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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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Once again Christmas comes. Christmas comes when turbulent events hurl sadness into spaces where peace once reigned. Christmas comes when indescribable suffering fills our spirits with tears and our minds with fearfulness.

Christmas comes! When we are swamp by surging waters that threaten to swallow us up. The darkness of hatred and intolerance that blind us to whatever real joy earth may host.

Christmas comes to remind us of the unmistakable truth: The God we serve is not far away from the world robed in amazing self-sufficiency, surrounded with glorious splendor, uncontaminated by the sinful human condition, and untouched by impurity. God is transcendent, removed from the worries of life, unrestricted by the limitations of earthly resources, reigning in perfect peace.

At Christmas we remember that God enters into the rough and tumble of our lives. Because of love for creation, God sends Jesus the Son into this world to open up the way to the realm above in which earth's trails cannot match heaven's benefits. Together with his earthly family, Jesus faces the terror caused by abuse of political power and he suffered the plight of those who are forced into refugee status.

It is Christmas! And we remember Jesus is the Prince of Peace. This year's Christmas theme is "The Prince of Peace" from Isaiah 9:6. The message of the angels has brought comfort and hope to millions down through the centuries "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, goodwill toward men.* (Luke 2:1-4). Mankind hopes sincerely and desires peace on earth. We all need inner peace during turmoil around us; peace in our hearts, homes and communities and peace among the nations.

Unfortunately, violence has become a staple in our daily lives. Child abuse, violence at home, discrimination, greed's hastaken deep root in our communities and our nation. Can peace invade the hearts and homes of the vulgar, blasphemous and ungodly? Is it possible for a change to occur in their lives? The answer is a definite, "Yes"! Jesus Christ is the '*Prince of Peace*' and '*Life's Great Champion*'. His love for the fearful, sinful, abused and hurting is awesome and an absolute reality. Even when conflicts and difficult circumstances come, we experience peace in the midst of storm.

This issue of the Baptist News includes articles on: The Prince of Peace, Knowing the Christmas Child, Travelling Mercies, A Ray of Hope, Christmas to me is a thankful heart, The significant child, The calling for Sacrifice, The missing dimension in our churches and more. I encourage you to read it and be more blessed.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI

The Prince of Peace



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary CBCNEI

Today we have seen in the world that there are so much of violence and killings everywhere. We have been experiencing so much of intolerance in India and the world at large. There seems to be no hope for peace on earth. In the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who wrote these words as he contemplated one Christmas morning:

*And in despair I bowed my head
“There is no peace on earth I said,
For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of Peace on earth goodwill to men.”*

We read the name of Christ here in **Is 9:6** as the **Prince of Peace**. It is of course Prince of Peace. But this one is difficult for us because we seem to have so many mixed messages when it comes to peace. On the one side Jesus is called the prince of Peace and the angels proclaim peace on earth goodwill to men. On the other, Jesus himself says,

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” (Matt 10:32-36).

As well, we have our own observations there is no peace on earth. Of all years - this one has shown us the absence of peace. Man’s inhumanity to man grinds endlessly onward. So how do we reconcile this?

What should be the definition of peace? The term peace has been clearly connected with the absence of conflict. Peace is connected with quiet meaning without conflict. It is almost as if we define peace by what it is not - war. If there is no war there is peace.

However, the word that is used in the Old Testament for peace is so much more than that. *Shalom* is indeed used to describe the cessation of hostilities, but the word itself also pictures health and wholeness. It denotes harmony and completeness. To have shalom is to have not only a quiet life but also to be fulfilled in every way.

So how is Christ the Prince of peace? Using this definition in Scripture - I think there are three distinct ways that Christ fulfills his title as ***Prince of Peace***.

First, he is the one who makes peace between God and man. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one

body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit” (Eph 2:13-18)

Second, he makes peace in this life possible because of his saving work. “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (Joh16:32-33). He encourages us not to be worried and upset for anything. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:5-6).

Thirdly, he will complete peace perfectly when he comes again. As promised in Is 11:1-9, God will take care of us for he does not sleep nor slumber. He will judge the guilty and bring justice to the righteous. Then he will rule this world with truth and justice.

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;

“God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;

The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,

Of peace on earth, good-will to men.



Knowing the Christmas Child

Reflection on the name of Jesus in Isaiah 9:6



*Dr Eyingbeni Humtsoe-Nienu, Faculty at Clark
Theological College, Mokokchung*

With the beginning of Advent, this year from November 29 onwards, Christians become restless. They say “Christmas” is here! And they start decorating their houses, shops, churches and start shopping, exchanging gifts, and dining in people’s homes. The days leading up to the Christmas day are virtual madness! But these are not what Christmas is all about, as we all know. Christmas is remembering the birth of the Christ child and Advent season is a privilege for us to reflect on his work of redemption and on his promise of Return and to prepare us for both.

But one thing that leaves us thinking is, “who is this child for whom and in whose name we do so much preparation?” What kind of a person is he? How well do we know him? The text Is 9: 6 contains the names by which Christ Jesus can be known fully.

1. Wonderful Counselor:

A good counselor gives good advice, apart from being a patient listener and comforter. S/he advises in ways that will guide a person the right way. Bad counselors can, on

the other hand, destroy a person but unhealthy counsel. Rehoboam is a classic example of being led astray by destructive counsel (1Kgs 10: 4ff).

Rehoboam succeeded Solomon and became King of the twelve tribes of Israel. But except for the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the other ten tribes laid out a condition for being accepted as their King: to lighten their burden of high taxation imposed by Rehoboam's father (v 4). When he sought advice to this effect he refused to listen to the elderly (v 7). Instead he chose to listen to his friends whose advice destroyed him (vv 10&11) because ultimately only Judah served him and the other eleven tribes refused his authority.

Bad counselors can be destructive. But Jesus is a wonderful counselor. When lost and confused and there seems to be no one to turn to, we don't have to run hither and thither. We don't even have to run to people and places. We can go to Jesus in prayer, through the Holy Spirit. He will be the one to speak, teach, comfort and direct your path (Mt 11:28; Jn 14: 15ff).

2. *Mighty God:*

In what way is Jesus God? He was with God in creation (Jn 1: 1ff). He redeems us from sin. He sustains us. He gives us hope. He gives us eternal life. All these are possible only by God; they are not within human capability. But humanity has this uncanny habit of taking divine matters into their own hands. In Mt 6:27, Jesus questions the futility of human attempts to do that which is divine prerogative and reminds us that relying on ourselves for those that only God can do is stressing out meaninglessly!

The two world wars, if anything, are reminders of how pinning our lives on human intelligence can at times be disastrous. We ought to recognize that God alone is divine

and seek to give that recognition in all our undertakings. He requires of us to put him on top of the priority list (Ex 20:2b). In doing so, he will deliver us from foolish ways and empower us to take wise steps for personal benefit as well as for the common good.

