

Baptist News

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Editorial



The past three months have been a very eventful with lots of bitter-sweet moments with laughter and silence in the air. With all these, it is very befitting that the theme of this volume has been chosen as "*Moving towards Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*". Along with introducing the theme, the focus has also been on the Annual General Meeting (AGM) with reports and photos of the gathering. I hope you will be blessed as you go through this issue as well.

"Moving towards pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" is a call to all Christians to join in the journey of promoting and defending Justice to restore peace in our society. Talking about Justice and Peace, as church, our focus has to be more on "Peace"; Justice not at the cost of Peace.

In our society today where the 'Mighty Rules', it is very possible that some prosper at the cost of others, and Justice became a far cry for many. Many a times, it is possible that we become insensitive to the surroundings, and those in the margins felt justice being denied to them though unintentional. Secondly, Justice is also a cry by those who feel justice is denied to them. When someone feels justice is denied to them, then comes

conflict, and where there is conflict, there is no peace. 'Justice being denied' is also felt by those who have insecurity in themselves. Once they feel insecure, there developed in the mind to feel they are the victim. Therefore, it is a very complex issue, and needs to be dealt with much care.

As we ponder upon delivering Justice to whom it is denied, it is also important to look from the perspective of the other party because, when we try to deliver justice to one, justice can be denied unknowingly to the other. For example, there are two parties, and the first party consists of 10 members and the other party consists of 50 members. It is very possible that the first party demands equal share since they are two parties, whereas, if equal share is given to both the parties, the individuals in the second party can be denied of the share the individuals in the first party gets. Therefore justice cannot be looked from only one perspective.

Dr. Wati Longchar has contributed an article on the same theme from the Margin's perspective. I hope you will read it and digest it to understand the Present Time and journey together toward fulfilling the command from the Lord.

Church, being a community of believers, it is a call to us to be a community of love and compassion so that peace prevails in our land.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI

Special Appeal

Dear fellow believers in the Lord,

Remembering the legacy left by the Missionaries who came to our land and suffered for the simple reason that we might become children of God, and remembering the legacy left by our forefathers who suffered persecution to preserve the faith, the Mission Department is constructing a Building called "Legacy Building". This building will stand tall as a testimony of our love for those gone before us.

We will use the building to generate income for mission, and every Rupee generated from this building will be specifically to support our Missionaries within India and abroad who are at warfront on our behalf sharing the love of God.

We felt it very important to share this opportunity to you to be part of this Legacy by donating any amount you felt led. Every donor's name will be enlisted as "Partners forever" in CBCNEI record and in the building as well. You can make this donation in the name of your loved ones who have gone before us as a sign of their legacy in Kingdom building. I assure you that you will not regret donating for this noble cause. People in many generations will see it and will be grateful to God for your donation.

Therefore, I would like to request you to prayerfully consider donating toward this Legacy. It will be storing your treasure in safe place *"where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal"* (Matthew 6:20).

You can send your Donation to the account given below:

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May the good Lord, in His great riches and glory, bless you even more.

In His service,



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary,
CBCNEI



A Pilgrimage Together with the People in the Margins – for Justice and Peace

Wati Longchar

The Site of Doing Theology

There are people who are forced to live in the margins through the imposition of unjust ideologies, cultural practices, economical, social, and political structures. Patriarchy, racism, Casteism, ableism, ageism, anthropocentrism, dictatorship, and even market capitalism are unjust institutions and structures that perpetuate, disenfranchise and dehumanize people and push them to the margins of society. Those who do not fit into the normative scheme of dominant powers are looked down upon as inferior, incapable, told that they are poor because they are lazy or not smart and that they lack intellectual capacity, or assured that they are cursed by God because of sin. Some of these people in the margins are:

- disabled people whose presence is seen as a burden to family and society; whose gifts and potentialities are never acknowledged, while they are seen as objects of charity, sinners and cursed by God;
- LGBT people who are seen as those with a psychological imbalance in their character, being abnormal and indulging in sinful same-sex relations and acts;
- people living with HIV and AIDS who are seen as drug abusers, sexual abusers and cursed by God;
- indigenous people who are denied their culture, spirituality and

land; being the poorest communities in their own land and whose culture, customs, rituals, sacred shrines, places of worship, sacred music, ceremonial dress, traditions, and handiwork are commoditized for commercial purpose; and who cannot compete within the dominant market system;

- migrant workers who are exploited for maximum profit and forced to perform dirty and dangerous work without social security;
- Dalits who suffer socially as the lowest group of the caste system bearing the stigma of untouchability, and whose touch, shadow and sight pollutes the people of other castes;
- women who are treated as inferior, subordinate beings whose bodies are commoditized as mere objects of enjoyment and pleasure for others.

These people who are denied justice and peace are the site of doing theology. 'Margin' is a theological principle that critiques all the dominant value systems that dehumanize, exclude and push some people to marginality. It calls the powerful and the privileged to repentance. It critiques cultures, traditions and theology that justify and nurture unjust institutions advocating marginality as a part of the divine creation. Journeying together with people in the margins for justice and peace requires listening to their testimonies, pain and suffering. From their experience of humiliation and suffering, in resistance to powers, and in struggle for life with dignity and justice, they bring a clear message of justice and peace. Their stories become the voice of God.

God Revealed Among the People in the Margins

The incarnation of Jesus took place among the people at the margins. At the time of the birth of Jesus, people who gathered around him were people outside of the power structure. They were people without any political power, nor religious authority, women, children and the poor, people like the shepherds. The wise men, strangers in Jerusalem, who brought precious gifts to Jesus, refused to be subjected to empire obligation. They were asked by the empire to report about the birth of

Jesus. Instead they left by another route to Galilee to protect the life of Jesus. People who welcomed Jesus were those outside of the social hierarchy. These people were not allowed to enter the temple. Jesus was not born in a palace, but a manger, a ragged cowshed, an open and unprotected place. People who were missing during the birth of Jesus were rich men, rich women, the king, queen, prince and princesses, high priest and priests, nobles and other high officials. The birth of Jesus was astonishing, threatening news for those who love money and power. They never expected that God would be revealed among the lowly people. The angel announced the message, “Peace among *you*”, among marginal people. The incarnation of God happened outside of the unjust power structure. God chose the ‘margin’ – the people on the underside of history to inaugurate His Kingdom, bringing justice and peace. God was and is encountered among the powerless and in unexpected locations, but not among the privileged and powerful people.

The true meaning of justice and peace can be understood and experienced when we journey with the people who are on the margins, because that is where God is present. God is with them. God chose them and said “Peace be with *you*”. The agenda from the periphery – the longing for justice and peace – is thus the agenda of God. The real future of humanity comes from here and not from the decisions and deliberations of the people who dominate the world. It is from the site of God’s visitation – the margins – that a new world has to take shape. It is in this context that our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace needs to begin.

No one can understand the good news of Jesus Christ – about justice and peace – without being in the context of the margins. Jesus of Nazareth continued this option for the marginalized, the persons with disability, gentiles, outcasts, widows and lepers - not because they are humble, innocent and pitiable but primarily because they are created in God’s own image to celebrate fullness of life and yet are denied the promise of the justice and peace through the imposition of unjust structures, cultures and traditions.

People in the Margins – Agents of Healing

2 Kings 5:1-19 presents a story of how people in the margins became the agents of healing. Naaman had leprosy, though he was also a successful commander of the army of the king of Syria and his skilful and dedicated work had won favour from the king and the people. And the nameless little girl – the prisoner and victim of war, displaced from her family, her people and land - was put to forced labour, working for Naaman’s wife, but she became an agent of healing. We see the following contrasting position of the two –Naaman and Nameless little girl;

Naaman is powerful - the Nameless girl is powerless and helpless.

Naaman is a ruler- the Nameless girl is ruled.

Naaman is a conqueror- the Nameless girl is conquered, abused & misused.

Naaman is an army commander - the Nameless girl is a victim of the army.

Naaman is a slave owner- the Nameless girl is a slave.

Naaman is a predator- the Nameless girl is a victim.

Naaman needed healing- the Nameless girl offered help.

Naaman has a name- the girl does not have a name.¹

In her pitiable experience of war and dislocation, the Nameless girl knew something of what Naaman was going through in his life. She knew the pain and sorrow of Naaman. Instead of rejoicing over his misfortune, the Nameless girl offered words of healing.

It was indeed difficult for the ruler to listen to the words of the ruled. The ruler wanted to get healed by using royal power and wealth. First, he obtained an official letter from the king of Aram thinking that the royal authority and power would be respected and obeyed by the subjects. Second, he took huge quantities of silver, gold and garments to impress and to appease the prophet Elisha. As was common protocol, Naaman expected that the prophet would come out, stand before him and perform rituals like calling on the name of Lord, wave his hand over him and cure his leprosy. The ruler thought that he would

thus be healed. But it happened in quite a different way.

Elisha sent a message through a messenger, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and you shall be clean” (v.9). Naaman felt insulted and took this as disrespectful not only to him but also to the king. He became angry and decided to go away without getting healed. But then another Word of healing came from his servant. Only when he listened to the voice of his servant, did he finally get healed.

What is the meaning of the washing in the Jordan river? The river didn't have, of course, substances within it that could cure leprosy. There is a deeper meaning in the act of washing in the dirty river for seven times. It was the river where the poorest people lived, where they drank and where they bathed. To be healed from leprosy, Naaman needed to wash himself in the river where the poor washed their bodies, too. By washing his body seven times in the river Jordan, Naaman expressed solidarity with the people at the margins. To wash himself seven times in the river would compel Naaman, a General and a fighter, to be humble in front of the prophet, and in front of the Nameless girl, and become servant of the people he had conquered. In this dirty river that Naaman despised, he could get his holistic healing. It was in solidarity with the people that he could find the power of healing.

Can the church ask the powerful rulers to submerge themselves in solidarity with the ‘dirty’ so that they can be healed?²

Journeying Together presupposes Naming

Journeying together with people in the margins, for justice and peace, involves naming. Naming involves the restoration of respect, dignity, and rights. It is making ‘nobody into somebody’.

In the Gospel of Luke we read,

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.
16:19-21

This parable tells about two persons, the rich man, and Lazarus. In whose context do we locate our search for justice and peace? How do we discern what it means to journey together in these two contrasting contexts? What does it mean in the context of the systemic denial of justice to the poor and marginalized?

The Rich man

Notice how the rich man is dressed “in purple and fine linen” (v19.a.), everyday, not just for special occasions. It is very striking that the rich man is identified with the dress he wore – purple and fine linen attire. He is not identified with his name! He is identified with his wealth. This true sea purple was a most precious and rare dye and was scarcely used even by princes and nobles of very high position. In the Bible, purple and fine linen are mentioned in a few places (Rev. 18:12; Prov. 18:12; Ezek. 27:7). This most luxurious fabric is associated with royalty or quasi-royal dignity. This signifies that the rich man is extremely rich.

Notice how the rich man eats. Since the rich man had everything at his disposal, it says he “feasted sumptuously everyday” (v. 19 b). Notice the reference to ‘everyday’. The diet of the ordinary people was simple and at times the poor passed the day without proper food. For the rich man, every day can be a feast. A banquet was a daily occurrence. The parable says he feasted lavishly, not just on special occasions. Feasting on special occasions seems reasonable, but everyday? Thus, with all the accompaniments of grandeur, this nameless mighty and rich one lived. We can imagine that his halls were filled with noble guests in rich attire, and his ante-chambers with servants. Everything that could make life splendid and joyous was in profusion and abundance.

His wealth was certainly earned from the backs of the poor through the oppressive patronage system of his time. The system was based on wealthy patrons who loaned money to poor clients with heavy taxation. When the clients failed to pay their loan, their land was confiscated. A rich man like this one would have accumulated massive wealth due to this unjust system.

Notice how he lives. The rich man lived in a ‘house’ with a “gate”, not a door. Some New Testament scholars suggest that the gate suggests

that he lived in a large ornamental mansion. Here Jesus is alluding to some of the most powerful families of the times who were both rich and corrupt. – What does a gate symbolize in today’s society?

