

Contents

Editorial Column	02
Church and Families	04
News Flash	15
Report of the General Secretary	23
Livelihood Project	43
In the Household of A gape	49
We the Readers	57
Social Teachings of Baptist Churches	63

Baptist News

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

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

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Editorial Column



The Household of Love – the Family

Introduction

We are all familiar with the household of love, the family, for each of us is a part of one. I call this primary household the “*household of love*” because it comes into being when two people fall in love and have a family. In our North East context, that household would include grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and others who live with us in the same house. Today, the structure of the family is changing because of migration, separation, and new forms of union. Expectedly it is in the household of love that members first experience acceptance, unconditional love, care and nurture, and responsibility. The sense of safety and protection is taught through certain boundaries that also give one a sense of identity. Thus, each one can say, “I belong to this particular family and not to another.” In my experience, the household of love nurtured me in a particular way, a particular perspective, a particular mindset, and a particular way of life. It was through mixing with children of other families that I learned of other households of love that were different from mine. There were times when I felt that my family did something better; there were also times when I felt envious of the ways that other families did certain things.

The Bible has many examples of them and they are not necessarily the best examples of being part of the household of love.

(1) *Violence in the family* – Example of killing of the first-born sons in Egypt; incest and sexual violence of Tamar; etc. My friend’s son Cheekit was about 7 years old when, after reading the story of the killing of the first-born sons in Egypt (Exodus 13:1-16), he burst out crying, “Mommy, I do not want to be a first-born son anymore because I do not want to die like those children.” She tried her best to explain to him that such a thing happened a long time ago and that God would never allow that to happen again

(2) Patriarchal preference for boys – Example of Hannah praying for a son.

One Sunday, She was re-telling the story of Hannah (I Samuel 1) praying for a son in a family talk at Kowloon Union Church. A clever little girl named Hannah, who comes from a family of girls, interrupted her with her query, “But why prays only for a son?” She tried to explain that in her time the biblical Hannah had wished so much for a son but today many parents know that daughters and sons are equally important. Of course, deep in her heart, she knew that unfortunately in many Asian societies this was not always the case.

(3) Faith in God at the expense of family – Example of Abraham’s treatment of Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, Isaac. Remember how Abraham asked his wife Sarah to tell King Abimelech of Gerar that she was Abraham’s sister (Gen. 20:2) in order to ensure his safety? Remember how Abraham and Sarah mistreated Hagar and Ishmael? And remember how Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac to prove his faithfulness to God? The renowned Bible scholar, Walter Brueggemann, called Abraham’s family a good example of a dysfunctional family.

Whether in the Bible or in our present contexts, many families, the so-called primary households of love, which are the basic units of society, have failed to reflect their nature of being households of love for they sometimes perpetrate abuse, discrimination, violence, etc. Consider the cases of spouse and child abuse, incest and sexual violence, discrimination of girl children, etc. If families are part of God’s creation, we must help recover their role as mirrors of the household of God – where members live together in love, where the weakest and most vulnerable are given special attention and care, and where everyone is valued and nurtured to become a responsible member of the wider community. We also need to guard against romanticizing the “ideal past” of families for we must live in the present with its own challenging realities. The churches in North East India must address all the issues that families are facing today especially Violence against women and Children.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI



Church and Families

*an extract from the Bible Studies
presented during 66th Annual General
Meeting.*

*Dr Lovely James Awomi, Associate Professor in Christian Theology,
Eastern Theological College, Rajabari Jorhat- 785014*

The main concentrated topic will be on families approached from the perspective of Church's responsibility toward them. Hence with just a brief introduction of the church we will straight away go into the aspect of families. The subject of families is approached with children at the centre and how Christian parents can effectively parent them in an atmosphere of godliness, thus creating the first or basic household of God. For the purpose, I have in particular, selected 3 passages from the Bible to serve as the foundation for our first section on the Church and 5 passages for the section on Families.

The 3 passages on the Church are:

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." **Romans 12:4-5**

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to

become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” **Ephesians 2:19-22**

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.....All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” **1 Corinthians 3:22-23**

The Church as God’s Household of Love, Unity and Caring Service

Apostle Paul clearly defines the meaning and function of the Church. It is the congregation of believers united in and through the person and salvific work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and having been united as such, believers are to exhibit their oneness not just in mere words but through concrete action – living and growing together in love, in care and concern, in respect, and giving, in comforting and encouraging, in teaching and praying, in counting others as higher than the self and in building up one another as members of one household of God. Not unlike our own present context (as church and as believing members), Paul, as a spiritual leader, had to confront myriad of life and faith issues faced by his congregation and by his fellow-believers. There were issues of ‘us’ vs ‘them’; ‘superior’ vs ‘inferior’; issues of division and dissension on the basis of doctrinal understandings and on the basis of leadership; false teachings, immorality and so forth. He had to time and again remind them of the core message of the gospel – believers and followers of Christ have to live as one family, being united in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The ‘body’ metaphor in Pauline writings teaches the believers that differences and distinctiveness are good, that they are expressions of God’s creative designs not just for the humans but for the whole life forms in the universe – the household of God. God’s children are not to hold their differences against each other but for the enrichment and benefit of one another. Besides, Paul constantly teaches and

admonishes them of their Christian responsibilities to one another. He also drives home the message that their variegated gifts and talents are all God-given and that they ought to utilize those blessings for the benefit and edification of one another and for the wider community. The gifts are not for purpose of lording over them by individual self or not for purpose of self boast, for offending others and for purpose of creating division among themselves. He encourages them to receive the gifts of God with thanksgiving and to make use of them for God's glory and for building up God's people and God's household. If that is how the Bible teaches us about the household of God – the Church, then, how do we define our churches today? Do our churches exhibit the character of being God's household not just in verbal affirmation but in their practical lives as well?

With that brief understanding of the Church as God's household and the importance of believers living together in the household of God (church), let us now turn our attention to the Church's ministry toward families. What does the Bible say about our families? How do we design our families into the household of God? And, what is the role and responsibility of the Church in nurturing families for God? The Bible has so much to say about families or about issues closely related to families – parents, wives and husbands, children, about God's love and instructions for members that make up families/households.

The aforementioned **5 passages on the Families** are:

"If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" **1 Timothy 3:5**

"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient..." **Titus 1:6**

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”
Deuteronomy 6:6-9

“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” **Matthew 18:5-6**

“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”
Joshua 24:15

Family as the First Household of God

Living together in the household of God should begin right from where we are first placed or born into – our homes, families and households. Before we reach out to the set up of the church, society or the outside world, and attempting to preach, teach and transform them into the household of God, we ought to consider our basic place of nurture and upbringing. The question before us therefore include, how do we make our families into the household of God? What does the Bible say about the ‘ideal’ family or ‘ideal’ household of God?

For those of us who expect a blueprint of ‘ideal’ families in the Bible will definitely be disappointed because the Bible does not provide us with such ‘ready-made’ models of ideal families. On the contrary, the Bible is full of ‘real’ families, families that include all the realistic ingredients/components, reflecting the very real experiences of God’s people struggling with varied issues, sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Take for examples the family of Adam and Eve where sibling rivalry led to murder (Genesis 4); Abraham and Sarah’s household with Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16 & 21); Abraham’s fidelity to God almost at the expense of neglecting and sacrificing his son Isaac’s life (Genesis 23); Isaac and Rebekah’s family with Jacob and Esau’s conflict over birthright and blessings (Genesis 25:19ff & Genesis 27); Joseph as the

son and brother who was 'sold-out' as a slave (Genesis 37:12-36); The heartbreaking environment of Moses and his sister Miriam (Exodus 1); Eli's rebellious sons (1 Samuel 2); David's family and the sin of adultery and incest (2 Samuel 11 & 13); Sons under mortgage for late father's unpaid debts (2 Kings 4:1-7), and so on. As such, the Bible has only 'real' instead of 'ideal' families (meaning realistic, suffering, conflicting and needy families), provided for us to reflect, understand and learn from them. It also provides us in abundance the wisdom, teachings and directives for God's people in their search for designing our families and households after God's heart and will.

Let us focus in particular upon 'Joshua's Household' based on the book of Joshua chapter 24 verse 15: "... but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

The call of Joshua upon the Israelites is built around the word "Choose." The Hebrew word *bachar*, "to choose," is often used in reference to God's sovereign, purposeful, deliberate choices, such as His choice of Israel, of the land, of Zion (Jerusalem), of Judah, of David, and of Solomon. When this word is used in reference to people and their choices, it includes also a deliberate intentional choice, a choice that has been the result of serious thought, plan, or desire.

This verse explicitly expresses Joshua's faith affirmation at the close of his life on earth as a great leader. It encourages us to do likewise, to see to it that our families remain faithful to God and that our home environment becomes one that is dynamic with mutual love, respect and spiritual fulfilment whether in times of joy and success or in times of struggles and problems. Joshua asks them for the last time who they will serve. He also strongly warns them against making any impulsive, emotional and flimsy decision. Commitment to God and making a spiritual pledge before God and before the multitudes of people is a serious thing. There is no space for second thoughts or backsliding later on. How often do we easily and readily, without much thought, profess that we will serve God and make our families God's household? How easy it is to utter but extremely difficult to hold on to our confessions when

hard times hit us and our families?

Now the Israelites have moved into the Promised Land and they were readying themselves and their families to set up permanent habitats unlike their hitherto nomadic existence in the wilderness as they were travelling toward the Promised Land. At this juncture, Joshua, their leader, being advanced in years and nearing his end, gathered them all at Shechem and summoned all their leaders, officials and judges of the tribes and presented before them this great challenge – to state their allegiance, to ‘choose’ right then and there who they will serve – would they serve the gods of Egypt where they were kept as slaves? Would they serve those gods that were worshipped by other people whom they have encountered in the Promised Land? Or, would they serve the God who delivered them from slavery in Egypt, who had been with them all through their wilderness journey and who has finally brought them safely into the Promised Land? The decision that they make, will not only affect their lives as individuals and as families, but also will immensely affect them as a nation as well as their overall history.

Before he called for this decision, Joshua gave adequate grounds for making the choice to serve (Hebrew, ‘*avad*, also mean worship, follow, and do the will of) the Lord. What Joshua did was exactly what Moses also did in his farewell addresses found in the Book of Deuteronomy (Cf. Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 6:21-25; 28:1, 2, 15). Likewise, Joshua drew attention to God’s dealings in Israel’s history; from Abraham to Moses to the victories in Canaan. “So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant” (24:13). This suggests that the Israelites have had enough reasons to throw away all their idols and serve the Lord – the one God who has been their deliverer, sustainer and guide all through their historic life and experiences.

Joshua knew that no matter how much he wished, he could not make the choice for them - the people had to choose for themselves. However, for his own family and household, he could do so as the leader, parent, provider and nurturer of his household - “but as for me and my household,

we will serve the Lord.” Joshua was a man who takes his responsibility toward his family seriously. Above all, he was a man who strives hard to establish the spiritual/faith life of his family and as such, he could confidently proclaim that he and his family had already chosen to serve the Lord. Viewing this proclamation from today’s perspective one might even be disturbed about the space for the right of individual choice and decision of the members of his household, however, Joshua was known to be “a man in whom is the spirit [that is, the Holy Spirit]” (Numbers 27:18) and so we can be sure he had a powerful spiritual influence (God’s Spirit was on his side), on the choices his household made.