As the Mighty God, Jesus is not only projected as one possessing divine essence but as having authority over all things (Mt 28: 18). To submit to his authority is not an option but a command that all those who choose to serve him must do. Unlike some earthly rulers, his authority is exercised not with coercive tyranny but gently bids us all to enjoy life under his gracious and just dominion (Lk 4: 18-19). Accepting his lordship still remains primary to asserting his divinity and living in his favor.

3. *Everlasting Father:*

Why is Jesus given a parental title “father”? The simple reason is that believers are his children (cf., Gal 4: 1-5). He gives us new life and adopts us as his children. As a father, he cares for us, loves us and provides for us (Cf., Mt 7: 9-11). Earthly parents may fail us at times due to many reasons pertaining to either genuine or irresponsible factors. Many times parents cannot provide for our needs (leave aside wants) because of financial poverty, they may not have the time or habit to sit and listen to us, and they may not show parental concern because of difficult circumstances or other priorities. But we are not left destitute. We have a parent in Jesus. He is the parent who is always near and dear (cf., Is 7: 14). He gently invites us to unload our burdens before him (Mt 11: 28), and assures us not to worry for physical needs (Mt 6: 33), and allows us to pour out our hearts’ desires to him (Jn 16: 24).

Also our human parents have mood swings and accordingly they respond to our cries for help and attention. When we

catch them at their bitter moment we are disappointed by their cold responses. Jesus is nothing like that. He never changes (Heb 13:8). He is always the dependable parent.

The reason most Christians find themselves feeling alone and without succor is because we have refused the privilege to be treated as daughters and sons of the royal household of God. The advent season is a perfect occasion to claim our family relationship with Jesus and publicly declare our rightful place as his children for all eternity.

4. *Prince of Peace:*

Jesus came to earth to establish a renewed kingdom. In this kingdom he is the Prince and all authority rests with him. His reign is characterized by peace in the community and in the individual and affects us momentarily as well as perpetually.

The tragedy is that although he reigns in peace, human beings foolishly choose, for themselves and others, to live under chaos, unrest, disunity, conflict, destruction and even death! It is, as though, they prefer to live under the rule of the evil one (cf. Jn 10:10).

Since he is also the author of peace (Jn 14: 27) it would be meaningless to look for it elsewhere. For the actual experience of peace in the world as well as in personal lives, we need to become members in his kingdom. Jn 3: 5 clearly states, “No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born again!” Peoples and systems need to be sanctified by the blood of Jesus in order to partake of the peace that members of his kingdom enjoy. When this happens humanity will no longer yearn for anything that contradicts the ideals of the kingdom of God. Systems and structures will no longer be allowed to function and be controlled by evil forces and principles (Cf., Eph 6: 10-17).

Believers in all professions ought to build God’s reign of

peace in every small corner of their work and stay. In doing so we extend God's reign on earth and open wide the scope of God's redemption to all peoples and in all places. Pray the season of advent will be an opportunity for us to know Jesus as he really and let him become real in our individual, family and community life. Blessed season!





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CBCNEI

Youth Fest 2015

as reported by Mr D. Hriini Zho, Assistant to Secretary of Justice & Peace

The three days CBCNEI Youth Fest was held from 9 - 11 of October 2015, it was organized by BYFNEI (Baptist Youth Fellowship North East India) and hosted by NBCC (Nagaland Baptist Church Council) at Dimapur Ao Baptist Church (DABA). Approximately 700 delegates from North-East and parts of India participated. The committee organized so many interesting and exciting events. Workshops, Bible study, Gospel services, Color night, Praise and Worship were all engaging and edifying events. The speakers and resource persons were: Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, Rev Dr Razouselie, Professor, Eastern Theological



College, Mr Caleb Ellis, Youth Alpha, Mr Bijoy Sangma, Asia Pacific Baptist Federation. The purpose of this youth fest was to encourage the youth to strengthen their faith in God, to build up the youth, encourage them to get involved in Christian ministries, and to heighten their commitment to the Body of Christ. Mr. Atungo Shitri, Youth Ministry In-charge CBCNEI and Mr. Vikuo Rhi, NBCC Youth Secretary were the key organizers of the fest and Mr Imnatoshi Longkumer served as the COLA chairman for the program.

ENGAGE, ENCOUNTER and EDIFY: The theme of the fest was illustrated by Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, in his address to the delegates on the first day. He stated that there are *“pressing needs today for people to engage in mission and evangelism and bring socio-economic political justice to the society”*. He encouraged the youth to take full advantage of the opportunity to be filled this weekend so that they could go out and make a difference in the world. In his concluding notes he stated that, *“the youth are the leaders of today and the future as well”*. This conference was much needed for the youth of Northeast India! The youth needed this refreshing and encouraging time so that they could flourish and grow in their faith. The skills, knowledge, and attitude that they gained at the conference through the workshops and other events will instill in them some qualities and values to become better leaders both of tomorrow, and of today.

In the concluding service, Mr. Mathotmi Vasha, President BYFNEI (CBCNEI) declared that the Garo Baptist Convention will be the next host of Youth Fest to be held in 2020. We are looking forward to that event and hope that it will be just as fruitful as this 2015 youth fest has been.





Travelling Mercies

Mrs Molly Johnson, USA

As we reflect on this Christmas season, I want to call attention to the unrest and the traveling that Mary and Joseph endured for the sake of Christ.

Take a look at the following verses:

Mary went to visit Elizabeth in Judea (Luke 1:39)

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the census (Luke 2:4)

They took Jesus to Jerusalem to dedicate him to God (Luke 2:22)

They went with their young baby Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod (Matthew 1:13)

They went back to Israel, but went to Nazareth in Galilee (Matthew 1: 20-23 & Luke 2:39)

That is a LOT of traveling! Joseph and Mary made their whole lives about protecting Jesus while he was still in his childhood. Before he could even speak with his human tongue, they were traveling all over the country to keep him safe. As anyone with children can attest- traveling with young children is NOT fun! I cannot imagine traveling this distance with a child. All the while God was fulfilling his word through each of their moves. I imagine Mary was

probably weary of traveling. “Why do we have to move again? Why can’t we settle into a home? When will it be enough?” The Bible doesn’t allude to these doubts or thoughts, but I wonder if she had these doubts that I sometimes have. Throughout all of the moving and traveling, she had faith that God was fulfilling his purpose through her. This is a lesson we can learn from her. Even though we don’t know what God is up to, we can trust that He is fulfilling his purpose through each move when we submit to His will.

God uses any of us who are willing. He will use the weakest of the weak to glorify His name.

In 2014, the Lord indicated that it was time for my husband Micah to apply to Eastern University in Philadelphia and get the education that the Lord had placed in his heart a few years earlier. At the time we were living in the Midwest and we were quite content living close to family. We both had jobs. We were part of a wonderful church and had each established small groups. But when the Lord calls, it is best to go where He sends, no matter how comfortable you are in your present circumstances (As demonstrated by Mary and Joseph’s example). So Micah began the application process and I began preparing for a move. I looked and looked for jobs but I could find nothing. We decided to move anyway because we felt God was clearly calling us there. God provided a job for me and housing for us shortly after we arrived. The whole time we were in Philadelphia it was hard to be so far from family, but it was good to be where God was and where He had called us. This was our first big move as a couple and it was hard, but it was good.