Is there any person without a name? We give names even to our pets. We give names even to flowers, fruits, plants, animals, mountains, and more. Not to name someone is an insult to them, especially to a rich person or to someone in a high position.³ Having no name means that someone is nobody, worthless, and identity-less. But Jesus does not take account of a person’s wealth. Is Jesus’ action not radical?

Poor Lazarus

Where does Lazarus live? He lays at the gate of the rich man. “And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus” (v. 20a). To live at somebody’s gate waiting for the left-over food or burnt bread is terrible and painful. It is indeed a humiliating condition. He was waiting with the dogs.

In past times bread used to be baked in fire and it is said that nobles and high priests would not eat burnt bread. Eating such a portion was considered to be a sign of impurity. This means the rich man is pure and holy, while Lazarus is impure, unholy and untouchable, associated with stigma.

“Covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table” (v 20 b and v 21 a), Lazarus is not only hungry and thirsty but is covered with sores, carrying a loathsome disease (perhaps leprosy). He was not only untouchable, but was also extremely sick. He is made a sign of impurity, pain and suffering. He is indeed a disabled person.

Apparently he could not get around for himself because of hunger and illness; he was as good as dead. Since he was an impure and untouchable person, Lazarus would not have had any relatives, friends and helpers. He was left alone, except for the dogs. Some commentators opine that the dogs were the wild, homeless stray dogs so common in all Eastern cities, who acted as the street scavengers and were regarded as dirty and unclean. The Bible says that things associated with dogs were unclean. This is another sign of this man’s outcast condition (see Exodus

23:31; 1 Kgs 21:19, 24; LXX Ps 21:16; Matt 15:26-27; Mark 7:27-28). The story also suggests that Lazarus was defenceless in that he could not even ward off the dogs. The dogs lick the pus that oozes from the afflicted man's sores and ulcers. It appears that the dogs might even have been acting like doctors and nurses for this poor man. Hungry, sick and with dogs licking his sores, he is in a very poor condition. But Lazarus' presence also threatens to pollute others.

Is Lazarus a sinner? Yes, he was a sinner and cursed by God according to some. At the time of Jesus, a beggar would have been regarded as a sinner, and poverty, or indeed incurable disease, was often spoken of as a punishment from God. People were encouraged not to touch or associate with such people. Lazarus is seen as a person cursed by God.

Jesus called him by his name! The Greek name 'Lazarus' is derived from two Hebrew words; Eli-ezer meaning "God helps/God helped". Naming implies identity which involves recognition, respect and right. With a name a person becomes somebody. Jesus introduced him with a name. Lazarus is no longer a nobody, but somebody with rights, dignity and worth.

We, pilgrims of justice and peace in the context of market capitalism

To put ourselves on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, to whose voice do we need to listen? On whose context do we need to reflect, that of the rich man in affluence or of Lazarus in abject poverty? Lazarus represents the excluded people, the poor in the margins who are denied rights and privileges in our context today, the marginalized, the afflicted and the oppressed.

Today we have millions of Lazaruses in the world due to unjust economic structures, religious, social and cultural systems which have marginalized the poor – who are part of the whole of God's *oikos*. Market capitalism plays a key role. Market capitalism, rooted in the objectification of nature and people and the inferiority of indigenous cultures, has come to be a principal characteristic feature of the new millennium. It operates with the logic of maximum profit, maximum capital accumulation, and maximum exploitation of labour and earth's resources. This ideology of ever-increasing growth and a thirst for the maximization of profit,

enjoyment and absolute domination of the earth's resources goes back to the Enlightenment movement.⁴ Development is measured in terms of the amount of goods and services produced rather than by what is produced and how it is distributed justly. Human creativity and natural resources are objectified and directed to the market for the purpose of commodity production and money making. To meet the demands of market capitalism indigenous people have to sacrifice many things including their culture, water, land and even their bodies. One serious negative impact on indigenous people and their cultures is objectification, especially through the promotion of the tourist industry. This treats people as mere instruments of sexual pleasure, making them a "sex object", and their cultures as something only for enjoyment and entertainment. It means treating a person or a group of people and their cultures as a mere commodity, without respect to their personality, spirituality and dignity.

The deliberate option of Jesus to speak for Lazarus tells us that our churches, the ecumenical movement and our efforts on our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace must be located in the context of people in the margins. Our pilgrimage will miss the core focus of its vision and programmatic, if we miss this location. There cannot be authentic justice and peace without a location in Lazarus' context.

Affirming the Diversity of Cultures – and their transformation in Christ

Journeying together is possible when we acknowledge the true and positive beauty of the diversity of cultures. Diversity is God's structure of creation. It is like a rainbow. All colours are unique and different, and only together they make the rainbow beautiful. It is God who created all cultures whether minority or majority traditions and they are all beautiful and must be respected, protected and also nurtured. Not only the one dominant culture, but also the smallest indigenous community tradition is blessed by God. The world will become richer when we celebrate together in different cultures and traditions with respect and love. Christian life will be more colourful and meaningful when we incorporate indigenous traditions. God can be worshipped in many

different styles and forms, and God is present even among “strange people’s culture”, as the prophet Isaiah believed and declared. The core of religion is doing justice, because God is a just God. The prophet Isaiah said,

When the time comes, there will be an altar of the Lord in the land of Egypt and a stone pillar dedicated to him at the Egyptian border. They will be the symbols of the Lord Almighty’s presence in Egypt. When the people there are oppressed and call out to the Lord for help, he will send someone to rescue them. The Lord will reveal himself to the Egyptian people and they will acknowledge and worship him and bring him sacrifices and offerings (Isa 19:19-21).

God will use different nations and they will be a blessing to the world. The prophet Isaiah further prophesied that

When the time comes, there will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria. The people of those two countries will travel to and for between them and the two nations will worship together. When that time comes, Israel will rank with Egypt and Assyria, and these three nations will be a blessing to the entire world. The Lord Almighty will bless them and say: “I will bless you Egypt, my people; you Assyria whom I created; and you Israel, my chosen people” (19:23-25).

The prophets acknowledged God as the Lord of all cultures and spirituality of all nations. The diversity of cultures testifies to the richness of God’s creation.

Transformed culture in Christ – by God’s Spirit

Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law, or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them” (Matt 5:17). Jesus acknowledged the good work of Samaritans who were considered as outcast by the Jews. Rather, Jesus was against ritualism, legalism and misuse of power and position. To explain the transformed culture in Christ, St. Paul always connects the “Spirit” and “faith”. They are the basis for following Jesus; the observance of traditional laws and

ritual practices is not sufficient.

The Galatians were not all Jewish; they were followers of Christ from a Gentile background. They had their own rich cultural traditions. After they decided to follow Jesus they thought they ought to be circumcised, adopt the strict observance of the Sabbath, and practice and apply Jewish law and customs. This created conflict and misunderstanding among themselves and also broke their relationship with their fellow brothers and sisters who were not yet Christian. Just as some Christians think that by adopting and following western culture, we become better Christians. St. Paul challenged them, saying “You foolish Galatians! Who misguided you?” He pushed several questions further; Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law? Did you not receive the Spirit by faith? Do you think that mere observance of the law will change your life? Do you think that religious practices and customs will transform your life? Paul argued that mere observance of laws and rituals of somebody else’s culture has nothing to do in following Jesus (Gal. 3: 1-14). It will rather uproot people and make people without identity. St. Paul expounded a transformed culture in Christ.

To help the Galatians recognize God’s presence, Paul connects with the ‘Spirit’ and ‘faith’. In the Old Testament, the ‘Spirit’ is compared to the ‘wind’. The wind blows wherever it wills. Nobody can control it. It does not make distinction between Jews and Gentiles, male or female, Christians or ‘non-Christians’, indigenous or non-indigenous. Neither does it make distinction between humans and non-humans. The wind is also compared with the breath of God which gives life to all. The Spirit was working even before Abraham. God’s Spirit was at work even before Israel as a nation came into being. - Paul wants to affirm that God as Spirit was/is present in all cultures from the very creation. Since the Spirit is present in all cultures we should not abandon it, but celebrate it. Galatian culture is also good and colourful because of the presence of the Spirit. One must follow Jesus without forsaking one’s own culture.

Paul further argued that “faith” in Christ makes our celebration of cultural diversity different and meaningful. Faith and action always go together,

because faith in Christ leads as to transformed action. Observance of law and customs without faith will just make routine ritual observance, and duty for the sake of duty. Works without faith lead a person to bondage and curtails one's freedom. But faith in Christ makes our cultural diversity liberating and transforming. Faith leads us to respect others, and not to condemn them. Faith leads us to value life more than mere ritualistic practices.

We are not saying that all our indigenous culture and practices are good and we should go back to traditional customs and practices. Paul is urging that we should preserve and practice our customs and culture in a transformed manner because of faith in Christ. Culture is dynamic and there is no fixed culture. Some cultures are destructive to life and the misuse and manipulation of culture has sometimes led to killing, domination and exploitation of many people. Faith in Christ leads us to discern human limitations and challenges us to resist, reject, and transform those oppressive elements in our culture for the sake of saving life—justice and peace. Paul is challenging the Galatians not to abandon their culture as evil. Instead, they should transform their own culture in Christ Jesus and celebrate diversity in rainbow colours to glorify God.

The celebration of diverse cultures and practices, transformed by Kingdom values, is what we need to affirm today.

Journeying Together in the Margins, Resisting Unjust Structures

Journeying together is not mere abstract talk, but means entering into the struggle of marginalized peoples for the cause of radical change to oppressive structures, proclaiming and making known that Jesus Christ is the liberator of all humankind and God's creation. It involves dismantling the existing systems, cultures and institutions that perpetuate systemic injustice to many people and God's *oikos*. In some cases it involves a continuous collective struggle against the misuse and abuse of power which demands organizing protest movements, non-cooperation movements, and campaigns through peaceful means.

Journeying together at the margins demands continual struggle for and commitment to the transformation of sinful social structures and the

liberation of their victims. It involves two levels of actions.

First, it requires raising the consciousness of both the victims and the perpetrators to expose the unjust structures and life-denying belief systems.

Secondly, it requires the mobilization of collective justice action groups, not only Christians but all of civil society. In this, respect for human dignity and the protection of the life-sustaining Earth should be the motivating ground for collective action. As a church on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, we can provide prophetic action and leadership. Silence in the face of so many marginalized victims due to unjust systems is simply a denial of God's justice and peace.

To protect life against any forces that threaten the celebration of life must be resisted. A primary vision of journeying together is thus denouncing and eliminating all forms of oppression that destroy human dignity and that threaten God's life-sustaining resources. The ultimate goal of journeying together is to restore justice for the celebration of life. To live a life in dignity, respect and freedom is the intrinsic right of all beings. It is a divine gift to all beings. The victims can celebrate God's given life in abundance only when justice is restored to them.

(Footnotes)

¹Naveen Rao, "Centered on the 'Margin'", *Clark Journal of Theology*, Vol. V, No. 2 (July-December 2015), pp. 8-10.

²Josef Purnama Widyatmadja, *Jesus & Wong Cilik: Transformative Diakonia – Theology with the Marginalized Peoples in Asia*, PTCA Study Series No. 10 (Kolkata: PTCA, 2015), pp. 29-35.

³For further detail of the interpretation in the context of indigenous people, Wati Longchar,

Returning to Mother Earth: Theology, Christian Witness and Theological Education – An Indigenous Perspective, PTCA Study Series No. 4 (Kolkata: 2014, 4th edition), pp. 24-55.

⁴V.J. John, *The Ecological Vision of Jesus* (Thiruvalla: CSS-BTTBPSA, 2002), pp. 34-35.



Together Towards Justice and Peace

Keynote Address during the AGM of CBCNEI

Nowgong Mission High School dated 27-19 April 2018

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI

Introduction

Together towards Justice and Peace is the theme of this 68th AGM of the Council. If we look at the cover picture of the Programme, we will see the picture which explains the theme. The group of people standing together shows “togetherness” and looking “towards” the sky or heavens from where our help comes, or from where the God of righteousness will bring “justice and peace”. There is the picture of white dove which symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit who is our guide, and also the symbol of freedom. The word, “Together” means doing together with others to fight against any injustices prevailing on this earth; which includes all Christians irrespective of denominational affiliations. It also includes people of other faiths who are concerned for truth, justice and peace in the world. It includes the governments and nations of the world together we can fight for climate justice and care of creation; together we can fight all kinds of evils in the homes, churches, and in the societies.