Joshua sets his priority correctly because he knew very well that his leadership, his spiritual testimony, his fatherly/parental role and responsibility in the home will either qualify or disqualify him as the leader of a nation. He knew he had to live by what he preaches, teaches and proclaims before the multitudes, first in his household. It is mainly in and through his leadership at home that people will be able to surmise what kind of leadership they are getting. This definitely reminds us of what Paul writes in I Timothy 3:1-5 “..... if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” What people need is a concrete and living example of spiritual leadership and this is first developed, nurtured and refined at the home base.

We can deduce from the passage that Joshua was a successful leader both at home and outside. This does not suggest that his journey as the head of the family or of the people was easy. He must have also experienced his fair share of conflicts and struggles (even much more than any other ordinary individual considering his position, context and the demands of the time). How often those of us parents and elders and as leaders or even as ordinary individuals in different capacities, feel all drained when we return home after a hectic day at work. Sometimes, the pressure and the tension of workplace weigh very heavily on our backs that when we reach home and meet our families – spouses, children and added members, we often unwind everything upon them, especially when we are not received with peaceful atmosphere at home,

when homeward problems and issues still await our assistance and intervention. Joshua could however, even toward the end of his life, declare on his own behalf and on behalf of his entire household that they are serving the Lord, no matter what.

Now, what can we draw from our study of this household for ourselves today? Can we also like Joshua proclaim before God and before all that our families/households are going to serve the Lord at any cost? Designing our families after the household of God where all members live together in active and enriching experiences is what God requires from us as his children. Taking Joshua's household as the closest example that we can find on exemplary family of God, I would like to invite you all to travel with me a little further in reflecting upon some of the realities of family life and to see how we as individual Christians and as the church could contribute toward making our families into the real household of God.

Faith Nurturing at Home

Parents are human-representatives of God – the Creator and the Heavenly Parent. Children come into real and expressive contact with God through the parents and their immediate families and elders in the home. We are reminded of the fourth century theologian, John Chrysostom who in his sermons on parenting especially in connection to faith nurturance of children at home, gave us a sound teaching on the subject. He viewed the home as “a little church” and took parents' responsibility of nurturing faith in children very seriously. As a result, he considers parental negligence in this area as a serious injustice or error. Pope John Paul II, in his Homily in Perth, Australia states that, “the family is the domestic church and the Church in miniature. Faith nurturing at home is thus the foundation ground for the spiritual and moral formation of children before they enter into the world outside. It is in this regard that parents have a great responsibility as spiritual and moral guides, mentors and models.

How do we nurture the faith of the children? The answer is simple, by living faith in the home. It is firstly through the faith life of the parents and

family that the little ones come into meaningful contact with God and with moral life as Christians. The Bible is very emphatic about the role and responsibility of the parents in this regard (Deuteronomy 6: 6-9). Parents are to take the God-given responsibility of being the mentor and guide of Children's faith in God – teaching them, feeding them with the word of God. The first step to nurture our children spiritually is for the parents to be rooted in the life of faith. As parents, we are to 'impress' our children and their hearts toward Godly life through not only by way of words but through our exemplary life of faith. How do we really 'impress' upon others, if not through our own way of life? No amount of teaching and preaching can truly impress somebody than our own examples of living out what we teach and preach. Only when we fulfill this, we will be able to carry out our God-given responsibility to lead, teach and nurture our children in the life of faith, which is what the Bible commands (Genesis 22: 1-14; 26: 23-25; Exodus 12: 3-11; Joshua 4: 21-22).

Another important aspect that we need to put into serious practice is the time of family devotion. Parents should see that family devotion time is truly inspiring and attractive for the young ones – example age-graded classes system in Sunday Schools. We should conduct our family prayer time in such a way that it does not push them away with its dullness but instead pulls them in, creating passion in them for it. Our prayer time which includes singing, short Bible lesson and prayer should not be 30 minutes short but somewhere between 5-10 minutes short. We should also make it a point to assign each of them with the turns to lead, sing and pray (it can also include assigning them to conclude after the mass prayer or taking turns to say Grace for meals). The impact of such practice in the family is truly amazing. Children should be allowed to freely express their thoughts and hearts, using their own cute words and languages, without judgment (and without making fun of them). We will be surprised at the depth of their faith as they express out to God and at the same time, they also make us love them more and make us vouch for them that God will surely be touched and moved by the prayers and devotions of the little ones. Time and again, the faith life of the young children speak to us parents and adults, teaching us a thing or two about the

importance of the purity of the hearts and innocence of faith in the presence of and before God. Our lord Jesus taught His own disciples about this truth (Matthew 19: 14).

In fact, the faith and spirituality that had been sowed in our childhood by and through our own parents had served as the roots and foundations of our present life of faith in God. Likewise, if today we as parents fail in our god-given responsibility to become spiritual teachers and parents to our children, we will be held accountable for it (Matthew 18:1-6; Matt. 19:14; Mk. 10:14; Lk. 18:16). From birth till they grow up and leave home, home is the place for their spiritual nurturance and parents their spiritual guides and teachers. Therefore, parenting our children God's way should without compromise, take this aspect very seriously if we want our children to grow knowing God and be loved and cared by God. Along with Joshua we should be able to vow to love, serve and worship the Lord with our families (Joshua 24: 15).

Right Teaching and Disciplining

Without going into the messy details of divergent ways and methods of teaching and disciplining our children, let me first confess on behalf of most parents here. We do fail in disciplining our children in the right way mainly because our temperament always gets the better of us. When children misbehave, most of us forget the importance of teaching our children that what they have done is wrong and therefore they need to be corrected and instead we let our feelings of anger overpower us and let it do the talking and teaching by use of hurtful (offensive even?) words and beating them till our own hidden monster of anger is satiated. That is the problem. Yes, many parents struggle with this and if the truth be told, we are the ones needing disciplining more than our children. We need to discipline our thoughts, temperaments and actions. We need right focus, right spirit as we strive to bring up our children God's way.

When we misuse our parenting responsibility especially in the issue of disciplining our children the right way, we lose our testimony before God and before our children. Our children, instead of learning the right

way of things, they can even become fearful and hateful toward us. Many children are scared stiff of their parents even when they do some insignificant mistakes; they immediately shrink inside their shells all the while expecting a sound scolding and beatings. They thus learn that the only way of handling mistakes or wrongdoings is punishment, violence and brutality. Instead of proposing some ready-made ways of disciplining our children, the writer would like to challenge or rather provoke parents to seriously check ourselves against God's way of disciplining us when we do wrong or when we go against His will. Each of us as parent(s) we need to reflect upon our own lives and find an answer to how or in what way our God teaches us to discipline our children (Proverbs 19: 18; 22: 6; Hebrews 12: 5-11; Colossians 3: 21; Ephesians 6: 4; Luke 15: 11-31). The Scripture says that God disciplines with love for He disciplines those whom He loves (Revelation 3: 19). This will enable us to review our method of disciplining our children.

1 Timothy 3:5 critiques and challenges us to take care of our families first. Without managing, nurturing and building our families and homes, we cannot claim to have the ability or the call to manage, nurture and build the wider household of God – the church. Without also concretely living out our love, respect and faithfulness toward our husbands and wives, we cannot also claim to be able to possess and exhibit these qualities in our service in the ministry of the church. Matthew 18:5-6 remind us of the urgency of ministering to families and children and of God's will and purpose in us as elders, as parents and as leaders in the homes and in the church. Churches' ministry toward families can never ever grow without Children-loving and children-caring pastors because children are at the heart of family life – they are the centre of parents' lives and they are the future church. Unless and until our churches have pastors who are deeply committed and passionate about the holistic growth and development of children, churches will never succeed in their ministry toward children and toward the entire household of God.

NEWS FLASH

Brief Reports on NCCI Pre Assembly Consultation in North East Region 2016 (28 - 29 March)

National Council of Churches in India Civil Society Joint Action to Strengthening a Pluralistic Society North East India Pre assembly Consultation on Challenges for freedom of Religion or belief in India, at Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), Guwahati. The consultation was organized by National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) in partnership with the CBCNEI. The main purpose of this consultation was to introduce the importance of Freedom of Religion or Belief in India, especially in North East India region.

Reports of the NCCI Youth Pre-Assembly 2016 (24 - 25 April)

The Youth Pre-Assembly of

NCCI met in Christ Church Boys' Senior Secondary School, Jabalpur, and deliberated on the theme, "TOWARDS YOUTHOPIA - A JI-FI COMMUNITY". JI-FI: (Pronounced jai-fai) Just and Inclusive Fidelity; JI- Just and Inclusive; FI- Fidelity. The Youth affirms that God is just an inclusive. The Youth firmly believes that in the household of God, we all are accommodated, and encouraged to live life in all its fullness in the Churches of India.

Reports on the National Council of Churches in India, XXVIII Quadrennial Assembly 2016 (27 - 30 April)

Mr. Rabindra Basumatary and Mr. Hriini Zho attended the National Council of Churches in India, XXVIII Quadrennial Assembly 2016, as representatives of the Council of Baptist Churches of North



East India, which was hosted by the Church of North India, Jabalpur Diocese. The Assembly was contemplated and reviewed the call and commitment of the Indian Ecumenical Movement by focusing the Assembly activities including the Business Sessions and cultural night on the theme; “Towards Just and Inclusive Communities”.

Taking over of Satribari Christian Hospital (5 May)

The official taking over program of SCH was held at the hospital chapel hall led by

Dr Lucita Momin, Medical Secretary of the Council. Short speech on behalf of the 4B Health Care was delivered by Mr A.K Goldsmith while Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary delivered a speech on behalf of the Council. Dr John R Sangma handed over the appointment letters followed by a special number from the SCH spiritual Dept. The

benediction was pronounced by Mrs Neisewheno Sirie, Chaplain, White Memorial Hostel.

Western Sumi Baptist Akukuhou Kuqhakulu Pastor’s Seminar (25 - 28 May)

This seminar has been jointly organized and conducted by WSBK and CBCNEI at L. M. Hall, CBCNEI, Guwahati. The topics discussed during the sessions were on “Church Organization and Administration”, “Building and Managing a Team: Pastor and his Associates” by



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, “The Art of Biblical Preaching” by Rev Dr A. K. Lama, Director South Asia, Words of Hope and “Integrity in financial management”, “Church budgeting and management” presented by Mr Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary, CBCNEI. Around 120 pastors and church leaders participated in the seminar.

Consultation on Disability at Shillong(10 - 12 May)

The CBCNEI Justice and Peace Ministries Department attended a workshop con-

ducted for the Faith Leaders on Disability Inclusion in North East India, organized by the World Vision India in collaboration with Presbyterian Church of India at Presbyterian Assembly House, Shillong. The intension of this workshop was to make churches and leaders across the region to be sensitive and responsive to the challenges of people living with disabilities in the society.

Teaching English to Speakers of other Language (9 - 20 May)

Two weeks of intensive pre-



paratory Missionary training program for both pre and on field intending candidates was organized by Mission Department of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) at CBCNEI conference hall, Guwahati, Assam in partnership with Asia Centre for Tesol based in Thailand. All together 20 participants from the Six conventions under the family of CBCNEI registered for the course. Sam Kukka

and Grace Dulay were the two teachers for the TESOL course. With positive response and successful second year in running of this TESOL course all the participants expressed their gratitude to Mission Department. After the completion of the two weeks course, certificates were awarded to all the successful participants. Continue to uphold in prayers that this course would be conducted every year for the





benefit of our Missionaries.

