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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 Anlong Baptist Convention, Manipur Baptist Convention and Nagaland Baptist Church Council.

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THE NEW LIFE

As I begin to pen down pondering on the theme “Alive in Christ”. I began to inquisitively wonder about the undeniable truth down from the history about our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man who died but rose again on the third day. He willingly gave His life on the cross so that we can have a New Life in Him. For it is by Grace through faith alone we have been saved from our sins and transgressions. Now that we have been redeemed with grace and mercy we less deserve, we are made alive in Christ.

When Christ nailed our sins and burdens on the Cross, we were set free from the bondage of our Sins and burdens. When he rose again, we were new born through His spirit and were made victors. We have Christ’s righteousness in us and ***“this righteousness from God comes through faith to all those who believe (Rom 3:22).”*** We have been adorned with the power of transcending any problem or situation with faith. Now we have the power and authority in the spiritual realm because of our position in Christ. Our life of emp-

tiness had been filled with the promises and security in God. We are alive now, and shall live forever, and it is all because of the graceful sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Glory be to God!

Reader Friends, we must all be grateful and praise the Almighty God for blessing us with a New Life in Christ. Let us rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord and celebrate our precious life. Let us give thanks for the new life granted to us in Him.

The first issue of the Baptist News for this year has inclusive contents on activity reports of CBCNEI departments, news updates, and sermonic messages on the theme "Alive in Christ" and some articles on social issues. We are effortlessly working out our task of publishing and updating details of the affairs of our Baptist Churches in North East India in every issue to avail the readers a quality newsletter.

Please visit our website: www.cbcnei.in to see the news updates to learn more about the ministries of the council. And we are also marching forward envisioning with a broader perspective. A little act of generosity will help us see through in realizing our visions. I also encourage all members of CBCNEI to subscribe the Baptist News so that you can learn about the works of the Council.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI



Are We Rooted in God's love?

Ms Vilibo Kiyelho Yepthomi, Lecturer in Dept. of History of Christianity, Nito Theological College, Zunheboto, Nagaland.

The only love we find with no strings attached is Christ love for us. It is unconditional, patient, kind and it has no jealousy (1 Cor 13:4). His love is the root and ground of all that we experience and receive in God. We experience joy and happiness even when our life's situation gets blind only when we are deeply rooted in God's love.

In Eph 3: 17- 18, Paul encourages us to grow deeply rooted in God's love because when we are rooted in God's love we will be filled with a measure of all the fullness of God. Let us see what is a root? A root is a part of a plant that draws life from ground. When our roots are grown deep down into God's love, it keeps us strong and lively. God's love for us is selfless and amazing. It always covers multitudes of our sin (1 Pt 4:8), it is deeper and it surpasses all other roots. The love that He displayed for us on the Cross needs no explanation because its overwhelming and it move us each time we ponder on it. But for most of us we are either rooted in our own abilities or in our talents rather than in God's love. We often fail to understand that He has much more for us. Each day He wants us to put our roots down deeper and to walk with him in spirit. His love is the key to

life and healing. A healthy plant is one which is always deeply rooted in the soil; though rain, storm or sunny days comes it is never shaken. In fact when it's watered, it grows healthier and its leaves become fresher but a plant which is not well rooted in the soil dies away when it's put out in the sun. So, God's love is like a healthy soil. When we firmly plant our roots in His love, we flourish in His love and our branches will not die. If we plant ourselves in the worldly soil we will die out and our roots will be shallow.

As Christians, we should always be reminded that when we let ourselves be rooted deeply in God's love, it cures fears, pain and trauma. It cures all the insecurities and the need of affirmation from this world. But we all need to understand that in order to grow into a fully grown and matured plant; it still needs to be watered daily. We should really dip our toes into the beginnings of God's deep love by constantly communicating, listening and meditating with God through our constant prayers. And by doing this we exercise our faith and completes a process of 'watering' our souls to stay alive daily in Christ. Therefore, let us reason ourselves and reflect whether our roots in God's love is struck deep and that we are secure or do we still need to deepen our roots in God's love lest we wither away.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU.

JAMES 4:8





Being Alive In Christ

Pastor Peter Thong, Naga Christian Fellowship Guwahati.

My five years old daughter was quite disturbed and curious after attending the funeral of my late Aunt.

I told her that her granny is with Jesus. That seems to make her brighter, but her curious mind won't stop there. She asked, "*Are you going to die Daddy?*". After a prolonged silence I said, "*Yes, we are all going to die someday, but if we love Jesus and obey His word we will go to heaven like granny*". She looked at me sadly and said, "*Daddy I don't want you to die*".

Many people in the world fear what will happen if they die or what if they suddenly die. Physical death as oppose to life is most often attached with fear and feelings that are dark and dreary. Yet, in Christendom death is only the doorway to a new life in Christ both physically and spiritually. The emphasis here though, is on the spiritual aspect.

To be death in a biblical, spiritual sense is not non-existence. "It is an existence devoid of the true purpose, character and fulfillment of human life created in the image of God." God told Adam in the Garden of Eden that if he eats the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. After he sinned, Adam died in a more significant way spiritually.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul writes that the reason for the Ephesians spiritual death was their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). It was because of sin that the Ephesians had been death, but they were made alive because of Christ (Eph 2:5). It is only through Jesus that believers stand righteous before God.

However, they are still responsible to grow into the position of righteousness. Therefore, as believers we must choose to ignore the evil desires that remain within us (Rom 6:11-14). And discipline oneself for the purpose of Godliness and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Our faith in Christ is more than a judicial act of God forgiving our sins. It is an active dynamic faith that engages us in an uncompromising war with all that is opposed to the kingdom of God. Therefore, it is not enough to experience and know the truth of the Gospel. We are to use the sword of truth to battle forward the border of His kingdom and righteousness, with the Kingdom's qualities of love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

The wonderful thing is, we are not alone in this battle, but He is at work in us both to will and do of his good pleasure. He is energizing and creating in us the power and desire to accomplish His will (Phil 2:13,14).

Therefore, being alive in Christ is to stop living a life of depression, defeat or discouragement. Let us live more as victors than people who live in fear, worry and only live to accumulate human assets. Nothing can defeat a Spirit Filled Christian. Let us give our time energy and resources to the propagation of Christ's truth and love rather than investing in worries about the negative things that drags us down.

We no longer have to live in fear of what lies beyond the grave since we are fully identified with Christ in his Resurrected life and with full cognizance of our powerful position in Christ.

