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Baptist News

A quarterly news letter of the
COUNCIL OF BAPTIST
CHURCHES IN NORTH
EAST INDIA

The Council comprises Assam
Baptist Convention; Nagaland
Baptist Church Council; Manipur
Baptist Convention; Garo Baptist
Convention; Arunachal Baptist
Church Council and Karbi Anglong
Baptist Convention

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from the desk of editor



Dear friends,

This issue of Baptist News is dedicated as a tribute to Uncle Ben Wati who went to be with the Lord on June 14, 2012. Many of us have been blessed knowing him personally. He raised the bar of excellence through his life achievements. And now, he has joined the great cloud of witnesses of great men and women of faith (Heb 12:1). Baptist Churches will remain grateful to God for raising a man of God like him amidst us.

The theme of this issue is *Christian Service*. You will read a brief report on the life and contribution of Imotemjen Aier (The second General Secretary of CBCNEI) and his wife Arenla Aier; a bible study by Jolly Rimai who encourages us to follow Jesus Christ; reports on Christian services by few CBCNEI institutions; a report on Emmanuel Hospital Association's response to HIV and Aids in the Northeast India; and a bible study by Raja Raychawdhury who exhorts us to build family. You will also read a paper that I wrote to emphasize the importance of training in expository preaching. I hope this issue will enrich you.

One of the objectives of the *Baptist News* is to bring 7000 churches in the CBCNEI family closer to each other through sharing of news. However, you will notice in the *News Capsule* that a majority of news is from CBCNEI and its institutions. The editorial team warmly welcomes brief reports and picture of special events of your church. Please send them for the next issue.

I also encourage you to send articles addressing contemporary issues that your Church or community is facing. It will be enriching to learn from each other and pray. Presently, I am concerned with some important issues that are pertinent to our Baptist family. I write this to seek your prayers. Today, the

Baptist Churches are facing numerous challenges. Besides, politics, disunity, and lack of vision which most Churches are besieged with, there are some challenges that are ubiquitous and unique to our denomination: *The distinctive of our denomination which is supposed to be strength is also the reasons of its weakness.*

As you know, we believe in the autonomy of the local Church. There is neither Baptist Pope, nor do they use common lectionary or liturgy. Local congregations are free to choose the way they like to worship. One can find richness in the wide spectrum of style of liturgy and theological emphasis in our Churches. However, *its diversity is so extensive that a Baptist member may wonder what it means to be a Baptist.*

The over exercise of autonomy has undermined the importance of unity. Often the members of a local church may not know their responsibility toward the larger Baptist family [expressed through existing Associations or Conventions in the region]. Last year while visiting an association, a pastor of our church asked me *what is CBCNEI?*

Some Baptist Churches often function as one isolated unit independent and disconnected from other Baptist Churches in the region. Most of them don't partner with other Baptist Churches for greater synergy in the Mission. They don't know about their obligation to the larger Baptist family. Indeed, *autonomy can be stretched like a rubber but even rubber breaks.*

We believe in the priesthood of all believers and hence we call our Pastor as *Pastor* (from the Latin word meaning *Shepherd*) not *Priest*. The Baptist polity permits ample opportunity to laity for ministry and administration of the Church. The lay leaders govern the church and appoint *pastors* to lead and serve. Baptist Pastors do not wear any uniform of distinction but appear as one among others in the body of Christ. Their authority and power do not come from the position they hold but from their ability to relate and persuade the laity leaders in the Church. In fact, the Baptist Pastors are lonely in their struggle and they have to work hard in order to earn respect from the laity. There are no Bishops or Archbishop to back them up. Association or Convention leaders do not have legal authority to intervene in the local church affair. On one occasion, my Anglican colleague, because of his cassock, got a free pass through the security but I did not because I was dressed like a lay person. *Baptist Pastors must live and dress like laity but must convince others that they are, in fact, priest and prophet.*

In Baptist Churches, much of the vision and the mission of church are dependent on the perspective, experience, and the theology of the laity members. This amounts to wrestling through a wide diversity of perspectives, experience, and even the depth of theology that may delay the convergence of opinions and a decision. Hence, *the Baptist Committee Meeting has the fame of notoriety for delay and division.*

The focus of a local Baptist Church is likely to be parochial and inward because such may be primary concerns of those who are in the leadership. Hence, a major portion of the budget is spent on the local church itself. The lay leaders are rarely engaged at the Association/Convention/Council level, and so they may not understand its importance. [Remarkably, NBCC did engage a large number of laity in their platinum jubilee celebration this year but it came under heavy criticism. Most of the executive body of association, convention, and council have either none or few lay leaders] *The greater masses of laity, sitting in pew, need a sense of divine direction for their involvement in the cause of Baptists Churches' integral mission.* How can we do that?

I do not think I have an answer for these challenges, but I intend to mobilise prayers for Baptist leaders. Future roads are not easy for the Baptist Leaders in the northeast. I believe that we have rich potential, which we have not yet actualized it. Our resources are fragmented and depleted.

Proportionately, our affectivity is far below our capability. Probably, our focus is too wide and scattered. Hence, we need prayers for unity, focus, discernment, and wisdom from above. We have to lose in order to gain. That is the lesson Jesus taught us (Luke 9:24). As individual members need to deny themselves, so also individual churches need to deny themselves for the sake of the *Common Good* (1 Cor 12:7). We need to network and create a powerful synergy in the Baptist Mission. One million Baptist in CBCNEI family is much more capable than what we have achieved so far. May God help us to foresee the implications of every decision we make.

Let us pray for greater unity among Baptists leaders in the Northeast.

Rev Dr A. K. Lama
General Secretary

TRIBUTE TO DR I BEN WATI



Rev Dr I Ben Wati, a leading Evangelical figure and former general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) went to be with his Lord on June 14, 2012. He was 91. He

was born and raised in Impur, Nagaland, India. He will be affectionally remembered by those who knew him as an exceptionally quiet, gracious, gentle giant of faith.

Dr Ben Wati did his BD from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, USA in 1948 and MA from Wheaton College, USA in 1949. He has the distinction of being the first Naga to earn a BD as well as masters degree.

He played a major role in translating the first Naga Bible. He was the President of World Evangelical Fellowship (now World Evangelical Alliance).

CONDOLENCE MESSAGES

Dear Narola, Family members, Relatives and Friends of Uncle Ben Wati:

The family of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI) solemnly joins you all to express our deepest felt condolence. We are all at loss for nothing shall fill the vacuum created by Uncle Ben's heavenly departure. We shall miss his wise counsel and insights. Personally, many leaders shall miss his emails with words of encouragements. In last 24 hours, I have received several emails that have expressed loss and grief.

Nevertheless, on this special day we would like to join you also to celebrate his glorious life. Indeed, God has shown to all of us what he can achieve through a person absolutely surrendered to God. Uncle Ben's multifaceted and amazing achievements at the regional and national level are in themselves a miracle of God. Indeed, he earned a good reputation for the Baptist of the Northeast in national and international arena. We are proud of him and shall remain grateful forever for his services to the Council.

We pray that God will give comfort and peace to all who are grieving. We also pray that God will enable many to follow his example of love and dedication.

Rev Dr A. K. Lama
General Secretary, CBCNEI

Dr I Ben Wati will be fondly remembered as one of the tallest Christian leaders of the North East. His life will continue to be a witness to the precious love of Christ not only in India but also abroad.

- *Mr Rolland G Momin*

He was a special person raised by God for the generation he lived in, and his footprints shall continue to guide us. He played a vital role in development of my spiritual pilgrimage too. Thanks be to God for eternal salvation that we have in Jesus Christ where we shall gather again.

- *Dr Phuveyi Dozo, Director, MRC, Dimapur*

We are remembering what he has contributed to the growth of our NE Churches. May God continue to bless the ministries initiated by him.

- *Rev K. C. Gaila, Chaplain, THS, Shilling*

He had a full and fruitful life. Please convey the condolences from Mary and myself to his family and friends.

- *Dr Fred Downs, Former faculty of ETC and BIM missionary*

It is with great sadness I received the news of the passing of Uncle Ben Wati. The Baptist family in the northeast has lost a great friend, mentor, spiritual giant and soldier of the cross.

- *Rev Leo S. Thorne, Associate General Secretary, American Baptist Churches*

There will be no other Dr. Ben!

- *Rev Bonny Resu, General Secretary, Asia Pacific Baptist Federation*

Dr. I. Ben Wati, fondly known as “Uncle Ben” went to be with the Lord is unspeakable loss for the North East Christians. It will be difficult to find someone to fill the vacuum he left because of the many lasting legacies he has left behind for NEI Christians.

- *Rev S. Nengzakhup, Director, NECTAR*

The Church has lost an able and dedicated leader.

- *Rev Michael Herenz, Pastor CNI Church Guwahati*

It's a great loss for all. But he has done so much and we are proud of him.

- *Mr. Huzo Meru, President, Shalom Bible Seminary*

We'll miss him tremendously.

- *Mr. Tony Marak, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Shillong*

The Tamenglong Baptist Church had condolence prayer meeting on June 17, 2012.

We all miss a true servant of God of India. But thank God for his ministries served around the world in his life.

We pray for the bereaved family for Godly comfort

- *Rev Mp A Kadi, Pastor Tamenglong Baptist Church, Manipur.*

Miriam Anne Robinson

Cathy Holmes, International Ministries, USA



Miriam Anne Robinson, former American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (IM) missionary in India and Thailand, passed away on July 29, 2012 in Fresno, California at the age of 94.

Miriam was born into the home of a Baptist minister on July 5, 1918 in Wellesley, Massachusetts. She was five when the family moved to California. They later moved to Arizona where her father was a missionary to the Navajo Indians under the American Baptist Home Mission Society. About the time Miriam was ready for high school the family moved back to Stockton, California which would become their permanent home.

Miriam was involved in church activity all her life, taking leadership positions in the local church and in camps and assemblies. She earned a science degree and then prepared to be a teacher. After some experience in teaching and in industry, as a food analyst, Miriam felt drawn toward mission work. While she thought for a few years that being a missionary was the last vocation she might consider, she grew to realize that this very calling was the only one that held life's greatest happiness for her. Miriam then attended Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago where she earned her B.D. degree in 1947, but did not seek ordination until 1973 after she had returned to the United States from India.

The Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (WABFMS) appointed Miriam on May 17, 1947 to serve in the mission's educational and evangelistic programs in Assam in North East India. Upon arrival in Assam in early 1948 Miriam settled in Golaghat. She taught at the Mission Girls' High School, visited and witnessed in villages, conducted Vacation Bible Schools, taught church school and gave counseling and other assistance to church youth organizations. She was the Principal of the Mission Girls' High School for eleven years. She supervised its hostel of 300 girls during that time as well. Miriam experienced that special joy of missionaries when her former student became Principal of the Mission Girls' High School.

In 1972, Miriam, due to a change in government regulations, was not permitted to return to her work in India. In June 1973 at the First Baptist Church of Stockton, CA, where she had been a member since 1931, she was ordained to the full gospel ministry. This was the first time in the history of the 120 year old church that it had ordained a woman. Miriam accepted the call to be the pastor in Fairview, Kansas at Delaware Baptist and Hamlin Baptist Church. She served there for a little more than 7 years.