Environment Day celebrated (7 June)

CBCNEI along with the team from YES Bank, Guwahati branch planted saplings at the main compound in commemoration of the World's Environment day celebration.

A Regional Seminar on the Role of North East Women in Peace-building (7 - 10 June)

A Regional Seminar on the Role of North East Women in Peace-building was conducted at Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), Guwahati, Assam.

It was jointly organized by CBCNEI, Henry Martin Institute (HMI), and Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS). Gender Analysis of conflict and violence, Mapping Women in Conflict and conflict and violence in North East India were the main topics in the seminar.

Farwell program of Mr Biren Saikia (30 June)

Mr Biren Saikia joined CBCNEI on 1st July, 1981 and retired after 35 years of service as a peon in the Council's headquarter office. His selfless service towards the ministry of God is honored and acknowledged with



deepest gratitude by the Council. A short program was conducted at the main office conference hall and speeches on behalf of the office staffs were delivered by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai,

Mr Rabin Basumatary and Mr Gubibdra Rabha. Mr Saikia expressed his gratefulness towards CBCNEI and shared how a very new hindu- convert young man was gracefully accepted then in 1981 to be a peon and how his spiritual life became stronger each year serving in this ministry with many good and bitter experiences. Short exhortation was shared by Mr Vikato Shikhu and the blessing benediction prayer was offered by Rev T.P Mordecai. CBCNEI would like to extend our thankfulness and prayers to his family.



Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) accepted as full member of World Council of Churches (WCC)

CBCNEI under the leadership of Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi is jubilant over the achievement of yet another milestone in extending broader ministry as it acquired full membership in the highest ecumenical body in the global church during the WCC - Central Committee Meeting held at Tronsheim, Norway, from 22-28 June 2016. The WCC describes itself as "a worldwide fellowship of 349 global, regional and sub-regional, national and local churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service." Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi delivering the acceptance speech on behalf of the Baptist Churches in North East India was a proud moment of achievement for the members of CBCNEI. Three member churches were accepted as its full members this year and CBCNEI is one among them.

"It is indeed a moment of joy and jubilation to be a member of the WCC, sharing common vision that WCC has. I believe that God will continue to lead us and guide us as we continue to celebrate life of togetherness and envision oneness in Christ." Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi

During the meeting a book entitled "Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission", edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum and Roderick R. Hewitt was released. This book will give support to the study of



Together Towards Life as a text book for theological colleges all over the world.

Situation Vacant

Post: Front Desk Receptionist

Qualification: 10+2

Documents requirement:

- * 2 Passport size photo
- * HSLC & HSSLC mark sheets
- * Basic computer diploma
- * Recommendation from local church and convention

Criteria:

- * Organized and dependable person with good communication skills to answer phone and handle correspondence with basic computer knowledge.
- * Must be able to communicate atleast in Hindi and English.
- * Preferably a female candidate between the age of 25-35 years.
- * Outgoing and cheerful personality.

Written application addressed to the General Secretary with required documents and recent photo can be submitted to the main office on or before 15th of August, 2016 to the address given below:

**CBCNEI, Mission Compound
H.B Road, Panbazar, Guwahati
Assam- 781001, India
Phone: +91-361-2515829
Fax : +91-361-2544 447
eMail: info@cbcnei.in**

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

May 2015-April 2016

Officers of CBCNEI

President : Mr. K. Ch. Momin
Vice President : Rev. Halli Likha

Executive Committee Members

Assam Baptist Convention (ABC): Mr. R. K. Raychawdhury, Mr. Sukumar Momin

Arunachal Baptist Church Council (ABCC): Rev. Mikim Perme, Mr. Toko Katch

Garo Baptist Convention (GBC): Rev. Janang R. Sangma, Mr. R. D. Shira

Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC): Rev. Davidson Ingti, Mr. Joel Hanse

Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC): Rev. Dr. Wungnaoting Konghar, Rev. Peter Chiru

Nagaland Baptist Church Convention (NBCC): Rev. Dr. Z. Keyho, Rev. Dr. Mar Atsongchanger

Baptist Youth Fellowship of North East India (BYFNEI) representative; Rev. Mathotmi Vasha

Baptist Women Fellowship North East India (BWFNEI): Rev. Toshinano

Christian Literature Centre (CLC) representative: Rev. T. P. Mordecai

Easter Theological College (ETC): Rev. Dr. Akheto Sumi

Co-opted Members: Mr. Nshenthang Jishing, Rev. Apila Thangal

NECU: Rev. Dr. Anjo Keikung

Staff Position-Secretaries:

For the period under review the following serve as Secretaries in the CBCNEI:

1. Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, 2. Mr. Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary 3. Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, 4. Mr. Pawan Bhuyan, Property Secretary, 5. Mr. Atungo Shitri, Justice and Peace Secretary, 6. Dr. Lucita Momin, Medical Secretary. There are 23 regularized staff and 18 contractual staff.

Member Conventions

ABC — 6 Associations, 730 churches and 34471 members

ABCC – 19 Associations, 1027 churches and 92284 members

GBC – 12 Associations, 1 Centre, 2474 churches and 283923 members

KABC – 13 Associations, 314 churches and 32200 members

MBC – 29 Associations, 1292 churches and 190988 members

NBCC – 20 Associations, 4 associate members, 1566 churches and 572152 members

Associate members:

Shillong Baptist Church – 122 member

Evangelical Church of Maraland – No Report

Mising Baptist Kebang – 115 churches, 4300 members

Zomi Baptist Church – No Report

Total Number of Associations – 99

Total Number of Associate Members – 4

Total Number of Churches - 7518

Total Number of Baptised Members – 1210440

Program Participation

India Mission Coordination Committee (4-7 Apr, 2016): IMCC meeting was organized at SCEPTRE, Kolkata where Mr. Atungo and I participated as resource persons. The purpose of the meeting was to support and promote the implementation of the IMS Declaration. Issues recommended by the different Forums were discussed such as Religious Liberty, Youth, Women and Human Trafficking faced by our societies today. There were about 25 participants from all the 12 partners and it was a meaningful and successful meeting.

Consultation on Church Leaders and Key Affected People(15-16 May ,2015): Mr. Vikato and myself attended and participated in the NCCI Program jointly conducted with NCCI and PCI at PCI, Shillong. About 30 church leaders from different denominations and affected people from different parts on NEI attended the program. The church needs to give attention to the Key affected people in the churches and societies especially the sexual minorities like HIV Positives, transgender, and people with disabilities.

Christian Conference of Asia General Assembly(22-27 May ,2015): The 14th CCA General Assembly was held at Jakarta, Indonesia. The theme of the Assembly was “Living Together in the Household of God”. I and Mr. Vikato represented the Council. On our return we visited the Singapore Baptist Convention and the Singapore Baptist Theological College. I preached at Shalom Baptist Church on Sunday, on the 31st May 2015. We had good interactions with the Dean of the College and the President of the SBC, Rev. Dr. Anthony Yeoh on matters related to North East Christian University. He is very much interested to partner with NECU and offer himself to teach in the future. Very soon along with Dr. Anjo, I will be visiting both the College and the Singapore Baptist Convention in Singapore for further discussion.

North East India Transformation Congress: As per the discussion in the EC meeting in April, the CBCNEI will partner in organizing this Congress together with the Evangelical Fellowship of India and other denominations. There have been two meetings of the Planning Committee

to identify issues facing NEI today by our churches. The Planning Committee also appointed a research coordinator who will do the research work under the guidance of the Research Consultant, Rev. Dr. Leaderwell Ponggap, from Shillong. The tentative date for the Congress is 3-6 November 2016. The Planning Committee requested NBCC to host the Congress however; due to clash of events they are not able to do so. We are still trying to arrange the program to be held in Dimapur, Nagaland.

BWA General Assembly (22-26 July 2015): The BWA 21st General Assembly was held at Durban, South Africa. Many of us from NEI attended the Assembly. The theme was “Jesus Christ, the Door”. Excellent Group Bibles studies were held every morning and followed by specific issue-based consultations were organized on several topics. I attended on the issue of Indigenous People’s concern. The morning Bible studies on “Jesus Christ the True Shepherd” were really enlightening and inspiring. The next BWA Congress will be held in Brazil in 2020.

North East Christian University: With the able leadership of the Rev. Dr. Anjo Keikung, the NECU Council has met twice already and 9th October being the second council meeting. It is encouraging that the launching of the NECU is progressing. Mr. Huzo Meru is the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) for the development of the campus and land. He has done wonderful job of promoting and raising fund for NECU. There are several decisions made at the Council meeting and the Chancellor will report to us later. Since the CBCNEI Executive has appointed and commissioned Dr. Anjo, as the Chancellor and Chief Executive Director, as fulltime with effect from 1st March 2015. The third NECU Governing Council was held at Dimapur on 9 April 2016. There are important recommendations from NECU governing council which he will bring to us for formal approval or information or for discussion.

Other Programs Participated: Beside the official meetings with NECU, and departmental board meetings, I attended meeting on SCH with 4B Healthcare on 4th June; EFICOR Meeting at Delhi on 10th June; FMPB program on 9 July; visited Dimapur Lotha Church on 9 August; meeting with 4B Health care on 12 August; attended National Church Leaders

Consultation jointly organized by NCCI and CASA in Bangalore on 23-24 August and National Consultation on Key Affected People and Church Leaders at Delhi on 25-26 August; participated in the SIL-CBCNEI program from 1-4 September; participated the 6th Conference of the India Christian Media Association at Kolkata from 9-11 September 2015; attended the NCCI EC & AGM meeting at Ranchi from 21-24 September 2015. I also participated as the Keynote Speaker on the theme, "ENGAGE, ENCOUNTER, EDIFY" at the CBCNEI YOUTH FEST 2015 held at DABA, Dimpaur from 9-11 October 2015 where more than 500 youth leaders attended. It was a meaningful fellowship. Participated and presented a paper at the Fellowship of Indian Missiologists at Don Bosco University, SVD House, Azara, Guwahati from 13-16 October 2015 on "Digital Generation: Challenges and Missiological Response". Participated as a Resource person to the SABAK Pastoral Training jointly conducted by the CBCNEI and SABAK from 2-4 November 2015. I also participated at the ABC Pre-Centenary Celebration held at Nowgong from 7-8 November 2015 as a speaker. I also led the CBCNEI Staff Retreat Team to Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh from 13-16 November 2016. Visited Zunheboto from 21-23 November 2016 as an official visit where I could speak at the Mission Church and the Sataka Town Baptist Church. I participated in the Indigenous Peoples Reference Group Meeting at Geneva from 7-12 December 2015, a program of the World Council of Churches (WCC). I also participated in the Global Theological Initiatives (GTI) along with other theologians from NEI from 27-31st January 2015, at Delhi during which I also attended the Tangkhul Delhi Church where I spoke on Sunday worship service. As a member of the Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace Reference Group, I participated the Meeting at Bethlehem, in Israel from 11-18 February 2016. I also attended the NCCI EC and AGM at Nagpur from 15-17 March 2016. Lastly, I participate at the 8th ABCC Annual Assembly held at Mirbuk Baptist Church, Pasighat from 15-17 April 2016 as a speaker.