Let us not merely live, but live vibrantly as **“Being Alive in Christ.”**



**WHOEVER ABIDES IN HIM DOES NOT SIN. WHOEVER SINS HAS
NEITHER SEEN HIM NOR KNOWN HIM.**

1JOHN 3:6

REPORTS FROM JUSTICE & PEACE MINISTRY OF THE COUNCIL

As reported by Mr Atungo Shitri, Secretary for Justice & Peace, CBCNEI

National United Christian Forum
(CBCI, NCCI and EFI)
Yusuf Sadan, 1 Ashok Place, New Delhi - 110 001
Tel: 011-2373 0657

**Statement of the National United Christian Forum
Issued at the National Consultation on
“Upholding Constitutional Rights of Minorities, with Special
Reference to Christians”
(March 17)**

This meeting of the leadership of the Church in India takes place in a moment of global crisis in which people of faith are facing mass violence, even extermination in the Middle-East at the hands of religious fanatics. We offer our prayers for and stand in solidarity with the Christian communities in Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and neighbouring countries. The situation in those parts of the world once again brings home to us the dangers of religious intolerance.

We, therefore, rejoice in India’s ancient and rich diversity of cultures, languages, religions and ethnicities. We celebrate the Constitution of India and the strength of its institutions. Our deep love for and commitment to our country and our fellow citizens lends urgency to our reflection on the challenges that we face as a nation.



The cultural DNA of India of pluralism and diversity is being threatened. We are anxious about the implications of the fundamentalist political thesis that India is “one nation, one people and one culture”. A nation of cultural homogeneity is impossibility and any effort to impose it is fraught with grave ramifications for country.

The Church in India asserts its stake in the country’s development. As citizens and followers of Christ, we have contributed to and continue to work for social development in all spheres of national life. We are committed to protecting the dignity of the human being in this great nation. We participate in this endeavour with other religious and social communities, civil society and all people of good will.

We are deeply concerned about the physical violence - arson, murder and rape of our religious personnel both men and women - as with the structural violence which is manifest in urban and rural India, in social and administrative excesses, and aberrant judicial pronouncements.

We are aghast at, and condemn in the strongest terms, the brutal rape of an aged Nun leading a convent and school in rural West Bengal. We locate all incidents of violence, of which there have been over 150 in 2014 including two murders, in an environment of hate that has so marked the political landscape of India for the last two years and shows no signs of abating soon.

We welcome the occasional statements of those in authority of adhering to the Constitution of India and, in particular to its assurances of the Freedom of Faith. However, these statements

fail to have any impact on the leadership of socio- political organizations that are polarizing the nation with the language and acts of intolerance, hate and violence. Political groups demonize various religious traditions and terrorize vulnerable groups. These groups seek to sabotage the Constitution which alone brings us together in a national identity.

We are particularly alarmed at the assault on the education system and the human resource development systems which are a critical building block of modern India.

The President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, noted the rise of communalism and the targeting of religious minorities in his address to the Nation on 25th January 2015, the eve of Republic Day. President Mukherjee said “In an international environment where so many countries are sinking into the morass of theocratic violence ... We have always reposed our trust in faith-equality where every faith is equal before the law and every culture blends into another to create a positive dynamic. The violence of the tongue cut and wounds people’s hearts. The Indian Constitution is the holy book of democracy. It is a lodestar for the socio-economic transformation of an India whose civilisation has celebrated pluralism, advocated tolerance and promoted goodwill between diverse communities. These values, however, need to be preserved with utmost care and vigilance.”

These developments bring us together not just in the pain of injury, but in the need to reflect and pray for the country in its journey.

We also share a reflection that citizenship is not just co-existence but living together as a way of life. For us the kingdom of God is where every human person has an equal share. Mother Teresa understood this and set a high example.

We therefore, reaffirm our commitment as the church in India:

1. To bear witness to Christ by demonstrating the values of justice, equality, fraternity and liberty in all our work and words.
2. Our service to all people and in particular our affirmative action for the poor and vulnerable, especially women

3. To work towards strengthening civil society in India,
4. To cultivate responsible relationships with all communities,
5. To pray for the nation, its political leadership and institutions

Our recommendations to the Government

1. This meeting takes note of the continuing plight of Dalits and Tribals in India and internal displacement in several parts of the country. The sharp decline in the budgetary allocations for members of the Schedule Castes is a cause for deep concern. We call upon the Government not only to restore but also to increase, the financial allocations for Dalits and Tribals. In particular, we affirm our continued support to the struggle of the Dalit Christians for their constitutional rights.

2. Take urgent and effective measures to restore the rule of law and curb the targeted and communal violence. The guilty must be traced, and action under the law should be taken. Police officers must be held accountable for communal crimes in their jurisdiction

3. Insulate government controlled school and higher education, syllabi and curriculum from political intervention and thesis of religious nationalism.

4. Enhance allocations to strengthen the poorer sections of religious minorities to ensure their participation in public life so they can benefit from the opportunities created by the development processes.

5. To ensure adequate representation of religious minorities in the police, administrative and judicial services at all levels.

6. To enact a suitable law to prevent communal and targeted violence.

Catholic Bishops Conference of India
His Eminence Baselios Cardinal Cleemis
President, CBCI & President NUCF

National Council Of Churches in India
Bishop Dr Taranath S. Sagar
President, NCCI & Co-President NUCF

Bishop Dr C.V. Mathew
EFI Council of Churches
President, EFICC & Co-President NUCF

Father Joseph Chinnayyan
Deputy Secretary General CBCI

Rev Dr Roger Gaikwad
Co Secretary NUCF
General Secretary NCCI

Rev Dr Richard Howell
Co Secretary NUCF
General Secretary EFI



**Biblical Peacemaking Eastern Theological College,
Jorhat and Oriental Theological Seminary, Dimapur.
(Nov 24 - Dec 6 2014)**

The Justice and Peace Ministries of the Council organized a Biblical Peacemaking Seminars at Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, Assam and Oriental Theological Seminary, Dimapur, Nagaland in collaboration with Partera International, Canada from 24 November 2014 to 6 December 2014. In each case - ETC and OTS - there were 38 students from B.D., M.Div. and M.Th courses of study as well as ten students at ETC from the new Peace Studies programme. The training has one key objective with a few sub-objectives:

- To emerge with a sense of ourselves as peculiarly Christian Peacemakers, children of God, through -
 - Asking and answering of two questions by the end of the training :



- How do we read the Bible? What does it mean to say that *this* is the Word of God?
- Does the Bible reveal a violent or a non-violent God?
 - The latter question inviting yet another question: Does it matter? Are there implications to our decision (re: Q#2) for the life of the church and of the follower of Jesus?
 - Learning the methods of Experiential Learning.
 - Exploring the use of the tools of Conflict Transformation.
 - Coming to a deeper understanding of the intersection of CT/experiential learning, biblical peacemaking and our stories.