According to Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Peace and Justice are two sides of the same coin.” Martin Luther said, “Peace is more important than all justice; and peace was not made for the sake of justice, but justice for the sake of peace.” The Church is called to take ‘justice and peace’ as the mission of God. Therefore the church must be concerned for climate justice, care for creation as commanded in the Scripture to ‘have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living things that moved on the earth’ (Gen Gen. 1:26-31). God has commanded human in the Garden of Eden to ‘dress

it and to keep it' (2:15). The idea of using the land properly and caring, preserving, protecting the earth's resources from total destruction comes here.

Understanding World Peace: If we look at the world situation, the most obvious global sign of the times is the symbiosis of the global empire and economic regime (globalization). The global market turns human beings and their cultural activities and creation into commodities for profit; Asia has become a source of raw materials, cheap labour, and food needs. The values of unjust financial system, ever increasing ideology of consumerism, materialism, individualism, competition and greed erode life-affirming values, fragments communities and increase poverty; values which are driven by the powerful science and technology of the Trans-National Corporations (TNCs). A uni-polar, monolithic, militaristic political power structure centred in the United States is imposed. This is borderless and challenges people's sovereignty and their nation-states. The global empire has absolute power to dominate all the other political powers of the world, and it seeks such hegemonic domination. It has no rivals, nor can it allow any. The global military regime with its imperial strategy is totalistic, limitlessly destructive, and nearly homicidal in character. The global empire justifies its power and actions in pseudo-religious terms, misusing Christian values and theological claims and demonizing any religious expression of resistance to its imperial power. Together with the global economic regime, it dominates people's cultures throughout the world, conquering minds and destroying rich heritages. Christianity, a minority religion in Asia, continues to face innumerable problems because of resurgence of religious fundamentalism and wrong generalization of Christianity with America. In fact Christianity faces the highest restrictions above all religions reports the Catholic News Service. "The US-based Pew Research Center's 'Rising Restrictions on Religion' notes hostilities are growing, with Christians facing harassment in more nations than any other religious adherents, reports CNS. Christians faced harassment in more nations than any other religious adherents – 130 nations, followed by 117 nations for harassment of Muslims, 75 for Jews, 27 for Hindus and

16 for Buddhists.”¹ The attack on Christians and other minorities has been increasing in India today. The nature of the violence varies; at times it is structural; at times it is symbolic attack and at times it is physical attack on the believers.

Peace is disturbed due to Conflict and Violence: Conflict and violence are two different things. Conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals. Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and/or prevent people from reaching their full human potential. Conflict is inevitable but we can transform it to have a better relationship and peaceful atmosphere. Conflict Transformation is a holistic and multifaceted process of engaging with conflict. It aims to reduce violence and to protect and promote social justice and sustainable peace. It requires work in all spheres, at all levels and with all stakeholders. Conflict Transformation needs to be accountable to those directly affected by conflict but requires networks and linkages to sustain it. Conflict Transformation is an ongoing process of changing relationships, behaviours, attitudes and structures, from negative to the positive. It requires timely interventions, respect for cultural context, patience and persistence and a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.² Since conflict transformation is an ongoing process, learning is very necessary and vital. It is also implied that one group or religious group cannot bring this transformation. We need the cooperation of people of other faiths and ideologies.

In the process of Peace building, Understanding Causes of Conflict is extremely important: What causes conflicts to occur and to continue? Conflicts are inevitable and they are caused by 1). Various aspects of human nature with which we are born, such as natural selfishness and selfish pursuits; instinctive aggressiveness, similar to animal aggression; the inclination to fight over territory and male aggressiveness.

2). It is also caused by the nature of social groups, and the natural inclination of people to associate with nation-states having incompat-

ible goals and focusing on their separate national interests related to security, power, and prestige; ethnic groups, defined by exclusiveness and hierarchies or gender groups that are hierarchically organized.

3). Conflicts are caused by problems in social structures such as structural inequality between groups, based on class differences arising from unequal economic wealth and control of resources, unequal access to authority and power by particular interests or identity groups, differences of status and legitimacy of particular social or ethnic groups, and inequalities between women and men.

4). Conflicts are also caused by social structures not addressing social needs, such as basic human needs not being met by the social structures and development leading to “modern” economic and social structures which are not compatible with traditional cultural practices.

5). Conflicts are caused by misperceptions and miscommunication. Conflict results from misunderstandings arising from poor communication between different cultures, between men and women, distorted perceptions of other parties (e.g. prejudices and stereotypes). It also results from the expression of unresolved past trauma: social-psychological trauma theory, which says conflicts can be caused by a group’s memory of an unresolved traumatic experience from the past.³ In short, conflict has a reason. It could be economic, religious, political, ethnic and even perpetrators. There are some people, like the terrorists, fundamentalists, and manufacturers of weapons, who always want conflict to happen.

Peace as a Process: Conflict is unavoidable and peace is a process: a many-sided, never ending struggle to transform violence. Both those who accept the need for coercive force, including violence, and those who take a totally non-violent stance, and the many others with views in between, would say that they want peace. But their ideas about what peace really is are rather different.

Stable peace is a relatively rare state. Many societies and communities are excluded from peace by a range of economic, political and social factors. Peace is often compared to health, in that it is more easily

recognized by its absence. Like health, all have access to it. However, unlike health it is contested: people disagree over what a peaceful society is.

Many people think peace to be the absence of war. While this is, of course, vital, others see it only a first step towards a fuller ideal, using definition such as: an interweaving of relationships between individuals, groups and institutions that value diversity and foster the full development of human potential. Women in Taliban-controlled peaceful, Afghanistan, deprived of education and opportunities to work, would not take long to see the difference.

Absence of war is often described as negative (cold) peace, and it contrasted with positive (warm) peace, which encompasses all aspects of the good society that we might envisage for ourselves: universal rights, economic well-being, ecological balance and other core issues. There are those who fear peace. Many have good reason to do so: they will lose wealth, status and power as result of what they have done. In this case, conflict would still be there but violence would be absent.⁴

Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is actually the theme of the World Council of Churches (WCC) since 2013 from the Busan Assembly. We are pilgrims here on earth with the purpose of bringing peace on earth. It also believes that there can be no true peace without justice delivered. Therefore, WCC talks about “just-peace”. However, in the process of bringing peace in any conflict situation, at times justice may not be the condition for peace building. But love and compassion is the basis for peace building. Justice is the outcome of the peace building. “Psalms 85 speaks of the meeting of justice and peace in a kiss in God’s new order. While we often futilely pursue such a goal through our politics, in Scripture we see its fulfillment through the cross” (Richard Davis). Verse 10 says, “*Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other*”. As part of the process of pilgrimage for justice and peace, WCC organizes visiting the wounds which is going to the wounded and listening to their hurts and trauma experiences of the victims of any injustices or violence. I think the CBCNEI should organize such programs through the Justice and

Peace department.

Peace Concerns in NEI: NEI is facing many issues and conflicts. Identifying the main issue of any conflict is very vital and crucial. Every conflict must be understood correctly and then only we can have our own **theory of change (ToC)**, the change we want to bring through our interventions. In NEI, we have conflict in the churches, associations, villages, even in one village we have conflict and division, between two ethnic tribes, and of course between individuals. Many of our church leadership lacks this skill. As a result we cannot identify the real problem, pride and arrogance prevented to establish priority, cannot maintain between divine and human factors, and at times home work is not done properly by not considering the attitude and feelings of everyone who is involved when we go for problem solving. To resolve any issue or conflict, properly identifying the root cause is very important. I wish to cite one example of the situation that happened in Karbi Anglong District of Assam in the year 2015 when the Karbi and the Dimasa tribes were made to fight for their own rights.

The Example of the Karbi-Dimasa Conflict: The issue of the Karbi-Dimasa Conflict in 2005 was a Demand for Separate State on the same land. These are two tribes living in the two hill districts of Karbi Anglong and NC Hills of Assam, India. Both the tribes have been living together for generations peacefully. They had intermarriages and cordial relationship but all of a sudden, conflict between the two tribes came out in 2005 when many villages had been burnt down to ashes. At least 200 people lost their lives and uncountable properties burnt and destroyed. About 30,000 people had been displaced and many could not return to their own places even today. The education of the children was affected. The economy was worse affected as both the tribes belong to the agrarian families. It was a very hostile situation. Even today there is fear among the people that war may break out anytime due to prejudices and outside influences. The situation was brought under controlled, through the interventions of the churches, NGOs, civil societies and the governments. But the real problem is yet to be resolved. The root causes identified are: 1) neglect of both the

centre and state governments, 2) no recognition of the tribes, 3) policies of the governments not properly implemented, 4) corruption, 5) land grabbing policy, 6) appointments of non-locals in the government offices, 7) lack of development in the two hill districts and there can be many other factors that had aggravated the violence which resulted in the great loss of lives and properties. Above all, the core issue or root cause is the long standing political insecurity of the tribes. Someone (A Roman Catholic Priest, Fr. Tom) has rightly commented that the Indian heritage of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) preached by M.K. Gandhi and the spirit of a life of simplicity or 'living lightly on earth' has been forgotten by the present day leaders. Instead of people's welfare, most leaders think only for their own good. In the process peace and harmony between communities are destroyed. Crores of rupees sanctioned for various schemes are not spent or are misused. This causes discontent among the people but the leaders exploit the grievances by building up animosity against other communities instead of dealing with the discontent.⁵

The world has not known anything about these two tribes struggling for identity and rights. The demand for Article 244(A) has been there since more than two decades now but governments are not appropriately responding to their demands. This is how justice is denied to these tribes against the constitutional provision. The civil society and leaders of the two tribes need to come to term and unitedly fight for justice and their own rights. The root causes of the conflict must be addressed involving both the tribes and the governments. As long as the governments continue to adopt 'divide and rule' policy, and the people's demand is neglected, conflict will continue to exist and civil war may break out again. There may be many situations like this which is not known to the world community.

For all these different conflict situations, identifying the core issues, effects and root causes are very vital before planning to bring change or transformation. There are several methods of doing this. One can use the tools like the conflict tree, conflict mapping, and analysis looking at the connectors and the dividers for any situation so that one can have a

deeper awareness of the conflict situation he or she is facing. It is the responsibility of peace builders to establish theories of change and identify persons and parties who can be involved in the peace process.

Challenge to the Churches in India

- 1) Training on Peace: The great challenge for the churches is to give greater importance on training our young generations on peace and conflict. We cannot just depend on para-church organizations and secular institutes that give training on peace but the churches themselves, of every locality, must give basic training to their members and younger generation.
- 2) Peace work must be taken as the mission of God entrusted to the church in our time. If and when civil society is educated through the peace work of churches, we can expect peaceful coexistence in every community in the world.
- 3) It is also a challenge for the civil societies and churches that peace education has to be made compulsory in homes, schools, colleges and universities. I believe that the world can become peaceful and a better place for us and our children to live in, if peace education is given in all homes and institutions.
- 4) The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held at Kingston, Jamaica⁶ had identified peace in the community, peace among the peoples, peace in the marketplace and peace with the earth. We need peace at all these levels and dialogue is the means to transform any group or communal conflict. We need peace and positive change at all these levels in the world. A change in perception leads to a change in attitude, which leads to a change in behavior, which leads to a change in the world.⁷ If Peacebuilding takes place in every Christian at home, then churches, societies and the world will experience peace and conflicts transformed.
- 5) Churches must also promote interfaith dialogue more and more for reducing or ending the religiously motivated violence. There have been bitter and ugly religious wars in the past as we have seen in the history of the world. This conflict still exists today. In India

when the fundamentalists try to implement their own agenda of “one nation, one religion, one law and one culture” to replace the existing democratic system of government, conflict is sure to happen. This is the reason why the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) have been taken away or attacked.