Finance: Mr. Vikato, the Finance Secretary, will present the overall detail income and expenditure of the Council for the year 2015-16. I would like to mention only the total figures. The budgeted amount was Rs.

3,46,29,874.00 and the total actual received is Rs. 3,03,03,296.00 and the total actual expenditure is Rs. 2,82,19,437.00. The detailed audited report has been provided in your files.

Mission

Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai is the Secretary of the Mission and Evangelism Department. He has conducted several Mission programs within this period of time. He also participated and attended in Mission Consultation of Krima No. IV of Garo Baptist Convention, Mission Consultation of Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang (ABAM), and attended the Nagaland Missionary Conference held at Dimapur organized by the Nagaland Mission Movement. During the period mentioned he conducted the following programs:

Missionary Pastors' Training (Jun 1-27, 2015):

In partnership with the West Virginia Baptist Convention and all the State Conventions and Councils of CBCNEI, the Mission Department conducted Missionary Pastors Training in five different locations. All together 161 Missionary Pastors and leaders participated in the training. The main focus of the training was to train Pastors on personal spiritual development, pastoral care and Bible study methods to take care of the churches and fellowships they are looking after.

Cross Cultural Missionary Training Program (Aug 10-21, 2015): This year the Training was focused on TESOL in partnership with the Asia Center for TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other Languages), Chiangmai. All together 17 participants from various Conventions, participated in the TESOL training. Grace Dulay and Jannine Coombe from Asia Centre for TESOL, were the two teachers for the training. During the intensive two week training, the participants were introduced to techniques of teaching English to other native speaking people groups. The purpose of this training is to produce a successful and effective missionary with basic knowledge of communication and evangelism skills.

Advanced Mission Leaders' Training (Sept30 – Oct 2, 2015): A special

Mission leaders' training was conducted for our Mission leaders at CBCNEI Campus. All together 35 leaders participated in the training. The Topics such as, "*Envisioning for Greater Impact*", "*Diaspora Mission Opportunity*", "*Present Mission Trends in the world*" and "*Understanding ethnicity and diversity from Mission's perspective*" were taught in the training. The purpose of the training was to broaden the outlook of the Mission leaders and see opportunities in Mission.

Kids for Mission: Under this project head, we were able to support the mission work of the Conventions by providing Goats for needy families in mission fields as well as for very low paid evangelists. ABC, ABCC, KABC, MBC and NMM were beneficiaries of this project.

Sunday School Teachers' Training (Nov24-26, 2015): In partnership with Christian Education Evangelical Fellowship of India (CEEFI), a three day Sunday school Teachers' Training was conducted at CBCNEI campus. All together 49 participants comprising of Sunday school teachers, Directors, Superintendent from Six conventions of CBCNEI family participated in the training. For many, this was their first time attending this type of training. It was an eye opener for more creative teaching skills. Many of them committed that they will be more committed to their work and be more sensitive to understand the needs of every child. They also committed to do their best to bring the children closer to God in their teaching. VBS grant was given to 28 selected needy churches under CBCNEI.

The Mission Secretary, Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai attended in many other Programs of the churches in GBC, ABAM, SABAK, ABC, MBC, Quiquanniell celebration of KRCBA and CRBCA. These programs include mission consultation, retreat, leadership training, celebration of pre centenary Jubilee and mission conference.

Property

Mr. Pawan Bhuyan has been looking after the Properties of CBCNEI for the last 15 years. He has been very active and careful in dealing with all property matters. The followings are some of the work done during the

year.

Buildings renovation & repairing: With the increase of staff residing inside the campus, provision of quarters is a challenge with no adequate infrastructure to accommodate their families. Limited facilities available were renovated and repaired to accommodate the staffs in sharing basis.

Most of the buildings are old and in dilapidating conditions, for which during this heavy monsoon season we experienced roof leakages everywhere. Considerable amount of funds were spent in replacing the CGI sheets etc.

WM Hostel toilets were repaired & renovated as a first phase work. Other areas in dining, kitchen, staff quarters are yet to be done due to shortage of fund. Security grills fitted in few windows, boundary wall in vulnerable areas need to be raised and barbed due to recent theft cases in the hostel and miscreants climbing the wall. The major roof leakages in the hostel building could not be done and we are still exploring fund to do the immediate works. The hostellers are suffering so much now due to the leakage and the security of the campus is of great concern.

LM Hostel Auditorium outer wall had been re-plastered with cement and painted.

Campus Safety Rules & Regulations: It was reviewed with entry & parking of vehicles policy strengthened for safety of the campus. Sign boards & Notices were put up in the security gate and self reliance buildings for effective implementation & close supervision.

Conference Centre Complex: Regular maintenance with development and up-gradation works in progress as this facility is the major revenue income of the Council.

Tenants in SRP I & II, STH Shillong, SCH Satribari: Regular monitoring and supervision of the tenants of the Council are carried out for uninterrupted flow of revenue. This is the second major source of revenue of the Council.

Jorhat Christian Medical Centre Land Matters: There is an encroached plot behind the Hospital Go down. It was decided to sell to the encroacher at a nominal price. The matter is still in process and was delayed due to change in leadership in the hospital management. However with the new leadership in the management, the matter would be settled at an early date.

Boundary wall construction behind staff quarters: The boundary protection is crucial with the vulnerability of the campus from potential encroachment. Due to fund constraints some areas are yet to be fenced permanently. However, the hospital management is requested to prioritize this matter and construct the boundary wall in phase manner as early as possible.

Land allotment document to Iswar Prem Baptist Church: With the absence of proper document related to the exact demarcated area and site plan, the allotment to the church could not be decided. The church is therefore requested to send the documents through the hospital management for further action.

CLCRC Project with ARLDF: The project was almost inactive for long months due to fund constraints and ARLDF change in leadership. The core committee of the project met with the new leadership of our partner organization and inspects the site for possible expansion and growth. We could now see some progress although the ARLDF is slow in implementing the proposed expansion. The ARLDF is requested to speed up the project expansion and also effectively sustain and improve the ongoing activities. The hospital management needs to regularly monitor the activities of the project and update the Council.

Development of Headquarter campus at Panbazar: The members were informed that so far nothing concrete on the development of the panbazar campus has come up. The development trust committee is not able to sit for quite some time. The main issue is to have the master plan for the campus, which requires lot of effort and brainstorming on what activities to have and expand the existing programmes that will continue for next ten to fifteen years in phase manner.

Construction of 1st floor Jubilee Complex building Phase II: The 1st floor construction of the Jubilee Complex phase II is almost over. The earlier tenant who was supposed to occupy, declined at the last moment and the office had to re-work on finding prospective tenants. One part of the floor will now be occupied by State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur branch most likely from April 2016. The other part is under negotiation from prospective tenants.

SIMNEI Premise in STH, Shillong: The construction of the 1st floor of SIMNEI occupied building at STH, Shillong would be carried out in partnership with SIMNEI. The MoU is almost finalized and SIMNEI would fund the entire project and the Council would do the construction. The advance loan would be adjusted on the rent which SIMNEI itself would occupy. The project is expected to start from this year once the necessary permission is obtained from the concerned government authority.

Justice and Peace

Relief Work: Mr. Atungo Shitri, the Secretary for Justice and Peace, visited Nepal along with Baptist Church leaders from APBF to assess the damage done by the earthquake in collaboration with the NBCC-MCDS and worked on a proposal for immediate relief with a special focus on the rural and outskirts of Katmandu City where NGOs and government agencies did not reach enough. The total collection for Nepal earthquake Relief was rupees 5,44,303.00 from within CBCNEI churches and institutions. Through the Justice and Peace department relief assistance to Manipur Flood was sent to MBC.

Seminar of Religious Freedom(24-25 July 2015): It was jointly organized by Alliance Defending Freedom India and CBCNEI. The main purpose of this seminar is to seek justice and equality for the minority religious groups in India. The participants were lawyers, community leaders, students and church leaders from CBCNEI areas.

Seminar on Bible and Baptist Unity and Conflict Transformation (19th August 2015): This seminar was jointly organized and sponsored by the NBCC for three associations under Peren district of Nagaland. About 145 pastors, church leaders and women leaders attended the program.

The program focuses on the growing Christian fundamentalist attack on the unity of the church today.

Interns from USA: The department also supervised two interns, Mr. Micah and Mrs. Molly, from BIM, who have been engaged in several Seminars and Teaching sessions with various institutions. They organized seminars/workshops in OTS, SBS, HTC, WTC, TTC, Youth fest 2015 and KABC women department on financial accountability/management and trauma and family counseling.

Relief Assistance to Karbi Anglong (1st Feb 2016): Justice & Peace Department of CBCNEI together with Church Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) conducted a relief camp for the Karbi Anglong cyclonic storm affected victims which happened on 9 January 2016. The team distributed some relief stuff/materials to 693 families in 34 villages.

Conflict Transformation Training (TOT) (9-18 Feb 2016): An extensive 10-days Training of Conflict Transformation Trainers in Baguio City, Philippines for people from Asia and the Pacific. It was organized by IM Global Consultant, Dr. Dan Buttry and 9 participants representing 5 Conventions, led by the Justice and Peace Ministries Secretary participated.

National Consultation (9-11 Feb 2016): The Justice and Peace Ministries assistant, Mr. Hriini Zho, participated in the national consultation on “Tolerance and Intolerance: Towards a Theological Musing about Indian Society Today” organized by the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology (ISET) and Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC), Bengaluru.

Solidarity Visit to Churachanpur, Manipur: With the initiative of Mr. Atungo, the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), General Secretary along with other Secretaries and representatives from Manipur Baptist Convention peace committee visited Churachanpur District Manipur State on 1 March 2016, and met key Church and community leaders to express our solidarity; and to meet the victims’ families; and appeal for peace to the people and Manipur Government to undertake constructive measures to break the impasse over the issue of the 3 Bills by way of a press release.

Reviews and Drafts: The Justice and Peace Secretary have been helping in the review and amendment of CBCNEI Constitution and Service Rules in consultation with the committee members for EC deliberation. Review and amendment of the CBCNEI Medical Board constitution and service rules and policies are also drafted by him in consultation with the committee members and submitted to Medical Board.

Consultation on Religious Freedom in NEI Region (28-29 Mar, 2016): The NCCI Pre-Assembly Consultation on Religious Freedom was jointly conducted at CBCNEI Campus. He also presented a paper on legal provisions on religious liberty under the Constitution of India with special focus on NEI. It was a meaningful, relevant and important consultation.

BYFNEI

The ministry of BYFNEI organized Music and Worship Seminar at Itanagar from ABCC where 65 youth leaders and worship leaders attended the program. The CBCNEI YOUTH FEST 2015 was organized at DABA from 9-11 October 2015 hosted by NBCC YOUTH, where 565 registered delegates participated and more than 800 youth from different Conventions attended the festival. The President BYFNEI (CBCNEI) declared that the Garo Baptist Convention will be the next host of the Youth Fest in 2020.

Healing Ministry

Dr. Lucita Momin is the Medical Secretary and she has been very effective in taking care of the six hospitals. The important events, achievements and also the overall progress of the healing ministry of the Council so far are as follows.