The Musing: Easter's significance

Rev Dr Ezamo Murry, former Principal of Eastern Theological College, Jorhat

Someone rightly said that Christians can never explain the Resurrection because it is the Resurrection that explains them. One inevitable proof of the Resurrection remains the existence of the Church. Let us join Saint Paul and declare once again, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"(2 Cor 15:57).

My faith strengthened with bliss while I read *Max Lucado* who started from the birth story of Jesus our Lord till the Resurrection. With due courtesy to Lucado I have paraphrased his presentation to simpler language as follows:

When he was born

When Herod heard the news of the birth of Jesus the eternal King, the temporal king Herod wished only one king in his corner of the world. There was no single religious leader who believed that the Messiah had been born. The only group of people who believed Jesus had been born included the star-gazers, the night-shift shepherds, and a newlywed couple who experienced giving birth without sex. Joseph and Mary were imprisoned in Egypt for bringing God to this world. That was how Christianity was born.

During his ministry

When Jesus was seen on the street of his hometown claiming he was God sent son, his villagers begun to inquire, “weird family, Have you seen his cousin?” His villagers demanded to lock him up, to stone him. He trained seventy disciples but none of them defended him to the authorities who were miscarrying justice against him. None amidst the numerous people he healed defended him when he was crucified.

During His Execution

The Jewish council awarded him three spikes and a spear. When he died the people on the street of Jerusalem regretted why Jesus did not stay in his father’s furniture business. Jesus prophesied three times that he would come back to life and all the apostles heard it. Ironically none of the apostles waited at the tomb to see this fulfilled.

When he rose again

On hearing the rumor of his resurrection the Jewish leaders took it as the expected propaganda of his followers. But they did testify that a great number of the Jewish priests believed and obeyed (Acts 6:7). The Jewish leaders decided about the church, “If their plan comes from human authority, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them”. (Acts 5:38-39). From that point of time the believers in the resurrected Lord keeps growing.

Lucado, reminds us that the French philosopher, Voltaire, who predicted that the church would die out within a hundred years died in 1778, but the church, is still growing till today. And that Friedrich Nietzsche who declared, “God is dead” in 1882 believed that the dawn of science would bring doom of faith but the fact is, science is dawned and faith in Jesus Christ is still on.

Lucado's concluding testimony has, "For when he died, so did your sin. And when he rose, so did your hope . . . *When he rose, your grave was changed from a final residence to temporary housing. Herod was right; there is room for only one King*".¹

There is a story of how an Orthodox Jew, talking about the Resurrection with a Chicago Pastor refused to believe in a dead body rising again. The latter told him how in the beginning God formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground. The former complied, "*If you put it that way, I do believe!*"(Walter B.Night, *Treasury of 2000 Illustrations*).

It might be worth beneficial to remember that Easter is not one day jubilation to be forgotten the rest of the year. We are reminded of this great event of our salvation history at least once a week in corporate worship, every Sunday. For every Sunday is often called "*little Easter*" because Jesus rose again on this first day of the week. Then on the following first day of the week, he appeared where Thomas was also present that day. The followers of the resurrected Lord began to gather on this first day of the week for worship. They called this day, the Lord's day. Christian worship, therefore, is not a Sabbath, the seventh day of the week which is on the seventh day which the Jews would still consider it as their Sabbath day.

As the ever reminding Easter requite to each of us this season, it is our prayer that the Resurrected Lord will touch each of us with the freshness of life, renewing our lives with his remission and regeneration, setting us to walk in newness of life.



¹ *Insights taken from, From Max Lucado, He Chose the Nails, Nashville: word Publishing, 2000*

The Call for Action

As reported by Ms Lichanbeni M Tungoe, Asst.Editor, Baptist News

India Mission Leaders' Conference held on 23 - 25 March 2015 successfully underwent at CBCNEI Mission Compound, Guwahati with more than 35 official delegates from across India.

This was a follow up conference of the declaration of 'India Mission Summit 2014' (October, NBCC (Nagaland Baptist Church Council) Convention Centre) with eminent resource spoke persons and facilitators. The discussion centred on issues of 'Religious Liberty' and 'Human Trafficking' with an objective to bring about fruitful solution through the Churches and recommend ways to solve



common social issues with the participation of the Churches and its leaders. The inaugural session was co-chaired by Rev Samaresh Nayak (General Secretary, Bengal Orissa Bihar Baptist Churches' Association) and Rev Katie Longkumer (BIM Consultant to CBCNEI). Rev Dr Ben Chan (Area Director, American Baptist International Ministries) briefed on the 'Forum Culture' and 'history of India Mission summit' the following day. The devotional messages delivered by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi (General Secretary, CBCNEI) and Rev Victor Emmanuel (Youth Leader, Baptist Convention of Telegu Churches) were very inspirationally relevant to the conference. The consultants of this conference were Rev Dr Katie Longkumer and Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi. The facilitators, Mr Atungo Shitri (Secretary for Justice & Peace) presented on "Religious Liberty" and Mrs Asha Sanchu, presented on "Human trafficking" .

The two days long conference detailed a view of a more comprehensive and insightful elements on the major issues prevailing in the context of our society and identifying various challenges to bring in transformation in areas like "*Religious Rights and Liberty*" and "*Human Trafficking*". The session commenced with group formation viz. General Secretaries, Youth Secretaries, Women Secretaries and Mission Secretaries among the delegates to discuss on the primary concern and to precisely frame five actions plans for forums on the various issues. The session called on for more broader conceptualized evangelism and re-assessment, and highlighted that the aims of the dialogue was to develop consensus view in changing the mindsets of the Churches, the Conventions, the Associations in the states and in the country about Mission mainly focused on all perspectives of life and instil the importance of the Churches role in taking up various initiatives in bringing in more change in eradicating the evil social activities.

The conference propagated the message on the importance of letting the Church or its members know that these issues are common concerns and on why it needs the talk of these issues to our people. For this is not only a matter of concern for the Baptist mission or of Christians but also to other denominations and faith.

Aziz-ul-Haque in his observatory comment remarked, “We have heard the cries of the victims, those victims of human trafficking and religious persecutions ...and it is our mission to participate in the rescue act but not ignoring the mission aspect of the need to attain salvation.”

Rev Kabi Gangmei also commented, “we the Baptist should be the fore front in ending these social evils and drill into the minds of the people and aware them of human trafficking and our religious rights and for that the churches should initiate to propagate this message even in the remotest corner”.

Rev Dr Ben Chan summarized the theme and the motto of the conference and urged all the delegates to continue sowing the seeds of “transformation and change “and to water it by spreading the message. Every delegate pledged to share the valuable message and visions to their members



of the churches or conventions and to make their home the media cell of the message. In the concluding remark he opined, *“These discussed issues are not only for today or for the year, we are investing in changing the mindsets of all our people to think and anticipate broader and to break through the wall of confinement and this is to see what we want to see happen in the next 30 years. Are you the one to bring the change?.”*

The conference wended with a brief speech of gratification by Rev Samaresh Nayak who thanked the resource persons, Consultants, observers and the delegates for their keen interest in participating and sharing their worthwhile comments and opined views and also the staffs of CBCNEI for their immense efforts in making the conference a success.