In 2015 Micah began to look at internship options to finish his degree. His program requires a three month internship

experience. He applied to a few opportunities that presented themselves and we prayed a lot in this time. He was offered a position in Africa, but after prayer and seeking out wisdom, we decided to turn it down, feeling that it was not where God wanted us. Then, we learned about the opportunity to intern through Baptist International Ministries. We prayed about it and we were very undecided for awhile. But one evening, as we were praying, we listened to a sermon about following God's will for your life. That same evening we received a call from Ben Chan. He said that if we accepted this opportunity, that they would have a position, not only for Micah, but for me to fill as well! Micah and I both laughed and laughed after hearing Ben Chan's message. God has a way of timing things so perfectly. We felt the joy of the Lord that evening as we knew without a doubt that God was asking us to pursue this opportunity. This was our second big move as a couple. Again, as the first move was, it has been difficult, but it has been so good. God has revealed insights and grown us during these three months. It has been so worth it! Even though it wasn't what I expected. Perhaps because it wasn't what I expected- my life has been changed in ways I wasn't anticipating. ***Due to the nature of people in North East India my eyes have been opened to generosity. My own thoughts about hospitality and generosity have been enlarged and I have been encouraged and challenged to love more faithfully, to give more generously, and to cook more "simply"!*** I have learned to always be willing to share. By the example of Christians here in North-east India I have come to witness all of these values in action. It is amazing to me that here in North East India there are Christians who know the exact missionary who brought the gospel to their tribe. They know the names of the missionaries, the names of the missionaries' children, and which country and even which state the missionaries

came from. They have a more rich history of their Christianity than I do of my own family tree! It is so beautiful and such a challenge to me. It has helped me recognize that I take my relationship with Christ for granted. I grew up in the church, my parents grew up in the church, and their parents grew up in the church. Because of this, I often take it for granted.

I also don't have a tribal history of dances, drums, colors, and traditions that honor another god. It is incredible to me the beautiful and natural way that the tribal groups have incorporated their rich tribal history with their faith and belief in the one true God. They can dance and sing and wear their tribal costume, all the while bringing glory to God the Father. Before they came to know Christ, God was preparing them for the gospel through their tribal traditions and understandings. They were dim reflections of the truth that was to come for them. Now that they know the Truth, they can enjoy worshiping Him in all the diverse and colorful ways that also honor their history.

All of these things and many more I have been able to learn while here in North East India. Micah and I are not quite sure where we are headed next. No angel of the Lord has appeared to us, nor have we had a vision in a dream of where God would like us to go next like He did for Joseph and Mary. But I can be confident, as Mary was that each new place He calls us we can go without fear, knowing that He goes before us. God is faithful and He will teach us lessons every place that He takes us.

This holiday season, whether you are traveling to see family, or you are making a move yourself, rest in the knowledge that God has called many a weary traveler to peace in Him.



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A Ray of Hope

Mr D. Hriini Zho, Assistant to Secretary Justice & Peace.

Isaiah 9:6 *"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace."*

When anyone is asked what they first think of when they see a newborn baby?

All have their own definitions and description that varies from one to another. Some may say Innocence, Peace, Contentment, Pure, and Truthfulness.

The preciousness of life itself is best seen in the frailty of the newborn, and we love and value the little ones. But the birth of Jesus is a very unique kind of a gift. God assuredly said that, He is going to give us a child, a son and this son will have a government placed upon His shoulders (Government was often seen as a burden by the Israelites, especially when they were under subjugation to foreign powers which happened frequently in Israel's history). And this son will be so filled with wisdom and power and righteousness that when people speak of Him... they will not just utter His name but will speak of Him, describing Him in words filled with awe:

- Wonderful counselor
- Mighty God
- Everlasting Father
- Prince of Peace

And this boy child will come to establish a Kingdom that will last forever. He is the Prince of peace - because His kingdom will be one of Peace. It would not be established like the earthly kingdom that have to wage a war to built one's mighty kingdom, but by bringing peace; it would not be maintained by keeping strong armies and troops to protect its kingdom form enemies attacks, but will be a kingdom that He upholds in Peace.

For the Christian, Christmas is a time of celebration, of remembering and honoring the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only son sent to this world so that He might save us.

Isaiah 9:6 is a prophecy that is fulfilled in Jesus, who was born so that He might die. It was Jesus who was born in a manger so that He might hang on a cross. In the birth of Christ are our redemption, our blessing, our cleansing, and all our hope.

But today, the word Christmas has become a commercialized frenzy of crazed shoppers who trample each other underfoot while trying to get a good deal on shoes, games, food and clothing. We have forgotten what Christmas is about.

Dear friends, be in no doubt this Christmas, which the child we remember is our God, who came to earth as human baby, in order to fulfill these and other great promises.

On conclusion, I want to ask you a question about self reflection on Christmas. What does Christmas means to you? Examine yourself whether the child is born to you or not? This is a challenging question to us today my dear fellow Christian.

Wishing You All a Very Joyous Christmas & Happy New Year 2016.



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Christmas to me is ...a thankful heart

Ms Lichanbeni M Tungoe, Asst. Editor, Baptist News

As Christmas comes every year, the real and true message of Love, Peace, Charity and Kindness gets lost and hidden inside some much of seasonal materialisms. With so many gifts to buy , trolley loads of food to be bought and prepared, it's no wonder we have very little time to think why we celebrate and what meaning and changes it have brought about in our life.

I love it when people take time to buy gifts, to give a gift that they have put some thought behind because such gifts remind me of the Christmas gift of Jesus. We have immense expectations of Christmas, with pictures of children playing, church choirs singing, smiling faces and people happily getting along with the season of joy. But oft-times, it is not that of the outlook; of what it is suppose to be, as the song says, "the wonderful time of the year". Not for all but for many it may be a very difficult phase because something might have inflicted the Joy: maybe sickness, or death, or loneliness, or spiritual struggles.

We look to Christmas season to be a perfect time of peace, harmony and joy. But the first Christmas never was that

way, it began with an intrusion. Consider the timing of Joseph and Mary's toughest interruption. It was supposed to be an excitingly amazing time like Christmas as they were engaged to be married. But it was during this time that an angel appeared to Mary and told her that she would miraculously, as a virgin, conceive and give birth to the Son of God (Matt 1:18). What joyful news! Yet, what an interruption! Mary's ultimate doubts would have been all these, had she accepted it in the worldly perspectives: How would she explain herself to Joseph? Would he believe her and take on that responsibility? This was not in their plans.

And yet, she accepted it gracefully as to why God had chosen her and relied on God.

It is obvious to know Joseph's respond in shock. He didn't believe her. How could he? His plans for a happy home with the woman he loved were dashed before his eyes. His life, as well as hers, had been powerfully interrupted. Joseph's human response to this powerful hindrance might have been to divorce her privately. But what a mistake it would have been? (Matt 1:19).