Impur Christian Hospital: Dr. Bendang Ao is the Medical Superintendent. After Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang (ABAM) took over ICH management from CBCNEI on 17.02.2015, quite a lot of activities started at a fast pace. ABAM entrusted the ICH to a Board of Trustee under the Convenorship of Dr. Sashi (Retd.) Health & Welfare Officer. A Vocational Training Centre was inaugurated on 18.05.2015. Midwifery Assistant Course started from 19.05.2015 with 24 students. Miss Akumjungla, M.Sc.

Nursing as Tutor and Dr. Bendang Ao is helping in Anatomy and Physiology classes. This course is for 10 months and recognized by the Government of India. First batch completed the course in March 2016 and second batch started their course from 8 March, 2016 with another 24 students. Up gradation of Laboratory by attaching a Microbiology wing was done. New portable X-ray machine has been installed. A billing computer ND printer is installed. Upgradation of ICH through NEC project is still carrying on. Kitchen with bathroom and toilets for inpatients and attendants is donated by Mr. Tushitsungba, IGP (NAP). Construction of retaining wall, light wiring and plumbing are completed. Borehole well with overhead RCC reservoir completed. Three new appointments done: a) Miss Akumjungla, M.Sc. Nursing Tutor from 01.05.2015. b) Miss Narorena, M.Sc. MLT (Microbiology and Immunology) from 01.09.2015. c) Miss Imtinaro, PPBSc as staff Nurse from 11.03.2015.

Kangpokpi Christian Hospital: Dr. Thangkhanpiang Hatzaw is the Medical Superintendent. KCH is still facing manpower crisis and financially down with limited human resources and standardized equipments but God is with KCH and could still serve the poor, sick and needy ones. Hospital building first floor construction work is in progress – so far one room has been completed. Project for NEC grant for hospital equipments and instrument is under process. Request for an appointment of a doctor is still on. There is a request for fund for KCH Centenary Guest House. They also need Fund for completion of three class rooms for Nursing School. There is a great need to mobilize the MBC Churches for full cooperation to the healing ministry. Dr. K. Marilio, sponsored candidate of CBCNEI who is serving at SCH at present, will be transferred to KCH for 3 months beginning from 1st May, 2016. Procurement of pucca patta for mission land is under process. The chimney and roof of Medical Superintendent Bungalow is repaired (damaged by 4th January, 2016 earthquake which hit Manipur). Three big rooms constructed for nursing class rooms is on progress and will be completed by within 2 months. KCH Nursing School needs teaching aids and library up gradation. Up gradation of ANM Nursing School to GNM Nursing School is a neces-

sity. Two students secured 9th and 10th positions in Top Ten in the last Council Examination held in November, 2015.

Jorhat Christian Medical Centre: Among all the six hospitals JCMC is doing better. Dr. Esther R. D. Liani was the Medical Superintendent and Dr. Colin Lawrence was the Chief Administrator of the JCMC. Dr. Lawrence joined his duty from the 20th August 2015. From October 2014 ICU seat has been increased to 14 bedded with 80% occupancy. Miss S. Tongpangkola Ozukum has been appointed as Principal, School of Nursing JCMC from 1st September, 2015. Two new Tutors for the Nursing School has been appointed and approved by the Medical Board. School of Nursing JCMC new building has been completed and a new class has started for the new batch of students. Dr. Esther Liani and Dr. Colin Lawrence resigned for their personal reasons one after the other.

Dr. Seniorita N. Sangma Singh, Pathologist took over the charge of Medical Superintendent of JCMC from 5th February, 2016, after Dr. Esther RD Liani's resignation. Dr. Sangma has been working in Mission Hospitals since last 15 years. Extension of Cabins two Rooms; Children ward renovation; Hostel bathroom, toilet renovation and construction of septic tank have been done. Water pump project is completed. There is a need of 30 bedded dormitories for Staff Nurses. Nursing School bus preferably 25-50 seater is needed. There is a need for separate Boys Hostel. Proposed to buy endoscopy machine on 70% – 30% partnership basis with tea-board. Dialysis room near ICU initiated by Dr. Dipak Sharma Cardiologist JCMC with Rotary Club is on process. Boundary wall around the Nursing School and Hostel is needed.

Donation and gift for JCMC: 1. Wheel Chair by SBI, 2. Ambulance – 1 nos (Maruti Ecco) by SBI, 3. Sintex Water Tank (4 nos) and LG Refrigerator (2 nos) from World Vision, Jorhat ADP.

Tura Christian Hospital: Dr. Jedidah Sangma is the Medical Superintendent. There is a change of timing for the OPD. This change has brought some positivity on income side as well as to the convenience of the patients at large. Decisions were taken collectively in the ADMC meeting and from the suggestion of doctors and nurses and other staff of

TCH. New High Dependency Unit with Dr. Benjamin S. Sangma, MD, joining in the TCH has given a moral boost to the Hospital and the new HDU has been installed at TCH with his initiative, which was dedicated by Rev. Dr. Wetterfield R. Marak, Pastor, Tura Baptist Church. Also New Software connection is completed.

TCH is one of the oldest Hospitals of Meghalaya – established in 1908. Presently houses 75 bedded General Hospital. There is Manpower crisis mainly due to shortage of nurses. Unpaid bill of about Rs.30 lacs from MHIS still not realized. With the help of Dr. Benjamin S. Sangma, TCH is starting a dialysis unit along with the HDU. TCH has approached Rajya Sabha MP Smt. Wansuk Syiem and Dalmia Cement Pvt. Ltd. for the financial assistance and the response has been very positive. To generate more income, the hospital is also trying to procure a Coffee machine. Hospital has also purchased a Sony TV set and installed at OPD for the patients/attendants.

Babupara Christian Hospital: Established in February, 1949, BCH has been improving under the leadership of Dr. J.R.N. Sangma, an Eye Specialist who joined in 2008 on a contract basis. As there was no full time Medical Officer joining of Dr. J.R.N. Sangma has fulfilled that vacuum to some extent. Hospital building mostly the roof is under renovation. Concrete road from hospital gate to hospital entrance is completed. Need of a water tank and water supply to entire hospital campus is pending. There is a need for RCC extension of the hospital. Installation of street light inside the campus is pending. There is great need for hospital boundary wall construction.

Satribari Christian Hospital: Satribari Christian Hospital has been handed over for management to the 4B Healthcare since 2010. However, the 4B Healthcare could not fulfill all the commitments they had made and the hospital is facing lot of mismanagement issues. Therefore, we have decided to take it back from 4B Healthcare and the process of taking over is on the progress. Hopefully we will be able to take over from within this October 2015. At the moment Mr. Amrith Kumar Goldsmith is the Chief Executive Officer appointed by the 4B Healthcare

for till the time we take over. Dr. Dolly Mazumder was the Medical Superintendent but recently she resigned due to heavy cases to attend being a gynecologist. So for time being with the understanding, Dr. Lucita is helping as the honorary Medical Superintendent till the time of taking over from 4B Healthcare.

This year we had 86 applicants who applied for MBBS/BSC/Physiotherapy for Christian Medical College, Vellore and Ludhiana. 56 students were short listed for the online written exam in which only 15 students were selected provisionally. 13 students qualified for the final round of interview both at CMC Vellore and Ludhiana in which two students got selected for admission at CMC, Vellore. Unfortunately, we could not get the privilege in CMC, Ludhiana. The two students under CBCNEI sponsorship who got admission at CMC, Vellore for MBBS course 2015 are a) Miss Kalibo Jakhalu and b) Mr. Kevingulie Savino.

SCH is approaching to celebrate its Centenary in 2026 – after 10 years. The whole hospital and the compound with its quarters need renovation. Management of SCH is changed from 1st April 2016, after CBCNEI and 4B Healthcare Pvt. Ltd has signed the agreement of disengagement on 28th March 2016. Dr. John R.N. Sangma, Eye Specialist took over the charge of Medical Superintendent of SCH from 1st April, 2016. Staff resignation and re-appointment is on the way and on 5th May 2016 re-appointment of the Staff will be completed.

A new ventilator was bought for CCU in November 2015. Long time need of the School of Nursing for a Bus has been fulfilled in February 2016, when school could buy a 32 seater TATA Starbus with loan. Another long time dream to buy a USG machine will be fulfilled towards the end of April 2016. Construction of 3 toilets in Nursing School completed. Renovation of one Duplex quarter with two units of toilets and bathroom with septic tank completed. Renovation of Geriatric Ward has to increase the number of beds from 5 – 15 bedded as there is much demand. Books for library of latest edition were purchased for the nursing school library. Girls Hostel of School of Nursing (SoN) needs urgent repairing. To upgrade the number of seat for SoN from 20-40. To upgrade the school

from GNM to B.Sc College of Nursing.

Every ministry is likely to face tough challenges due to many reasons said and unsaid. The Mission run Hospitals is not an exceptions here. We are always in shortage of manpower. We must earnestly request the local Churches and Associations to encourage and nurture the Youths for the service of humanity and render their service in helping people and also to be a leader of the institutions. In short, we need totally committed doctors and staff.

BWFNEI:

Dr. Lucita Momin is made to be in charge of the BWFNEI. However, she has not been able to get involved in the concerns of the fellowship so far. Miss Lhingboi of MBC is the Secretary and Miss T. Narola Longkumer is the President of the BWFNEI. The triennial meeting of BWFNEI is scheduled to be held at Pasighat in October 2016.

Student Ministry:

Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai Secretary Mission Department CBCNEI is taking charge of the Student Ministry. There are three Hostels where we cater boys and girls pursuing their studies in Guwahati and Shillong.

Lewis Memorial Hostel in Guwahati has 57 boarders with Mr. Talimao Jamir as the Chaplain. Some of the programs and activities of the hostel are selection of new boarders done on June 20th 2015 and selected 23 students; orientation was held on 4th August 2015; Fresher's day observed on 14th August 2015. Seminar on Youth Leadership was conducted in partnership with Immanuel Business School, Hyderabad; get together fellowship with Youth Harvest Ministry was conducted on 14 July 2015. Program on Building dreams—shaping lives was also conducted; hostel sports was also conducted for three days; retreat was organized from 8-10 October and many hostellers recommitted their lives to God.

White Memorial Hostel for Girls in Satribari, Guwahati has 49 girl students at the moment under the motherly care of Mrs. Neisewheno Sirie (Chaplain). The hostel also does programs such as fund raise for fare-

well party and picnic by selling tea and snacks. The hostel is also helping Rs. 500/- per month to a staff of Campus Crusade for Christ as mission contribution. They also have regular programs like fresher's day, annual camp, sports, memory verse competition, hymn practice etc. This hostel needs urgent attention on the security and deplorable condition of the building. The roof leakage is increasing as the monsoon rain comes and the wall is too low for thieves and intruders to come inside easily. The toilets and bathrooms need total renovation as it is outside the hostel without any security.

Shillong Tyrannus Hall has 30 boys under the guardianship of Rev. K. C. Gaila. Tyrannus Hall is working out to add 8 more rooms for a total of 45 boys. Regular programs are like orientation, fresher's day, sports together with Lydia Hall girls, Outing cum Picnic, Bible camp combined with Lydia Hall, special prayer day observed and the Advent Christmas.

