast Christian University (NECU) Project

With the help of our God and His People, CBCNEI serves and empowers the Baptist churches in Northeast India so that members will be effective in transforming the societies within their own communities, encourages and equips our Baptist Churches in witnessing Jesus Christ so that all people groups may come to know Jesus Christ and experience life in its fullness; fosters Baptist unity in Christ in the face of divisive forces working against us; advocates justice and renders humanitarian service to the poor and the marginalized; and be an agent of peace and reconciliation against ethnic, religious and political conflict. The CBCNEI envisions facilitating its members to shine in their faithful witness to the truth, to strive in their service to the needy, and to struggle utmost for the unity of His Church, the body of Jesus Christ.

On the Occasion of the India Mission Summit (IMS) at the Nagaland Baptist Church Council Convention Center, October 5, 2014, the delegates declared the following statements

### **CONFESSION**

While '*Celebrating the Past*' throughout the days of this summit we have become painfully aware of our failures and shortcomings as the Body of Christ. Therefore:

#### **WE CONFESS TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER**

That we have failed to be living witnesses to our friends and families.

That we have failed to be faithful stewards of all the resources God has entrusted to us.

#### **WE CONFESS TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER**

That we recognize and are deeply disturbed by the reality of human trafficking in our regions;

That we have not protected our women and children from being trafficked in bonded labor, slavery or sex trade;

That we have not addressed the root causes that create vulnerability to trafficking.

#### **WE CONFESS TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER**

That we have been unaware and indifferent to the suffering and persecution of fellow believers in our nation.

#### **WE CONFESS TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER**

That we have failed to provide opportunities and avenues for women to exercise their God-given gifts and abilities in ministry.

#### **WE CONFESS TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER**

That we have failed our youth in their quest for meaning in life and faith in Christ; That we have failed in our responsibility to be effective mentors and role-models.

## **CALL TO ACTION**

In light of the above, we therefore recommend the following actions to be considered and adopted.

### **I. We COMMIT**

**a. To seek** God for His vision for the extension of His Kingdom and to continue the legacy of being sacrificial, living witnesses within our communities and beyond.

**b. To encourage** our churches to adopt practices that promote integrity, transparency and accountability in the stewardship of resources God has entrusted.

**c. To promote** and strengthen the Baptist network and address issues facing the church in India, we recommend convening future India Mission Summits.

### **II. We recommend the formation of a BAPTIST PARTNER COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS**

**FREEDOM** to network to promote functional unity within the Baptist family in addressing these issues; through a network of prayer and victim support; and to provide a platform for proactive initiatives.

### **III. We recommend the formation of a BAPTIST PARTNER COMMISSION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING** to enlighten and empower churches

**a.** to tackle the root causes thereby reducing vulnerability and prevalence of trafficking in our regions;

**b.** to engage in the rescue and restoration of the victims of human trafficking.

**IV.** We recommend the formation of a **BAPTIST WOMENS' FORUM** to promote women leadership and gender equality in ministry.

**V.** We recommend the formation of a **BAPTIST YOUTH FORUM** to empower the youth to engage their generation in their quest for identity and purpose in life; and to understand their role in passing on the legacy of Christian faith.

### **PLEDGE**

We, the delegates of the 2014 India Mission Summit, affirm and agree with the Call to Action, and thereby pledge, by the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, to seek to bring it to fulfillment.

Dear Readers,  
Please send your stories, testimonies, reports, articles and Church News.

You can mail to:

**The Editor Baptist News**  
**CBCNEI, Panbazar**  
**Guwahati, Assam-781001, India**  
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## **The Baptist News**

The Baptist News is non-profit publication of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India. It is published quarterly.

### **Disclaimer:**

The views expressed in this Publication do not necessarily represent the official position of the Council. Each contributor is solely responsible for the views expressed in his or her article.

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*The Finance Secretary*  
*CBCNEI, Panbazar,*  
*Guwahati, Assam 781001 India*

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*Assam-781001, India*  
*email: editor@cbcnei.in*