Fight the good fight of faith, take hold of the life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:12

NEWS CLIPPINGS

Street Children Advent Christmas Program (December 17, 2014)

Mission department, CBCNEI in collaboration with World Vision organized Street Children Advent Christmas Program at Lewis Memorial Hostel Auditorium. The welcome speech was addressed by Mr Pawan, Property Secretary, CBCNEI and the invocation prayer was offered by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI. The high-

lights of this program were carol singing, Christmas story telling, games, and gifts distributions to the children and a special program by children from Boothnath. The program came to an end with vote of thanks delivered by World Vision, the benedictory prayer by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai.



**Peace Prayer Fellowship at Boro Baptist Churches Association.
(January 15)**

Justice & Peace Secretary, CBCNEI Mr Atungo Shitri along with Mr. Sukumar Momin, President of Guwahati Baptist Church and Mr Benard Marak, Associate General Secretary of Assam Baptist Convention (ABC) visited Tukrajhar, Assam for peace prayer fellowship. They paid a spot visit to the Boro relief camp for prayer fellowship.



Investiture of New Chaplain at White Memorial Hostel.

(Jan 27)

CBCNEI family welcomed its newly inducted Chaplain at White Memorial Hostel, Mrs. Neisewheno Sirie. Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Student Ministry incharge led the official induction program. A brief exhortation and dedication of prayer was enacted by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary CBCNEI. Mrs.



Peace Prayer Fellowship at Boro Baptist Churches Association

Neisewheno Sirie hails from Angami tribe of Nagaland and is blessed with a son. The new chaplain stressed for cooperation from all nooks so as to take forward the students' community ministry. On behalf of the CBCNEI family we congratulate her and wish her the very best to nurture the student's community.



20th Triennial convention of Nagaland Baptist Church Council.
(Feb 5 - 8)
The Triennial convention

with the theme “In step with the spirit” underway in Mon, Nagaland and was witnessed by over 5000 delegates from 116 churches and nine fellowships under KBBB, Mon, including national and international delegates. Konyak Baptist Bumeinok Church Association (KBBB) hosted the event.

The theme speakers were Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, Rev Dr Zhodi Angami, Rev Dr Reid S. Trulsol, Rev Dr ZK Rochill, Rev. Judith Fackenthal.



Official handing over of Neighborhood Ministry to Assam Baptist Convention. (Feb 20)

Considering the fact that CBCNEI family consists of all the Baptist churches in North East India, Mission department, CBCNEI organized an official program for handing over of Neighborhood Ministry to Assam Baptist Convention (ABC) on the 20 Feb prior to the actions of the board meeting held on 30 Jan to forward a request to the ABC to charge over its supervision. The program was chaired by Rev Dr Jolly, Secretary Mission Department. A brief Neighborhood

Ministry report was presented by Mr. Shamesh-uddin Ahmed, followed by a response from Mr R. K. Raychawdhuri, General Secretary ABC. The program ended in prayer by Mr. Prince Paul, Mission Secretary ABC.



34th Annual Conference of ABC held at Sile.

(February 12 - 15)

The 34th Annual Conference of Adi Baptist Council (ABC) was conducted at Sile Baptist Church under Sile-Oyan, Circle of East Siang with the Theme “Increased Faith -





Enlarged Investment” (2 Cor:10:15,16)

The conference was witnessed by at least 300 believers. Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) General Secretary Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi and Arunachal Baptist Churches Council (ABCC) General Secretary Rev Wanglong Simai were the guest speakers. The three days long programme commenced with a congregational prayer for communal harmony, followed by Bible Study, Exhortation and varied activities and competitions among the participating churches.

Adi Baptist Council (ABC) bade farewell to its Senior Executive Secretary Mr Talem Darang who has served the council for five years and its veteran member Rev Tanya Riram who had long served the council for 34 years since its inception and retired at 87 years and inducted Mr John Padung as the new Executive Secretary of the Council for a tenure of five years. The programme wound up with valedictory prayer and the handing over of the Council Flag to Taki Lalung Baptist Church, the next conference venue.



Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Consultation.

(Feb 19 - 20)

CBCNEI in partnership with North East India Committee on Relief and Development (NEICORD), World Vision India (WVI), India Missions Association (IMA) and Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) organized a two-day workshop on FCRA at CBCNEI Mission Compound, Guwahati. The resource person for the consultation was Dr Manoj Fogla, Chartered Accountant & Legal Advisor.

The objectives of this consultation was to familiarize the participating agencies with the Act towards renewal of their registrations and effective compliance with regulations.

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi led the Biblical Reflection on "Stewardship". Rev Wati Longkumer exhorted on 'Leading with Integrity' which was followed by presentations on "Leadership in changing times Governance" by Atungo Shitri and "Financial Accountability to Government" by Vikato Shikhu.



FOR MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN.

MATT 22:14

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Meeting at Switzerland.

(Feb 22 - 26)

The General Secretary, CBCNEI Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi participated in the Meeting of the Reference Group for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace of the World Council of Churches which was held at Bossey, Switzerland.



Poster Campaign for Peace in Chang and Yimchunger Regions, Tuengsang District of Nagaland by CBCNEI and NBCC Youth Department.

(March 4 - 5)

The Justice & Peace Ministries of the Council in col-

laboration with the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) Youth Department organized Poster Campaign for Peace in Tuengsang District Nagaland on 4-5 March.

The team comprising of Mr Atungo Shitri, Secretary, Justice and Peace and Youth Department in-charge, Rev Dr Woba James an Associate Professor, Eastern Theological College, and Mr Vikuo Rhi, Youth Secretary, NBCC put up posters and banners with the help of the Baptist Youth Fellowship Tuensang and Baptist Pastors Fellowship Tuensang.

The purpose of this peace campaign was to appeal to the two warring Naga com-



The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Meeting



munities, Chang and Yim-chunger, who are predominantly Baptist Christians, to seek justice and peace as mandated in the scripture. The words printed on the posters and banners were verses on peace from the Bible.



Kyong (Lotha) Baptist Ekhumkho Mission Consultation.

(March 11 - 13)

To strengthen and carry forward the voice of God, the Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho Sanrhyutsu (KBES) organized its first ever Mission Consultation hosted by Lotha Baptist Church Dimapur. Mission

reports from various churches that are actively involved in missions were presented during the consultation. Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI and Rev Taku Longkumer, BIM Consultant were the resource persons. A brief mission experience was shared by Rev J. Thungjamo Lotha, missionary at Mission One Challenge International. The consultation paved a way for the Lotha churches to unite and work together in strengthening His Missions. On the day end, all the members who attended the consultation pledged and made resolution to meet again as a follow up program in the month of May 2015.