Students from across the North East states are enrolled in our CBCNEI Hostels. We are proud that every year the passed out graduates are able to stand on their feet and with Christ centered life. Testimonies of some graduates and their present status in the society have made our Hostel Ministry more proud of their achievements. Our CBCNEI Hostel ministry has been a blessing to both the students and also the society by producing more God fearing and responsible citizens

Partnership with ARLDFIT: Asian Rural Life Development Foundation, India Trust, is in partnership with CBCNEI since 2015. Under it, Seven Sisters Home operates as a Government registered Children Home under the authority of the India Juvenile Justice Act. Services include medical and psychological care, education, life skills training, and vocational training. The goal is to help the children become independent adults so that they can become productive and good members of the society. Currently, there are twenty four children are living and receiving care at the Home. The project employs 25 part time and full time staff, including social worker, Psychologist, Administrators, Teachers, Cooks, Drivers, and Care-Coordinationers.

Theological Education

The only theological institution of the Council is the Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, Assam. Rev. Dr. Akheto Sumi is the present Principal and Dr. Narola Imchen the Vice Principal. Dr. Akheto has been visiting several places to raise funds for the college and establish partnership with other churches. Dr. Narola takes care of the full academic related affairs. The strength of the students of BD students is 226, M. Th 26, altogether 252 students. The overall result is good. M. Th. 4 students got first class, 13 students got B+ and 3 students passed in B grade. This year we could give theological scholarships to BD/M. Div. students, M. Th. and D. Th. and D. Min students from all over CBCNEI churches and studying in different theological colleges. Policy of granting scholarship has been slightly changed.

This is for your information that all BD candidates must study from the affiliated colleges if wishes to avail the CBCNEI scholarship. Scholarship for M. Th. and above will be for the purpose of faculty development.

Christian Literature Centre

Rev. T. P. Mordecai is the new Director of CLC. He has been doing well for the last 12 months. He has participated and attended several programs related to literature ministry. Under his able leadership many projects have been accomplished. 1. Hymnal Project: The Moyon hymnal, Tangkhul hymnal, Meitei Hymnal, MBC Hymnal and Liangmai hymnals have been completed. The Tarao, Maring and Rongmei hymnals are on the way. 2. Bible Project: Tangkhul Naga Bible (Bonded Leather with Zip of BSI) = 2000 copies (June 2015), Tangkhul Naga Bible (Bonded Leather with Zip of BSI) = 2000 copies in process, Manipuri Bible (BSI or IBS) = 2000 copies yet to process and Anal Bible (Bonded Leather with Zip of BSI) = 3000 copies under Process. 3. School Books Printing Project: My Table Book (reprint)= 3000 copies - In the Press, My Alphabet Book (Reprint)= 3000 copies, My Nursery Rhymes-1 (Reprint) = 3000 copies, My Table Book 1-50 =3,000 copies and My Number book 1-50 = 3000 copies, envelops for NMM = 3,00,000 copies. List of books which are ready are as many as 26 books and

Bibles. One of the new challenges taken by CLC is the online sales at Amazon which is started from March 21, 2016. CLC has contributed 3,50,00/- towards the other ministries of CBCNEI and also printed both Calendar and Diary for CBCNEI.

Altogether there are 27 staff in all the five branches of CLC. The branches are located in Guwahati, Imphal, Dimapur, Senapati. New sales counters are in Chumukedima in Nagaland and Khuman Lampak, Imphal in Manipur. I personally thank the Director for his effort to develop the Literature Ministry to the best of his ability and knowledge. I believe with his able leadership, the CLC will continue to grow.

I conclude this report with sincere thanks to all my colleagues in the CBCNEI Headquarters, Staff, and those in the semi-autonomous bodies-CLC, BWFNEI, BYFNEI, for their participation in carrying out the responsibilities assigned to us by the member conventions of the CBCNEI. We are grateful to all our churches for partnering with us in different ways, through their prayers, financial and other resources, personal participation, etc. in the life and work of the CBCNEI. I also thank our partners International Ministries (IM) and national partners for their encouraging and empowering relationships. My thanks go out to the Members of the Executive Committee and all its related committees, and my friends for all the guidance and support given to the work of CBCNEI. A special word of gratitude to the President and the Vice-President for journeying with me and the entire CBCNEI Team in carrying out the tasks set before us. Above all I thank God who blesses us and challenges us to be committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ; and also for granting me the grace, wisdom and health to carry out all the responsibilities laid upon me.

Faithfully Submitted



Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI

Livelihood Project: Small Scale Entrepreneurship

Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) sponsored project through Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), implemented by Foundation for Church Society (FCS)

An initiative of Oriental Theological Seminary (OTS) under Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC)



My name is Wekokhro Medo. I live in Bade village, Dimapur. I and my family want to thank CBCNEI/NBCC-FCS for the financial and moral support in opening a Grocery shop. I was challenged and motivated to open the grocery shop in my village as there was

no local people running a shop. All the shops were run by non locals which has a huge negative impact on the economy of the local people. All of the local people who started this kind of shop always fail and were gradually forced to close their shops. And people have this opinion that local people are not meant to run a shop. Taking it as a challenge and more as an opportunity, because I know almost all of the villagers would like to buy from a shop run by a local people, I started the shop. It was difficult at first as I struggle with low capital investment and low profit. It was a big challenge as I compete with the non local shopkeepers who always seem to be able to afford to sell commodities at a lower price. I began to understand that it was one of their tactics to force shut down the shop of



a contender especially of a local people. It motivated me to work harder and not give up. I began to search everywhere to get goods and commodities at a lower price so that I can stay up with the competition, and even beat them if possible. Sometimes, I used to go to Assam (a neighboring state) to get things at a cheaper price. And I manage to sell some of the commodities at a lower price than my non local friends. I enjoy marketing and learning to count even a few paises which I never did before. Now my non local friends, realizing that I am not going to give up, have given up to put me down. Today, I can say that I am doing fine and probably have proven wrong the old notion of my people. I am delighted as I observe my shop growing each day. Once again, I want to say Thank you to CBCNEI/NBCC-FCS for helping me to start my grocery shop. May God bless you!



My name is Kukhrusayi Hoshi. I live in Bade village, Dimapur Nagaland. It has been a few years since I finished my studies and staying jobless. Being jobless is one of the most frustrating moments in life. I tried looking for without being successful till today.

I thought of doing business but don't have enough capital money to invest with. Today, I am really grateful to CBCNEI/NBCC-FCS for helping me to start a poultry farm. I constructed a thatch house and bought a few chickens with the money. I am enjoying rearing the chickens as I observe them growing rapidly every day. I go and observe other people who are rearing the same and get tips from them too. Now I have better skills and knowledge to look after. I want to expand my poultry farm into a bigger one where I can employ more people and export even to other districts in Nagaland. I have come to learn that we have better climates to rear broiler chicken than in other colder and hilly regions. This give me a good business opportunity as I plan to rear chicken and export them to those places who has less advantages in this area. Lastly, I thank CBCNEI/NBCC-FCS again for helping to start this poultry farm. I am not jobless anymore.





Cuvove Churhah is uneducated.

His father died when he (Cuvove) was just 3 years. He grew up as a hard working child helping his widowed mother. He has two sisters and three brothers who are all farmers. Cuvove got married and he has 9 children. Due to financial constrain none of his children could make it to class 10. Life is pathetic for this family; however, Cuvove is hard working and skilled in wood works. When he was selected as one of the recipients of Small Scale Entrepreneurship Development

scheme, he said, **"I am so happy. I don't know what to say? Now, I will work very hard with these precious machines to support my family."** He goes on to say that, he will try to engage in all kinds of carpentry works such as wood carving, furniture, house construction, etc. CBCNEI/NBCC-FCS is happy to play a small part in helping a needy family for survival and prays for God's blessings upon the agency that has extended financial assistance.



My name is Huveto Khamo.

I live in Bade village, Dimapur Nagaland. I graduated from Oriental Theological Seminary in 2015. It has always been my dream to establish a tent making ministry but financial scarcity became a big challenge for my ministry. I have a dream to serve the youth

outside the church institution and reach out the unreached and make a difference in the life of those who are been neglected and marginalized. As I was struggling to set up a furniture shop, which I intend it to become a model in displaying the culture of dignity of labor, CBCNEI/NBCC-Foundation for Church and Society Oriental Theological Seminary (FCS) came to my aid. I am grateful to CBCNEI/NBCC and God for providing me financial support at the right time. I was able to buy some basic machines like Planner, Router, Circular Saw and some miscellaneous tools which are primary tools as a carpenter. There are many youths in my area roaming around without a job. I believe the biggest problem in unemployment is not because there is scarcity of job but because people are not willing to work due to laziness, lack of motivations, and mostly lack



of proper guidance and encouragement. This workless culture is encouraged when educated people refused to do manual works as if it is below their dignity to do the same. I want to educate the people about the value of dignity of labor regardless of the status. I intend to expand my area of work and reach out to more people to work together. My goal is to let people earn their livelihood and simultaneously teach people to help one another. Right now, there are only two of us working on the project. I hope more people will be able to join us soon. As I expand my business, profit is also among the objectives of which I intend to help poor students who are struggling financially to study. It is just a humble beginning to a big dream. But I believe nothing is too big if God is willing. I am always passionate and energetic believing God has a special calling for me in this area. I strongly believe that it was God who has put the vision and the passion in my heart. Once again, I want to thank CBCNEI/NBCC-FCS for helping me to start my dreams and visions.

In the Household of

A GAPE

Text: I Corinthians 13:13 “and now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is Love”



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No word is exceptionally as magnetizing and intriguing as the word “love” either in secular and sacred arena. In the taxonomy of definition, “love” is multifarious with the diversity of ways in which it has developed. It is a liberal term which scarcely serves a matter of research nor challenged, not withstanding its primary importance in the New Testament writings, especially, Pauline corpus. However, the notion of various definitions raised a host of questions about how the texts of the New Testament convey the very concept “love” despite its catholicity. Apparently, the first Epistle of Paul to Corinthians gives a vivid elucidation on this. Thus, the concept of love will be examined within the context of I Corinthians 13:13 to stimulate reflections on church’s contemporary experiences.

The Synopsis of Love in Pauline Corpus

The concept of love is one of the central ideas expressed throughout Pauline writings. Lexically, extra biblical Greek has various expression for love; *Phileo*, *stergo*, *eros* and *agapao*. *filia*, referred to the affection of friends and kindred spirits (or a liking for something); *Storgh* (compound, *filo*,*storgoi*) means ‘natural affection’ (as between a mother and child); *Erwj*, the attraction of desire, especially in sexual love, and *agape*, the self-giving love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, which is the motivating power and pattern of Christian living.¹ All these four ‘loves’ in common denote at one and the same time an inner state of feeling or disposition of the heart, plus an attitude of mind or way of thinking, and also a way of behaving, acting or reacting, towards the object(s) of love.²

Paul divulges the profoundest version to the Christian understanding of love and acknowledged God as God of love (II Cor 13:11) whereby he is the object of God’s love (Gal. 2:20). God is the source of love and even that of the acts of human love (I Cor. 8:3). As such, the proof of God’s love is pronounced superlatively when he extended an unconditional grace to the worst sinner (Rom. 5:8-10).