I can imagine Joseph, having learned of Mary's situation, tossing and turning in bed, trying to decide what to do. Finally, he decides. He will divorce her privately. But while he was sleeping an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and says,

"Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. What she says is true. The child in her womb is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. This is in fulfillment of what God said through Isaiah the prophet, 'The virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son, and He shall be called Immanuel meaning 'God with

us.”(Matt 1:20-23)

The key to handling difficulties and hindrance in life is to get God’s take on it. Thankfully, God rescued Joseph from his error.

As I was penning down this Christmas message, it took me back to my situation last December. The profound lesson of faith and hope I learnt through that life-changing decision. That year’s Christmas was for me not as a merry a season as it should have been. It was one phase of my life in which I was at content with my profession as a teacher for I have always learnt from my mother that: teaching is one of the noblest professions on earth and that it’s a greater ministry educating the rising generation with true values and virtues. To my own plans, I began to sway deeper into the secured zone of being a teacher, who would love to jump into that wayward situation of being a teacher for a lifetime. To an extent that there seems no bigger offer and better profession than what I have been offered. I had this big fat offer of a more secured job, and its advantages that include: being with my parents assuring a safe landing every time in all terms; physically, mentally, emotionally and financially. I cannot scrap off that offer. Not until the day I came across the advertisement in the Baptist News of the editorial department. From the first glance, I knew this is something I have being passionate about. I have always been enthusiastic about writing. I would love to try! , was my first thought.

But on the second, third and the fourth thought my seemingly interested passion was on rift. Still my options and choices stirred me confused. While that calling from the Lord to come into His field for work echoes through my ears. The more I prayed, the clearer the voice seems to resound .It was this reminder by my parents that really

touched my heart: *“Life is a mission. God did not entrust His ministries to the theologians and missionaries alone but He made us according to his plan to do all we could with what He has gifted us and not according to what we plan for our self.”*

The only solace I found at that situation was in surrendering everything to God in prayer. I left all what my life would hold to God with the faith that His plans for me are much higher than mine (Is 55:9). I knew that God, in His providence, is still in control of my life. All I ever needed was to have faith in Him and walk in His way. The answers to my prayers were convincingly amazing because God really pulled down my polestar into the ground so that He could build His plan anew. God convince me of His will and I realise the blessings I have receive, to use the little I could do for His kingdom’s glory through my work. With that leap of faith which I took, now I look back and praise God with a thankful heart. God in His plan has made me see his wondrous miracles throughout this year.

Sometimes things may fail to work out according to our plans. It might have shattered you and may be it will be too hard for you to accept. This was true with Mary and Joseph. There was a great hindrance and all their plans were distracted. But can you imagine what could be more a privilege, or a responsibility, than to be human parents of the Son of God? The great hindrance which they accepted it positively redirected their beautiful future. The direction their future took was of course not what they had planned, but it was so much better and bigger than that of their plans. God may not help you cut your grass. He wants to help you in cutting His grass. He will give you the lawnmower and the fertilizers and teach you to take care of His grass, not yours.

Let us re-consider the fact that God plans for you are to prosper you and not harm you (Jer 29:11). Whatever difficulties you may be enduring right now, why not look at it in a different angle, and ask, *“God, are you using this to do something great in my life?”*

Then begin to look for the marvelous and miraculous things He will do in your life everyday. Nothing can happen to you without the leave and notice of your father, who knows the best for you. He still has all of the hairs on your head numbered.

Even in the midst of difficult circumstances, there is one thing you can do: stop and give thanks and praise God for Jesus, and something of the Peace that Jesus came with will be yours.

Let the joy of the season fills your heart and may the Prince of Peace be at your home this Christmas.



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:27

CONTRIBUTION FOR NORTH EAST CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

The Bible talks so much of money/wealth/possession even more than of faith and prayer. Wealth matters, because like an index it flashes one's exact character. Wealth is fleeting. It is futile to blindly pursue wealth that does not last. It is sheer foolishness to simply hoard wealth on earth for self gratification. Whoever is gripped by greed of wealth is, indeed a foolish and miserable person.

On the other hand, one must know that wealth is a gift from God. And this gift is to be used for worthy and meaningful purposes. It is God's desire that we create wealth and use it for His glory. God wants every believer to be rich towards Him by wisely investing with whatever one is gifted.

Giving is one of the most profitable investments. Jesus admonishes us to ponder on laying up treasures in heaven. The choice is yours to act while He gives you resources, time and opportunity.

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(Huzo Meru)

Director of Operations

NECU

The Significant Child

Rev Dr Yiepetso Wezah, Principal, Baptist Theological College, Pfutsero

Jesus Christ offers hope and peace to all the believers in the midst of hatred, wars, killings and suffering. God promised a new world order through Jesus Christ by restoring a harmonious relationship with humans and with all His creation. God fulfilled His promise more than two thousand years ago. Let us be reminded of the love of God through His historical incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ. I would like to share a few insights on the theme “Prince of Peace”.

The promise of God

A child to be born in order to deliver people from the bondage of sins was divinely planned and prophesied by the prophets of God (Is. 9:1-2). In the midst of hatred, enmity and wars, people looked for a king who would bring peace and prosperity. People turned to God and there was national enlargement, peace and prosperity under the blessing of God (Is. 9:3-5) Thus, God promised that a child will be born, he shall be called Immanuel. He will refuse evil and do good. He will bring peace and prosperity (Is. 7:10-14).

They realized that enmity and war was not a solution to their problems. Hence, they relied on God and not depended on humans (Is. 7:9; 8:12). For God promised that through Jesus Christ He will restore harmonious relation-

ship with humans and there will be harmonious relationship between individuals, families, village and nations, between humans and God's creation. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Government shall be upon his shoulders. The earthly government is only human made government. It has a lot of limitations, weaknesses and failures to execute justice. In human made government people fights for power and dominion over individuals and exercise authority in decision making process to control socio-economic and political life to meet their own ends. It breeds enmity, wars and killings. However, the government that Jesus would be establishing is to rule the hearts of individuals. He would transform the hearts of people into a loving hearts and help them execute justice in their governance, which will ultimately bring peace and prosperity to a nation. Jesus would give wisdom to handle daily affairs in all aspects of life. This will gradually happen as people accept Jesus Christ and commit themselves to the plan of God.

A child to be born will have four names and each name carries a significant meaning. (1) Wonderful Counselor, (2) Mighty God, (3) Everlasting Father and (4) Prince of Peace. The first two names suggest the Divine wisdom and power



Rev Dr Yiepetso Wezah with his family

and the last two names suggest the accomplishment of the first two names. Let reflect on the names of the child Jesus and see the implication of each name.