Miriam was reinstated for missionary service in Thailand by International Ministries on June 1, 1981 designated to teach English as a second language in the Samruk Christian Academy at Bang Saen, Thailand. A school sponsored by the Chinese Baptist Association of Bangkok. After her 25 years in India, to return to the Orient gave Miriam a feeling of being near home again. The term of service in Thailand was both demanding and fulfilling. Miriam was a classroom teacher, served as the school's chaplain; the first ordained woman to do so, taught music, preached at worship services, held Bible study classes with the teachers, and often spoke to youth

groups. In 1985 Miriam returned to the United States bringing to a close a long and distinguished missionary service in India and Thailand that did not end her commitment of dedicated service to her Lord.

Miriam settled in Fresno, California and was involved in church outreach, service on the mission board, American Baptist Women's Ministries, Sunday school teacher, teaching Bible studies at a retirement community, addressing senior citizen luncheons, and preaching at chapel in the retirement community. She was also served as a deacon. Miriam wrote several publications including "God Led me to India", "God Led Me to Kansas" and "God Led Me to Thailand" as well as several inspirational booklets.

In 1986 Miriam was able to return to India for a visit. She went to Nagaland, but was not given a permit to return to Golaghat. Many of her former students and old friends made the 60 mile journey to visit her. Miriam returned to Thailand in 1987 to volunteer for six months and in 1991 for two months. She was also a volunteer at Green Lake Assembly for two months in the summer of 1989.

Miriam is survived by her sister, Eleanor, niece, Gwyneth Robinson, nephews, Eric Erickson and Ricky Robinson and five great nieces and nephews.

A funeral service was held on August 2nd, at the First Baptist Church, Stockton, CA. There will be a memorial service in the chapel at San Joaquin Gardens in Fresno, CA, at 200 p.m. on Sunday, August 19th.

Condolences may be sent to Miriam's sister, Eleanor Robinson Erickson, 4939 P Street, Sacramento, California 95819



Seeing as Jesus saw



Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI

Matt. 25:34-40 *“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ ‘I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ ‘When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ ‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren,*

you did it to Me.’

Seeing as Jesus saw has become important, especially in our time when we have more widows and orphans in our society. It is because church represents Christ. But, first it may be important for us to understand the logic on why the church needs to care for the less privilege in our society?

According to Eph 5:23, Christ is the head of the church and the church is the body of Christ. The head and the body should grow together: the Head cannot grow alone. Therefore if we claim that we are Christians and our church is founded by Christ, we ought to grow in Him and with Him.

Most of the times, the problem is, we want to grow, but without Christ. When we set agenda for the church we do not really

consider the agenda of Christ; what Christ would have wanted us to do. We simply go ahead with the agenda of our choice. Our church belongs to Christ, and therefore, our growth should always be in line with Him. John 14: 15, says if we love Him, we need to obey Him.

There are two main ministries Jesus focused while He was on earth:

– Teaching about the kingdom of God & healing or caring for the poor. He was either teaching or caring the poor, sometimes both at the same time.

Therefore, caring for the less privilege was one of the main ministries of Jesus. The intensity of Jesus’ care for the less privilege people is seen from the text below.

In Matt. 12:10-14, He was accused of healing on the Sabbath. Matt. 14:14 also says, *And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.*

In Matt. 10:1, Jesus commissioned His disciples with power and authority Why? For what? To heal all kinds of diseases. “*And when He had called His twelve*

*disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to **heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease**”. And Matt. 10:7-8, “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”⁸ **“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give”**”.*

The Bible says,

1. Be generous to the poor (Prov. 19:9-10; 22:9; Isa 58:7-8,10) = your light will shine if you help the poor.
2. Be kind to them (Prov. 28:8).
3. Give to the poor. (Isa 1:17; 58:6-10; Jer 5:28; 22:16; Gal 2:10; Ps 41:1; 112:9; Prov. 14:21; 24:11-2; 28:27; 29:7; 31:9,20; Eph 4:28; Acts 9:36; 1 Tim. 6:18-9; James 1:27)
4. Rescue the poor (Job 29:12); Lev. 25:35-37.
5. We should especially help widows and orphans. (James 1:27; Deut. 15:11; Ps 68:5).
6. We should especially help the

sick, hungry, naked, and imprisoned. (Matt. 25:34-46; Zech. 7:9-10; Isa 58:10-11; Ps 69:33).

Therefore, helping the poor, caring the sick is what God demands from all of us.

Jesus wept on two occasions; the first is found in Luke 19:41 where he wept for Jerusalem, and the second is found in John 11:35. When Jesus saw Mary and the Jews weeping for Lazarus who was dead for three days, He was moved in spirit and He wept. This is to say Jesus shared the emotions of human beings. When people's hearts were broken it affected the heart of Jesus also.

How about us?

How much do we care for the sickly widow in our village?

How much do we care for the orphans?

True religion is not simply going to the church and singing. According

to the Bible, 'Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.' (James 1:27)

The presence of widows and orphans in our society should not be considered as burden, but an opportunity to serve the Lord through them. No one wants to be an orphan and no one wants to be a widow.

Jesus cared for the poor, he wept and groaned in spirit for the sick. As we grow into Christian maturity, let us prioritize our ministry in line with "Seeing as Jesus saw". May we faithfully represent Him in the world that does not know Him. Let the Father be glorified by our good works among others. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* (Matt. 5:16).

Amen.



Dr I. Ben Wati was the first Naga to complete M.A from Wheaton College, USA in 1949



God lifts up the humble

*Rev Dr Imotemjen Aier with his wife
Arenla Aier*

*Beth Fogg, Mission Resource Development
American Baptist Churches USA*

Often we read and hear of many missionaries who have done great things for the Church and people. But sometimes there are some humble servants who quietly serve the Lord. One such servant is Rev Dr Imotemjen Aier, who has been working in different Christian ministries since 1961 was recently awarded a plaque by the American Baptist International Ministries for “Leadership and Contributions to American Baptist Mission in India and Global Baptist Family”. Although he has series of achievements, the Reverend kept a low-profile, of which he said: “I work for the

Lord and he knows what I do.” The honorary award was presented to Aier during the 7-day World Mission Conference held at Green Lake Conference Center, Wisconsin in USA. The convention was held in relation to American Baptist International Ministries’ 200 years celebration of global mission. “It was a pleasant surprise for my wife and I. They never informed us about it but we went there because we were also one of the participants at the convention.”

He humbly said the award itself is a message to the younger generation that “if you are sincere,

the Lord will bless you.” Earlier too he had received two honorary doctorate degrees in Divinity from The Eastern Baptist theological Seminary, USA and Council of Serampore College (Univeristy), India.

Something amazing about this special man is that even at 81 years; he remembers dates of every single event he had come across in his life. Also, he is serving with International Ministries India Property Team as an attorney, looking after the welfare of the mission properties in the region of Bengal Orissa Bihar Baptist Churches Association (BOBBCA), Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. “I want to retire because I cannot contribute much like before. I have even asked them to release me since I am more of a liability to them but they still want to keep me,” he said. Queried whether he has any health complications, he chuckled and said: “...by God’s grace I have no serious ailments till now except the old-age joint pains which bothers me time to time.”

Also, his wife Arenla Aier has been

assisting him in every mission field. She is a former missionary to the American Baptist Churches USA and served as a missionary with International Ministries to the BOBBCA in India from 1988-2000.

Evangelism is not just about preaching. Aier said preaching alone cannot fulfil evangelism; one has to train the people, make them confident to take over the leadership. Many missionaries or evangelists posted in different mission fields tend to overlook at it, which makes their mission work incomplete.

The Reverend narrated his own experience working with the ‘adivasis’. He said they are oppressed people and they need help spiritually, socio-economically and educationally. However, providing them with the necessities alone was not enough but he had to train them so that they can take charge and look after themselves well. Stressing that if the people are not trained, the church will not grow.

Concerning about accusing

Christian missionaries of force conversion or bribery, he said people misinterpret the good deeds carried out by missionaries. According to the teachings of Jesus Christ, Christianity is about love – helping the poor and the weak, providing basic necessities, making them understand the love of God etc... So the missionaries follow the tenets laid down by Christ, however, people of other creed look at it as bribery.

An eyesore...

The reverend said some Christian missionaries get carried away by ‘worldly things’ that their actual mission work becomes secondary. Instead of thinking how to expand the church, they tend to look at the monetary benefits more. He also went on saying that when a church or a Christian organisation sends off an evangelist for ministry, they should also make sure that he is financially sufficient so that he is not distracted from his mission.

[Rev Dr Imotemjen Aier was born on May 5, 1931 at Longjang village under

Mokokchung district. He married Arenla on December 19, 1963 and blessed with one daughter, two sons and two grandchildren and also expecting the third grandchild soon.

He started his ministry from Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang, Impur in 1961 as a teacher, church promotional secretary and acting executive secretary. In 1967 he moved to Guwahati and worked with Council of Baptist Churches in North East India till 1987 as associate general secretary and general secretary. Later in 1988 he moved to United States as a missionary to the American Baptist Churches and in 1990 he returned to India as the American Baptist Missionary to Bengal Orissa Bihar Baptist Churches Association and worked till 2001.

He has authored four books:

- 1. The Growth of Baptist Churches in Meghalaya*
- 2. A Chance for the Church*
- 3. Church, Ministry and Mission and*
- 4. Sayuluyim.]*



News Capsule

62nd CBCNEI Annual General Meeting

Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention hosted the 62nd annual general meeting of CBCNEI at Hamren



Town Baptist church from 27 - 29 April. The resource persons were Rev Dr S. L. Benjamin Chan, Rev Dr Joseph Huse, and Col Arun. 150 delegates from the six conventions and associate members were present.

Bible School at Nisangram

Krma I of Garo Baptist Convention has started a three months course Bible school at Nisangram to cater

in-service training for the lay leaders and pastors. This Bible School is a great help for the local church leaders.

Lewis Memorial Hostel

Lewis Memorial Hostel, Guwahati popularly known L M Hostel is renamed as “LM hostel ministry” and “superintendent” to “chaplain” by the executive committee of the Council during its annual meeting on April 27 - 29 April at Hamren, Karbi Anglong.

LM Boys Excel

Mr Wangba Konyak (top) and Mr Lalrosang passed higher



secondary examination 2012 in first division.





Dr I. Ben Wati was the cofounder of Eastern Theological College (1949 - 1953) with Rev Dr J. W. Cook

Discipleship Training (April 2-5)

In partnership with Trans World Radio (TWR), the mission department of CBCNEI conducted a pilot project in Wancho Baptist Association, Arunachal Pradesh. Around 50 pastors were given “In touch Messenger” for evangelism and discipleship. The translation of “Thru the bible” in Wancho dialect has been started. This will also be recorded in Audio form and distributed to the pastors of the Association.

Survey and Mapping (June 18-19)

The first mapping program of the northeast region was started with the help of Dr. Duane and Mr. Andy. It was started with the five Districts of Assam (Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat). The goal is to complete the mapping of the entire North



East within this year.