The centrality of *agape* is explicitly seen throughout Pauline writings. In each of love centered discussion, Paul’s thought submerges into the edification of the church in the form of unity and harmonious living (I Th. 4:1-12; Phi. 2:1-18; Eph. 4:1-16; Col.3:12-17). In that, love serves as a perfecter of other virtues. For, those virtues by themselves are nothing without love. In this regards, E. Stauffer stated: “Love builds up (I Cor. 8:1), and builds the work of the future because of which it is always central when linked with faith, hope and other Christian virtues (I The.1:3; Col 1:4-5).”³

Notably, the idea of love is so prominent in Pauline epistles that it becomes a style of address ('beloved' Rom. 1:7; I Thes 14; II Thes. 2:13; Rom. 16:12). For Paul, love is a bridge for Christian that connects him/her to God in spite of the oppositions (Rom. 8:39). He affirms that in Christ nothing matters except faith activated by love (Rom. 5:6). In this way, the fundamental importance of love is affirmed throughout Pauline writings.

"In the household of agape": An Exegetical Outlook (I Cor. 13:13)

The first letter of Paul to the Corinthians is marked by its chaotic issues and miscellaneous problems prevailing in the church. The issues revolve around moral and ethical disorderliness in the church and in social conduct - divisions, sexual immorality, lawsuits, misuse of freedom, disorderliness in public worship and resurrection. Amid the problems, it is surprising to observe that one of the finest and sublimed themes in the entire Bible 'love' is enclosed within. Therefore, it is a matter of query what love meant and what is the main idea behind its interpolation within the subject matter of gifts in the Epistle.

The Setting: Paul founded the church at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17), a trading center and a city highly sophisticated in worldly advancement. In such context, the existence of chaos and evil influences in the church is almost satisfactory. In the immediate context, I Corinthians 13: 13 fall within the scope of I Corinthians 12-14 and sandwiches the two chapters both of which stress on the operations of Spiritual gifts. This implies that the 'love' chapter should be understood within the framework of discussion on Spiritual gifts (though its place is sometime questioned as "a non-Pauline interpolation" -because of its interrupting emphasis between the two chapters).⁴

In this pericope, the stress is given to the supremacy of *avgaph* over against other spiritual gifts such as tongues, prophecy, knowledge, and benevolence. These gifts are said to be temporal (13:8), while love alone is projected as eternal. However, the setting of the text suggests that Paul's main concern lies not in the infinity of love but in the proper functions of gifts. Relatively, gifts are endowed to each individual differently just as God wills for the common good. Hence, equal importance and same care should be given to each endowment.

In the following chapter, it becomes clear that the crux of what trouble the Corinthian church was practical issues pertaining to speaking in tongues. They are obsessed with exercising spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues, evidently to the detriment of common edification and even their growth in grace. To this, Paul rhetorically brings *agape* as the basis to judge against any manifestations of spirit. For, *agape* alone emerges a sense of unity and edification in the church.

Love as the key to edification: 1 Cor 13:13

By using *apodosi* *eva.n*, Paul characterizes the meaninglessness of spiritual gifts in the absence of 'love.' The word *eva.n* with subjunctive verb *lalw/* expresses a sense of possibility or uncertainty. This suggests that the list in 13:1-3 may be possible but even then, they would be of void without love. It is worth notice that these are supernatural qualities; tongues of man and angel, gift of prophecy to know all mysteries and knowledge, faith that can remove mountains, gift of martyrdom. Whatsoever, love eminently surpasses them all. Thus, these conditional clauses are employed to showcase the significance of love for the effective functioning of spiritual gifts in the church.

"But now faith, hope, love abide these three; but the

greatest of these is love. Paul singled out three Christian virtues into a higher level: faith, hope and love. The present indicative verb *menai* “abide” which means ‘remain’ or ‘continue to live’ indicates that faith, hope and love are permanent. In fact, faith and hope are permanent and great but not as permanent and great as love. This further suggests that faith and hope are inseparable from the household of love. Now, the question is, beside the temporary character of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, how should the idea of faith and hope be understood? Myron J. Houghton opined that faith, hope and love remain beyond the ending of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. Yet faith and hope do not remain beyond Christ’s return but love does.⁵ “Faith here does not refer to faith as a means by which man is justified but of faith as a power operative in the material sphere, a trust in God’s Word and power that enables you to do the proverbial moving of mountains.”⁶ Hope is that aspect of faith which projects Christian faith into the future (Rom 15:13), activated through agape (Gal 5:6).⁷ However, Paul is not theorizing about an abstract evaluation of faith, hope, love, he is dealing with factual problems with practical life. Hence, by promoting the transcendence of love above faith and hope, Paul projected agape as the perfecter of other gifts for edification.

Overall, Paul spotlights the characteristics of the household of agape. In the household of agape, there are 15 attributes of love which are the edifying factors of the church (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). These attributes defined what love is and what it is not. Consequently, because of what love entails it is all the more clear that the idea behind Paul’s argument is to accentuate love as the key to edification, therefore, all should strive for agape for the edification of the church. Above all, exercise the spiritual gifts in a proper manner, with agape as the ultimate goal.

For, we are members of the household of love and thus every gift ought to function within the household of love. Without love, everything is worthless.

Relevance: It is axiomatic that our world today is a reflection of Corinth of Paul's day; our churches that of Corinthians. Our world is so individualistic that a sense of community or household or unity is no longer valid. Love is a missing dimension in family, church and society. This is evident in divisions based on class, looks, rich and poor; conflicts, conceit and envy, manipulations, boasting, suing one another in magistrate, self-indulgence to immorality, the list can go on. These are the results of the absence of *avga*,ph.

Apparently, the present happenings around us indicate a loveless world which is incompatible for the members of the household of love. God is love; love is the essence of God and this assures that loveless world is Godless. Unfortunately, what we have today is a world filled with hatred, a society of variances, broken families, etc. Intrinsically, human societies today become a perfect vehicle for creating partitions rather than promoting unity and edification. Vile and covetous relationship creates many broken families that are hopeless. Aren't these the antithesis of the product of love? Love is absent everywhere. Now, our membership in the household of God is dubious. With this great concern, it is a great challenge for us members of the household of *agape* to demonstrate its fruit in action. For, love is action. Love is the key to every good relationship (Col 3:18-22). Love demands fruitfulness. James 2:19 enlightens, "faith without work is dead." Likewise, without an act of love produced in us we are as good as corpse.

On the whole, if love is requisite in every Pauline churches,

the church at Corinth needs it the most and so do our churches. The repeated emphasis on love denotes that it is the anchor of Christian unity. In Corinthians, misuse of gifts, conceit, envy were the main causes of confusions and disorderliness in public worship. The same loveless attitudes are seen in our churches today. Church becomes a platform to showcase one's social status rather than a place of worship and edification; an individual ecstatic experience is considered as the highest goal rather than edification of the church; some even seek for identical experience like that of the apostles.' In this regards, it is rightly cited that modern spiritual gifts are analogous to but not identical with the divinely authoritative gifts exercised by the apostles.⁸ Thus, the point is this: "let all things be done for edification." And, agape is the key to edification. Without love, nothing counts.

Conclusion: Throughout, Paul's emphasis on agape is very firm. His intention is not to mount the value of love but a dynamic unity in diversity. Unity in the household of love is proven by the fact that the distributed gifts are from the same Spirit, in the service of the same Lord, inspired by the same God. Apparently, agape holds the greatest position within the permanent trio family. Gifts are apportioned to everyone and each gift is a member in the household of love. Each member must exercise their specific gift within the household of love. Spiritual gifts exercised only within the household of love will bring edification and unity. Meanwhile, the purpose of spiritual gifts is not to make the individual user godly but rather to enable the user to serve the church- edification. Where there is love, edification takes place, where there is edification, unity prevails. Thus, agape is the greatest and the key to edification and therefore strives for it and spread it everywhere.

End notes

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Leadership Mission Consultation

Organized jointly by the CBCNEI and the World Council of Churches

Theme: "Together Towards Life"

Date: 7 - 9 September 2016

Place: CBCNEI Mission Compound, Panbazar

We the Readers

The Mouthpiece

“We The Readers: The Mouthpiece” is a column introduced for the keen reader-contributors who not only read us but also come forward with their insightful articles. We have received an overwhelming response till now.

Keeping writing to us at: editor@cbcnei.in OR lichenbenitungoe@gmail.com



PEACE! BE STILL

Text: Mark 4:35-41

He (Jesus) woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be Still” (Mark 4:39)

Rev Dr Wati Longchar, Professor, Theology and Culture, Yushan Theological College & Seminary, Haulien, Taiwan

Jesus from time to time would withdraw from the crowd and go to the mountain or lonely places for prayer. On this particular day, Jesus was tired. The whole day Jesus argued with the scribes on various issues. As usual the crowd was around Jesus and his disciples. Jesus wanted to be free from the crowd and scribes. Jesus and his disciples go into a boat and went away leaving the crowd behind.

It was on the Sea of Galilee. It is also known as Lake of Gennesaret. The Sea was about 13 km wide (means as far as Majuli Island) and 19K.M long and so it would take at least two hours to make the crossing.

Since Jesus was very tired, he took a cushion and soon went to sleep. At that time, violent storm arose. The Sea of Galilee is situated on the foot of two mountains which serves as tunnel to carry strong winds. Often winds sweep down on the lake and violently agitating its water. Jesus and his disciples also faced with a sudden storm in the midst of the sea. The storm filled the boat with water, threatened to drown. They were all terrified and felt themselves helpless.

But Jesus was sleeping. They shouted at Jesus, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea “Peace! Be Still”. Amazingly the storm stopped. Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

The Boat

The boat has a very strong theological significance. Many ecumenical organizations like WCC, NCCs use the symbol of ‘ship’ or ‘boat’ to signify the Greek word ‘oikumene’ or ‘oikos’ - the house of all inhabited world. They use this symbol to signify that life is on journey or the movement is on journey. The boat can be compared with our churches too. Boat signifies struggling together. In an airplane or bus, the driver or pilot is in whole control of the aircraft or bus. It is he or she drives and takes the passengers to the destination. The role of passenger is not to disturb the driver or pilot. Passengers should sit quietly on their respective seats until they reach the destination. But on a boat, everyone is a driver. Everyone has to hold the roaring

stick or turn by turn; while others are roaring some should take care of the mast in the boat so that the boat goes to the right direction. With united efforts, they reach the destination. Sam Kobia, the former Gen. Secy of WCC said, "If you want to run fast, run alone, but if you want to reach the destination, run together." "Boat" signifies struggling together.