Wonderful Counselor

Jesus has a wonderful nature. In Him there is a union of Deity and Humanity. He possesses grace and gives grace to all who believe in him. He is a wonderful prophet. He wonderfully discloses his divine nature and human duty and destiny. He spoke the word of God with authority. He fulfilled the promises of God in himself. As the priest, he sacrificed himself for the sins of human once for all. He carries out the work of reconciliation. As a king, he rules the world with authority and power and yet with gentleness. He wonderfully relates with people and minister people according to their needs with grace. He knows the needs and desires of every individual. He always has sympathy and identifies himself with people. He understands weaknesses, strengths, joy and sorrow of every individual and gently deals and comforts us. For these reasons, Jesus is known as the most wonderful counselor. Further, he gives wisdom to tackle daily situation, helps in our decision making with tender heart. Every true believer experience Jesus as a wonderful counselor. He is there for everyone.

Mighty God

Jesus involves in the creation of the world (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17). He is the Creator; all things were created in and through Him. Thus he has authority over everything both in heaven and on earth. Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). God is in Jesus and Jesus is in God. By looking at Jesus, we can see the character and qualities of God (holy, righteous, just, love, kind, patience, mercy, etc.) He is the true incarnation of God who was born in human form to offer salvation to whoever believes in Him.

His words and works demonstrate that He is the only true God (1 John 3:16; 5:20). He is mighty God who accomplishes everything that is promised for our salvation and life here on earth and the future Kingdom of God.

Everlasting Father

Jesus is God Himself. He is the Father of eternity, the Father forever. He is the Lord of eternity. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the provider of all our needs and protector, preserver and nurturer of our lives and all the creation. He is the alpha and omega, who is there for us and the generation to come.

Prince of Peace

Jesus himself is the peace. He proclaims peace, makes peace with people and gives everlasting peace to whoever receives him into their lives. There are two ways of understanding peace-(1) the inner peace and (2) the earthly peace which is understood as the absence of war.

When we receive Jesus into our lives, the joy and peace of God fills our hearts. Then we have peace with God and with people. For whoever, reconciled with God will reconcile with people around him/her. Gradually, the peace of Jesus Christ will permeate the whole society.

The prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus possesses more than the above mentioned qualities and gives these things to us, which the world can never give. We have to receive Jesus into our lives with grateful heart and experience him personally and share the good things of Jesus with others.

May we all experience Jesus as the wonderful counselor, the mighty, the everlasting father and prince of peace during this Christmas.





Voice box



Mr Chubatemu, B.Com

I was not happy at all the first time I came to Lewis Memorial (LM) hostel. I have always been very comfortable in my own zone of life and I hated the feeling of coping with the whole new environment and to mingle with all the other hostlers. But that was my first thought, now am glad I joined this hostel because it changed me. I learnt to be cheerful and respect everyone. I love being a part of this brotherhood. I have grown closer to Naga Christian Fellowship (NCF) and enjoy taking part in the church activities. The best experience I've got here is building relations through games. Basketball is the heart of the hosteller's games here and it is through this we learnt "Unity of hearts" to win or to lose. At the end of the game, we get to know each other better.





Mr A. Reizuo Pfoze, BCA

Hostel's life is one of the most memorable experiences one can have. It takes us away from home and teaches you many things about life and people.

Lewis Memorial (LM) hostel has taught me many values as it not only focuses in making a student more competent in academics but in personal developments and most importantly, spiritual development.

One magical thing about this hostel is : ***“ even those who have not laid their fingers on a basketball also gets trained into a professional player once we get boarded in LM.”*** I was never a basketball player but now I can play and am learning to be more skilful.



Bits and pieces: Lewis Memorial Boy's Hostel is one ministry under the Council's Student ministry. Currently under the Mission Department of the Council, this student's ministry is officially supervised and headed by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary of CBCNEI. The boys are taken care by Mr Talimoa, Chaplain of the Hostel.

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We the Readers

The Mouthpiece

“We The Readers: The Mouthpiece” is a new column introduced for the first time in *Baptist News* for the keen reader-contributors who not only read us but also come forward with their insightful articles. We have received an overwhelming respond.

Keeping writing to us at:

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Who do you follow?

Yumri Taipodia, Alumnus of SAIACS

Abraham? No, he didn't wait for the promise.

Jacob? No, he deceived his father.

What about Joseph? No, because he didn't pray.

May be you follow Moses? He broke the tablets.

David? I would, had he not be a polygamist.

Peter? He denied Jesus.

Thomas? He doubted the Master.

May you follow Paul? No, he persecuted the Church.

Except Jesus I can follow none. Jesus only is blameless.

So I will follow Jesus.





Engaging Culture

Mr Micah Johnson, Intern, Board of International Ministries, USA

How should a person go about bringing change to an area? How does one teach and bring new information to a group of people in a way that is respectful of the local culture? These are some of the questions that we wrestled with heavily during my graduate studies. We were cautioned against the tendency for those of us from the West to take on a “*Savior complex*” - feeling that we have all the answers and we can go save the world from all its problems. The history of development work, and to a lesser extent missionary work, is filled with stories of development interventions gone wrong. Outsiders coming into a new culture tried to impose solutions to problems that they saw; however, with minimal understanding of the culture, the development workers coming from outside usually implemented solutions that would work in the West but did not fit into the local cultural patterns of the developing country. Therefore, many of the solutions failed, offended, and even harmed local cultures.

Therefore, as I have traveled around the North East speaking at various churches and seminaries, I have been cautious to offer up “my way” of doing business as the “best way.”

What I have found is that more productive discussions and solutions are created when the participants from the local culture engage in discussion with each other and work to find solutions to local problems and identify areas where change is needed. Not only are these ideas more appropriate for the local context, but they are also more likely to be implemented as there is now more local momentum to push the ideas towards implementation.

Nevertheless, sometimes it does take an outsider to be able to objectively see a problematic situation and call out the church when it is doing wrong. We see Paul frequently doing this in his letters to the churches in Europe. Certain cultural practices had become ingrained into the churches' rituals and the lives of church members, and it required Paul, as an outsider, to write to the churches in order to correct their practices. I have been doing some reading lately on the church and culture - examining how the church must determine which aspects of culture to embrace and which aspects to reject. One particular book, *Love and Revolutions* by Dr. Eloise Meneses, referenced the struggle of the church in South India to reconcile the pervasive practice of the caste system with its own doctrine and set of practices. Not only did some churches fail to eliminate caste practices within their congregations, but others, such as the Syrian Church in Kerala, owed centuries of survival and acceptance in India to their integration of caste practices into their church.

It is important that we constantly examine our practices in light of the larger culture around us. When the church totally rejects the culture around it, the church often finds itself in a place that is irrelevant to those outside the walls of the church. However, when the church integrates too much of the culture around us into our church practices we risk losing our distinct message to the world. When we lose our

distinctness, we lose the radical message of Jesus that is so inviting to the lost, hurting, marginalized populations around us. As I have traveled around the North East, I have heard that after the initial rapid expansion of the Gospel spread by Baptist missionaries among the tribal groups, the expansion throughout the second and third and fourth generations has slowed. I have experienced a similar phenomenon in the United States where the church was once a highly-regarded institution of society, yet now is experiencing declining membership. Therefore, we must all ask ourselves, “What has our message become?”