- 6) There is a much greater need to have interfaith dialogue to have a better understanding of other faiths which will ensure peace and harmony among peoples. Charles Gibbs said, “An essential teaching for people of all Faiths is – Will we stop using our interpretations of sacred texts as weapons of division and destruction, and, instead, use their light to illumine a shared path of peace, justice and healing?”⁸ Therefore, ending or reducing the religiously motivated violence must be our initiative. This initiative should be every Christian’s commitment and it can be done through interfaith programs and activities.
- 7) Another big challenge for the churches in NEI is the balance between the great commission and the great commandment. Anne quoted Dr. Hope Antone, who made the key note speech at a consultation on Contextual Theology in May 2010 at MIT, Myanmar Institute of Theology and said, among others, “*The great Commission is not greater than the great Commandment*”. Meaning that evangelism and conversion (Matt. 28: 16-20) is not, or should not be more important for Christians than loving their neighbors (Matt. 22: 37-40), including their non Christian neighbors and family members.

Conclusion

The work of bringing Justice and Peace is a multi-facet process but it has to begin at the grassroot level. I urge all the local churches in North East India to impart peace education to its entire member and take it as the mission of God for the church today. Begin to have interfaith dialogues and end the religiously motivated conflicts and violence. I believe that if all of us are strongly committed and with a strong will to the task entrusted to us by God, the prayer of the Psalmist will be an-

swered. Let us pray, “Let mercy and truth meet together, justice and peace kiss each other” (Ps. 85:10) in our homes, churches, societies in NEI, in India and in the whole world. Let us call our churches in NEI to walk in solidarity with the people being the ‘voice of the voiceless’ in their struggle; let us ask the churches to confront the causes and dire consequences of poverty; be a key player in advocating in peoples’ movement for freedom and peace; condemning and overcoming all forms of violence at all levels; and being in partnership with other faith communities to address the issues of climate change, poverty and the negative effects of globalization on the world community.

(Endnotes)

¹ <http://www.ucanews.com/2011/08/17/more-people-face-religious-restrictions-study/20/08/11>.

² Monica Alfred, *Fundamentals for Peace and Conflict Work* a workshop paper presented at Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Phnom Penh on 8-13 August 2011.

³ Adapted from notes by Monica Alfred for CPCS’ training on Fundamentals for Peace and Conflict Work at Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 8-13 August 2011.

⁴ Simon Fisher et al, *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*: Zed Books, 2000: pp11-13.

⁵ Tom Mangathuthazhe, *Violence and Search for Peace in Karbi Anglong, Assam*, NESRC, Guwahati, 2008. P 20.

⁶ http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=291128133334
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⁷ <http://www.worldpeacenewsletter.com/?gclid=CLq1wJPs3KoCFQsh6wod906E7Q/20/08/11>.

⁸ Canon Charles Gibbs, *The Heart of Holy Books: Blessing for People of All Faiths in Holy Books and People of Differing F*

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A Brief Report of the General Secretary, CBCNEI

(April 2017 to March 2018)

*Presented on 27-29 April 2018 at Nagaon Mission High School,
Nagaon, Assam.*

Introduction

In today's world of globalization there are two dangers to avoid. On one hand, we must shun every kind of nationalism, racism, the claim of superiority and cultural hegemony, xenophobia, and oppression of the vulnerable. On the other hand, we must shun the imposition of a uniform universal culture, where the identity of different peoples, their cultures, etc, are extinguished. Moreover, the whole world is inhabited not only by humans but by so many creatures. True Christianity implies living in just integrated relationships with all of God's creation. At the same time there are growing concerns about safeguarding democracy and governance in the country. The way elections are fought on communal basis, the questionable background of candidates who are put up, the political alliances or coalitions made just for the sake of acquiring power, the stalling of proceedings in the house, the criminalization of politics, corruption and inefficiency in governance, the alliance between economic forces and political powers, the resultant suffering of the people, etc. are issues that need to be addressed.

In the midst of these challenges, Indian society witnesses several grass-root level movements, which are resisting unjust pro-developmental initiatives of the governments and multi-national companies. People at the grass-roots are getting organized and are fighting relentlessly for their land, lives, livelihood, future, identity and rights. There are initiatives for nurturing pluralistic harmony and creation-integrated living. In this context, churches and movements are being called upon to com-

passionately respond to the groaning of the people, to fight against corruption, the pro-market policies of the governments, violent attacks on innocents, and religious right-wing ideologies, while at the same time strengthening people's resistance and movements for just and holistic alternatives. It is in such context, the Church in North East India (NEI) needs to discover her vocation as being a missional Church. That the Churches need to transcend the walls of confessionals and bear witness to the God of Justice and Peace in solidarity with the toiling and groaning masses. That the churches in NEI must come together to fight all kinds of corruption and injustices.

In such a situation, CBCNEI needs to be more pro-active in bringing justice and peace in NEI; the task of encouraging and facilitating mission and evangelism must be taken serious on urgent basis, especially reaching with the good news in our life time; the healing ministry of CBCNEI needs critical review and encouragements from churches when we are faced with lack of finance, committed Christian doctors and nurses; protection of the CBCNEI property is a great concern when one of our own members is challenging the Council and hindered the further development of the council's properties; Literature ministry is to be strengthened and encouraged; relief and development wing of the Council be fully established and functional as the current situation demands more relief and development especially when people are afflicted by natural and man-made calamities.

Justice and Peace Department

Mr Malthus Sangma is the Secretary for the Justice and Peace Department of the Council. As a new comer he has started learning many new things and has been working very hard to serve God effectively. During the year he has conducted two days Capacity Building in Proposal Writing and Fundraising workshop from 11-12 April 2017 in partnership with APBFAid, at CBCNEI, Mission Compound, Guwahati, Assam. He was also involved in relief ministry on 24th July 2017, Council of Baptist Churches in North East India in collaboration with APBFAid-Rural & Development Arm of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation. Peace workshop on conflict transformation was conducted from 30th - 31st

August 2017 jointly organized by Justice and Peace Department and Manipur Baptist Convention at Moreh, Manipur.

Peace Building Program at Guwahati: Peace building program was jointly conducted for young students at Guwahati, Assam by CBCNEI and World Vision on 30th January 2018. Many students turned up for the program from across the state. Students from Meghalaya and Nagaland also attended. The main idea of this program is to create a platform for the young students to involve in peace building process and train them to take active part in peace building.

New Programs & Appointment: Through the Justice and Peace Department, we are going to conduct awareness campaigns on Human Trafficking in collaboration with India Collaboration (IC) in all the six convention twice in a year for each convention. We have also appointed the new Assistant to Justice and Peace Secretary in the person of Advocate Pulotoli Kiho from NBCC wef 2nd April 2018.

Mission & Evangelism Department

Rev. Dr. Jolly is the Secretary for Mission and Evangelism Department. He has been actively involved in the ongoing mission movement happening in India today. The vision is to reach the nation during our lifetime, and the strategy developed in line with the vision has been widely accepted by our leaders and leaders of other denominations. If this is God's doing, then this movement will remain as historic in the Indian mission movement since this type of movement has never happened in Indian mission history.

Till today, envisioning has been done with Mission leaders of all conventions, except ABCC. The department will continue to encourage and pray for leaders to have the burden for the unreached people in India so that reaching India during our lifetime becomes a reality.

APBF Congress: During the APBF Congress held at Yogyakarta, Indonesia, the CBCNEI Dr. Jolly Rimai was given an opportunity to lead a session on “*Global Mission is not just for the West*”. In his presentation, he was able to envision the leaders who attended his session on how we can make greater impact in our mission in APBF ar-

eas. Proposals such as, *Proper Coordination amongst the Churches under APBF*, *Partnership of the Churches under APBF for Mission* were presented. We believe this will also bear fruit and we will be able to see cooperation of churches under APBF in God's mission.

As a result of this presentaiton, the Mission Committee of APBF is planning for a special Mission Consultation for all mission leaders under APBF early next year for partnership of churches for greater impact in misions, specially among unreached areas under asia-pacific.

TESOL Training: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) a certified course organized by Mission Department of CBCNEI in partnership with Asia Centre for TESOL based in Chiang Mai was held from 22 May till 2 June at Mission Compound CBCNEI. 15 participants representing the whole North East family of CBCNEI attended the two weeks course. Those who attended this course expressed that they were so blessed and it was worth coming. They also shared that their entire personal life has been reshaped for the better during the training.

Social Media for Missions: Using Social Media as a platform for Gospel sharing and ministry training was conducted on 2nd June. 21 Pastors and Mission leaders attended the program. It was decided that such training be conducted in future for all Guwahati based Church Pastors and Mission leaders along with the youth of the churches.

Student Ministry: The main purpose of running these hostels is to disciple the boarders while they are still studying in Guwahati and Shillong so that they become responsible citizens and strong disciples. Students are drawn from all over NE region. 1) *Lewis Memorial Hostel* has 57 boarders under the care of Mr. Talimoa Jamir as the chaplain. One significant event was the Centenary Celebration which was held on 3 November 2017. The Rev. Taku Longkumer, Country coordinator, IM was the speaker and I unveiled the monolith of the celebration. The hostel has daily vesper, every Wednesday guest speaker is invited; seminars and retreat are conducted as regular basis; weekly games and sports conducted. There were 15 graduating students this year. 2) *White*

Memorial Hostel has 32 boarders at the moment under the care of Mrs. Neisewheno Khro, the chaplain. They have vesper, cleaning, bible study, picnic, church visit, games and sports, special program for hospital visit are some of the activities. They also support Rs.500 per month to a Campus Crusade for Christ staff as a mission work. 3) *Shillong Tyrannus Hall* has 26 boarders at the moment under the care of the Rev. K. C. Gaila, the chaplain. Weekly Bible study, games and sports, and evening vesper are some of the activities of the hostel. There are 7 graduating students this year and there will be 20 new students coming in. They have also extended 6 more rooms which mean they will have 36 seats from this year.

Property of CBCNEI

Mr. Rajib Zillie is the new Property Secretary. He joined the council from 5 January 2018 and was under orientation until he took over charge from me on the 20th March 2018. He has been touring around to see all the CBCNEI Properties.

JCMC Encroached plot behind Hospital Godown: The hospital authority was requested to settle the matter with the encroacher at as early as possible as the matter is taking too long.

JCMC Boundary wall construction behind staff quarters: The construction of the boundary wall is important for protection of the hospital property. The hospital authority was requested to look into the matter and construct the wall in the Christian Leprosy Clinic land without any further delay. Again the ADMC must take it serious and urgent because delay could be disastrous.

JCMC/CLCRC Project: It was observed that the CLCRC project in the leprosy clinic area is not progressing after the partnership with ARLDF ended. The hospital authority was requested to actively work on the project and obtain help from other sources so that there is progress and expansion.

Application from Christian Village members, JCMC/Jorhat: The JCMC management has forwarded the application of the Christian patty vil-
lage in JCMC, Jorhat on their request for a drain along the eastern

boundary of the campus in CLC land for easy passage of rain water during rainy season which would prevent the regular clogging & flooding of water at the entrance to the village. The temporary *kacha drain* (2' w x 2½' d) would be done from the village side on the CLC land.

Eastern Theological College, Jorhat: Conversion of Annual Patta Land to Period Patta: The land at the back of the college campus adjacent to municipality dumping ground and the crematorium is still in annual patta that was applied for conversion to period patta.

Baptist Vacation House, Shillong: Construction Project in STH Shillong: The construction of 1st floor rented premise of SIM is going on in partnership with SIMNEI. Half of the work is completed. By May or June, it may be complete and ready for use.

Panbazar & Satribari Mission Land, Guwahati: Mutation of Mission land to beneficiaries & Purchasers: The beneficiaries and purchasers have worked on the mutation of their plot and some have mutated their plots but separation of land revenue share is not yet done. The office is pursuing the matter for an early settlement.

Development of Headquarter Panbazar Campus: The architects have completed the Master Plan of the campus and sent the same on soft copy. It was discussed in the Executive Committee and further entrusted the Development Trust Committee to work on it.

CBCNEI Construction of 1st floor Jubilee Complex Building Phase II: The construction of the 1st floor was completed and the State Bank of India has occupied the premise since July 2017 on monthly rent.

Development of the unused plot at the back of Satribari Campus: The court cases filed by Guwahati Baptist Church and Mr. Dilip Thomas are still going on although there is no injunction imposed. The development work is carried out with the construction of boundary wall. As per the EC decision, we have called the GBC Deacon Board and appealed to them by all the General Secretaries of Conventions to withdraw the cases. Later the President and Secretaries met the KABS leaders and appealed to them to take appropriate steps to ask the GBC to withdraw the cases.