Leadership Training for Neighborhood Ministry (June 20-22)

Seventeen leaders from Neighborhood Ministry of CBCNEI were invited for leadership training at CBCNEI campus. Rev. Taku Longkumer, the Development Consultant and



Mission Secretary of CBCNEI were the main resource persons. Since all of them were first generation Christians it was necessary to teach them on “Christian Leadership, Christian Management of human and financial resources, and Church growth”. On the last day, they were able to come up with a target for 2020.

During last three months the neighbourhood ministry of



CBCNEI is glad to have forty new followers of Jesus Christ.

At present, there are over fifty house fellowships. They meet in homes every Sunday for worship and fellowship. Please continue to pray for them.



A new member Association under Arunachal Baptist Church Council (ABCC)

On February 19, 2012, Ollo Baptist Churches Association (OBCA) of Tirap District was dedicated. Their Mission Centre is located at Raptsa. The Zeme

Baptist Church Council (ZBCC) of Nagaland is partnering with them. They have also started Raptsa English School.

The other two associations namely West Kameng Baptist Churches Council (WKBCC) and Tagin Baptist Churches Association (TBCA) are in the process of affiliation with ABCC.

AGM of ABCC (April 13 - 15)

The annual general meeting of Arunachal Baptist Church Council (ABCC) was held at Galo Baptist Church Council, Basar. Rev Dr Hevukhu Achumi, Director, Sumi Baptist Convention was the speaker. Rev Banbo Pertin and Rev Halli Likha led the Bible studies.

New staff in Manipur Baptist Convention

Ms. Ramtawon K. Shimray is appointed as the new Manager of MBC Guest House & Canteen.



Ms Jenny has been appointed as the new Co-ordinator

of the Centre.



Ms Lamhoihkim Gangte have joined the convention as the warden of the

Girls hostel.



Ms Robita is appointed as the cook.

New leaders for Nagamese Baptist Churches Association

Rev Dr Chen Rengma was installed as the Executive Secretary and Rev R. Meren as the President of the Nagamese Baptist Churches Association.

On May 8, they were installed in a service at Nagamese Baptist Church, Burma Camp, Dimapur.



Dr I. Ben Wati was the founder and chairman of North East India Committee on Relief & Development, Shillong

Three MA Programs in Eastern Theological College (ETC)

The Eastern Theological College has introduced three new MA programme called the Institute of Leadership Enhancement and Ministry Augmentation (ILEMA). This Institute plans to offer some practical programmes for the lay members of NE churches. The second College shall be able to offer MA in Holistic Child Development from 2013. The third programme is designed on Peace Building. It will be added to BD study and a curriculum is on way for MA programme also. These Master-level programmes are non-residential and are meant for Pastors, Alumni and lay leaders. The Faculties of ETC have also started a bi-annual journal which anyone may subscribe and contribute articles as well.

Writer's Workshop

CBCNEI along with Asia Theological Association (ATA) organized a three day long Writer's Workshop at CBCNEI conference centre, Guwahati. This was the first workshop of its kind CBCNEI ever organized. 22 participants took part in it.

Julie Belding, Ingrid Albuquerque and Dr A K Lama were the resource persons.



O B I T U A R Y



Late Haokolen Thomsong is the eldest son of Lt. Tonglam Thomsong & Tingneilam Thomsong of Piellhang village. He was born on July 14, 1964 and baptized on January 24, 1986. On May 16, 1987 he married Mrs Lhaikim Guite. He is survived by his wife, two sons & two daughters. He breathed his last on July 3, 2012 at Metro

Hospital, Dimapur.

Late Haokolen Thomsong was a God fearing, humble, diligent and devoted leader as well as a good musician and song composer. His sudden demise is a great loss for his family and the Churches in general. The Kuki Baptist Association pays tribute to this godly man.

Kuki Baptist Association Nagaland



Arwin Sushil, former Chief Executive Officer, 4B Satribari Christian Hospital

This is a story of sustenance of Gods’ work at 4B Satribari Christian Hospital. God in His own will established this hospital in the year 1926. The celebration of the partnership between CBCNEI and 4B Health Care Pvt. was held on July 1, 2010 at the chapel of the Hospital. The organizational life of the Hospital entered into another phase.

The last two years of partnership is too short to evaluate but it has certainly laid the foundations for the years to come. Strategically, the Vision and Mission of the hospital was defined. This instils a sense of direction and purpose.



The revamping of systems and procedures were done. The laboratory services were upgraded to auto result the Bi-chemistry, haematology, and clinical pathology. Microbiology was a welcome addition. The core of our services are mother and child care. In order to strengthen the maternity services, Neo Natal Intensive care Unit was established. The out-patient and emergency services were further developed. The Casualty Ward is improved with new look and with 24 hours presence of a doctor, nurses, and other allied health staff.





Today, the hospital provides facilities such as General Medicine, Obstetric and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, General surgery-open and Laparoscopic, Orthopaedics, Physiotherapy, Casualty, OPD, Fully automated Laboratory, X-Ray and Ultrasonography, CCU and NICU. The GNM training

program continues to nurture and train young christian youth to be the excellent christian nurses.

Much is yet to be done. The second recession in the global economy has adversely affected the flow of funds as expected. The challenge is to take this story to the next level where we shall reach out to the surrounding communities of the North Eastern states. We are the arm of the Church to represent their Healing ministry. We covet prayers of all for Gods' enabling grace as this tale unfolds day in and day out.

Nothing is impossible for God.



The 62nd AGM Resolution of CBCNEI

[Hamren Town Baptist Church, April 27 - 29, 2012]

A. Acknowledgment: We the executive committee members and the delegates of the 62 CBCNEI Hamren meeting express our appreciation to the following:

a) The host church Hamren Town Baptist Church, Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention and some associations for taking a bold step to host this conference, we appreciate the hospitality given to all the delegates.

b) The speakers of the sessions Rev Dr Benjamin S. L. Chan, Rev Dr Joseph Huse, Col. Arun, NPCTI and Mr R. D. Shira, for their valuable inputs from the theme.

c) The general secretary Rev Dr A. K. Lama and staff for organizing the conference and for their continued efforts to bring CBCNEI families together through various programs and activities.

d) The choir, praise and worship team, volunteers, delegates from various conventions and associations for their valuable participation.

B. Re-affirmation: we re-affirmed the 61 CBCNEI resolutions points 2, which stress on “Greater Unity in love for enrichment in Christ” through Bible studies, pulpit

teaching and various other ministries within CBCNEI churches.

C. We Moved: We fully encourage that all churches within CBCNEI to participate on environment issues like protecting catchment areas of water resources, cleaning up rivers, cities, towns and villages.

D. We Observed: North Eastern States has been torn apart due to various political, insurgency problems which had become a big threat for peace and unity. Therefore, we affirmed our support to peace initiatives carried out by the conventions, churches and NGOs. So we move CBCNEI to include in the Annual Calendar to pray for peace in the region.

E. We Stand: We stand for free and fair election in the up-coming state election both in Nagaland and Meghalaya. CBCNEI Churches should stand firm against the rampant corruption attached to election.

Resolution Committee Members

1. *Rev G.B.R. Marak (Convener)*
2. *Rev Dr. Kavito Zhimo (Member)*
3. *Mr Benting Teron (Member)*



*L. Bendangla Jamir, Chaplain
White Memorial Hostel Ministry*

White Memorial Hostel, Guwahati

White Memorial (WM) Hostel was named after a noble hearted American lady called Sarah E. White. She never came to India. However, her genuine concern for the welfare of the women in NE India motivated her to donate ₹ 50,000/- (Rupees fifty thousand only) through the visionary Women of American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1937. This is the first hostel established for the college going girls in Assam and the NE India.

This historical hostel was established in the beautiful and calm place located in the heart of Guwahati city. It is an enchanting place from all perspective; a place where homely care is given, spiritual and moral guidance are nurtured, leadership quality is developed and just and positive

spirit is imparted.

The hostel is under the student ministry of CBCNEI. Its motto is “Quality Life” and the purpose is to nurture in the minds of the young girls a balanced development of intellect, of thought, of academic excellence, of spirituality thereby producing a quality life.

Our core value is to aspire moral and spiritual sanctity of life. We encourage the spirit of sisterhood, team work and mutual care. We believe that discipline is a quality that undergirds any true development of personality. In this process we learn and grow.

The foundation of Sarah E. White Memorial hostel was laid by Mr. Keith Cantlei, Assam Valley Commission on May 8, 1937. The first admission took place from June 28, 1937 to March 1, 1938. This hostel was built by American



Baptist Mission mainly for girl student goint to the Cotton College. This year we are celebrating 75 years of Jubilee.

The first hostel superintendent was Miss Marion Burnham. She worked from 1937-1940. In her four years tenure, 116 girls stayed in the Hostel. From her writings and correspondence, we come to know that she had a good relationship with the high officials and she was an influential woman. There are many letters in the file written to the high officials reminding and requesting for students scholarship. Each boarder was receiving Rupees one hundred monthly, from the government. Today, she is with the Lord and we remember her great works. We will be delighted to hear from her relatives and her

dear and near ones and to have them for the celebration. We will also be very happy to hear from the pioneers. Some of them might be with the Lord today. However, it will be a blessing for us to have their near and

dear ones, celebrating this Jubilee with us on their behalf.

We are working hard to raise funds for the forthcoming celebration. We have distributed seed money to some of the alumni and friends of White Memorial Hostel so that they can multiply them with their creativity for the hostel Jubilee fund. We extend our gratitude to all the women Convention for their generous contributions. As a preparation for Jubilee, we are presently renovating and painting the hostel which was not done for many years due to want of fund. We look forward to a celebration of God's faithfulness and goodness. Please continue to uphold us in prayers for the Jubilee Celebration.





My life experience at White Memorial Hostel

Amen Aier, Dimapur

It feels just like yesterday, led by a friend to a bungalow with a sign board written “White Memorial Hostel”; with welcoming screams, and thunderous laughter. There grew a doubt in my heart. Little did I know that this journey would change my life. I was a latecomer and was informed to be lucky to escape from the fresher’s ritual except for introducing myself. Five years have passed since I left WMH but still the memories linger and I always thank God for the time I spent with WM family; where friends became more than sisters, Ma’am became Mother and the word “We” became more important than “I”.

From washing clothes to shopping, from Sunday school to NCF we were inseparable and it was a proud moment moving around as WMers—always living out loud. I miss the *Misa ase, hai-ree and markhabi*. I miss the immediate abundance of any chores to be in time for the vesper, the clock to strike 9 during exams for tea break, to eagerly wait for Mamaji’s special Sunday chicken and of course Fresher’s Day for the irresistible Smoked Pork and to display our ‘flexibility in the dark.....’

It was a fulfilling story in WM with an opportunity to grow and reflect my quotient with the Lord. There was a platform for us to refine our talents and gifts. God’s greatness was revealed through every single person I met helping me realise how fearfully and wonderfully each person was made. Some taught me the beauty of meekness, some humility, some hard work, some kindness and some beauty of sharing. There was never a day when I needed a word of encouragement or a shoulder to lean on and I wouldn’t find one. Whether in tears or in laughter I was never alone.

As I reminisce back to my years in WM I realise what a great leap I had in life helping me to grow into a better person and to be the one I am today. I will always cherish my stay in WM.