I have been told that one of the main issues of the church in North East India is that many Christians are nominal Christians who, though they show up on Sunday, do not live a lifestyle of someone who has been “*born again*” during the rest of the week. I have also heard about social issues such as domestic violence, sex trafficking, and corruption which are pervasive in the North East. It is the church who has been tasked with fighting these issues of injustice. And in that fight against injustice, the church, as Newbigin states, is to be three things: a *sign* pointing the way for the lost to find the Kingdom of God; a *foretaste* of the Kingdom where people can experience the fellowship of all cultures and the realities of peace, justice, and reconciliation that Christ died for; and an *instrument* which brings the Gospel to all peoples. However, working against social issues is not an easy message to deliver. It often causes tension and debate. Therefore, the extent to which the church decides to work against these social issues may both drive away some members on one hand - those who claim the church by name but not by action, and strengthen the expansion of the Gospel on the other - by delivering the distinct message of Christ to those in need of hearing it. Passivity towards these issues may help the church keep

the peace in the short-run while sacrificing long-term growth and social change.

So when we examine aspects of our churches that may be different from one another, it is important to discern between those practices that are simply cultural adaptations of the same message, and those that are in fact detrimental to the distinct message of Christ. And thanks to the Gospel, we are not outsiders to each other. We are all brothers and sisters striving to change our own lives and our own churches to become more in line with the calling that Christ has given us. As the global church becomes more unified, we can increase the opportunities that we have to learn from each other. When I return to the United States, I hope that I can help the American church to undertake a thorough self-examination of its own posture towards contemporary culture in the United States. We need to examine how the overarching structures and underlying foundations of American society have penetrated the church in such a way that the church is now unable to distinguish itself from society at large. We need to look at the example of the church in North East India to understand our role in fighting the social justice issues that we have ignored for far too long. I am thankful for a global body of believers in which we can all walk, learn, and grow together in a unified fellowship.



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NEWS FLASH

Christian Literature Centre Board Meeting (20 Oct)

The half yearly board meeting for Christian Literature Center (CLC) was conducted at CBCNEI conference hall. Board meetings are held twice in a year during which the reports are briefed to the members and the previous actions plans are reviewed. The members were Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, Rev T. P. Mordecai, Mr Vitoshe Swu, Mr Pabitro Achowe, Mr Vikato Shikhu, Mr Angam Chahong, Mr Bernard Marak.

Mission Leaders Training (30 Oct - 2 Nov)

30 Mission Leaders, Directors and Mission minded church pastors participated at the Mission Leaders training organized by Mission Department at CBCNEI Conference Centre. Col. Arun Kumar, Dr. Paul Borthwick and Rev. Dr. J. M. Ngul Khan Pau were the resource persons. The topics for the training were 1. Envisioning on Finishing the Task (Col Arun Kumar), Global trends in Mission, Understanding Ethnicity and Diver-





sity in Mission (Dr. Paul Borthwick) and Diaspora Mission; Past and present (Rev. Dr. J. M Ngul Khan Pau).

In the inaugural session, Col. Arun (UP Mission) gave a fascinating field experience thoughts on the need to establish a strong defined mission strategy in completing the task. Dr. Paul Borthwick dealt on the various challenges Missionaries are facing in this diverse cultural ethnicity while doing Mission activities. Biblical examples both from Old Testament and New Testament were an extract of Rev. Dr. J. M. Ngul Khan Pau presentation on Diaspora Mission specifically focused on the shift in Christian perspective in doing Mission at this

present generation. Bible studies were led by Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary CBCNEI and Rev. Rettiar G Momin, Mission Secretary Garo Baptist Convention.



SABAK Leadership Training (3-5 Nov)

Sumi Aphuyemi Baptist Akukuhou Kuqhakulu (SABAK) with the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) jointly organized a three days Leadership Seminar from at CBCNEI Conference Hall with more than 30 Church leaders from the 21 local churches under SABAK attending it.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary CBCNEI, Dr. Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary CBCNEI, Mr Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary CBCNEI were the resource persons.

Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary of the Council in his presentation on mission strategies quoted that “ A missionary sending Church.



Lewis Memorial Boy’s Hostel Retreat (23-25 Nov)

The three days retreat program of the Lewis Memorial Boy’s Hostel underwent successfully at its campus. Mr Gibson Marak, Director WWF and Mr Pur, Youth Ministry, Dimapur were the theme

speakers. The bible studies were based on the theme “*Consider your ways*”. One of the most important topics that had been taken up was “Youth challenges today”. The retreat was a blessing to the participants and some of the boys re-dedicated their lives to Jesus and at the end session of the retreat, all the boys pledge to inculcate the good habit of reading the bible daily.



Sunday School Teachers Training (24-26 Nov)

49 participants comprising of Sunday school teachers, Directors, Superintendent from six conventions partic-



ipated. Mission department CBCNEI in partnership with Christian Education Evangelical Fellowship of India (CEEFI) organized it. Rev. Joshi and Rev. Bendang Toshi were the resource persons. Group discussions, presentation's, games, goals of Christian Education, Children's characteristics, lesson preparation/storytelling, biblical Basis for Children ministry, learning styles, visual aids, organizational matters and games for Children were the topics covered.

Ms Ennu Tamut (Adi Baptist Churches Council, Arunachal Pradesh) remarked: *"I learned a lot from the visual aids presentation. Getting to learn about different age group of child was one thing I enjoyed the*

most."

Ms Moanaro Imchen (Kumlong Baptist Church (ABAM)) opined *"this training was an eye opener for more creative teaching of the children."*

The enormous response from the teachers proves how keen they are to learn more and equip themselves in nurturing the future leaders. On behalf of Mission Department CBCNEI we extend our gratitude to CEEFI and all the participants.



Diphu Baptist Church donation (Nov 28)

The Diphu Baptist Church's pastors and deacons paid an official visit to the CBCNEI's office and donated a pristine



SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS TRAINING



office desk for the General Secretary. The office of the Council expresses our thankfulness for the generosity of the church and extends our prayers to be abundantly blessed and to enable the Church minister more to the people in the days to come.



White Memorial Hostel advent Christmas (28 Nov)



White Memorial girl's hostel organized a series of program to celebrate advance Christmas thereby preparing hearts for the joyful season.



An Event of Awestruck

In Bethlehem town
There was no little ground,
Everywhere trumpet sound,
Ding dong bell,
A cute was born in stable,
Found in the manger,
What's a pity but wonder,
Throng used to tell,
None but sinner he's in hell,
As long grown up tender,
Rays-up glory starts glare,
Who was begotten,
Forsaken other brethren ,
No conceive of parent,
All were remain dormant,
Who would no he's the lone savior,

Tormented with llows,
Got pierced over nails with
hammers
Who would hung into lap,
None yonder to make help,
Only on-laid- down
None was to mourn,
No sob, no weep, no scramble
All limb even held tremble,
A brevier dare to commit the same,
No greedy, selfish, and damn
We don't have any dreams,
To sustain since we are only in
sweety dreams
Oh Lord Jesu, you the last resort
We are innocent, silly and destitute



*Mr Amal Dev,
Guwahati Baptist Church*

Missionary Pastors Training Program



The Mission Department conducted Missionary Pastors Training in five (5) different locations in the month of June. All together 161 Missionary Pastors and leaders were given basic Pastoral training to take care of the churches and fellowships they are looking after.