Kangpokpi Christian Hospital Land Matters, Manipur-Application from the Kangpokpi Christian Hospital Staff: The Medical Board has forwarded the application with a recommendation to approve the request of the KCH staff for purchase of mission land for staff pensioners' colony. About 20 employees have requested for 2 acre of low lying land along the boundary for purchase to settle after their retirement.

Application from the Kangpokpi Town Committee: The Medical Board has forwarded the application with a recommendation to approve the request of the applicant but only with 2 (two) hectare of land for the Christian Cemetery expansion. The recommendation would be discussed in the Executive Committee for final approval to give 2 (two) hectares of land to Kangpokpi Town Committee for the expansion of the Christian Cemetery.

Land Transfer to MBC: Certain portion of the Kangpokpi land was handed over to the MBC by EC decision and the MBC is supposed to make mutation and registration to be obtained.

CBCNEI Healing Ministry

Dr. Lucita Momin is the Medical Secretary. CBCNEI healing ministry has completed 109 years and among the six hospitals Tura Christian Hospital is the oldest. In the very beginning during missionary's time it has reached its pinnacle. When missionary left after few years hospitals started backsliding. Fortunately, with God's grace and with few committed faithful staff and with their dedication, now we can see changes especially in JCMC, TCH, BCH even in ICH. KCH is struggling due to lack of permanent doctor.

Jorhat Christian Medical Centre: JCMC has started new two bedded dialysis centre from 31st October 2017. Much renovation work is going on. The whole operation theatre, part of maternity ward, new doctors' rest room, and children ward converted to private room etc. There are 80 to 85 nursing students.

Babupara Christian Hospital: BCH is now having a new hospital building, renovated new eye operation theatre and very recently BCH has installed a new x-ray machine in their extended building. In a week 10-

12 eye operation done and number of patients comes to 80-115 in a week.

Tura Christian Hospital: TCH has also new High Dependency Unit with a dialysis ward. They are also waiting to renovate the old orphanage to private rooms and x-ray centre but due to shortage of finance they are postponing the renovation. Average patients' 45-50 % occupancy and OPD will be 50-60 daily.

Kangpokpi Christian Hospital: KCH has recently installed a new Sonography machine and a new digital x-ray machine. We still have not got any specialist in KCH which make the hospital very difficult to manage. 15 seats are there for ANM and patients is very less. There are only four MBBS doctors as of now.

Impur Christian Hospital: ICH continues to have the training program for nursing assistant from the centre and also planning for a palliative care centre. One doctor from NRHM is serving in the hospital.

Satribari Christian Hospital: SCH is standing up slowly after it is taken over by CBCNEI Healing Ministry from 4B HealthCare Pvt. LTD. SCH is still suffering from lack of finance. The hospital is running a program for bedside nursing, laboratory assistant and other activities from the state government. Patients are about 60-70 per day. Paediatric, maternity and medicines departments are going on well. In patients are about 45-50 persons daily. SCH has received NOC from Assam Health and Family Welfare department for enhancement of GNM seats from 20 to 40 seats; also received permission for G+3 building for nursing college. Satribari has received Rs.28,000,00.00 (Rupees twenty-eight lacs) from MPLAD fund for nursing school building.

CBCNEI Literature Ministry: CLC

Rev. T. P. Mordecai is the Director for the Christian Literature Centre. He has completed three years of service. The CLC has printed number of books during this period. Some of them are "*The Making of the Bible*" by Dr. Zhodi Angami; "*Questions About Jesus Christ*" By Michael Houdmann; *Our Daily Bread, cover specially designed for CBCNEI Churches*; *School Books like My Alphabet ABC*; *My*

Nursery Rhymes -1 and My Nursery Rhymes-2 were some of the books printed in the first half of the year.

Books that are in the pipeline for printing are Pastor's Manual in English; Manual of Worship by FS Downs; and A corner in India by M. M. Clark. One day consultation on GST was conducted with the help of the Chartered Accountants on 28 July 2017. There has been lot of challenges for CLC to function due to the new rules imposed on us. The following books were printed this year by Christian Literature Centre: *Got Questions, The Making of the Bible, KBCA Calendar 2018 (Tripura), TBCU Diary 2018 (Tripura), The Place of Women in Naga Society, RNBA Diary 2018, CBCNEI Diary 2018, CBCNEI Calendar 2018, and Our Daily Bread 2018.*

CLC will continue to print *Our daily Bread* for CBCNEI Churches through Our Daily Bread Ministries and preparation for the celebration of CLC Golden Jubilee 2019 is going on and the date is fixed for 5th November 2019 to be held in the Campus.

Relief and Development

The Rev. Kabi Gangmai, the Consultant, is working together with the strong cooperation of Secretary i/c Justice & Peace. He has been actively involved in building capacity of the Churches and helping them to respond to the need arising out of natural disasters.

Capacity building: With the assistance from APBAid, support was given to Mr. Athungo Shitri, the then Secretary for Justice & Peace and his successor Mr. Malthus Sangma to attend APBAid Development Consultation held on Sept 22-24, 2017 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

DRR program: CBCNEI also helped Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) to conduct a DRR program hosted by Salampatong Baptist Church under Vaiphei Baptist Churches Association on Nov 1-2, 2017. About 37 participants from 11 Vaiphei villages of Salampatong area along with their village chiefs, pastors and church elders participated in the 2-days DRR workshop.

Relief work: The R&D unit also worked hard to help the churches

affected by different disasters. On May 5th, 2017 hailstorm struck Sirmola village in Nagaon district under Nagaon Baptist Association and devastated 125 homes – all of them were poor Garo families. CBCNEI was also able to assist a Mission School run by Diphu Baptist Church (DBC), under Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention. The school building was devastated by hailstorm on May 5th, 2017 and school children were deprived of classrooms. A relief grant of Rs.50,000 was given to DBC to repair/rebuild the school building. On 11th July, 2017 a massive landslide struck Laptap village, Sagalee area in Papum-pare District of Arunachal Pradesh. Six homes were completely destroyed along with 14 persons buried alive. These families had lost everything including their domestic animals along with their granaries. In partnership with Arunachal Baptist Church Council, CBCNEI was able to assist them with the provision of foodstuff and essential materials such as utensils, blankets and big bucket, et al.

Immediate Plans: We remain thankful to Ms. Levish Leivon, HFH representative in NE India who had brought the needed skills and opportunity to work with a national Christian NGO like Habitat for Humanity India (HFH) and get acquaintance with their standards and working system in response to a disaster situation. The R&D wing is working toward a long-term partnership between CBCNEI and HFH-India. The R&D wing also works with CASA team to develop a proposal for Community Development project to be implemented in Goalpara district, Assam. The initiative had been well received and necessary formalities were already done, and now the wing is awaiting green signal from CASA to start with the project. With the onset of this year's Monsoon, the R&D wing is gearing up to face the challenges of season's calamities such as flood, landslide and hailstorm. These are common natural events that besets NE India region every year, followed by common diseases such as viral fever, malaria and water borne ailments. We must solicit every support and prayer for R&D wing so that the team may face these challenges effectively.

Appointment: We have appointed Mr. Kaikiri Terang from KABC to be the first Relief & Development Assistant with effect from 2nd April

2018 who will be oriented and guided by the Consultant, Rev. Kabi Gangmei.

Theological Board:

There are altogether 49 students whom we could sponsor this year. This includes 15 the continuing students from last year and 34 new sponsored students this year. This also includes 9 doctoral students; 10 M.Th. students and the rest are from B.D., M. Div. and B. Miss. The Principals' meeting held on 3rd October at ETC, Jorhat decided to have a theological consultation for creating contextual theological curriculum for NEI on 29th November 2016 at TTC, Dimapur. It was good brainstorming consultation and further consultation will be held in the near future so as to how the relevant contextual syllabus and working systems may be adopted by NECU.

Under CBCNEI umbrella, we have altogether 9 affiliated theological colleges now. Whiter Theological College is the newest college joining the CBCNEI Theological family from this year. Seven are recognized by the Senate of Serampore College, one is recognized by the Asian Theological Association and one is still independent. With the coming up of the North East Christian University, we do hope that all the theological colleges affiliated to CBCNEI will offer the courses designed by the NECU from the near future. We also offer scholarship to deserving students every year. There are 10 Ph. D. /Th. D. students; 6 M. Th. students; and 37 BD students studying in different colleges in India. We are thankful to the International Ministries (IM) for providing such scholarship since the last many years.

Seven Sisters' Home

Miss Prodipta Christy Rongpipi looks after the Seven Sisters Home as Managing Director. It is a Home for girls subjected to child trafficking and abused who are in need of Care and Protection. It was a project run by the ARLDF however, due to unavailability of FCRA, they were not able to run the home with outside assistance. In due course of time, they requested CBCNEI to help channelize fund and it has to be handed over to CBCNEI for running and facilitating the home since

2016. Now even the Society registration of the home is obtained in the name of CBCNEI. Therefore, officially and legally the project belongs to CBCNEI now. The management and supervision of the home should come under the Justice and Peace department. There are 25 girls, 20 are minor girls and five majors. Some are schooling, some are taught at home and some who could not go for schooling undergo vocational training. So far four major girls are employed in different institutions and organizations. We are thankful to Don & Janice who supported this project through Seven Sisters International.

Baptist Youth Fellowship of North East India

Rev. Vikuo Rhi is the Secretary and Mr. Bikash Momin is the President of the BYFNEI. They could have two Executive meetings this year: at ETC Jorhat, on 28th April 2017 and at CBCNEI Office, Guwahati on 13th August 2017 respectively. A brief farewell program was conducted during its first executive meeting at Jorhat on 28th April 2017 in honour of Mr. Atungo Shitri, the outgoing Youth In charge who was also the Secretary for Justice and Peace Department, CBCNEI. The new Youth in-Charge is Adv. Malthys Sangma, the Secretary for Justice & Peace, CBCNEI from 1st May 2017 onwards.

Youth Leadership Development Training was conducted at Guwahati from 11th – 13th August 2017 on the theme “*Generation Ignite*.” There were 35 youth leaders from six conventions including resource persons attended the training. Resource persons include (i) Mr. Tony Travert Marak (ii) Imnatoshi Longkumer (iii) Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi (iv) Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai, (v) Mr. Malthys Sangma (vi) Mr. Bikash G momin and (vii) Rev. Boipu Serto. The major plan ahead is Leadership Training/Conference Program for all Association Youth Secretaries which shall be conducted in 2018 and hosted by the Apatani Baptist Association under Arunachal Baptist Church Council during July/August 2018.

Baptist Women Fellowship-NEI

Mrs. Jaksil Sangma is the President and Ms. Visasieu Dolie is the President of BWFNEI. Executive Committee meets once in a year for planning and discussion. BWFNEI exists to encourage, build relationships

and networking among women. Women leaders of conventions are assigned to visit the other conventions as an exchange program. Last year along with the peace and justice department of CBCNEI and Patera International Ministries, Women of Peace program was organized at CBCNEI Conference Centre. Every three years a conference is organized in different conventions. In 2019 the Women conference will be held in Nagaland. For the renovation of White Memorial Hostel, one offering of BWFNEI conference was collected and the GBC Women Department has contributed Rs.2, 50,000/- for the renovation of this hostel. We are really grateful to the Garo Baptist Women Department of Garo Baptist Convention. Their future plan is to take over the management of WM Hostel; visit USA in 2019 for raising fund and networking; and conduct “Women of Peace” Consultation in three places beginning from 2018-20 in collaboration with Justice and Peace Department.