With immense pleasure I have shared a part of my sweetest moments and want to thank Ma’am for providing me the opportunity. I salute you for moulding many lives and for your motherly love that never ceases. I cannot let this end without letting the WMer’s know that I really love and miss you all. God Bless WM Family!





Memories of White Memorial Hostel

Viketonu Pucho, stayed in W.M.Hostel from 2008 to 2011. She graduated in Hindi Honours from Cotton College and is now currently pursuing her masters in Hindi at NEHU,Shillong.

As I sat down to pen down my thoughts, many memories flooded my mind as if they are being played over and over in my head.

Staying in White Memorial Hostel has been a memorable experience for me. It has moulded and shaped me in all ways and have added more to my being and personality. When I first came to the hostel, madam, seniors and the hostel itself assured me that it will be a place where I could build my personality, sharpen my skill and discover myself. And it surely did!

The Hostel added so much to my spiritual life too. The retreats and camps and the everyday vesper services held were like a thread which continually bound me with God. One thing I have learnt from all these is that I can do anything through Christ if I learn how to put Him first.

The FM Radios sessions on the terrace after dinner especially when the electricity is gone is what I miss

the most. The special WM's red tomato chutney on Wednesday, special *puris* and the dark brownish tea are also part of the package that I continue to miss.

But Fresher's day and pre-Christmas celebrations were the best. It has been a year since I left the hostel for my further studies but the memories I have had, is still very much a part of me. The homely feelings that I experienced there makes me want to go back once in a while. "A home far away from home" is what I can describe best about White Memorial Hostel

It was truly a privilege for me being a part of W.M Family where I have learnt and gained so much. With the 75 years of Jubilee celebration approaching, I wish the committee, madam and everyone involved for this celebration, the very best.

"Long live White Memorial Hostel!"



Greeting to all believers in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I trust that it is the Lord who called me from the dust for His ministry, and that He raised me up to serve in the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), inspite of all



my weaknesses, shortcomming and limitations. I want to thank all of you for trusting me and giving me this great responsibility. I am looking foward for your good advice and suggestions to work in the Council.

I had good christian parents though they had gone to be with the Lord, I praise God for their lives and their testimony for which they have set the role model for my life. They raised me in the fear of the Lord and they taught me what I was supposed to be as a child of God. I grew up in a good spiritual atmosphere, and had knowledge about Christ from my childhood. With that I got the privilage of knowing Christ and accepted Him as my personal saviour.

I have a great passion of serving God right from my childhood. And now I can boldly declare that God has led me thus far, he is so faithful and true. He gives the best to His children. I praise God for saving me and counting me faithfull, putting me in His ministry for His Glory. Please pray for me so that I will be an obedient and faithful servant of God.

VIKATO SHIKHU

Designate Treasurer cum Finance Secretary



Shillong Tyrannus Hall

Rev K. C. Gaila, Chaplain, Shillong Tyrannus Hall

What is Shillong Tyrannus Hall? A question people often ask.

Shillong Tyrannus Hall (STH) is the “students ministry” of CBCNEI. It was established in 1987 in partnership with Tyrannus Hall International (THI). The objective of STH is to impart Christian discipleship to students while they pursue their secular studies. We believe that the future of the church lies with youths who function well both in the church and in the world.

STH is about to complete 25 years of its ministry in training and making disciples (1987-2012). Preparation of the Silver Jubilee Celebration from

November 9 - 10, 2012 is under way to celebrate God’s faithfulness.

Some of the boarders are as young as 15 years when they are admitted to STH. For many of them, it may be the first experience of life in the company of strangers and outside the immediate protection and comfort of their parents or their home. I remember one particular boy who, when his parents were leaving for the first





time, had tears rolling down his cheeks and he could not control his childlike emotions. Today that boy is a police officer.

However, once they settle into the hall's life and have made friends, they almost completely forget all loneliness or homesickness. They find STH to be truly, in their own words, "a home away from home". Some of them have even confessed that they enjoyed Tyrannus life more than their home. The wide-ranging activities of STH have enabled these raw and crude young boys to be transformed into fine men. For example, morning joggings, the emphasis paid to develop community cooperation and importance of doing social works, Bible study and theological lectures; all have contributed to mold the students physically, mentally and spiritually. The restrictions and regulations laid out

for them have enabled their transformation and growth. It is a great joy to see the process of changes taking place in them as they mature and become responsible young men.

Following are some collection of excerpts that the final year boys of 2012 have written down before leaving the hall:

"Ever since I was a kid, I always wanted to do everything and learn everything that a boy can. I got the opportunity to develop what I always wanted when God brought me to STH. Tyrannus hall has prepared me and now I am more equipped to face the world".

- Phajathang Ovung

"I thank the Almighty God for blessing me to be part of the family of STH. My five years stay in the hall has taught me what life is all about and helped me fulfill God's will for my life. I have spent the best part of my life in Tyrannus hall, which enabled me to develop myself in various areas of my life for a better future. The seed has been

sown in me that which, I am sure, one day will generate and bear fruit”.

- Albert Lengouhao

“First of all, I would like to thank God for blessing me with this wonderful place called Tyrannus hall. I was just a boy when I enter this hall but now I can proudly say that this hall has molded me into a real man. The sweet memories in STH will always stick close to my heart. Thank you, STH.”

- Chingutho Trakha

“After having spent the last precious three years in STH, I realize that I have learned many things. I will surely have missed if I was not allowed to stay in this home. This is a real home for me. God bless STH”

- Namguilung Panmei

“My stay here in Tyrannus hall feels simply like a month or a few months back that I joined, when in reality I already had

completed two years. During my short stay here, it had given me more than what I expected out of it. I will always cherish and treasure the times I have spent at STH and it will ever hold a special place in my heart”.

- Supong Temsu



We have students from all the eight states of the North East. The present student body consists of 14 tribes (Adi, Ao, Angami, Assamese, Chakhesang, Garo, Mao, Lotha, Konyak, Kuki, Rengma, Rongmei, Tangkhul, and Zeme). This helps STH develop a multi-cultural setting where young people from different tribes, cultures and languages come together to live as one family. It is a great joy to see them learning to accept one another and maturing in all aspects during their stay in

the hall.

Many students come to Shillong every year with high expectations to achieve great things; some make it, but many fail to do so. We always receive many applications for admission in STH, but this year again we could select only 10 out of the total of 54 candidates who appeared for interview. It is sad to turn down the majority due to the limited seats. We have a proposal to increase the capacity in the near future.

The fee structure are as follows: Admission fee of Rs.13,300/- (including establishment, games & sports, library, mess utility,

medical, outreach, building development, maintenance and seat rent); Mess fee of ₹ 1200/- per month and security deposit of ₹ 3000/- (refundable).

STH will continue to be a place where young disciples live together to prepare themselves through peer discipleship to face the world. I know that whoever completes the course of discipleship training in STH will not remain the same. He will be a refined new person, ready to live a life of witnessing to the glory of God. The motto of STH is “on the move... with Him”. God bless the ministry of STH as we work to multiply effective and obedient disciples for Christ!



LEWIS MEMORIAL HOSTEL MINISTRY



Mr Talimoa Jamir, Chaplain, Lewis Memorial Hostel Ministry

Since its inception CBCNEI students' ministry has been catering the spiritual needs of many young people, as it is a God given ministry with a clear vision to reach out the youth. Youth ministry is very challenging, however, it should not be considered as *a problem* rather as *an opportunity*. As youths are the primary catalysts of change and on whom the future of our Church and society depends.

Lewis Memorial (LM) Hostel has a capacity of 57 boarders with students studying from higher secondary level to Master level. Besides the old timers there are 29 fresher who joined the hostel

in 2011. The hostellers are a blend of 22 different communities of North Eastern Region.

In spite of the diverse culture and challenges faced in a new environment, boarders work hard and move forward to achieve their aspirations.

The aim and objective of LM Hostel ministry is to train the students to be faithful leaders and Christian disciples. To achieve this goal, various activities such as, Extempore speech, Quiz, Debates, Games & Sports, Social work are organized. Every Thursday evening guest speakers are invited to speak on different





theme 'The Truth Shall Set You Free'. Gibson Marak (Youth Secretary, GBC) was the Camp Director cum Speaker, who led the Bible study sessions. Rev Dr Jolly Rimai (Mission Secretary, CBCNEI) took the doctrinal sessions

topics. Intercessory prayer fellowship is held on every Friday evening. Students collect offerings in the worship service which are used for their welfare. Besides, students also visit other hostels and take active part in different church programs. They often have privilege to participate in Naga Christian Fellowship.

and Pastor Senti Longkumer (NCFG) took the evening gospel services. The Camp was successful and many responded and committed their lives to Jesus. We appreciate Mr Panger Jamir & family for donating `10, 000 towards this Camp.

Annual Spiritual Camp is a vital part of LM hostel life which transforms many students. The year 2011 Hostel Camp was held from 29 – 31 August at NE Diocesan Social Forum, under the

LM Hostel ministry is an important ministry of CBCNEI. Let us continue to pray particularly for the activities in 2012, namely, Discipleship camp, Seminar on career guidance, Students spiritual life & studies, & Hostel development & growth.



Dr I. Ben Wati was ordained in 1973 at Impur.



Holistic Ministry of Christian Literature Centre of CBCNEI

Angam G. Chahong, Asstt. Director CLC, Guwahati

Christian Literature Centre (CLC) is the literature publishing and distributing wing of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI). It provides various types of resources to assist Churches and its members in their ministry and for their daily Christian living. CLC believes that by doing this precious ministry it can impact many lives. It can channelize the value of biblical purpose like helping the author, publisher, reader and the Churches.

Genesis of CLC: Historically the CLC functioned under the Literature Board of CBCNEI with a full time Literature Secretary / Director. It was established in 1969. Over the years the needs of the Churches in NE grew so enormous that CLC was allowed to function independently. In 1984, the

CBCNEI Executive Committee allowed CLC to become an autonomous body with the understanding that the CBCNEI will be represented in the Board.

At present CLC has **five branches** in North East India, having five branches in **Guwahati, Imphal, Dimapur, Ukhrul** and **Senapati**.

After 30 years of autonomy, the CLC Ministry was brought under CBCNEI on July 1, 2010. The purpose was to make it more effective in serving the Associations, Conventions, churches and Schools in North East India.

The CLC branch in Guwahati was recently renovated with new look and increased collection of books. The renovation of Dimapur Branch is in progress. Recently, the CLC along



with ATA/CBCNEI sponsored the Writer's Workshop (5 - 8 June) at CBCNEI Mission Centre.

Mission & Vision: CLC's Mission is to be Life Transforming Resources Centre for North East India Churches and beyond. The vision is to produce and make available life transforming Christian resources in printed matters and other media.

The Core Value and Purpose:

i. To witness and make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the printed word and media.

ii. To print, publish and sell in collaboration, directly or indirectly with other publishers, producers and booksellers, having similar objectives, for the promotion of literature of educational, scientific, technical education and Life Transforming Religious Literature.

iii. To promote and encourage

development of literary, cultural, religious, scientific and technical education.

iv. To produce adult literacy and social education materials and train people to use of them. To organize seminar on the relevant topics and issues.

v. To operate and encourage the use of reading rooms and libraries thereby to encourage public to own and read life transforming literature.

vi. To produce religious, general and educational literature, Christian Cards, Scripture Calendars, Gospel Bookmark, Gospel Tracts, Audio-Visual aids, Church Articles.