Theological Board Meeting.

(March 17)

The Theological Education Committee called for its Board Meeting on 17 March at CBCNEI, Conference Room. The meeting was attended by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, Mr Vika-to Shikhu, Rev Dr Akheto Sema, Dr Imnanungshi Imsong, Rev Dr Lt. Haokip, Rev Dr Kavito Zhimo, Dr Yiepeto Wezah, Rev Dr Taka Temjen.



Arunachal Baptist Church Council 7th Annual General Meeting.

(March 19 - 22)

Arunachal Baptist Church Council (ABCC) annual general meeting was held with the theme "***Pressing on towards the goal***" (***phil 3:14***) at Baptist Church Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh. The event was hosted by Mishmi Baptist Church Council (MBCC). Mr Khado

Ampi, Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), Rev Dr K. Zhimo, President, Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), Rev Choworam Daimari, General Secretary, North Bank Baptist Christian Association (NBBCA) were the resource person. Mr Atungo Shitri (Secretary Justice & Peace, CBCNEI) was also present in the annual meet.



Installation of New Projectors & Screens.

(March 23)

Four Projectors and Three motorized and one manual screens were newly installed in the conference halls of CBCNEI and White Memorial Hostel. The projector and screens were financially funded by the incredible generosity of its donors Rev Fred Taylor, Mr Jeff Taylor, Ms Sandy Taylor and Miami Baptist Church, Logansport, Indiana.

Rev Fred Taylor, a 95 years

old retired pastor actively initiates most of the fund raising and donations works for over many years. Two decades back, he spear-headed the fund raising from the American Baptist Churches, Ohio that provided more than 50 cycles and scooters for Nagaland Missionary Movement evangelists. Rev Fred and his children have initiated the major provision funds for the projectors. The Miami Baptist Church that contributed greatly to this fund was in fact the foremost in send-



ing the first missionary to plant churches in Nagaland. Rev E. W. Clark, one of the first missionary among the Ao- Nagas was once the pastor of the Church before he arrived in India. Presently, the pastor of this church is Rev Daisok Panmei, a Naga from Manipur. We the CBC-NEI, Guwahati would like to extend a heartfelt gratitude to all the generous donors and pray for God’s abundant blessings for your contribution.



Special Consultation for Guwahati Transformation 2020.

(March 25 - 26)

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6).

Guwahati the gateway of Northeast India shelters diverse religious groups of

people coming from all over the Northeastern States. Many churches have been established but the impact of Christianity has been minimal. With the call of God to lead the churches for unity in proclaiming His Kingdom until His return, the Guwahati Christian Forum (GCF) organized a two day special Consultation for Guwahati Transformation 2020 at Lewis Memorial Auditorium, CBCNEI on 25 & 26



March 2015. 117 delegates that attended comprised of pastors, women leaders, elders, evangelists and various other mission agencies from Guwahati vicinity. Rev Dr Patrick Johnstone and Rev Dr Byung Kook Yoo were the two resource speakers. On the last day of the wrapping up session, Rev Dr Jolly Rimai urged and left a challenging note to the participants to transform Guwahati city for His kingdom.



Manipur Baptist Convention Quinquennial Congress. (March 26 - 29)

Manipur Baptist Convention Quinquennial Congress was held at Ukhrul, Manipur, with its theme “**Called to Holiness.**” More than 3000 official delegates participated from 28 Associations. The evening gatherings witnessed more than 12,000 congregations and on Sunday the multitude gathering was about 20,000. The afternoon program was scheduled for MBC choral singing competition with 15 participating tribes. The theme speakers



were the Rev Dr Benjamin S L Chan, USA, Rev Dr Anthony Yeoh, Singapore, Dr Andrew B. Kim, South Korea and the Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary of CBCNEI. He spoke on the sub-theme, **“Called to Holiness in Our Workplace”** While Churachanpur Baptist Fellowship led the choir during the worship service. Local MLA Samuel Risom along with MLA Dr Alexander Pao and MLA Thiko also attended the program.



**I can do things you cannot do, you can do things I cannot,
together we can do great things.**

Mother Teresa



We Are Made Alive With Christ

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI

Ephesians 2:1-6: In Ephesians chapter one, Paul was emphasizing the wealth of spiritual blessings we have as because we are in Christ. Now in chapter 2, he emphasizes our position in Christ. Our position in Christ determines our spiritual possessions and authority.

Regardless of where we might be physically staying like Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter, we have power and authority in the spiritual realm because of our position in Christ. How is this possible? God invites all of his creation to live life to the fullest, to be in fellowship with Him, to be apart of Him, and to be made alive in him.

Paul wrote in Eph 2:1-6 (NIV)

2:1 says, As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

verse 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the

air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

verse 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

verse 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

verse 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

verse 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

With a deeper insight into this wonderful passage we realise that, we were spiritually dead, because of sins and because we were powerfully chained by our sinful self. First, we are by nature born as children of wrath. Second, we became children of disobedience after rejecting Christ when we reached the age of accountability.

God made us alive with Christ, and he forgave all our sins and exempted all the debts. He erased the records with its rules and nailed it to the cross.

A. Being Made Alive with Christ is to experience God's life within us. It means being born of God through His Spirit, it means what was void in our lives are filled and we are made whole. We have new holy cravings that are filled.

B. Being Made Alive with Christ means, God gave us life; he raised us from the grave of sin, and took us out of the graveyard and more of which, He made us members of Christ's body. Why would God do such a thing? Look at verse 4. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy." Mercy means that God does not give us what we deserve; grace means that He gives us what we don't de-

serve.

C. Being Made Alive with Christ means we are His workmanship, His new creation. The same loving Father that chose us, called us, and saved us has also sketched out a wonderful plan for our lives. We are new creations, begun again, linked with the fullness of life that our saviour imparts.

D. Being Made Alive with Christ means he has come to live in us, and has joined himself to us, and we are one person with Him. Jesus said, *“I am the vine; you are the branches.”* Our identity is no longer *“in Adam”* but it is *“in Christ.”* We are no longer ordinary; we are by God’s Grace Extraordinary. The whole task shouldered by the enemy is to let you sceptically disbelieve that and let you go back to thinking that you are just an ordinary individual.

E. Being Made Alive with Christ means we are sitting together in heavenly places. Notice that Paul says **“with Christ”** three times:

We are “made alive with Christ.”

We are “raised up with Christ.”

We are “made to sit with Him.”