Travels and Participations

During the year I have participated in several programs within and outside India. I have attended several meetings related to NECU and am also made the honorary Chancellor by virtue of the post I am holding. I also participated as a speaker at the Convocation of the AICS, Aizawl; Dedication of the largest Baptist Church in Asia, Zunheboto Baptist Church; and the CBCNEI EC & AGM, which was held at ETC, Jorhat from 26-30 April 2017. We also had Leaders Summit on 1st May with IM Leaders where we shared about our ministries to the IM leaders and Rev. Ben Chan informed as about the change of guard in IM with Rev. Sharon Koh as the new Executive Director. I also visited Wokha for the inquiry of Whiter Theological College and the Mission Week of the Wokha Village Church. The church assured me that they will participate in the founding membership of the NECU. I attended the Indigenous People Reference Group (IRPG) meeting in Manila 26-31 May where the issues of Indigenous Peoples face everywhere in the world and try to find out ways and means to influence world communities to protect the rights and dignity of the IPs. This was organized by the World Council of Churches. I also participated in the NEICC meet-

ings several times and conducted NECU Consultation on 28-30 June at CBCNEI. Attended the BWA Annual Gathering at Bangkok from 2-8 July when a new General Secretary in the person of American Elijah Brown was installed, originally from the state of Texas, was elected to be the next General Secretary of the BWA. Brown will assume the position on January 1, 2018, succeeding Neville Callam, a Jamaican, who retires from that position in December after more than 10 years of service. I also led devotion in one of the 16 Commissions meeting. After that I attended the IMCC Programme Committee meeting in Chennai from 10-13 July; participated in the General Secretaries' Conclave at Kaziranga from 19-21 July where we, the Secretaries, deliberated on the issues and ministries of CBCNEI for two days. It was a meaningful fellowship and sharing. Some recommendations have been made and it will be presented to us for further discussion. We conducted City Pastors meeting on 3rd August for fellowship and relationship building among the city churches of CBCNEI. I also visited Kangpokpi Christian Hospital on 18-19 August along with Medical Secretary, Dr. Lucita Momin. This hospital is celebrating its centenary in 2019. Attended AGM of NCCI-Ranchi-21-24 Aug where we discussed much about the issues facing the churches in India today especially the attack on minorities. I participated in the Core Committee of NECU on 5 September at Dimapur.

I visited the US for raising fund and promotion of NECU from 10 September-2nd October 2017; visited several places from the east coast to the extreme west coast of the US. I met Rev. Dr. Ben Chan, Area Director IM, Rev. Dr. Lee B. Spitcher, General Secretary of ABC, Rev. Sharon Koh, Executive Director of IM and shared the vision of CBCNEI especially on NECU. I was able to reach Philadelphia, Valley Forge, New York, Boston, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Kansas City, Denver, San Francisco, St. Louis and Chicago. I also visited three Universities and interacted with the presidents, deans and professors of the Universities. After mourning for a brief period with my father for the loss of my mother, I attended the 60th Anniversary of the Christian Conference of Asia and the Asia Mission Conference from 10-16

October 2017. The theme of the Conference was “*Journeying Together in Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light.*”

Together with Rev. Dr. Hevukhu and Mr. Vikato Shikhu, I represented CBCNEI to the 60th Anniversary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Asia Mission Conference from 10-16 October 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar. The theme was “*Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia.*” I also participated in the KABC Leadership Training at Guwahati from 29-31 October; India Baptist Leaders’ Summit from 1-3 November and Centenary program of the LM Student Ministry at Guwahati. Attended CASA Board meeting at Delhi and then to Chennai on 7-8 November to meet ICSA Director with regards to ABFMS Property matters; NECU GC meeting at Dimapur on 17 November and attended Consultation on Religious Liberty at Guwahati; Visited Payap University and McCormick Hospital in Chiangmai, Thailand from 7-10 December went with my own earned leave; attended the International Consultation on *Challenges to Freedom of Religion Or Belief in Southern Asia* at Bangkok, Thailand from 10-14 December 2018; participated as a speaker at the Centenary celebration of the Makokching Baptist Church in Manipur on 27-28 December; Met the President of MBC and spoke at the MBC Centre Church, Imphal; spoke at KBC Centre Church in Churachanpur and Imphal on New Year Day 1st January 2018. Participated in NKBA AGM as a speaker from 10-14 January at Diphu; Organised CBCNEI Strategic Planning Consultation from 22-23 January. Attended 40th Anniversary of TWR in Chennai from 26-28 January 2018; Visited NECU campus along with FNECU members from USA and CBCNEI Church Leaders’ Conference at Dimapur from 3-8 February; Participated as a speaker at the 150th Anniversary of the Garo Baptist Church celebrated by the Garo Baptist Convention from 9-11 February 2018 at Rajasimla as the keynote speaker on the theme, “*Revisiting the Past, Envisioning the Future*”; attended IMCC Planning Committee meeting in Hyderabad from 12-14 February; attended the NCCI EC Meeting from 19-22 February hosted by CBCNEI for the first time. I also attended the 14th World Mission Conference of

the World Council of Churches at Arusha, Tanzania from 7-15 March 2018. The theme of the 14th World Mission Conference was “*Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship*” Based on Galatians 5:25.

Conclusion

I conclude this report with sincere thanks to all my colleagues in the CBCNEI Headquarters, both Secretaries and Staff, and those in the semi-autonomous bodies-CLC, BWFNEI, BYFNEI, for their participation in carrying out all the responsibilities. I also like to thank the Members of the Executive Committee and all its related committees for all their participation, guidance and support given in carrying out the ministries of CBCNEI

I am indeed grateful to the President and Vice President of the CBCNEI, the members of the Executive Committee, and all official delegates of the Annual General Meeting for their prayers and support. So also, I am especially grateful to all those who have graciously partnered with us in implementing our programmes. And above all, I express my gratitude to God who through Jesus Christ inspires leads and moves us on in our commitment to the task of the Kingdom of God on earth. I realize that there is a great need of motivating and equipping church, institutions, associations and conventions to effectively face the challenges of our times.

Faithfully Submitted

Solomon Rongpi

General Secretary, CBCNEI

Camp: Nagaon, 27-29 April 2018.

News Capsule

MOU with OMF (April 5): With much grateful heart to God, we were able to enter into partnership with Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF). This partnership will help our churches in sending Missionaries to East Asian Countries. OMF has their staff and offices in almost all East Asian Countries and therefore they can help us in supervising our Missionaries and also give member care to them in times of need. It was also made mandatory that OMF staff go to all State Conventions and sign MOA for detail implementation of partnership. I hope it will be a blessing for our churches.



Silver Jubilee of Nepal Baptist Church Council (NBCC) **(April 11-12):**

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary and Mr Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary of the CBCNEI represented Council during the Silver Jubilee celebration of the NBCC at Kathmandu, Nepal.



Workshop Hosted by ADF (April 11-13):

A three-day training workshop was held from 11th – 13th April 2018, organized by ADF India at Sukh Hotel, Juhu Church Road, Juhu Mumbai, the main motive of the legal training was to seek justice and equality to minority group and to sensitized and equip social activist and church leaders regarding the communal intolerance and attacks against the freedom of conscience, speech and expression.



ABCC Annual General Meeting At Tirbin (April 20-22): Under the Theme, “*Let Us Do Good To All People*”, the Arunachal Baptist Church Council had its Annual General Meeting at Tirbin, the Headquarter of the Galo Baptist Union. The Mission Secretary of CBCNEI was invited to be one of the Speakers during the Annual General Meeting.



KRIMA 1 Mission Strategy Presentation (April 18): As Krima No.1 has adopted Kokrajhar District in Assam as their new mission field, a special consultation on how to develop a strategy to reach this District was held at the Association Headquarter. CBCNEI Mission Secretary along with Rev. Rettiar, the Mission Director of GBC, conducted the Consultation.



Nihang Karbi Baptist Association (NKBA) Staff Retreat (April 19-21):

The officers and staff of NKBA had their staff retreat here at CBCNEI Mission Compound. Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, Mr Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary and Mr Malthys D. Sangma, Secretary for Justice and Peace, CBCNEI were the resource persons. The program was partially sponsored by CBCNEI.



ABU Youth Conference (May 3-6): Based on Psalm 119:9, under the Theme, *“How can young person stay on the path of purity?”* the Adi Baptist Union conducted Youth Conference at Ngopok Baptist Church, Arunachal. Over 700 young people gathered and made



commitment that they will, by the grace of God, stay pure in their lives and dare to be different for the Lord. Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai was the main Gospel preacher of the Conference.



Workshop on Project Implementation (May 8-9): With a collaboration with CASA two-days start-up workshop was held in CBCNEI Compound. The primary objective of the workshop was to brief the partner organizations on how to implement the project in their respective target areas. It was informed that the project *“Enhancing Communities’ capacities to strengthen economic and social status with dignity, justice and peace”* was to be started in respective ministry fields to the earliest.



TESOL TRAINING (May 7-18): Like any other years, TESOL training was conducted at WSBK Center in Dimapur. Altogether 22 Trainees attended the training and all graduated successfully. Testimonies of those who attended said they were recommended by those who have attended earlier, especially by their own brothers and sisters. We extend our gratitude to WSBK for hosting this training program.



Seminar on Religious Freedom and Harmony (May12):

Jointly organized by Assam Baptist Convention, KarbiAnglong Baptist Convention, Assam Christian Forum, All India Christian Council and Council of Baptist Churches in North East India organized a day long seminar on Religious Freedom and Harmony at Lewis Memorial Auditorium, Mission Compound, CBCNEI. Over 150 christian leaders from all over Assam attended the seminar.



MOU with YBPS

(May 15): Yeshu Bhakh Pravitra Sabha is a young church planting mission movement actively working in UP state. As they plant new churches the need arises for



them to partner with matured-established churches to guide them and help them get established. Therefore, a Memorandum of understanding was signed hoping our churches will come forward and help this newly established churches in UP. We agree that we will pray for, and encourage one another to the glory of God and for the extension of His kingdom.



Nagaon District Baptist Association Leadership Training

(June 8-9): Sponsored by the Lamding Baptist Church, a two-day leadership training was conducted by the Nagaon District Baptist Association for their Pastors and church leaders at the Association Center. Over 30 Pastors and leaders attended the training program.



Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai was the main Resource person for the training program.



Macedonian Call And Response: In response to the Call to reach this Nation during our Lifetime, many Associations and churches have responded to the call to pray for and to let the people hear the Gospel. Over 70 Associations have responded and adopted unreached Districts as their new Mission fields. Many Associations have sent Survey Teams to the Mission fields, many have sent workers, and many are in the process of sending, and there are few who have not adopted. Let us pray to the Lord to

send more workers in the mission fields, and also pray for the Associations who have adopted so that God will bless their work. Let us also pray for the Associations who have not adopted the new unreached Districts so that they



will be also involved in this movement to pray for the Nation. We want no one to be left out in this great movement since this will, someday, become history in the history of the Mission of God in India.



Special Consultation On Present Scenario In India

(June 16): Pressed by the challenges faced by the churches today, a one day special consultation on Awareness of the Present Scenario was conducted by the Union of Tangkhul Baptist Churches Imphal at Tangkhul Baptist Church Imphal. Col. Arun Kumar and Rev. Dr. Jolly

Rimai were the main resource persons of the consultation. Important issues on the challenges faced by churches all over India were presented, and the importance on how churches should respond through focused prayer was also presented. Hundreds of pastors and Church leaders from the city as well as the foothills attended the consultation.



Applications are invited for the post of the Assistant Editor, Baptist News, Council of Baptist Churches in Indian (CBCNEI), Guwahati, Assam. Interested candidate should submit their application and resume along with two passport photos and bio-data, church recommendation, email ID and mobile number on or before August 30, 2018. Original certificates and other documents should be produced at the time of interview.

Minimum Qualificaton Required:

1. BA- BD / MA in English
2. Basic Communication Skills
3. Having basic knowledge of DTP
4. Skills in writing and Editing
5. Committed Christian

Kindly send your complete application to the address below:
General Secretary,
CBCNEI Mission Compound
H.B. Road, Panbazar, Guwahati – 781001
Assam, India

Reminder from:
North East Christian University
Huzo Meru, Director of Operations, NECU



A clarion call for support of NECU was made in the last issue of the Baptist News. However the response from the stakeholders especially Associations and Churches has been

slow and discouraging. The development of NECU City Centre at Burma camp, Dimapur was initiated since the beginning of the year and all available funds have been invested in the foundation of the Complex. The progress of work is now stalled due to financial constraint and this will adversely affect launching of academic programs and operation of NECU as planned.