This was a partnership program of West Virginia Baptist Convention, under ABC- USA, CBCNEI and the Mission Department of the State Conventions and Council. We also extend our gratefulness to the leadership of WVBC, MBC, GBC, KABC, ABC, NMM (NBCC). We look forward to training more Missionary Pastors in the future.

Some feedbacks includes: *“this training helped us to really enjoy the taste of the Bible. Earlier we read the Bible but did not really*





know how to study. It was like licking the fruit from the outside without peeling off the cover. This time we were able to enjoy the taste of the inside."



Evangelism Exposure Training

In partnership with Overflowing Cross Society and Guwahati Christian Forum, a training on Evangelism Exposure was conducted during 19-20 November 2015 at the campus. The topics taught includes,

- Total Church Life - *How to be a first century Church in the 21st Century world.*
- People Sharing Jesus - *Helping Others Know Christ*
- Practice witnessing & went to market areas for sharing Gospel

About 65 persons participated each day for the training and in the evening the trainees were taken out to the street to practice and present the Gospel to people of



other faiths. Gospel was presented to 53 people in the street, out of which 17 willingly accepted Christ as Saviour while 6 people refused to listen to the Gospel presentation. It was an amazing training as expressed by the trainees.

Some of the missionaries who were trained in this program went out for Evangelism on 25th November at Maligaon and distributed around 500 tracts and shared the Gospel to 150 people. Out of those 150 people, 55 of them responded positively and want to know more about Jesus. 10 of them received Christ and 6 of them are willing to take baptism. One family open their home for weekly bible study and fellowship.



The calling for Sacrifice

Rev Wati Longchar, Dean, Serampore College



Text: Mathew 13: 44-46

In the passage we find two parables - (1) The parable of hidden treasure, and (2) the parable of pearl. The parables are said to be the shortest parables recorded in the Bible; two parables in just three verses or in three sentences. Perhaps, it was not necessary for Jesus to elaborate them since it was so common usage among the people. May be people over used the “*hidden treasure*” or “*precious pearl*” in their daily conversation. This could be the reason why the other gospel writers also did not feel the need to record it. But both parables carry deep theological meanings for Christians today, especially for Church workers.

Jesus tried to re-explain the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven specifically to his disciples. These parables were told only to his trusted disciples, not to others who were following Jesus. So let us imagine that Jesus is telling to Christians alone or specifically to the church workers. Citing the parable of hidden treasure and fine pearl, Jesus is reminding his disciples - What is the Kingdom of God all about, why do we need to sacrifice for God’s Kingdom, what and where do we have to sacrifice for the sake of God’s Kingdom? What are the sacrifices involved in witnessing God’s Kingdom?

During the time of Jesus, it was a common practice to bury valuables like gold, ornaments under the ground to protect

from the hands of untrusted neighbors, thieves or robbers. They used to bury it before departing for battle or get on long journeys. If they returned safely, they would reclaim their buried treasure. Unfortunately, if they died in the battle field or failed to return home due to unknown reasons, the location of the valuables would remain a secret. Technically, in such cases the hidden treasure belonged to the person who owned the land. Because of this, there were some people known as “treasure hunters” at the time of Jesus. The one who discovered the treasure must purchase the land to become the rightful owner. If the person takes it without purchasing the land then one would be considered as a thief. In Matthew 13:44, Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, which a person found and hid. Then because of joy he went and sold all that he had and bought that field.” For the sake of hidden treasure, the person gave up everything until he had only one thing - the hidden treasure.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he found a pearl of great value, he went out and sold everything he had and bought it.” (Vs 45-46) For the sake of the pearl, he gave up everything and finally he is left with nothing except the pearl.

In spite of the deliberate reminders and teaching, the disciples of Jesus thought that the Kingdom of God was an earthly kingdom where God would establish almighty kingdom and rule over the nations with great might and power. The King would deliver Israel from all kinds of bondages and make Israel a mighty kingdom. Indeed, they expected the kingdom of God in terms of exercise of power and authority. Jesus refuted disciples’ understanding of God’s Kingdom citing the parables of the hidden treasure and pearl.

The contexts in which these two parables presented are very striking. The first parable is presented in the context of “*field*”. Agriculture is the major occupation of the people at the time. It is in this field that a large number of people spent their life,

worked whole day, earned their living, and shared their products. The same is the situation with many Asian today. It means that the Kingdom of God is to be experienced amidst our daily life activities, not somewhere else life after death.

The second parable is presented in the context of busy market setting. We all go to market to buy our needs. Here people buy and sell their products. We cannot survive without the market. Market is also a place where lot of cheating, manipulation, adulteration and corruption takes place and everything is oriented to money, profit and gain. We also encounter many different people such as drunkards, drug abusers, sex workers, robbers, tourists, honest people, young and old, men and women of diverse religions, races and cultures. Again this affirms that Kingdom of God is to be experienced in the daily busy and multi complex public life.

A Latin American theologian Gustavo Gutierrez says, “We worship God by doing justice to the poor”. We often think that we can worship God within the four walls of the church. This is a wrong understanding. The church is not only the worship place. In fact, the true worship place is our agriculture fields, market places, offices and our work places. It is in those places that we must act out truth and justice and testify the message of God’s Kingdom.

Here Jesus is reiterating that Kingdom of God is to be found in the midst of the people especially among the poor who are oppressed, rejected and abandoned. It is here that people are called to worship God by doing justice. We worship God by doing justice to the poor.

The focus of the parables is the value or worth of the hidden treasure and pearl. The value cannot be compared with any earthly things we own. The Kingdom of God which Jesus is talking about is not comparable with earthly wealth, power and authority. If you want to experience or become the bearers of this Kingdom, we need to deny ourselves, empty our-

selves, and disassociate ourselves from desires of having more wealth or to become richer at the cost of poor, to exercise more power and authority for self glory. Humble, humility, sacrifice and commitment to justice to the poor are what required in God's Kingdom. These values need to be exercised in public life.

By re-explaining the Kingdom of God using these parables, Jesus throw an open challenge to his disciples- Are you willing to sacrifice your wealth and life for the sake of God's Kingdom? We have to face the same challenge even today. If we are willing to do so, it involves risk in life. We have to face many oppressive system, well-structured and institutionalized military power, political system, co-operate multi-nationals, patriarchy, tribalism. Those are the evil forces that hinder celebration of life. We also have to challenge gun culture, unending taxation, organize crimes, unending competition of consumerism, and excessive exploitation of natural resources.