Heaven is not a far distant nor a very little known about place, it can be experienced here and now. Heaven can be experienced here on earth. ***“God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6).*** Sitting with Jesus gives us a glimpse into his heart. Discovering God makes everything more beautiful, more wonderful, and more precious.

Conclusion

Eph 2:4-6 reads, “ *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*” Our Lord is inviting us all into his life. Once we were dead spiritually and enslaved by Satan. Now our hearts, our mind, and our spirits, have been sent free from the bondage of sin and shame. Now we can transcend any problem or situation through our powerful position in Christ. Once we had only ourselves to rely upon but now we have the abounding power of God’s Love, His mercy and grace, and His companionship in life. Then our life was with no hope, and we were in a helpless condition. But now we look up to the promises and security in God. Once our life was empty and void but now we can enter into the joy of the Lord and begin to enjoy life in Him. We can become complete through faith in the perfection of Christ our saviour.



BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARDS US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.

ROM 5:8

35th Annual General Meeting of the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC)

As reported by Mr Luke Rongphar, Mission Secretary, KABC

The 35th Annual General Meeting of the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC) was held at Donka Baptist Church (under Puta Karbi Baptist Association (PKBA) from March 12-15, 2015 with the theme “Christian Maturity”. The Pastor and congregation of the host church welcomed the resource persons, leaders and all the delegates from different churches and associations. The first morning of the AGM was marked by KABC flag hoisting by the President, Departments and Associations which was followed by women and Youth delegates’ meeting. Resource persons during the AGM were Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi (*General Secretary, CBCNEI*), Rev Lawrence Ingti (*former Executive Secretary,*



Nihang Karbi Baptist Association (NKBA)) and Rev Davidson Ingti (*General Secretary, KABC*). Mr Vikato Shikhu (*Finance Secretary, CBCNEI*) blessed and encouraged the congregation through his exhortation. All the resource persons focused on **Christian Maturity** in three important areas - Self-govern, Self-support and Self-propagation. They opined that, it is high time for the Baptist Churches in Karbi Anglong to focus on those three important elements.

Sunday afternoon was set aside for panel discussion where Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi and Rev Lawrence Ingti were the panellists. It was a fruitful panel discussion - digging the



root cause for the lack of self-govern, self-support and self-propagation of our churches, associa-

tions and convention. At the end of the panel discussion a resolution was taken that change of strategy is needed to which **Centralization of Funds** is voted for. In this regard, the KABC office will initiate seminars and workshops in churches and associations with its centralized funds.

The 36th KABC Annual General Meeting will be held at Rongphar Baptist Church under Amri Karbi Baptist Kachikruk Asong (AKBKA), Sonapur during the second week of March 2016.





Rights and Plights of Minorities in India

Aziz-ul Haque, Pastor, Guwahati Baptist Church

Bill Gates said, "Discrimination has a lot of layers that make it tough for minorities to get a leg up". Realizing the plight of minority communities across the globe, the United Nations on December 18, 1992, adopted and promulgated the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistics Minorities. It declares, "States shall protect the existence of the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their perspective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity. The Constitution of India does not define 'minority' even if the term appears several times. It refers to 'minorities' and speaks of those 'based on religion or language'. It is taken for granted as 'a non-dominant group' or in relative term it is referred to represent the smaller of two numbers, sections or groups called 'majority'. In this sense, there may be religious, linguistic, ethnic minority etc. This writing seeks to deal with religious minorities.

The Constitution declares the State to be 'secular', and this is of special relevance for the religious minorities. Moreover, it is committed to the equality of citizens and responsibilities of the State to preserve, protect, and assure the rights of minorities. The important components of the

rights of minorities are found in Articles 14, 15 (2) and 16 (2) which grant equality to all citizens before the law and entitle them to equal protection of the laws. They outlaw discrimination against any citizen on the ground of his religion, race, caste or gender. Another facet of it in Article 19 (1-A) which grants freedom of speech and expression, and Article 25 preserves the right to profess, practice and propagate religion of one's own choice. Of course, this right is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order, morality and health. Article 26 provides freedom to manage religious affairs and Article 28 gives the fundamental right to every religion to establish and maintain their institutions in matters of religion.

As a result of an Act in 1992, the National Commission for Minorities referred to as Minority Commission, which now functions under the Ministry of Minority Affairs, was constituted by the Government of India to monitor and evaluate the progress of people classified as minorities. Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs and Zoroastrians or Parsees have been notified as minority communities under section 2© of the Act. The Ministry of Minority Affairs was created in 2006 and along its allied bodies like Maulana Azad Education Foundation for providing financial assistance schemes for education like scholarship, coaching and multi-sectoral development programs. The Central Wakf Council was established as a statutory body to advise the Government on matters concerning the working of Wakf Boards and their administration of mosques, dargahs and management of properties and educational advancement for the community. The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation were set up in 1994 for promoting economic development of the poorer section of minorities. The Prime Minister's 15-Point Program for the Welfare of Minorities was announced in 2006 aiming educational, fi-

nancial and employment opportunities for the minorities. No doubt, some of these schemes and opportunities are being partly availed by minorities whereas the larger section of these communities is still unaware about such provisions. Therefore, steps must be taken by the government as well as the leaders of respective communities for creating awareness among these people.

It is also to be noted that in spite of the constitutional and other special provisions, religious minorities, comparatively the more minority communities, particularly Christians in India are often discriminated. Of course the Constitution has loopholes which the ruling class takes advantage to discriminate against creed and caste by interpreting and implementing them in the name of secular democracy. Sometimes constitutional provisions and enactments are contradictory. For instance, the Constitution guarantees right to freedom of religion which to a great extent is restricted by the Freedom of Religion Act as in case of Arunachal, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh where many Christians suffer harassment on the pretext of conversion. The Uniform Civil Code raises questions on the identity of the minority communities. The Sachar Committee reveals the grievances of the Muslims as the endless stories of 'woes' and 'miseries' with glaring cases of their deprivation in government jobs. The plight Christians is even worse. Many times the educational and economic rights of the minorities have been either curtailed or not implemented both at the central as well as state levels. There is absence of political will either to implementing the various provisions or to safeguarding the rights of the minorities.

In Assam, the emigrant Muslims who make up the majority of this community take advantage of the schemes whereas the indigenous Muslims are being deprived of those opportunities and the government and political parties for vote

bank take side with the majority. If the influx of people from Bangladesh is not checked and the problem of illegal migrants is not solved, the indigenous minorities are bound to suffer identity crisis. This needs immediate remedy. One way to tackle this burning issue and for safeguarding the indigenous minorities would be to upgrade the National Register for Citizens basing the cut off year 1950 (January 26), the year the Constitution came into force. This has already been voiced by the All Assam Indigenous Religious Minority Council formed in 2009.