Being deeply concerned of the current financial situation of NECU, recently the Chancellor has donated Rs 1 lakh and the Vice Chancellor's family of five members have donated Rs 1 lakh each as founding members of NECU to model the way of Giving. NECU is for the welfare of our children, grandchildren and for ultimate transformation of our region. What is being done today by us will bear testimony to the vision we hold for our future generations. With this sense of urgency, I



I take this opportunity to remind all stakeholders to act fast with your contributions to demonstrate your passion and prayers for NECU. When we all act together nothing is impossible and this noble project is very much within our capacity to achieve. Our good work brings heaven down to earth and through it our God is glorified.

The North East Christian University

Annual Report 2017-2018

As reported by Prof (Dr.) Darlando Khathing, Vice Chancellor, NECU

The North East Christian University – A University with Distinction under the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India.

A. INTRODUCTION.

North East India is the Eastern – most region of India comprising of the contiguous Seven Sister States (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura) and the Himalayan State of Sikkim. The region shares almost 90 % of its borders with China (Tibet) in the North, Myanmar in the East, Bangladesh in the Southwest and Bhutan in the Northwest. The North East is a true frontier region.

North East India has been the meeting point of many communities, faiths and cultures. A place renowned for its **magical beauty** and **bewildering diversity**, North East India is home for more than 166 separate tribes speaking a wide range of languages. Some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far as South East Asia and Mongolia. They retain their cultural traditions and values but are beginning to adapt to contemporary lifestyles. Its jungles are dense, its rivers powerful, and heavy rain and thunderstorms sweep across the hills, valleys and plains during the annual monsoons.

The North East Christian University is an ambitious project (Ministry) of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI). Since the establishment of the Baptist Mission in the North Eastern region, education has been one of the major focuses of the American Baptist missionaries. This is evident by the impact they have made in this field.

The first Assamese literature was promoted by them. As such the first Weekly Newspaper known as “Arunodoi” which means “Raising of the Sun” was published by three American Baptist missionaries namely, Miles Brownson, Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter. They were the ones who fought for the promotion of Assamese literature. In Nagaland, it was missionary Mary Mead, wife of Dr. E. W. Clark who opened the first school. Then, in many places, the other missionaries and churches opened mission schools. Today we have so many Primary and High Schools and quite a number of secular and theological colleges in the region.

The North East Christian University.

In a meeting of the **Principals of Theological Seminaries** under the Council of Baptist Churches of North East India (CBCNEI) held in March 2010, it was unanimously agreed that the time was right for **Baptist Churches to establish a full-fledged University**. A series of consultations were then held with Conventions and Associations members who endorsed the vision. Once formally proposed, the Act on the establishment of the University was passed by the **Nagaland Legislative Assembly** and notified accordingly in the State Gazette. Today the North East Christian University is a reality.

The **Vision** of the University is of a distinctive centre of excellence committed to integrating **faith and knowledge, character and service**, in transforming students towards empowerment, leadership and human development in preparation for challenging times. The **Mission** of the University is to provide a wholesome education that is global in perspective, upright in character and praxis in its approach. Its **Motto** is “**Truth and Liberty**”. The **Logo** depicts a **Flame** (of Warmth, Light, Care, Compassion), a **Dove from above** (Wisdom and Understanding, Love), and a **Pedestal** (Pillar of Knowledge and Discernment, Leadership).

NECU is a secular University which will offer courses and training programmes on a **wide range of subjects** – from religion and theology to earth sciences and philosophy, from history to mobile technology, from medical sciences to agricultural sciences, from humanities to science and technology. It would provide flexible and innovative programmes using online and blended learning methods that comply with international standards for quality education and professional competence. It would

inculcate various skills like **critical and innovative thinking**, technological adaptability and **multi-cultural traits**. It would create research opportunities that will lead to actions bringing **contextual realities** to programmes and greater **community participation**. In addition to accreditation to National bodies, NECU would seek accreditation to American statutory bodies to ensure world class teaching and learning standards and offer **seamless opportunities for NECU students** to pursue further studies overseas. Semester and Credits would be adopted including **transfer/recognition of Credits** from well established collaborating institutions.

The North East Christian University (NECU), an initiative of the Council of Baptist Churches of North East India (CBCNEI), was established through the North East Christian University Act 2012 passed by the Nagaland State Legislative Assembly in 2013 and duly notified in the Nagaland State Gazette on June 5, 2013.

A **Governing Council** comprising representatives the CBCNEI, the Nagaland Baptist Council of Churches (NBCC), the Visitor of NECU, and ex officio members of the University was constituted. As per the Act, the Chancellor was appointed by the CBCNEI in 2014. The **first Chancellor** was Reverend Dr Anjo Keikung. In 2015, Mr. Huzo Merü was appointed as a **Director of Operations**. Rev. Dr. Anjo Keikung was also appointed as **Chief Executive Director**, with primary purpose of mobilizing resources for the University.

A Search Committee was constituted for the appointment of the first Vice Chancellor. The **First Vice Chancellor** was appointed in March 2017. He is Professor (Dr) Darlando Khathing, who had retired from NEHU as a Professor of Physics and who had served as the first Vice Chancellor of Central University of Jharkhand. His installation was held in the evening of the 4th April 2017 when the Governing Council had met before the GC regular meeting scheduled on the 5th.

Rev. Dr. Anjo Keikung was released from office at his request of ill health, as the CED and Chancellor of NECU. On the 31st December, 2017. The earlier appointment and subsequent release was done by the Executive Committee of the CBCNEI.

Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, took over as

the **new Chancellor**, NECU with effect from 1st January, 2018.

Land for the permanent campus and for the immediate functioning of the University was being surveyed. NECU operated its offices from the Nagaland Mission Ministry building at Dimapur. In 2016, land of about 250 acres was acquired by the Government of Nagaland at Medziphema area which was handed over to the University for its Permanent Campus. The permanent campus was dedicated on the **10th of March 2017**, by the President of CBCNEI Mr. K.C.Momin. It was truly a blessed occasion and all felt the Grace of the Lord upon them and the land.

B. INFRASTRUCTURE

A generous family transferred free of cost about one and one half acres of land in the prime Burma Camp area of Dimapur to the NBCC for the purpose of establishing the University. The land has since been transferred to the University. An existing one floor building of six rooms was also on the premise which was handed over to the University. This **city based campus**, known as **Anchor Complex**, is presently the operating office and headquarters of the University. The Anchor Building office was dedicated on the **5th of April 2017** by the General Secretary, NBCC, Rev. Dr. Z. Keyho. In addition to the offices, one meeting room and one classroom are functioning. A larger multipurpose hall of 120 seating capacity, made of indigenous materials, known as the **Palm Leaf Centre**, has also been completed.

The University has engaged an architectural consultant to plan a four storied building at the **Anchor Complex**. The design is such that even when the University shifts its main operations to the permanent campus, the building will have clients to rent the premises and facilities so as to generate some revenue. The drawings and design have been approved. The **foundation work** has started since January 2018.

The **Main permanent campus** layout is under preparation. The University is conscious of the environment and of conservation. It has therefore first engaged an **Eco Survey** team of experts to map the entire campus of its flora, fauna, topography and ecological pointers so as to guide the landscape consultants to optimally utilize the area without causing much adverse ecological impact. At least 120 different plant species

have been identified with a few rare ones. Fresh pug marks of barking deer, wild boar and even of a leopard were observed on the campus.

Aside from the usual modern and state of the art classrooms, hostels, administrative blocks, etc, and a large sports complex, a **NE Village** is being planned as a **Retreat cum Event Centre** for gatherings and conferences. Cottages to stay in would represent **designs of all the eight NE states** with special display and craft making facilities. Seminar rooms, hostels and a food court of NE cuisine are envisioned. A specially designed **Chapel** would be a central facility of the University. Four major hillocks have been named: Mt. Sinai, Mt. Nebu, Mt. Carmel and Mt. Hermon, where zoning of specific infrastructure has been identified in line with the history of those **Biblical mountains**.

Churches have been quickly forthcoming in offering their services for the development of the main campus and of the Anchor Complex. At the Anchor Complex, members of a neighboring Church cleared the area and erected a boundary wall of bamboo matting. At the main permanent campus, at least thirty different Churches from even beyond Kohima, sent volunteers to work on the approach road and to clear several areas of undergrowth inside the campus. Private parties offered their JCBs and bulldozer to create internal roads and water bodies. A base camp was also established.

The University sent a proposal to the State Government for consideration to forward the same to the North Eastern Council on a **Water Supply facility** from a village situated at a high altitude from where water, by gravity would flow to the Permanent Campus. There are water sources within the campus, but this would be pure and crystal clear spring water, which the concerned village has been kind enough to approve for NECU.

C. ACADEMIC

As per resolution of the Governing Council, the formal full **degree courses** would be offered only from 2018. Six subjects had been identified and the framing of the syllabi is going on.

The **subjects** are:

1. **English.** Teaching of English language, Masters degree of two years. Also Certificate and Diploma of three months to one year respec-

tively, based on TESOL and ESL.

2. **Education.** B.Ed. of two years, B.A-Bed and B.sc-Bed of four years.
3. **Theology.** Masters of two years.
4. **Public Administration.** Masters of two years. Online in collaboration with a University abroad.
5. **Computer Science.** Application based. With collaboration with overseas Institutions.
6. **Management.** Thrust areas in collaboration with overseas institutions.

Till March 2018 end, the framing of curriculum in **English** and **Theology** has been actively reported from the concerned experts/Committees. The Governing Council has expressed concern that the curriculum on **Theology** and the ensuing admission process might not be ready and hence resolved that the courses on Theology be offered only in the next academic year, 2019

Education would need to be put on hold owing to a Notification by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) that no new courses on Education would be permitted to be offered in 2018. This is apparently owing to a policy review that is going on.

For the three other programmes, advice is being awaited from our US consultants.

D. NECU INITIATIVES:

1) Simultaneously with the preparations for the degree courses, NECU took the initiative to identify and plan on offering **short term skill based training courses**. Several well established skill training centres were consulted, based in Dimapur, Shillong and Guwahati. Among the skills identified to be offered and for which curriculum are ready, are Retail Management, Food Processing, Low Cost Construction, Solar Appliances Assembly and Maintenance. The University organized a 6 day course on **Accountancy and Financial Management** for Church workers in October, 2017.

NECU Staff have been by invitation conducting short term courses on

Accountancy and Financial Management. These include a) **Accountancy Workshop** organized by Baptist Church “A” 5Medziphema Town from April 10th to 12th, 2017 (10 trainees from 4 Churches) and b) **Accountancy Training** on March 8th and 9th 2018 to Church Leaders under Chang Baptist Lashong Thangyen (74 trainees from 56 Churches). NECU Accounts Officer Mr. Peshu K. also joined the CBCNEI Workshop **on GST, Income Tax and FCRA** on the 29th of August, 2017.

2) NECU successfully proposed and received approved sanction for establishing a **Smart Class room**. In addition to the usual projections, this would have facilities for online. Teaching and video conferencing.

3) The 25 seat classroom would serve a Language Laboratory. Courses offered and taught would include from basic computers awareness to e commerce, from on line tutorials in Science Subjects to Soft Skills and Digital Marketing. End users would range from school students, housewives to entrepreneurs and executives. The acquisition of equipment is going on.

4) NECU has taken the initiative of being recognized as a **Certification Body to certify Traditional Health Providers (Healers)**. This is part of a national programme under the Quality Council of India (QCI) which normally certifies products and organizations, as per the ISO international standards. It has extended its ambit to certify Personnel, persons with special skills, known for their knowledge and competence. It is hoped that with the experience and competence that NECU gains, other areas like crafts, music, food, etc which are rich and highly rated, would also be included in the range of areas that can be recognized for certification. Such certification is like a degree to one who has no formal classroom learning experience, but by generation or in house training of their gifts, are very competent and well recognized by society. The Certification would have international status and could give our traditional practitioners a well deserved lift and recognition.