Books to be released in July/ August 2012:

American Baptist women missionaries in North East India

by Dr Aphuno Chase Roy

The Mighty Work of God – CBCNEI church history (Revised Edition) by Dr Frederick S. Downs

Christianity in North East India (Re-print edition) by Dr F S. Downs

The Pastor's Manual by Dr. James R Hobbs



FORTH-COMING CBCNEI TRAINING PROGRAMS

October 8 - 12, 2012

Celebrate Recovery, co-sponsored by CBCNEI & Summerville

November 5 - 8, 2012

Sunday School Training, co-sponsored by CBCNEI & CBM

November 8 - 11, 2012

Spiritual Renewal Conference, co-sponsored by TLA & CBCNEI

November 12 - 16, 2012

Seminar on Exegetical Preaching & Biblical Counseling, co-sponsored by TLA & CBCNEI

November 27 - 30, 2012

Global Mission Consultation, sponsored by CBCNEI

December 10 - 14, 2012

Missionary Training Program, sponsored by CBCNEI

January 7 - 12, 2013

Langham Preaching Seminar, sponsored by Langham Preaching

February 1 - 3, 2013

Family Enrichment Seminar, co-sponsored TLA & CBCNEI

March 11 - 15, 2013

Pastor's Conference, co-sponsored by TLA & CBCNEI

for more detail please mail to siamliana@cbcnei.com or call 09859981628

NAGALAND BAPTIST CHURCH COUNCIL PLATINUM JUBILEE



RESOLUTION

We the People of God gathered at the celebration of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) Platinum Jubilee, Kohima, Nagaland, from April 19- 22, 2012:

OFFER SINCERE THANKS TO GOD for establishing His Church in Nagaland, and for the lives, faith and dedicated vision of all the Christian pioneers whose ministry came to establish the Nagaland Baptist Church Council.

ACKNOWLEDGE the Government of Nagaland under the Chief Minister Mr Neiphiu Rio which has extended all cooperation and assistance for the successful conduct of the Platinum Jubilee of the NBCC and for the generous grants provided for the construction of the Convention Centre along with the North Eastern Council.

ACKNOWLEDGE all who have come forward with their Prayer support, financial contributions, their time, expertise, services. We furthermore acknowledge with much gratitude the services and contributions rendered by all the various Committees of the Jubilee for making the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations a blessing to the people of Nagaland and others.

Resolution I: On Nation Building and Peace

MAINTAIN the ongoing concern about the unresolved protracted Naga Political issue and the sporadic eruption of armed conflicts among the Factions, unchecked taxations, undisciplined behaviour of some cadres, and other human rights violations; thereby, respect the democratic process, the rule of law, and the wise counsel of the voice of the people.

CALL upon all Factions to cease immediately from all forms of killings, intimidation, and forcible collections, in order to create space for nation building based on Biblical principles and work towards a shared future, to

be accountable to God and the people as no single group holds monopoly on nationalism.

Resolution II: On Governance and Elections

Concerned, as God's people who believe in the equality of man, of the social, economic and political disparity that exists among the people.

Appeal to the policy makers and those in government to intensify and intentionally make efforts to promote good governance where transparency and accountability is integral and to guarantee social justice and equal economic opportunities to all its citizens.

Call upon all citizens, communities, the churches, political parties and their candidates to ensure free and fair elections befitting a democratic society and that the elections are not vitiated by use of money and material inducements, impersonations, booth capturing and community decisions that go against individual freedom of choice.

AFFIRM and **STAND** on the Biblical principle that every individual is endowed with a unique identity and freedom of choice which are our birth rights given by God Himself.

ENGAGE in public issues and corporate failures of accountability, as an important element of Baptist heritage in the world. Hence, the Church to address causes and symptoms of all forms of corruption, and their harmful effects in our societies through education, advocacy, lobbying, and prophetic witness of the church in our society.

Resolution III: On Environment

Reaffirm the Rotomi Resolution No. 8 of February 2011 that

- i. Baptist Churches will initiate Climate Change adaptation strategies and other Eco- Biological friendly actions, sensitize on Conservation of Forest and preservation of wild life, and work closely with the community leaders and concerned Departments for addressing the Environmental alarm.
- ii. Abstain from using jungle meat during NBCC and Churches gatherings.
- iii. Discourage Churches from offering wild animals during its Thanksgiving service.

Resolution IV: Gender Equality

UPHOLD that “ ...God created mankind in His image, in the image of God He created them; male . and female He created them”(Gen 1:27).

URGE the local Baptist Churches and the Associations/Councils to avail the Christian services of both men and women as equal in the ministry of the Church.

Resolution V: Strengthening NBCC

EXPRESS our gratefulness to God for and reaffirm the Baptist heritage of Scripture alone, upholding freedom of choice of the individual, safe guarding human rights, and the autonomy of the local church.

URGE MOST PASSIONATELY to strengthen the ministry of the NBCC through the association/councils to be intentional in contextualizing in today's world, to remain faithful to God through the ministry of the NBCC, the apex organization of the Baptist churches in Nagaland.

ENDEAVOR faithfully to fulfill God's Great Commission to share His love in Jesus Christ in the next 25 years and beyond under the NBCC and to this end;

AGREE to revisit the NBCC ministerial structure by the Executive Committee in order to reinforce the ministry of NBCC.

COMMIT to deepen our partnership with other like-minded bodies around the world.

Resolution VII: Prayer

STANDING on the Biblical truth that God has, through the death of Jesus on the cross, created a “New Humanity in Christ” we PRAY that God will give us the grace to respect and accept one another as God's own children and to build up each other.

These resolutions were passed by the NBCC Executive held on April 18, 2012 at the NBCC Headquarters.



THE BOOK THAT TRANSFORMS



Akhrieno Savi, Lecturer, Shalom Bible Seminary, Zubza, Kohima

One evening in the month of July, despite the heavy rain and storm, a group of Naga women came together to read the parable of the Good Samaritan (found in Luke 10:25-37). They were mostly mothers, straight from their work places. They met in a small church made of tin sheets. These women looked happy and vibrant, looking forward to reading the Bible together. As they walked in, they greeted and shook hands with one another and shared jokes and laughter. The long exhausting day had not taken their spirit away and regardless of working so hard from morning till night, they could still put a smile on their faces at the end of the day. As they settled down and began to read the text together, they took turns to share how they understood the story.

While interpreting the text, no

textual questions were raised. They did not discuss the grammar, the style and the definitions. The readers showed little or no interest in the literary analysis. Instead, they read the story wearing the 'lenses' of their own present context and applied it to their everyday life situations. They used examples in the form of personal experiences, true stories, even illustrations based on cultural values. For these women, the wounded man in the parable was no more a stranger from Jerusalem going down the Jericho way, robbed and left to die by bandits; but turned out to be an alcoholic, a drug addict in their own locality needing someone to help him out of his habits. The wounded man also turned into a battered woman, a prostitute, a widow neglected by the society; an HIV patient, a weary traveler, a broken hearted mother and a troubled child from a dysfunctional home. According

to them, the wounded ones are those who were economically deprived, spiritually weak and socially discriminated. In a context where the poor suffer and the rich exploit and manipulate, readers read the Bible from the standpoint of the least, the lost and the last. Another woman however shared that the rich and the affluent were the wounded ones too. She said, “not only the poor and the widows but even our chief minister, prime minister and other big shots are mentally and spiritually wounded too. People always get the wrong impression about them and they are often misjudged. However, they are also human beings just like us.” Another reader agreed to what she said and added, “Everybody is the ‘wounded man’ today, whether of low or high standing. The whole world is groaning with pain and we as Christians should reach out to heal our broken society.”

As they read together, they learned to own the Bible. Readers spotted the suffering people in their own community and made a commitment to reach out to them. One woman said, “We are all like

the priest in the Bible at times. We call ourselves as Christians, but live selfishly and uncaringly. We should be like the Good Samaritan and help anyone in need.” Another reader said, “I feel the line ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ has a special message for Christians today.” Still another one said, “Though Nagaland is called a Christian state and people go to church regularly, there is no love for fellow human beings as a lot of violence is found in the state. The parable is relevant in our present context because Jesus told this parable so that we can learn to love one another irrespective of class and tribe.”

One positive outcome of reading together is that, it strengthened the oneness as a community among the readers. Usually in private readings, when people read, they read for their own personal comforts and benefits and sometimes private reading can be manipulative, exclusive and individualistic. However, the women had used the story to share things that concerned them as individuals and also things that concerned their society. Besides

narrating their own stories they also closely listened to their friends' stories with care and attention. They showed solidarity with women who recounted their stories of struggle and also shared in their celebration of life. One reader declared, "Reading together with my sisters has helped me to realize that women go through similar struggles and pains. And I am comforted by knowing that there are also sisters who carry the same burden as I do and who join me in my struggle for survival." It also helped them to be more expressive and open. The readers instantly connected the story to their own life experiences as widows, mothers and as women and they shared with transparency. The fact that all of them were women, going through similar problems, had made the reading so much easier. The common concerns heartened them to open up and they were able to relate with each other's pains and struggles.

For many, the Bible may not occupy their list of favorite

readings; however, it is still the most loved book and holds a very special place in the hearts of Christians today. Many simply love to read it and carry a genuine desire to know and understand it better for guidance. The Bible is a book of life that motivates, inspires and liberates. Readers are empowered through the reading of Scripture. It transforms their lives and perspectives. It also stirs their hearts to inspire one another and propels them to reach out to the broken hearted. It also enlightens and uplifts the downtrodden and the subjugated. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the Bible not only inspires people to be better human beings, motivates and gives spiritual guidance to the individual, but also liberates them from all kinds of bondages and helps them to be in solidarity with one another. May we always find time to sit together and read the "BOOK" that not only gives hope and restores our spiritual lives, but also strengthens relationship with people and teaches us to reach out to our neighbors in need.



EHA's response to HIV/AIDS in the Northeast India

Ms Lhingneikim Manchong, Training Coordinator, Emmanuel Hospital Association



Introduction:

Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA) is a non-profit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860 of India and also under the Government of India Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. EHA was founded in 1969 as an indigenous Christian health and development agency and in 2009 it celebrated 40 years of dedicated service for health care and development in India. EHA works through 20 hospitals and 46 community-based projects spread across 14 states of India - Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, and Andaman Islands. EHA partners with the communities,

governments, community-based organizations and NGOs, at district, state, and national levels, to deliver services effectively and efficiently.

EHA's response to the problem of HIV and AIDS has been through specific prevention and care projects that are implemented in select districts of the 14 states it operates in. The organization's Policy on HIV/AIDS - 2011 governs its wholistic work (of prevention, treatment and care) among those infected and affected by the disease across all hospitals and projects.