Sudden Storm

Life is in journey. The community is on the move. In our journey of life, storm is inevitable - sometimes sudden storm, sometimes big storm, sometimes mild storm. Christians may face the storm of financial crisis, storm of disagreement over various issues, storm of the lack of support from members, storm of misconceptions of the institution, etc. Today Christian communities all over the world face the storm of war against terrorism. US war on terrorism has created storm all over the world. Many innocent people have been killed, and continue to kill particularly in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The storm of violence continues in Palestine. Many minority Christians are under the storm of attack and persecution in Pakistan, Indonesia, Burma and India. Many poor continue to die of starvation. A few years ago, the whole world witnessed the world leaders discussion of the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting in Bangkok. The Thai Govt. spent 300 million bhat in decoration besides millions of bhat in security arrangement. In the midst of the conference on economic cooperation, a Thai woman delivered a child and left the child in the trash of the Robinson market. She did not have money to feed the child. With the hope that some wealthy person will see and pick up the child, she left the child in the trash. She wanted her child to live a better life. Some people saw the child, and took the child to hospital and gave the name

APEC, but unfortunately the child died. This looks like an isolated incident, but we have to recognize that unjust global economic structure make many people starve to death. There is no justice everywhere. We face many storms in our life. At one time or another, all of us are afloat on a troubled sea. Often experience storm of uncertainty, rejection, storm of failure, storm of lack of necessities, even physical sickness and many others. Those are storms in our life. Let us ask ourselves - What are the 'storm' we face presently in your ministry? In your life? When do you feel God's presence? How do you know that God is with you in the midst of storms?

Jesus said, "Peace, Be Still"

When we are in the midst of storm, we often remember the words of Jesus "Peace, Be Still". We want Jesus to wake up and solve the problem. But we often forget the other questions of Jesus, "Are you afraid?" "Have you no faith?" Storm in our life, in our community, in our church will not stop just by shouting. The storm cannot be controlled just by screaming from the back end of a boat. Faith in God involves 3 things: pray for peace, speak for peace and act for peace. The biblical understanding of Peace is not just absence of conflict, war, or having food to eat. But it means justice.

Four values required in our journey

As Christians, as community of believers

1. If we want to journey together and if we want to reach the destination together, if we want to bring peace on this earth, then we need to cultivate the value of respect of others. Christians have not learnt how to love the people of other faiths. We talk about respect of otherness but just within the four walls of the church. The history has proved that Christians are one of the

most violent communities in the world. It is all because of disrespect of others.

2. cultivate the spirit of working together. We need to co-operate with other faith communities, different tribes and races, and also different Christian confessions. Christian alone cannot bring peace.
3. cultivate the value of sharing. A Japanese saying goes like this, “Rice in the mouth keeps the mouth shut”. If we examine the doctrine of world economic policies, the rich economic resources are used a weapon against the poor nations. The ruthless dictators make sure that people are feed well, so that people do not resist against them. Singapore, Korea and Japanese Govts. obey all what American says and remain silent against the American oppressive policies because they do not want to lose their economic supremacy in Asia. The poor nations like India, Pakistan, Thailand, Philippines do not want to speak against Americans because they want favour from American and our politicians fear that speaking against American policies will have negative economic impact in the country. Just sharing is required not only in global context, but also in our own local context. Without willingness to share, there is no justice and peace. The storm of violence, poverty, deprivation in the world cannot be stopped both in the local and international contexts if people do not cultivate a culture of sharing.
4. value of forgiving. We often hear people saying, “Forget and forgive” is only way if we want to bring reconciliation among different factional groups in North East India. Forgiveness is very important, but if we forget certain things then it would become dangerous. In Germany, the Castle Church in Wittenberg where Luther

posted his 95 thesis on its door in protest against Catholic Church's practice of indulgences, celebrated the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth in 1983. During the 12th centuries, the Jews were called 'pigs' and treated them like pigs. To symbolize the contempt for the Jews, in the back side of the churches there was a curving of pigs made during the 12th century. When the members of the Castle church were renovating the old church, the issue came up whether they should destroy the curving of pigs. They decided to retain just as it was so that people would not forget that the churches in their history had discriminated against the Jews. Hiroshima holocaust should not be forgotten, so that human beings will not commit another Hiroshima disaster. I saw a stone in Changtongya village erected by the Yachem villagers to remind people that the two villagers were at war so that people do not forget and repeat the past bitter history of war between the two villages. Bitter history of the past is powerful living reminder for change. The power of forgiveness comes alive, when we do not forget the past bitter memories. Forgiveness is the power that binds people together.

In our journey of life, Jesus is in our midst struggling with us although we may sometimes feel that he is sleeping. Sudden storm can be overcome if people in the boat respect each other, work together, care for each other, and forgive each other.



Social Teachings of Baptist Churches

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continued from last issue..

5. Same Sex Marriage

According to the Baptist, same sex marriage is abomination to the Lord. God established marriage in Genesis chapter 1 between one man and one woman. The Bible says, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2: 24). This act of same sex marriage is total sin against God. One of the main purposes for marriage is to produce offspring. People of the same sex cannot do this. Therefore, the Baptist Churches believe that this act is abomination to the act of God.¹ Marriage is a fundamental social institution that does not exist just for the emotional satisfaction of two individuals but for the greater good of the community which stands under the blessing or curse of God (Mk 10: 6-9). Societies that put emotional fulfillment before right actions and principles will soon give way to a multitude of addictions and deep corruptions and collapse.² God will judge any society that institutes same sex marriages. We cannot bend the principles of God’s Word to suit vocal minority groups (1 Cor 6: 9-10, 1 Tim 1: 9-10). The Baptists believe that while some nations enact laws permitting same sex marriage, the true church of God must stand resolutely firm and never allow the sanctioning of same sex marriages by Christian clergy. No church that takes the Bible seriously can sanction a union between homosexuals or lesbians in our society today (Matt 24:35).

6. Divorce

This is also one of the most difficult issues that Baptist Churches face today and this must be diligently dealt with. The impact of this issue not only affects the family (parents and children), but also the community and the church. What does the Bible have to say about divorce? Very clearly, God hates divorce as mentioned in Malachi 2: 16. What are the causes for divorce according to the teachings of Baptist Churches today? Foremost is the issue of adultery. Either the man or woman has sex or a relationship outside the marriage. This is adultery and a sin against the Lord and also against the spouse and the plan of God - marriage between believers and unbelievers.³ The Bible is very clear on the issue as given in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, concerning believers and non-believers spouse, that, if the believing spouse does not take care of the faith life and spirituality of their relationship, it will cause conflict and go against God's will. The second cause or ground of divorce according to the Baptists is, the Presence of Abuse. This is usually by men over women though there are also cases where women abuse their husbands. This problem can become a valid reason for divorce. Couples in this situation must seek help from God and leaders of the church. There are laws today to protect either spouse or children if abuse is being practiced. However, the Baptists strongly believe that before going to law it must be solved before God and His people.⁴ Impulsive Marriage is another issue facing believers today. Most couples do not know each other well enough before making the commitment of marriage. That is the reason for the necessity for engagement period. Couples should be talking about their visions and plans when they do get married. They should invest sufficient time to get to know each other.⁵ Another serious issue facing couples is the issue of Finances. This is a big area where couples break the marriage and get a divorce. If one knows that one's potential partner has debts and other financial problems, one should not get married until they are under control.

An issue that is running wild amongst believing couples or

marriages is the issue of misunderstanding and misinterpreting the Scripture on the part of the husbands. Many of the husbands misunderstand the Bible that says, “Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5: 22f). What most husbands forget is the verse that says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her...” (Ephesians 5: 25ff). The problem is that many men think that they are the Kings/Rulers of their Families, with their wives and children as subjects to be ruled over. This is not what the Bible says. In Genesis, God says the reason why he gave Eve to Adam was to be his helper - taking a rib out of man (God did not take a bone out of the man’s foot), and created a woman. This act meant that she, your wife, is by your side not for you to rule over her but to love and care for her as she would be your helper and partner (Genesis 2: 24; Deut. 24: 1; Matt. 5: 32; 19: 9; Romans 7: 1-3; Mark 10: 9-12; Luke 16: 8; 1 Cor. 7: 10-11, and verse 15). Therefore, for the Baptists divorce is against God and it is sin (Mk 10: 6-9). All married couples should responsibly design their married life with their spouses along biblical lines and fulfill God’s plan and purpose in them.

7. Church and State (Politics)

The Baptists believe in religious freedom and its corollary, the separation of the institutions of church and state, which come from the Baptist commitment to the authority of the Bible. The term “state” refers to governments.⁶ The Bible indicates that governments are ordained by God to provide law and order (Romans 13:1-5). Government leaders are to act for the benefit of the citizens (1 Peter 2:13-14). Baptists and other Christians are to honor and pray for government officials (1 Timothy 2:1-3; 1 Peter 2:17), pay taxes (Matthew 22:17-22; Romans 13:6-7) and obey the government except when obedience would be clearly contrary to God’s will (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29). Historically, Baptists have affirmed their loyalty to the state.

The term “church” refers to religious organizations. For

Baptists, this includes both local congregations and various entities established for religious purposes, such as associations, conventions, schools and institutions for ministry. Baptists teach that the nature of “church” is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8), to teach Christian doctrines and develop believers (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-13) and to minister in Christ’s name (Matthew 25:31-46).⁷ The church is to rely on the sword of the Spirit and not the sword of the government in carrying out its mission. Therefore, the relation of church and state is mutually beneficial.⁸ For example, the state is to provide law and order and safety; these are useful to the church in carrying out its mission (Acts 13-16). And the church contributes to a positive social order by helping to develop law-abiding, hard-working, honest citizens (Ephesians 4:24-32; 1 Peter 2:11-17) and corruption-less Christians in the society.

Baptists believe that this mutual benefit works best when the institutions of church and state are separate and when neither seeks to control the other. The state is not to dictate doctrine, worship style, organization, membership or personnel for leadership to the church. The church is not to seek the power or the financial support of the state for spiritual ends. Such is the model set forth in the New Testament.⁹ The very nature of the gospel and of church calls for such a relationship. The Bible reveals that humans are created by God with a competency to know and follow his will (Genesis 1:27). Thus, neither church nor state should ever interfere with each other’s responsibilities for the political and spiritual wellbeing of the society and church today. People should support the churches by voluntary contributions of tithes and offerings (2 Corinthians 8:1-15). Only Jesus is to be Lord, never any government or ecclesiastical organization (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:8-11).¹⁰ Thus, Baptists continue to emphasize that neither church nor state should exercise authority over the other; rather they should be free from each other’s interference and instead faithfully serve God’s people within their God-given areas of service.

We have briefly touched upon some of the core social teachings that the Baptist Churches hold on to as they continue to attempt to respond and strengthen the faith life of their congregations. The writer has presented not his own but the position of the general Baptist Church on those social issues that are faced by all today. It is now up to the readers here to compare and contrast between what is being presented here and your own Church's position at present - in the ministry that you are involved in. This is not the complete sets of the social teachings of the Baptists churches today, yet these are some of the real social concerns that are faced and will continue to be faced by the church and our society today. We as believers and Baptist members need to strengthen our faith in Christ to express our conviction and faith and correct what is wrong today in the church and society.

Endnote

¹Cf. B.H. Carroll, *Baptists and Their Doctrines* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 19.

²James Leo. Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2009), 37.

³Cf. John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2008), 78.

⁴Herschel H. Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), 34.

⁵Cf. Norman H. Maring, and Winthrop S. Hudson. *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1991), 45.

⁶Cf. Ernest E. Mosley, *Basics for Baptists* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1996), 14.

⁷Cf. E. Y. Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1925), 67.

⁸Cf. Stanton, R Norman, *The Baptist Way* (Nashville: Broadman & Homan Publishers, 2005)23.

⁹Cf. Walter Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 1993), 67.

¹⁰Cf. Powell, Tuck, William, *Our Baptist Tradition*. Macon (Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 200), 24.

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