E. UNIVERSITY GUESTS

i. In the second and third week of April NECU was fortunate to have two visitors from **Friends of NECU, USA (FNECU)** Dr. Joseph Huse and Mr. Ben Chan.

ii. A week later a team of five members of the **World Relief Team of**

ABS-USA visited NECU. Each guest took time to visit both the Anchor Building and the Permanent campus.

iii. In August, Professor (Mrs) Lee, **Head of Korean Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)** visited to explore starting Korean language programmes at NECU.

iv. In September, Dr. Sam Bandela, of the **Friends of NECU, USA**, visited to work out ways to support the University.

v. In October, Dr. Samson Chiru of **Trinity College Manipur and Sanagi International University**, Churachandpur visited to offer support in his field and network.

vi. In October, Professor (Dr) Francis Thummy, **Head of Mass Communication, Amity University**, Noida, visited to offer assistance in course structure and teaching.

vii. In February, 2018 Three **FNECU, USA**, Rev. Dr. Don Ng, Dr. Jennifer Davidson and Dr. Rex A. Rogers visited Anchor and the permanent campus of NECU.

viii. In March, Mr. Anil Jauhri, CEO and Prof Dr.(Mrs) Debjani Roy, Adviser, **Quality Council of India**, New Delhi, visited NECU and conducted a two day interactive meet on certification of Traditional Health Providers.

F. SCHOLARSHIPS

The University has been privileged to receive an Endowment fund to institute the “**Governor-Acharya’s Award**” for the Best Graduate in a) Academics – Sarojini Naidu Award, b) Extra Curricular Activities – Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Award and c) Social Responsibility – Mother Teresa Award.

G RESOURCE MOBILISATION:

1) A **Promoters Meeting** was held on the 11th April 2017. The Promoter from Manipur and the local officers (CED and Dir-Operations) were present.

2) During the year NECU sponsored the travel and stay from 25th June to 7th July 2017, of the Chancellor / Chief Executive Director to attend the **BWA Conference at Thailand** and to highlight NECU.

3) NECU also partially supported the **General Secretary CBCNEI** on his almost month long (10th to 30th September, 2017) **tour of the US** where much of his interaction was based on NECU resource mobilization.

4) **NECU Administrative Staff** members also participated in reaching out and spreading the NECU project. Mr. Pasha K. travelled in November 2017, to **Khiamniungan Baptist Churches Association (KBCA)** and spoke in the Executive Council. In September 2017 VC addressed the **Manipur Pastors Retreat of MBC**, at CBCNEI Guwahati. VC addressed the **Manipur Baptist Convention Town Church, Imphal** in November 2017. In March, VC addressed Church leaders under the **Chang Baptist Churches Association (CLBT), Tuensang**, Congregation of **Chang Town Baptist Church, Tuensang** and Church elders of the **Khiamniungan Town Baptist Church, Tuensang**.

5) **NECU Promoter from Manipur, Rev. Yarngam Muivah has submitted the following Report** : i. Besides visiting and meeting various churches, families and individuals, he visited the following Associations from which he received positive responses:

In Chandel district: 1. Mayon Naga Baptist Association, 2. Monsang Naga Baptist Association, 3. Tarao Naga Baptist Association, 4. Lamkang Naga Baptist Association, In Senapati district: 1. Maram Naga Baptist Association, In Kangpokpi district: 1. Thadou Baptist Association and In Churachandpur district: 1. Chin Baptist Association, 2. Vaiphei Baptist Association, 3. Simte Baptist Association.

ii. He shared about NECU at Rongmei Naga Baptist Association General Assembly at Khoubum, at Tangkhul Baptist Pastor's Association Annual Gathering at Mapao Zingsho Baptist Church, at MBC Council Meeting at MBC Centre Church, at Phungyo Baptist Church (Mother Church of MBC). The latter adopted resolution to upgrade from Founding Member to Patron Member.

iii. He organized an Awareness Gospel Concert in collaboration with the Voice of Symphony - a popular choral band at MBC Centre Church in November 2017 where Vice Chancellor, NECU highlighted NECU. Around 1000 parents and youth attended the concert. It was indeed an eye opener for many of them as they heard of NECU for the first time.

iv. He accompanied Vice Chancellor to Shillong to consult Secretary NEC with regard to establishing Environmental School of Architecture.

7) Report from Director of Operations (April 2017- March 2018):i. **NECU Promotion:** Visited more than 10 Churches/Fellowships to promote NECU and garner support. Response by and large positive. Permission sought to visit more Churches but slow response from Pastors. Visited/met many individuals with NECU brochure and Newsletter and appealed for support. Polite response but slow action. Promoted NECU through social media for wide publicity.

ii. **NECU Campus Development:** Been to NECU permanent campus, Medziphema more than 30 times to work with JCB and Bulldozer and to share NECU vision with well-wishers and Church groups who visit NECU campus. Successfully negotiated for water tapping from perennial stream at Thekrujuma Village.

iii. **NECU Fund Mobilization:** Raised over Rs 20 lakhs in the form of NECU Founding Members and supporters. Contacted a Donor Agency and confirmed a grant approval of US \$40,000.00 for a Smart Classroom.

iv. **NECU Material Mobilization:** Got a free JCB service for a month from a well-wisher. Got a free Bulldozer service for unspecified time from a well-wisher. On request, a Kirloskar Generator 3.5 kv (second hand) has been gifted to NECU by a well-wisher.

Fervent Request to CBCNEI from Director of Operations:

- Request all the 6 Conventions to become Patron Members by contributing Rs 10 lakhs each (One time).
- Request all the 105 Associations to become Founding Members by contributing Rs 1 lakh each (one time).
- Request all the 7851 Churches to become Active Partners by contributing minimum Rs 5000/-and above as resolved by the CBCNEI to expedite the process of NECU.

9) NECU cosponsored the CBCNEI Church Leaders' Conference held from 6th to 8th February 2018 and hosted by WSBK, Dimapur.

ABOUT EASTERN THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, RAJABARI, JORHAT, ASSAM

*as reported by Rev. Prof. Akheto Sema, Principal, Eastern Theological College,
Jorhat, Assam*

The Eastern Theological College as the premier theological and training institution of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), plays a leading role in promoting theological education in the North Eastern region of India. It was on 12th January 1905, the Rev. S.A.D Boggs pitched his tent by the site of the Tocklai river near the present College bridge. After a year's preparation the Bible Training Centre got started in April 1906. The institution later grew into a group of schools called the Jorhat Christian Schools which included the Bible School (1906); a Middle English School; a Normal School and an Industrial School (all in 1907) and later a High School (1914). But soon it was evident to some perceptive leaders – missionaries and nationals – that the Bible School and the High School training would not be enough in the years to come if the churches in the region were to effectively meet the challenges of the fast changing times. In 1944, the idea of College level theological education was discussed seriously for the first time in a missionary conference. The proposal was accepted in principle, but it was not materialized till the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) was formed in 1950. Therefore, in the autumn of 1950 a historic step was taken when the Jorhat Bible College was established with the Rev. J.W. Cook as its first Principal. When the High School and the English Medium Bible School were closed down in 1955 and 1957 respectively, the College (then renamed as the Assam Baptist Theological Seminary since 1953) occupied the land and the property. In 1957, to

suit the changing times, the name of the College was once again changed to Eastern Theological College as it is known today.

Significant development took place in the College under the earlier Principals like Rev. M.J. Chance and Dr. J. Douglas Duffy. Further, important developments took place under the leadership of Rev. George W. Peck (1962-1963); Dr. Frederick S. Downs (1963-1966); and Rev. Dr. Jonathan H. Thumra (1966-1987), who became the first native Principal. This was followed by Rev. Prof. O.M. Rao (1987-1993); Prof. Renty Keitzar (1993-2000); Rev. Prof. M. Kipgen (2001-2006); Rev. Prof. Ezamo Murry (2000-2001) as acting and 2006-2009 as full time Principal; Rev. Zhabu Terhuja (2009-2010 as acting Principal) and President from 2010-2015, and Rev. Prof. Akheto Sema (2010 till date). Over the years a faculty development programme has been going on and today ETC has a strong faculty members consisting of 20 Asst. Professors, Associate Professors and Professors.

Currently we have altogether 295 residential students coming from different tribes and communities from India and beyond: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Myanmar, Nagaland, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh. We also have around 50 students for Master of Arts in Holistic Child Development external programmes for men and women inservice in the local churches and Christian organizations.

ETC offers the following courses:

1. Bachelor of Divinity (B.D) course for four years studies. Candidates who have secured secular graduation are eligible for the course. It is a residential study program. The degree is conferred by the Senate of Serampore College/University. Entrance exam for BD candidates is conducted in April every year. For 2019 it is fixed for 19th April.

2. Master of Theology (M.Th) in New Testament, History of Christianity, Theology & Christian Ministry (Education) for two years of studies for candidates with BD B - Grade and above. It is a residential programme under Senate of Serampore College/University. Entrance exam for M.Th candidate is fixed on 1st & 2nd February 2019.

3. DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY (D.Th) for minimum of 3 years and maximum of 7 years. Any candidate with M.Th B grade and above and

passed in Common Entrance Test (CET) conducted by the Senate of Serampore College/University Research/SATHRI and ETC, can apply. The dates for Entrance examination for D.Th will be announced later.

4. Master of Arts in Holistic Child Development course for two years of External studies. **ONE MONTH INTENSIVE CLASS COURSE IN THE MONTH OF 'MAY' EVERY YEAR.** Interested candidates can apply. This is a specialized course of studies for Children Ministry in local churches etc.

5. ETC also co-ordinates External Studies of **DIPLOMA IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES (Dip.CS)** and **BACHELOR OF CHRISTIAN STUDIES (BCS)** of the Senate of Serampore College (University), and also Conducts entrance examinations for **DOCTOR OF MINISTRY (D.MIN)** Programme under the Senate of Serampore College/University.

Some of the activities in the campus are as follows:

The Lord through His churches, organizations and individuals have made it possible to see us through in the over-all campus development for which our due thanks is given to God. Secondly, I am so grateful to churches under the CBCNEI for your regular support given to the college. Currently the following activities and sponsorships:

1) Besides CBCNEI scholarship, we continue to receive Ausbildungshilfe CEF, Kassel, Germany for scholarship for our Bachelor of Divinity (BD) and Master of Theology (M.Th) students. It is a great help to our students who are financially poor and yet bright in his/her academic studies. For such students we grant CEF scholarship at the graduate and post graduate levels. The college is very grateful to Ausbildungshilfe CEF, Kassel, Germany.

2) Campus beautification with flowers, decorative plants/trees, hedges on the footpaths etc. ETC campus is eco-friendly, with trees, 20 plus species of birds and surrounded by Toklai river and river in the middle of the campus.

3) P.G Women hostel ground floor is completed and we have accommodated 12 students. We look forward to Brewster Baptist Church in USA for their financial support to complete the construction of 3 more storied buildings.

4) Extension of students' mess hall, new wash basin outside of the hall and other essential amenities provided with donation received from individual donor.

5) Water filtration plant is in progress with commitment given by some individuals and well wishers. Temporarily we have connected pipes to the hostels and few quarters with water from the ponds.

6) Extension of library building to accommodate more books specifically for D.Th students. The Archive room is completed with A.C. CBCNEI library books and archive materials are all shifted to ETC library. More furniture purchased to stock the book etc. The Andover Theological Seminary, USA is donating 1000 volumes of books to ETC. The books will be used for D.Th programme in the field of N.T/Theology/Church History. We keep receiving latest publications from Langham Partnership library fund from U.K. Our next project is to extend library hall as it is becoming congested due to increase of volumes of books and academic programmes. Fund will be raised for this project to add more books/shelves/etc.

7) Very soon we will have a conference hall named after late Professor Renty Keitzar, former Principal, for conducting various academic/workshops/seminaries. The conference will be fully fitted with ACS, over-head projector and comfortable arm chairs etc.

8) Cooks Chapel hall is over-packed on Sunday worship. Along with ETC community of 300 plus we also keep on having students & families from Jorhat city and therefore we plan to extend the hall soon.

9) The college continues to have several programmes conducted inside the campus like, Scripture Engagement by BSI; I. Ben Wati Legacy Talks; seminars/workshops; ETC Foundation Day; International Women's Day etc. And, ETC is known for publications of book by teachers, journals from the Tribal Study Centre, Women Study Centre, Institute of Leadership Enhancement and Ministerial Augmentation (ILEMA). Through the ILEMA, we have been conducting Pastors' Refresher course for 2-3 days plus giving to our pastors some practical exposure.

Lastly, we continue to seek your partnership in our common endeavor in extending God's Kingdom through theological education.

Dear Readers,
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