The minorities form an important segment of the Indian society. It is necessary that they are provided ample opportunities that would help in their development, thereby leading to the progress of the nation. It is of paramount importance to monitor that opportunities are properly availed by the different indigenous communities and facilitate their integration and mainstreaming in the society. At the same time, the minority communities must not forget their duties and responsibilities in building the nation along with the majority.

The present BJP led government must not continue in committing blunders by leaders like Subramanian Swamy who said that Bangladeshi Muslim migrants could be allowed to stay if they were ready to convert to Hinduism and Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti who campaigned that people should vote for Ram's children, not illegitimate children, and thereby to igniting the flame of communalism. Despite the promise of greater protections for religious minorities, there have been many attacks on Muslim and Christian groups during the first ten months of the new Government. The Government must be sensitive to these issues and pay heed to the cries of the minorities.





The Resurrection

..One of these must become witness with us of His resurrection (Acts 1:22)

Mr Mhabemo Kithan, Mission Assistant, CBCNEI

Who is Alive even after experiencing death? The only answer is Jesus Christ who died but rose again. Many have died but none had triumph over the darkness of death.

Christ's short lived Ministry dwelt on teaching, healing, forgiving and giving us new life in Christ. The life of Jesus is a triumphant story that confirms and validates His identity as God incarnate.

There are five recorded occasions as found in Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23, Mark 8:31; 10:32-34 and Luke 9:22 where Jesus specifically mentions about His nearing death and His Resurrection. His disciples' reaction to Him sharing His destiny with them was a sort of mixed feelings. Often the statements Jesus mystified that the disciples, sometimes they would not believe His words, that He would be put to death and restored again to be made alive for us.

The sacrifice made by Christ for the atonement of our sins was an explicit example of His love for us. His rising from the death three days later signifies the power of God and His compassion for us. Here the resurrection is of the spirit being and not merely the restoration of life to the physical being. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." 1 Cor 15:22.

Looking back at what Jesus said to His disciples we are exemplified by His cent percent accuracy of what would happen. Jesus was crucified, laid in the tomb and resurrected on the third day. The accuracy of the fulfillment of prophecy is part of the strong evidence of who Jesus was and is.

Is Resurrection Important?

The resurrection is one of the strongest evidences for recognizing the deity of Christ. It is an event that validates His identity, miracles, power over nature, and creation of the world. His resurrection reaffirms His compassion and remission for each one of us.

A question for us all to ponder is , have we been changed? Or are we still living a life to please ourselves? I am sure we go to church, pray, read our Bible, but at the end of the day are we living a life that has been changed by the redeeming power of the cross?

Will you meet Jesus at the cross of Calvary? For us it is the only place to start and the only place to return.

For he had rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:13-14

God brought us out from the spiritual land of dead, where we were weak and unable to help ourselves. But God not only made us alive but gave us an inheritance of life and joy beyond description.

We rose from the bondage of sin and darkness through Christ. Live in Christ and for Christ.





Cultivating Joy and Happiness

Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI

Philippians 4:4-7 *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Being joyful or living a happy life is what all of us want, yet it is very difficult live out because of the ups and downs of life itself. Our happiness and joy depends so much on the circumstances around us. But if we want to live joyful life, the circumstances around us should not be the factor that controls us. Here are some tips on how you can cultivate joy in your life and add happiness into your life.

1. Always remember why you trust God:

Read Psalm 103, and remember what the Lord has done for you. Remind yourself of what He has promised to you and be thankful. In every circumstance remember that He knows it and is in control. Remember you are more precious than the sparrows and the lilies. For if God so cared for them, He cares for you even more.

2. Keep a Record Book:

Record the reasons you have to rejoice and the reminders of God's faithfulness that you encounter in your everyday life. Every night recollect the activities of the day and as much as possible recall and record the things or person that make you happy that day. And in the end say a prayer thanking God for those things or persons who made you happy.

3. Surround yourself with joyful people:

As mentioned earlier, as human beings, our joy and happiness depends so much on the circumstances around us. Joy is contagious – so build relationships with friends whose lives exhibit their confidence in God and are happy in any circumstances.

4. Think positive: God doesn't waste the difficult circumstances of your life but uses them to develop His character in you. Review Romans 5 and James 1 for help in processing pressure productively. Joy will sneak up on you when you view your hardest lessons as gifts from God. God allows the blooming roses on a thorny plant.

5. Be grateful:

Has God met a need? Praise Him! Have your challenges given you greater opportunities to see Him work? Thank Him! Joy flows from a grateful and responsive heart. Before

you turn in at night, write down three to five blessings in your “Joy Record Book.” Make it a habit, and watch your joyful attitude grow.

6. Fill your mind with music:

Listen to songs that praise God. As you go around, sing or hum or whistle songs that make you happy, and meditate on music that draws your heart nearer to God and His Word. Someone has said, “A singing person is a happy person”. Your song can also inspire others and make their heart glad.

7. Take the long view:

Investors advise their clients not to worry about the daily ups and downs of the stock market – what matters is the long view. Does life present incredible challenges today? Regardless of today’s events, take the long view. Remember that God remains in charge of your days and will faithfully develop His character in you.

Trust that God controls your life’s details (Romans 8:28), that He hears your every request (Psalm 116:1), and that His joy will be your strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

May God bless you and lead a happy joyful life as you trust Him for your today and for eternity. Amen.



**Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek
the LORD rejoice.**

Psalm 105:2-3



The Churches role in Preventing HIV/AIDS in North East Context.

Rev Dr Woba James, Associate Professor, History of Christianity Eastern Theological College, Jorhat

The North Eastern Region, comprising the seven States and a brother of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, is an extensive area with more than 3.7% of total population. The States of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh share long borders with Myanmar to the East, across hilly, forested, thinly populated terrain. This critical location has had major implications for HIV/AIDS problem in the North Eastern Region. Terrain is largely hilly, forested, with very poor and limited transportation and communications and largely of tribal population.

In a recent news headlines in the newspaper there was a very disturbing incident in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh. A married man wanted to marry his sister-in law (his present wife's sister), to which the girl concerned rejected his ridiculous intention. In anger the man got hold of an HIV/AIDS infected blood from one of his friends and injected the infected blood into his sister in-law.

Within a day or two later, another incident appeared where a young man was caught while he was trying to inject an infected blood into a girl who refused his proposal. (This is

a reminder that HIV/AIDS has now mounted a greater scale - it is now *being used* for evil purposes).

The most threatening disease of the present day is commonly known to all, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), a health condition in which a person is affected by a series of diseases because of poor immunity. HIV by itself is not an illness and does not instantly lead to AIDS. An HIV infected person can lead a healthy life for several years before she/he develops AIDS.