Project ORCHID:

ORCHID stands for Organized Response for Comprehensive HIV Interventions in Districts of Manipur and Nagaland. The

project was funded by Avahan under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for a ten-year period (2004-2013) to curtail the spread of HIV among high risk groups through targeted interventions (TIs). EHA implemented the project in collaboration with Australian International Health Institute (now Nossal Institute for Global Health), University of Melbourne.

ORCHID implements the project through 30 NGO partners across 13 districts in Manipur and Nagaland. ORCHID works to reduce the transmission of HIV and STI among injecting drug users (IDUs), female sex workers (FSW), men who-have-sex-with men (MSM) and their sexual partners and spouses. In 2011, services were provided to 14971 IDUs, 4486 FSW and 1596 MSM who were registered with the project. ORCHID is leading the development and implementation of innovating program strategies in the region, such as nurse-led STI clinics, secondary distributors, female friendly harm reduction services,

etc. Currently ORCHID is transitioning the TIs to the State AIDS Control Societies (SACS) of the two states.

Project AXSHYA:

This project is funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) through its India Round 9 Tuberculosis Grant. EHA is a Sub-Recipient in this project to The International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (The Union), a Primary Recipient of this grant. The project began in August 2010 with the major objectives to support India's Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) to expand its reach, visibility and effectiveness, and to engage community-based providers to improve TB services, especially for women, children, marginalised, vulnerable and TB-HIV co-infected populations, by 2015. This project undertakes intensified Advocacy Communication and Social Mobilisation (ACSM), community based support and care, increasing participation of traditional healers, and

sensitisation of private practitioners and Non - Government Organisations (NGOs) for involvement in Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) schemes. It also endeavours to address challenges in programme implementation and access to quality TB care by: strengthening engagement of providers and communities, complement RNTCP efforts in human resource development, supervision and monitoring, increased commitment to TB-HIV from all levels, enhancing engagement of community-based

providers and engage other providers in RNTCP's revised schemes.

In this first year, 7 districts in 3 states were covered under this project - these being Bishnupur, Chandel, Churachandpur and Ukhrul in Manipur, Phek in Nagaland, Palamu and Sahibganj in Jharkhand. By the third year EHA will be covering 25 districts in 8 states. In 2011 the project carried activities under various Service Delivery Areas that included amongst others, advocacy and social mobilization, human resource development,



community TB care and TB-HIV care.

Project HIFAZAT:

EHA is the Principal Recipient (PR) of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) Round-9 India HIV-IDU Grant. HIFAZAT (HIV Intervention For Achieving Zero Addiction-related Transmission) was rolled out in October 2010 to accelerate the National programme in reaching key populations in underserved areas and to strengthen the capacity, reach and quality of Injecting Drug Users Harm Reduction services. It will supplement the National AIDS Control Programme goal to halt and reverse the epidemic in India over the next 5 years by integrating programmes for prevention, care, support and treatment. The targeted beneficiaries are injecting drug users (especially female IDUs) and their sexual partners. The different service delivery areas under the project are: 1) Strengthening of civil society and institutional capacity building, 2) Ensuring Quality assurance

systems for harm Reduction, and 3) Reintegration Services and after care services for IDUs. The EHA has the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and SHARAN as its Technical Partners. The project is implemented through a series of institutional mechanisms (sub recipients of the grant) such as five Regional Technical Training Centres (RTTCs) at medical colleges of repute, ten State Training and Resource Centres (STRCs), and thirteen Learning sites (selected from the currently existing Targeted Intervention (TI) sites) across the country.

North East Regional Office (NERO) TI support and DAPCU:

NERO TI Support: NERO is a regional technical support unit under NACO, functional since 2008. It ensures effective implementation of NACP-III in the eight states of the North-East region by facilitating programme planning, implementation, capacity building, monitoring and reporting. The focus during 2010-11 had been on strengthening of systems

and building up capacity in the North Eastern States. EHA support NERO-NACO through its seconded staff who provide leading technical support to the TI program in the north east states. Technical support is provided in trainings, supportive supervision, and stakeholder consultations, etc.

State Training and Resource Centre (STRC):

EHA set up the STRC for Manipur and Nagaland in 2009 to build capacity of the TI partners of two states. The Training Facility is housed within the CIHSR Complex, Dimapur. In 2011, EHA in partnership with the National Lutheran Health and Medical Board (NLHMB) set up the STRC for Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura to build capacity of TI staff from the three states. It operates from Guwahati. The STRCs closely interacts with SACS, NERO, NACO and TI partners. Each STRC has a Training

Coordinator, 3 Training Officers and an Accountant.

SHALOM Mizoram:

EHA started SHALOM Mizoram in December 1997 as a community based HIV/AIDS prevention and care program. Located in Aizawl, Mizoram, SHALOM aims to reduce HIV transmission, provide care to People Living With HIV/AIDS, and minimize the negative socio-economic impact of HIV on individuals, families and communities in Mizoram. Currently the project implements targeted intervention among Injecting Drug Users, Telephonic Counselling Services, Peer Educator Placement, IEC on HIV/AIDS among local churches, Justice and HIV & AIDS Project, and capacity building of PLWHAs. SHALOM also ran the opioid substitution therapy (OST) program partly funded by Mizoram SACS.



Dr I. Ben Wati was the President of World Evangelical Fellowship, now World Evangelical Alliance.

Brief Report of Relief Work for flood affected people in Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur, Assam

“...they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

As reported by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI

This year the flood situation in Assam is considered one of the worst in the last 20 years. Many lost their family members and properties. Till today many live in make-shaft Relief Camps on the road side.

In response to the situation, the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) initiated a relief project. Following Churches, organization, and individuals sent donations to purchase relief materials:

1. Church Auxiliary for Social Action
2. Baptist International Ministries
3. Garo Baptist Convention
4. Ms. Amy Register
5. Eastern Theological College

We are glad that we were able to help one thousand (1000) flood affected families in Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur, Assam. The relief package includes: 25 kgs of Rice, 2 kgs of Musur Dal, 1 liter Mustard oil, 1 kg Salt, and one Mosquito Net. We were happy to bring smile on their



faces as they received the items. Our desire is that someday they will receive Eternal Life and their destiny will be changed forever.



During our interaction with them we learnt that they have not received any relief before. Some of them calculated the items and said it is worth more than ₹ 1000 for each family. They said having 25kgs of rice is a big thing, and they can start rebuilding their houses instead of going for daily wages to feed the family.

A Relief Committee composed of the village *Gaon Buras* (village elders) and volunteers were from the village itself. This committee selected the suffering families from their own villages. During distribution they helped to identify the people. This enabled us to avoid any confusion during distribution.

The local MLA provided lunch to the Relief Team and the Volunteers. The local Administration provided Police personnel so that there would not be any problem during distribution of the materials.

Lastly, we want to thank all the supporters, relief team, local MLA and leaders, volunteers, and all those who were involved in this program. May the Lord bless each and every one of you and double your reward for helping the people who are in need.

“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that ...they may see your good deeds and glorify God ...” (1 Peter 2:12).



Family



Mr R. K. Raychawdhuri, General Secretary, Assam Baptist Convention

Ps. 127

“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stands guard in vain”

Ps. 127 cover three areas of human activity, the house, the city, and the family. It affirms that without the Lord we can do nothing. Verse 1 and 2 seem to suggest, leave everything to the Lord, leave it all to God; we are encouraged to let go, and enjoy a restful life. But in the Bible the opposite of rest is not work, but restlessness.

The Lord has ordained the human activities of begetting, conceiving and bearing. Yet the Bible insists, it is not human, but divine that opens the “womb” or indeed

closes it (Gen. 29:31-35). Children are not our achievements but his gift. So is a complete house and a guarded city. All earthly comforts are uncertain, but the Lord will bless and comfort those who serve him.

Prov. 24:3,4 “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established, through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures”.

The key words are: Built, Established, and Filled. These words show progressive development.

Built: That was the result of something put together. It was built and once it was built it, was

properly grounded, that was established. It was made firm, solid and secure. Built, then established. Once it is established it can be filled. It really speaks about the spiritual life. But the focus here is marriage. The Bible speaks about the church being the bride of Christ. Jesus is regarded the heavenly bridegroom and we as believers are the bride. So our relationship that we see with the living God can also be seen as a marriage relationship. The relationship is the same nature, same quality.

In marriage the following steps should be considered:

1. Built,
2. Established,
3. Filled.

All believers must take the above steps and surrender their life to Christ. So a believer is made because of that yielding to Jesus, and because of that one is established in faith. Paul says rooted in him, meaning the principles of the Word of God is wrought out in that life. It is made real to that person. Then that believer can be filled with the Spirit of God. If we are not filled with

the Spirit of God, then it is impossible to lead a victorious life. Of course if we are filled with other things then the Spirit of God has no space in our life, eg. an expensive pen. There was a man who purchased an expensive pen and used the same on special occasions. One day he was asked to sign important documents and he used the expensive pen. The pen did not work. He tried and tried, but it would not work. So he signed the papers with an ordinary pen. However as he left his office he went to the pen hospital and asked the pen doctor that the pen was expensive but it refused to write. The man went for shopping and on his return he went to collect the pen. The pen doctor handed over the pen to him and told him everything is fine. The man made the necessary payment, took the pen and was about to leave when he asked very casually, “doctor, why did my pen refuse to write?” The doctor told him “oh sir, I had to empty everything first from your pen and fill it with fresh ink and now it is writing beautifully.” Our life is also like that. Unless we empty ourselves of the bad things in our life it

cannot be filled with God's Spirit. That is why so often in our relationship with God or in our marriage things are so useless. It does not function the way it was designed, just like the expensive pen. The pen was designed to function in a particular way Why? Because in our relationship with God or in our marriage relationship we do not want to be emptied. If we do not want to be emptied, we cannot be filled.

The Bible says that a house is built by wisdom and understanding it is established. Through knowledge its rooms are filled. Filling aspect is the nice part. We get excited when filling takes place. Bible says rooms are filled with rare and beautiful rare treasures. Do we know the meaning of this word? Rare, it is not found everywhere. Genuine happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment are also rare, brothers and sisters. It is not found in every marriage, every life. In this world today many marriages ends in divorce. In my family and friend's family this has happened, here in Assam, here in Guwahati. It is

beautiful thing if a husband and wife can live peacefully and in harmony together. Both of them have different chemistry, yet it is beautiful if harmony is established between them. There may be rare moments of bliss of heaven on earth of real joy of fellowship. Why is it rare? Because that department comes after a house is built, followed by being established, then it can be filled. When a couple first starts their marriage life the work of building is the responsibility of the wife. If she is unfaithful in her calling, the house will not be built.

The second part is the responsibility of the husband. His calling is to establish that house. He has to see that it is developed on a firm foundation, firm principles and if he fails in that then the house cannot be built. But if both of them have fulfilled their calling the way God wants, then they can be ready to receive His blessing of peace and prosperity. Every room of our hearts will be filled. The door of our heart is open. It will not be closed.



Interpreting Scripture in the Northeast India -Arunachal Pradesh in Particular

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



I The Weak Pulpit

The Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI) is the largest Baptist family in the south central Asia (with more than 7000 Baptist Churches and about 20 theological institutions).¹ The churches under the Council send more than 2000 missionaries cross-culturally. The Christian influence is so great in the region that almost all shops are closed on Sundays in some of the cities. The impact of the gospel for last 175 years in the region has been remarkable.