For Kingdom's sake, Mark was dragged to death behind a chariot, Luke was crucified, Stephen was stoned to death, James was beheaded, Thaddeus was crucified and shot to death with arrows, Nathaniel was skinned alive and then crucified, Philip was hanged in a column of the Temple, Andrew was crucified in Egypt, Thomas was speared to death in India, Simon was sawed to pieces while still alive, Paul was beheaded. They sacrificed their life because they value Kingdom of God more than earthly pleasure, wealth and power. Likewise many missionaries, many church leaders, many aborigines/indigenous people fighting against injustice have sacrificed their life. Are we ready and willing to sacrifice for Kingdom's cost?



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Faculty of Theology

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Bachelor of Divinity (BD) Degree programme attempts to inculcate a sense of commitment to the ministry of the church following the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The Candidates shall be able to interpret the word of God, understand theological discourses, major religions, mature in Christian spirituality, Pastoral Care & Counselling.

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The Missing Dimension in Our Churches

Elungkom Kompoing, Kiyezhe Village, Kuhuboto, Dimapur

Could there be “a missing dimension in our churches”? Yes, I believe there is evidently a striking similarity of the Victorian England era dawning in our society with a significant slide from Christian belief. Commenting on the famous British motto, “My mind is no longer a Christian even though my body is” Mohler says, “a person can continue to live as a Christian without believing anymore in the basic tenets of the faith, even in the existence of God himself (Albert R. Mohler. *Atheism Remix*. 23-24). The terms “Christian” and “Christianity” have become so cliché that a respected church leader once wrote an article in one of the local dailies on how, “[we] don’t need to be evangelized anymore because everyone is Christian.” That statement made me wonder what his understanding of the gospel according to the Bible might be. In other words, has the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) become obsolete and without relevance whatsoever in our context now. The Great Commission, however, is not just about evangelism. It is also about discipleship, “*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*” (Matt. 28:20). Discipleship is a necessary follow-up of evangelization, our spiritual growth that leads to spiritual maturity. Our be-

coming Christian doesn't stop at salvation but continues through the process of discipleship, and so the objective of evangelism is life (salvation) and growth (discipleship). To claim or profess Christianity on the basis of one's Christian heritage is self-deceptive because God's Word clearly presents salvation as a matter of individual choice - "*who-soever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life...*" (John 3:16, 6:47; Rom. 1:16). Yet, there are many who claim to be Christian live by the false view of "Christianity" based on Christian heritage and not on acceptance of Christ as one's personal Saviour. The gospel which is the only message for evangelisation and the nucleus of Christianity must be correctly presented.

God's Word in the Pulpit Ministry: The ministry of the pulpit is the ministry of the pastor who is called to this sacred task, to devote himself to preaching (1 Tim 4:13). Therefore, he needs to do his best to present himself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). However, many pastors and preachers tend to shy away from this and opt for topical or other types of sermons and the danger of preaching out of context looms large. When a pastor fails to study hard and delve into the Scriptures, the outcome is a poor sermon. I must admit that this is true in many churches. And, as John Stott puts it, "*the low level of our Christianity is due to the low level of preaching in the churches.*" The failure to impart systematic and proper biblical teaching in our churches has deprived innocent and genuine believers who earnestly crave to know the Bible and to relate to God in a more intimate way; but many are misguided. There is no telling how many wrong beliefs and unbiblical practices churches have adopted because of the lack of proper biblical teaching. Number of awareness programs - camps and seminars

ranging from revival crusades to health, social, moral or ecological issues, etc are conducted to educate believers about different things, which may be good to know. But those cannot replace the staple diet of the Word of God that should come from the pulpits every week as spiritual feasting on one or two good meals of a seminar or occasional programs. Systematic and proper teaching; sound, faithful, and accurate exposition of the Word of God in our churches lacks.

God's Word in the lives of Christians: Christianity is the embodiment of Christ and His teachings. As Christians, we derive our worldview from the Bible and look at our world, interpret situations and conduct ourselves through its lens. What is sad to see in our context is the failure of our churches to impact our world; our families, neighbourhoods and beyond - with our lives shaped by the biblical worldview. Instead, many of our congregations are deeply rooted in worldviews other than the biblical one, and this has a bearing on moral and ethical conduct in our society. Despite the fact that we live in a fallen world, far from perfection, the number of churches in our region should mean that God's Word is transforming lives and making a difference for all to see. But is the supremacy of God's Word heard from our pulpits?

God's Word in Theological Institutions: I would like to posit how theological institutions contribute to the ministry of the church, particularly the ministry of the pulpit. An institution can be either academic- or ministry-oriented. Some institutions rigorously emphasize the academic, overlooking spiritual development and the ministerial aspect, while others zealously emphasize spiritual development and the ministerial aspect, overlooking the academic. Some just offer degrees! While many institutions may have a blend of both, with an emphasis of one over the other, it

is not helpful to be lopsided. It is important to strike a balance between the two. What good is it to be academically informed and ministerially irrelevant? Or what good is it to be ministerially afire and academically below par? Neither is adequate nor satisfactorily fulfils the demands of the ministry. The values of an institution are reflected in its graduates and it is important how an institution presents its values to the students through its teaching and through the lives of the teachers. I cannot agree more with the warning of Machen when he said, “*as go the theological seminaries, so goes the church*”(J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*. 65).

It is a joy to see many people committing their lives for the ministry. But if the ministers of God are flippant about their calling, the word of the prophet Hosea should serve as a warning: “*The more the priests increased, the more they sinned against me; ... and it will be: Like people, like priest; so I will punish them...*” (*Hosea 4:7-9ff*). How I wish this message had a positive tone. There is greater responsibility on those who preach and teach as they are to make an impact in the lives of other believers for they are their spiritual role models. If the teaching and preaching of God’s Word is minimal in the churches today, it shouldn’t be surprising when some churches eventually abandon it altogether.

The devil cunningly desires and seek for loopholes to craft misguiding and adulterate messages in the pulpit other than the Word of God and, even if it is the Word of God. He creates chaos and disarray in believers’ lives. The Bible talks about the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:11), against which believers are to stand. Therefore, we must be aware of the danger of replacing what is central to our faith and practice by our ingenuity and sloppiness in preparation and imparting of the Word of God. We need a constant re-

minder that we are accountable for everything entrusted to us, accountable for what we preach, for what we do or fail to do according to the Word of God. And finally, consider the thought-provoking concept that, whatever we transmit from the pulpit to the pew will be lived out in the public square!

We desire to see transformation in unbelievers' lives and earnestly desire reformation in our own lives, but how does that happen? Well, it happens only when we allow the Word of God to take the supreme place in our lives. God's word can bring the reformation and revival in our churches. The reformation of Judah under King Josiah (2 Chron. 34), and under Nehemiah (Neh. 8 & 9) came as the result of the ministry of God's Word. What is plaguing many of our churches today is what I call "the missing dimension". If this dimension is set in place, I believe we will see changes and transformation in people's lives.

For us to assume that we are Christian because of our heritage is a grave mistake! Each new generation needs to be evangelized and taught the Word of God accurately if the Great Commission is to be fulfilled.



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