HIV/AIDS was discovered as a medical issue in the early 1980s; however, it has become clear that it is more than just a medical issue. It pervades all areas of our lives: social, economic, political and cultural. Besides, it is also more than just an individual situation. Therefore, it poses as a very serious challenge to the Churches globally and in particular to the churches in India because it is predicted that unless India immediately take radical steps in combating this issue, by 2020, India is going to be the *HIV/AIDS Capitol of the world*¹.

According to National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) survey, the most common route of HIV transmission in India is by sexual transmission and through sharing drug injecting equipment (needles), or being accidentally stuck by needles or sharp objects contaminated with infected blood, blood transfusions i.e. infected blood and from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding and organ transplant from infected donors. Among young children especially, prenatal transmission is the most common source; however, children in India are also infected

1. In other words, India will defeat South Africa and become the Leading Nation of HIV/AIDS in the World. *Report on Special Consultation of Bishops and Major Health Organization* held at St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Bangalore, on August 2003

through sexual abuse and unsterilized syringes, including injections in drug use.

Within North East, the highest HIV prevalence rates Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Experts from NACO said that HIV/AIDS epidemic in north-eastern states are spread by intravenous drug-users who then pass it on to their partners by having unprotected sex. Nagaland has already reported such a trend and Manipur may follow soon. The situation in our region is very dark and there are many unreported HIV/AIDS positive living within the society today.

In such critical situation, what kind of models that Church, Theological Colleges and Institutions can adopt in bringing transformation?

Christian Churches have a long tradition of pastoral care, education and healthcare, a concern for social justice and unparalleled local networks and hence well placed to play a pivotal role in HIV prevention. In the 1980s, some churches responded to HIV infected persons that it was a punishment from God for their sexual immorality. This condemning response had a worsening impact as the infected kept their positive status hidden to avoid stigma and rejection by their church and family. While we do not ignore the churches' efforts toward this issue, still the church need to extend its role in accordance to the terrifying pace of HIV/AIDS' spread.

Some appropriate models for the church and theological paternity in its healing ministry toward the prevention of HIV/AIDS:

The churches should open platform for believers' participation:

When we talk about the ministerial role of the church, we seldom think of the overall body of the church that in-

cludes all its members ,its ministers or leaders. Very often, we just wait or relegate the responsibility to those leaders, structural bodies or organizations to carry out its social ministries. However, considering the magnitude and urgency of HIV/AIDS pandemic, it necessitates the combined involvement of entire Christian community to be actively involved in action if we truly wish defeat this serious problem. Here, the church should become an open platform where all its members are welcomed to freely participate and contribute in the task of combating this life-destroying menace of HIV/AIDS.

Be an Instrument of Redeeming the Integrity and Dignity of Human hood for the Infected:

Churches have begun to realize that its mission involves not only the spiritual salvation of the people but that it includes also the healing of the physical, material and practical aspects of peoples' lives. Therefore, the Churches in India need to grow up and recognize its neglected assigned responsibilities especially in the context of HIV/AIDS. This way, the church can be God's instrument in helping regain the trampled integrity and dignity of those who have been forced to forfeit their human hood.

Create holistic learning center for educating people especially the youth for healthy living:

Church should also present itself as a center for holistic learning, imparting and guiding its people in moral principles of life. In the present context, it involves enabling people to behave responsibly by providing teaching about HIV prevention. The church has an inevitable duty especially toward the youth in talking about this issue because some parents find it difficult to talk about sexual feelings and behavior with their kids. Churches should open up in initiating awareness campaign for precautionary measures

and preventions. Only through drastic actions of transformation in the churches' lives can there be any real changes in the HIV/AIDS infected context such as ours today.

Combined Participation of Churches and theological institutions for Combating Common Ailment:

Churches in order to identify the most effective ways of combating the HIV epidemic, they need to re-examine their relationships with other churches and other faiths. We recognize that HIV/AIDS is universal in its affects and therefore only through combined participation and efforts of everyone can it be combated. Therefore, churches should shed their own cloak of indifference and join hands in combating this life-eating monster.

Not very long back, with some of my colleagues (Theological Teachers) visited a social service center in our region. There, we greeted the inmates with hands-shake and it so happened that someone whispered to one of my colleagues that the person whose hand he shook is an HIV/AIDS infected person. To the embarrassments and shock of his friends, this colleague immediately rushed off to wash his hands with a generous amount of hand wash for fear that he might be infected through the hand-shake. This is a picture of our theological teachers, students, pastors and many Christians today.

The Trainings initiated by the World Council of Churches has encouraged in many ways in ensuring that theological colleges in India rise to the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

Theological institutions in India especially Serampore Affiliated Colleges have begun to wrestle with this issue very recently as they seek to become contextually relevant. Theological Institutions as instruments of the Church (or society) need to seriously acknowledge that it is not just a problem '*out there*' but it is a problem that touches every

individuals and groups, 'right here' and 'now.' Theological colleges have a long way to go in breaking the silence of this issue. Therefore, the need of the hour in our region is to design a serious theological curriculum in such a way that it will bring transformation in the approaches of theological education with this issue.

Conclusion

Thus, it is very important for us to first be aware and sensitive toward the threat of HIV/AIDS and then learn ways that could be effective in counteracting it. Besides, we should encourage people to speak about human sexuality openly for there is no better way to impart and affect changes than openness to the issues involved. Now then, to what extent has the church been successful in its efforts already committed toward the prevention of HIV/AIDS? And, what are the areas that the church has neglected thus far and how should it fulfill its God-given responsibility toward its fellow-beings who are struggling alone with this life-negating affliction, in its midst? May the lord direct our thoughts and our hearts to be a part of God's healing presence here on earth.



There are many of us that are willing to do great things for the Lord, but few of us are willing to do little things.

Dwilight L. Moody

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Email: shiats theology@gmail.com/ samuelrichmond@rediffmail.com Mob. +919621317282; 05322684507; 05322684607 Academic session begins July 2015

NEW APPOINTEE



Ms Lichanbeni M Tungoe is from Lotha community of Nagaland and hails from Wokha.

She graduated with honors in English Literature in the year 2012 at B. Borooah College, Gauhati University. She had been into teaching as an English teacher after her graduation and served for two years in a school. She is the newly appointed Assistant Editor for Baptist News from March 2015.

The CBCNEI family would like to welcome her and extend good wishes and prayers for her new assignments.

Mission Department Program for the forthcoming months

Missionary Pastors Training Program with Rev John Simos.

01 - 07 June : Hosted by Manipur Baptist Convention

12 - 14 June : Hosted by Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention

16 - 18 June : Hosted by Assam Baptist Convention

20 - 23 June : Hosted by Garo Baptist Convention

25 - 27 June : Hosted by Nagaland Missions Movement

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