Nevertheless, most thinking Christians from my region would agree with me that the preaching of the Word of God needs improvement. In general, they are disappointed by the preachers. In the churches, there is growing apathy against the preaching and so the time for

sermon delivery is reduced.

Youth in the churches prefer to stand hours for an ecstatic experience of singing rather than sitting under a homily. The Bible is gradually disappearing in the pew. Most Christians come to worship with hymnals. When asked *how was the sermon?* I often hear people saying:

Well, the sermon was

- *not grounded in the biblical text*
- *preached without interpreting the text*
- *preached interpreting text incorrectly*
- *preached without expounding the text adequately*
- *preached with right theology but wrong text*
- *his personal subjective experiences*
- *too much of theory but no practical applications*
- *emotional and but very*

poor in content

- *over emphasizing on miraculous healing*
- *about prosperity gospel and false hope*
- *preached with theological slant undermining the whole counsel of God²*
- *preached without addressing the issue we are facing today*

Do they sound familiar to you? While the congregation has these genuine complaints against the preachers, the preachers also have their own. I have been conducting seminars on hermeneutics and homiletics for pastors for last ten years and I have heard some of them saying:

- *I have never been to any seminary*
- *I am not a full time pastor. The Church pays for four Sundays only*
- *My seminary never taught me how to do exegesis*
- *We had only two courses on exegesis*
- *In last 30 years of my ministry, this is the first training on exegesis I am attending*
- *I wish I had learned at the beginning of my ministry, I am*

retiring in two years

- *I wish I could do exegesis but I do not have time to do research and write sermons*
- *My congregation does not like exegesis but stories*
- *I feel inadequate and not gifted for this*
- *All the exegesis of sermons I have heard were boring*
- *I do not know how to make my exegesis interesting*
- *I did not do well in biblical languages and so I am still struggling*
- *My seniors discouraged me to use languages and exegetical tools in preaching*
- *I thought that we have passed the era of exegetical preaching. Its era of narrative*
- *Our congregation comes from oral background, too much reading of text puts them off*
- *My congregation do not bring their Bible*
- *My congregation watch tele-evangelists and they want similar type of preaching*
- *People are living in post technological era. They prefer audio-visual presentation and not Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones type of exegetical preaching. Exegetical preaching is*

outdated.

Have you heard preachers say likewise in your context? Are these grievances true?

The cry for help is heard from both sides: the congregation and preachers. The longing desire to hear and preach the Word with authority with its true meaning and mission is ever alive in churches. Both groups desire to see that the pulpit is strong in our churches.

Those of us, who understand the primacy of teaching and preaching of the Word of God, would prefer to gear up all our available resource to address this issue. The subject, indeed, needs our urgent attention.

We may need to scrutinize the trainings given (both formally and informally) in our seminaries. Is the current curriculum on hermeneutics and homiletic in our seminary address this need sufficiently? Does our strategy to train future exegete needs some introspection?

In America where there is strong biblical scholarship and where the commentaries are published

every year, Rev Stephen Olford, the great expository preacher of the last century, felt the need of starting a separate Institute of Biblical Preaching in 1980. His purpose was to *help pastors and lay leaders develop their preaching skills through the clear, accurate, Spirit - empowered exposition of the Scriptures* in the Bible belt of America.

I believe that every Asian country needs a strategy/a curriculum/ or an institute fully focused to train pastors for this indispensable ministry. We need to strengthen the pulpit in our churches. What do you say?

II The Irrelevant Pulpit

The reason for a weak pulpit is much more complex. It is not only the interpreting of the text incorrectly, but also interpreting the listeners and their context inadequately. Before we preach Jesus is the **answer** we need to know what the **question** is. Often our thesis does not have anti-thesis. Our pulpit does not connect with the congregation. They find better comfort in the contemporary songs rather in the sermons. In fact, the

congregation often start looking at their wrist watches when preaching starts.

Recently, a chairman of the Board of the theological college told me, *“I don’t know what our pastors learn in the seminary. Most of the time they preach about the history of Israel and missions of the early Church but they are unable to tell me what does the bible say about the current social and political issue I am facing.”* He just affirmed my concerns with his personal experience.

Definitely, we all need to join Uncle John in prayers. He wrote:

We should be praying that God will raise up new generation of Christian communicators who are determined to bridge the chasm; who struggle to relate God’s unchanging Word to our ever-changing world; who refuse to sacrifice truth to relevance or relevance to truth; but who resolve instead in equal measure to be faithful to Scripture and pertinent to today.³

Scott Cunningham, the Director of the Institute for Excellence,

Overseas Council International invited a group of theologians and Church leaders from South Asia to Kandy, Sri Lanka. In his invitation letter, he wrote:

Our gathering this year will focus on the theme of **“Re-envisioning the Seminary-Church Relationship.”** Why are relationships between some seminaries and churches strained or unhelpful? What can be done to strengthen the relationship? How can the church and the seminary work together in developing Christian leaders? How can the seminary provide the right kind of training to the right people in the right way?⁴

The consensus in the Institute in Kandy undergirded the relevance of trainings in seminary. How can we make our curriculum relevant? In my presentation, I made an appeal to the seminary leaders to listen to the churches they were serving.

Are we listening to the Church? In the academic world, the voices of the great cloud of published theologians are so loud that the moan from Church fails to get our attention. One day a Hindu

young boy, a friend of my son, came to stay with us. I wanted to give him to read something simple about Jesus and his teachings. I went to my library and begin to look for a book for him. My book-shelves are full of voluminous theological books: Old Testament, New Testament, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, French and so on. Suddenly it dawned on me that in pursuit of knowledge I had travelled so far that I had failed to give importance to the basics of Christianity. I did not have a single book that tells the story and teaching of Jesus in simple language for a sincere seeker. Yes it can happen to all of us that we may fail to keep the sometime *main thing* as *main thing*.

When did we last visit a rural Church? What did we publish last that was sold as hotcake in church premises? How many of our publications are known to the rural pastors? Didn't we all start our journey with Church as destination in our mind? It has happened to me I have missed the turn on some occasion and driven far away living the Church behind where I was supposed to

preach. Once, I barely made in time just to preach a brief sermon before benediction. Figuratively speaking, I have met few theologians on that way of obliviousness.

The hurdles of presenting the Word of God with good interpretation begin with good exegesis. In our region, we do not have many Biblical scholars who are known for their command in languages and exegesis. Many seminaries have begun offering theological degree without language requirements. Often the Bible is reduced to the status of a reference book. The biblical knowledge of most seminary students whether graduated with languages or without language, is very low. So it affects their ability to do good exegesis.

While writing the above paragraph, I was interrupted by a phone call from a theologically qualified leader of Church Association. He told me that their association is divided on the subject whether their members should cooperate with the government on Unique ID system done by Biometric

scanning. He asked my opinion about the number triple six in the Book of Revelation. It seems some pastors in his association were preaching that the Satan is using biometric to number all human beings so as to spot the triple six as his instrument. So the churches are divided whether they should protest against government's act. Churches in rural area face this kind of question on a daily basis because they have preachers who do not interpret correctly.

Indeed, good interpretation starts with good exegesis, but that is only a beginning. It is one thing to exegete the text but it is another thing to exegete the listeners and their context. Selection of a relevant text for exegesis and its wise application follows only after a careful analysis of the listeners and their context. Once we have the right text, the next hurdle for us would be to have right homiletics to present them in a manner that impacts both heart and mind.

Indeed, the pressure to entertain the congregation by filling our sermon with humour, stories, attractive quotations, and popular

songs is very powerful. They in themselves are not harmful but to use them skilfully without diluting the exegesis of the text is an art which is rarely found in most preachers. Preacher needs help to develop that skill and most seminaries do not have either time or skilled person to provide such training. Some seminaries are trying to train their students through informal programs but often students are not serious about it because it does not earn for them any credit toward their degree.

Interpreting the context of the listeners, whether it is social, cultural, or religious context, is the key to the choosing of the right text. In medical science, clinical diagnosis is a crucial step prior to prescribing a line of treatment or choosing medicine. Medical doctors spend 4 to 5 years learning how to diagnose diseases before they begin prescribing medicines. A good diagnosis helps one to anticipate prognosis (the future). Failure to diagnose disease can lead to wrong treatment. In other words, it can cause wastage of medicine, wastage of time, prolonging of sickness, and even death of patient.

So, interpreting the listeners and their context is vital in making our preaching relevant. Preachers must be able to assess the current issues, the popular trend in the society, and forth telling thereof. They are called to speak prophetically to the present as well as the anticipated future.

III The Prophetic Pulpit

Our preaching shall fail from being prophetic if we fail to understand our listeners and their *sitz im leben*. Preaching in the northeast India with good exegesis can be as risky as stepping on a live Cobra. But that may be true anywhere in this fallen world. Definitely, preaching of TRUTH can set us free, but we should not be surprized if the preaching of truth can also set us free from life. We all need courage as well as wisdom from God to preach the word in a manner that is more effective.

Undoubtedly, the gospel has had many remarkable impacts on the people of northeast India in last 175 years. However, I want to draw out attention to the **bad news** (the anti-thesis) so that we can talk about the importance of the relevant **good news** (thesis)

in the Bible that needs to be interpreted and preached.

The Northeast Christian States

The context of the Northeast India is unique. Most states, except Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Tripura, are Christian states. Most political leaders and government official are Christians. Nevertheless, the social and political challenges are not different from other non-Christian states.

There are more than 20 underground militants groups who are fighting for freedom from India. In the state of Nagaland there are three militant groups. Each group is dependent on the taxes paid by the government employees, businessmen, and politicians. Extortion, kidnapping and killing has been rampant in the last two decades. In Garo Hills, this has been intense in the recent years. Almost all members of the churches are affected. Speaking against it would amount to speaking against the freedom struggle of the people.

Some militant groups use Old Testament text to justify their

violence and killing. They observe the Sabbath and attend chapel service. They have the sympathy of some Christians as they also engage in Church planting. So some Christians are confused and others including some of our leaders support their cause. Since the government of India has failed to integrate the tribal people in last 5 decades and also failed to recognize Christians as patriots, hence the aspiration for freedom from India is pervasive.

The problem is further aggravated as most politicians, government employees, and businessmen are deep into corruption. The entire system runs on bribery and payment of illegitimate service charges. Government grants can be manipulated or payment of exaggerated bills by the contractors can be purchased. One can see increasing number of personal luxurious houses but most public assets such as roads, schools, hospitals, and public drains are in ruins.

In the whole of northeast India, generally speaking, rich is getting richer and the poor is getting

poorer. Unemployment is rising. Marriages are breaking and divorce is on the rise. There are more broken homes, single mother, and run away children on the streets than it used to be ten years ago. Youths live in frustration. Drug addiction, violence, crime, and HIV and AIDs are also on rise. In search of easy money, youths are seduced to join wrong groups.

Also in the state of Nagaland, wild-life and forest is almost in the verge of extinction. One can rarely find a flying bird. This year the Baptist Churches in Nagaland have decided to observe Green Sunday.

Christian leaders in general are loner. They are very enterprising but they prefer freedom and no accountability to the body of Christ. In a small city of Dimapur in Nagaland with 123777 populations (2011) there are more than 30 small and big theological schools. The trend in the northeast is to start a private and personal family Christian trust, ministry, society, or Christian business which may look like ministry.

The Baptist Churches has

problem of its own. Recently, the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of Baptist Churches in Nagaland came under heavy criticism by some secular columnist. The church is blamed for siding with the corrupt politicians and government officials as they were given active participation in the Jubilee program. How do Churches respond to such a situation? A popular preacher from the west was invited as the main speaker. The speaker preached the simple gospel of salvation. According to the critics Nagaland Churches needed message of discipleship and stewardship.

So much for the impact of the coming of the gospel 175 years ago!

Do these problems sound familiar to you? Could our preaching address these issues?

Context of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh, my home state, is 25% Buddhist, 50% Animist, and 16% Christians. The Hindus would like to claim the animists as Hindus. Christianity came in early part of 1970s. In 1974, Government enacted Indigenous Faith Bill Act under

which conversion to Christianity became illegal. In spite of the anti-conversion law, Christianity in the state did not stop growing. Many experienced miraculous healings and received freedom from the clutches of superstitious belief. Arunachal soon became a mission field of many mission agencies. The competing theological teaching on belief and practices began to pour in. Today we have many villages where families of less than hundred are divided among 3-4 denominations, or competing groups. Loyalty to funding mission agencies is a big deal. The money is more powerful than the gospel. Christians envy each other and prefer not to have anything to do with other Christians.

Is there any message for non-Christians here? It sounds like telling them *if you become Christians you shall fight with each other and shall be divided.*

In Arunachal some tribes have been practicing child marriage and polygamy. Individuals are part of the community. Each one has to abide by the law set by the community or else he/she shall be

evicted from the village. The social norm for justice is different.

What do we preach to those who are coming from such background? What should we tell them to do once they accept Christ? Should they abandon their second or consecutive wives? What about their children? Where they would go if they are evicted from their village? The implications are complex. Hence, in addition to the simple gospel of salvation, the Churches need wisdom: the whole counsel of God.

It is shocking when we hear the opinion of non-Christians about Christians in some part of India. They think Christians are religious fanatics, insensitive, disrespectful of other religion, unjust, and of course separatist. So much for our orthodoxy that burns our bridges with those whom we want to reach out.

When my father died, I was expected to perform his last rite in a Buddhist temple. I had the option to go and perform the rite and yet remain true to my faith in Christ but I chose to refuse, even

to attend the funeral. My understanding of the Scripture was not wholesome then and I did not have wise counsel.⁵ As a result I brought bad name to my newly found faith in Christ and I burnt the bridges of all communication with my family, relatives, and friends. We need wisdom of God how we interpret and apply whole counsel of God in certain specific situation.

There are more than one ways to make our preaching relevant and effective. But finding the right text, interpret it correctly, and then preach it from the pulpit with biblical wisdom is the need of the hour. We need a sapiential pulpit.

IV The Sapiential Pulpit

Unfortunately, many a time we already have a message. It's more of an *eisogesis* rather than *exegesis*. Our ears are deaf but our mouth speaks out loud. We need to listen what the Holy Spirit has to say. We need a pulpit endowed with divine wisdom: a pulpit where pastors understand the richness of divine wisdom in the Bible and allow the Holy Spirit to speak in his own term. A pulpit from where

churches hear the whole counsel of God. Kevin Vanhoozer calls it “sapiential ability to participate fittingly in the theo-drama.”⁶ In order to get a better perspective on Vanhoozer’s hermeneutical assumption let me quote here an excerpt from my earlier writing.

Hermeneutical Assumption⁷

[Quote:

The language of canon as a divine communicative act must be discerned at more than one level of action. Developing the idea from J. L. Austin, Kevin Vanhoozer introduces three kinds of linguistic actions: locutionary act (actual utterance), illocutionary act (what the communicator does in utterance), and perlocutionary act (what the communicator bring about by uttering).⁸ While the locution has to do with a sign system or *langue*, the illocutions and perlocutions have to do with sentences, with the languages in action or *parole*. In this way, the speech act emerging from texts is not merely understood at a basic semiotic level, but also, at the level of discourse, which embodies in itself the propositional content (e.g., the matter) as well as

illocutionary force (e.g., the energy) and the perlocutionary effect (the purpose).⁹

Ascertaining the illocutionary intent in the discourse, for Vanhoozer, is critical to the theological interpretation of the text.¹⁰ He writes,

To interpret a text is thus to ascribe a particular illocutionary act, or set of acts, to its author. To interpret a text is to answer the question, what is the author doing in her text? Interpretation involves coming up with appropriately “thick” descriptions of what an author is doing that get beyond the locutionary level (e.g., “he uttered a sentence” or “he spoke with a French accent”) to descriptions of relevant communicative, which is to say illocutionary, action (“he confessed Jesus is Lord”).¹¹

A good interpretation, therefore, demands an inferring of a just and exact illocutionary intent from the textual and the contextual evidence. However, the illocutionary intent comes at

different levels: sentential, generic (literary whole), and canonical level.¹² Vanhoozer asserts that our theological conviction on the divine authorship of the Scripture, in which human and divine authors are brought together and where various genres and intentionality are ensembled as a canon, compels us to consider the canonical level of illocutionary intent as the higher level. This higher level of illocutionary intent is the ultimate divine intent, which “supervenes” all lower levels of illocutionary intent.¹³ Although the lower level illocutions are important for understanding “what the text meant” to its original intended author and the receiver, the higher-level illocution is the ultimate historical binding that enables us to discern the original intention of the divine author for the community that received it.

For Vanhoozer, the final form of Scripture is a *theo-drama* of God, through which the God of the Bible draws others into his communicative action at many levels.¹⁴ His “canonical-linguistic theology” addresses

both the drama in the text—what God is doing in the world through Christ—and the drama that continues in the Church as God uses Scripture to address, edify, and confront its readers.”¹⁵ This theology affirms the plurality of voices in the Scripture and their theological significance.¹⁶ These pluralities indicate the different levels of complexity and different aspects of reality.¹⁷ Together they represent the theo-dramatic reality of the canon, which is independent of our perspectives, constructs, speech, thought, or silence. Reading scripture, therefore, involves more than summarizing a set of propositional statements, but “the ability to see, feel, and taste the world as disclosed in the diverse biblical text.”¹⁸ It is not merely lexical, historical, and grammatical exercises that involve the interpreter’s intellectual, spiritual, and imaginative discipline, but most of all, the “**sapiential ability to participate fittingly in the theo-drama.**”¹⁹

Unquote]

I am grateful to Vanhoozer for

his insights on hermeneutics. The exercise of making the Scripture relevant is more than art and science of interpretation. It is the deeper understanding of the theo-drama of God which compels us to actively engage in the divine act at many levels in transforming the world with his Word that makes the interpretation of Scripture and its mission far-reaching. The process continues in our lives as we experience the triune God on daily basis and when we submit ourselves to his glory.

Interpretation of Scripture, therefore, requires virtues rather than merely skills. Vanhoozer rightly puts it: What Christianity gives to hermeneutics is the contrast between a “hermeneutics of the cross” and a “hermeneutics of glory.” Those who read according to the hermeneutics of glory revel in their own interpretive skills, impose their interpretive theories on texts, and eclipse the text’s own meaning. Such “glory” is, of course, short-lived. According to the hermeneutics of humility, by contrast, we will only gain understanding—of God, texts, others, and ourselves—if we

are willing to put ourselves second and our interpretive theories to the test of the text.²⁰

Vanhoozer encourages us to practice the *hermeneutics of humility and conviction*, where humility and conviction remains in *constructive tension*. According to him, a preacher of the Word is *simul Justus et peccator*: both saint and sinner. When we are besieged with doubts, we must remind ourselves that we exist in Christ for we are *saints* and when we are flattered by our pride, we must remember that we are *sinner*s. Uncle John also encourages the preachers to be humble:

A humble mind (being submissive to the written Word of God), a humble ambition (desiring an encounter to take place between Christ and his people), and a humble dependence (relying on the power of the Holy Spirit) – this is the analysis of a preacher’s humility which we have made. It indicates that our message must be God’s Word not ours, our aim Christ’s glory not ours, and our confidence the Holy Spirit’s power, not ours.²¹

May God help us to strengthen

our pulpits, make them relevant, and let them overflow with wisdom from above.

Soli Deo Gloria

[PS: Earlier this paper was presented in the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Theological Education and Leadership Formation, July 2 - 5, Santiago, Chile and in the Asia Theological Association CONSULTATION on Scripture; Its Authority, Meaning and Mission, Jun 18-22, 2012, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.]

¹ To know more about the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI), please visit www.cbcnei.com.

² Read Acts 20:27; ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you *the whole counsel of God* (RSV). Also KJV, ASV, and ESV translate *Counsel of God*.

³ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: the Challenges of Preaching Today* (Eerdmans: Michigan: 1982), 144.

⁴ A letter of invitation dated 7 April 2010, signed by Dr Scott Cunningham, Dean of Leadership Development, and Director of the Institute for Excellence, Overseas Council International.

⁵ Read 2 King 5:18; ¹⁸ *But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.*” Also 1 Cor 8:4; ⁴ *So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.”*

⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 285.

⁷ The following quote is taken from my Ph.D. dissertation *The Placement of Psalm 145 in Book V: A Compositional Analysis*. TIU, 2007.

⁸ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and The Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 208, 18, 427-8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 228; Vanhoozer, “Language, Literature, Hermeneutics, and Biblical Theology: What’s Theological About a Theological Dictionary?” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997): 34.

¹⁰ Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press: 2002), 182.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 191-4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁴ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 48-56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 465.

²¹ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: the Challenges of Preaching Today* (Eerdmans: Michigan: 1982), 335.

Kuala Lumpur Affirmation

We, the participants of Asia Theological Association (ATA) Consultation held at Malaysia Bible Seminary, Kuang from 18-22 June, 2012 hereby together acknowledge our gratitude to God and our appreciation to ATA for providing us an enriching time of reflection on the theme *Scripture: Its Authority, Meaning and Mission*.

In our faith in and love for the Word of God and in service to the Body of Christ to which we all belong, we hereby solemnly commit that we shall read, study and meditate upon the Word of God with delight and present it to others in understandable language.

We affirm our confidence in the primacy and sufficiency of the transforming Word of God in every context in Asia. In the midst of suffering, the Word of God heals and unites the social diversity, religious plurality and political realities of Asia, restoring dignity to women and men created in the image of God.

We clearly understand that we need to review substantially and innovate the curricula of our theological institutions in order to embody the Word in our ever-changing Asian contexts. Our curricula must help our students understand and serve their contexts biblically and theologically through the teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We strongly feel that every faculty in our theological institutions needs to mentor their students in Christ-likeness so as to form them for practical ministries of the church such as ministries among children, youth, women and men. We need to train them to engage wisely in the socio-political and environmental issues that the world is facing today.

Therefore, trusting in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit we commit our hearts and minds to the above affirmation. In our prayerful commitment, we joyfully share the mission of the Body of Christ for the glory of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

** signed by 105 participants **

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