

Baptist News

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INDIA

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Contents

Editorial	02
Revisioning Mission in North East India In the Light of TTL	04
India's Look East Policy- A Missional response	10
Testimony	14
God and His Mission for the Lost World	16
News Flash	21
Prophetic Mission from Margin's Perspective	29
Suffering is a beautiful part of life when we trust God	39
Servant Leadership Amidst Legions	44
We the Readers	48

Editorial Column



Every human being on earth live with a dream to pursue a successful life of what is called “the good life” which usually means to lead a comfortable life, to own a house, a car and be financially well settled. While many of us might have achieved that goal of *living a good life* yet most of us might have missed the abundant life that is promised to us all by our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the abundant life?

The abundance in life that Jesus promised has nothing to do with treasuring more wealth and riches of the world. It means being right with God through faith in Christ and having the hope of eternity spent in His presence. The apostle Paul wasn't rich in this world's goods, but he enjoyed the abundant life that Christ offers. He was content with just food and covering (1 Tim. 6:8), but he was rich toward God (Luke 12:21; Eph. 2:7). He gained those riches by coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:8).

Reflection from the Gospel of John 10:10.

John 10: 10(**NIV**) Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

A thief may be someone who rarely comes for stealing. The main motive of a thief would be either to kill, injure, destroy and steal. In our Christian lives, we are often visited by these thieves in our daily encounter. It can be in the form of rumours, false teachings, wrong prophecies, doctrinal issues, hatred, jealousy, communal violence, killings, harming the ecology, greed etc. A cancerous growth in the form of destroying our healthy relationship with God is taking place every now and then within our family, community and nature at an alarming rate. Coming to our North East India context, the slogan of the rise of so called thieves are daily life adventures. In the name of fighting for their state different forms of taxation has been levied by various insurgent groups leaving the

public in hue and cry over their daily economy. Governmental step up offices and officials are not far behind them in the form of bribery in lieu of getting white collar jobs. Suicides cases have been on the rise among families in this region. Flow of black business markets are flooding daily. In the churches too, the viruses has entered and people are plagued by dirty church politics for fame and gain. Instead of building a community centered in Christ, Churches in North East India are having a competitive spirit among themselves as to who build on the largest and biggest building. At present days, most Churches but not all are more concerned about the buildings rather than helping the poor and the needy souls. Revivals among the members are slowly losing its ground. Misuse of Gods money and property can be seen in our present form. Thieves have slowly entered into our homes, our Churches and our communities. Amidst the invasion of thieves among us there is still Hope of eternal life, the one who came 2000 years ago when people were dwelling in darkness and is still present to give us that eternal life. Christ came into this world in the form of human nature so that we will have eternal life and protect us from all kinds of thieves. As Jesus tells the woman from Samaria (verse found in John 4:14) "whoever drinks of this water that I shall give will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." In spite of this world filled with evil, God offers us a ray of hope that will give us eternal life. Even though we were sinners yet God send His only begotten son into this world to save us and give us eternal life to those who believe in Him and would cling onto Him till the end. Christ like character needs to replace in our hearts, family, Church, community and even to the nature. Our unchanging God has promised that His loving mercy endures forever (Psalms 136). Though we are surrounded by evil, we can trust God because His mercy will never fail. In a temporary world, God's mercy gives us an abundant life in Him. Jesus is our gate keeper from all kinds of thieves and whoever enters through His gate will be saved and secured in His arms. Abundant Life which Jesus came to give is a life filled with joy, happiness, peace and love. It includes all aspects of life and the resources for living this life are sufficient for all peoples on this earth. This is the kind of life to which Christ has called us to live.



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI

RE-VISIONING MISSION IN NORTH EAST INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF TOGETHER TOWARDS LIFE (TTL)



Y. Zeeneta Lens

Introduction

As WCC indicated “Together towards Life” as the theme for the Council of Churches around the world since its 2013 meeting in Korea, it has been a great opportunity for the Christian mission, to particularly discuss and review several mission activities. In fact, reflections on TTL as drafted by WCC “address mission in the changing landscapes of today’s world and today’s church” (Bevans).

Christian Mission in North East India: The North East India is one of the regions in the country where Christian mission sits with full support from existing churches and Christian community. And today’s Christian missions in NEI are the fruits of pioneer missionaries who struggled to sow the “seed” of the Gospel in the midst of tears and sweats. The early missionaries in NEI made an impact at the cost of their lives in the midst of head-hunters and primitive peoples. Some of the most significant impacts and virtues of Christian missions which exist even today are mission schools, literature development, health care ministry, and social transformation, leadership of local people and expansion of God’s mission throughout NEI (Dozo 56-9). However, with so much of freedom and openness to the Gospel today in NEI, the present Christian missions cannot influence as much as the

early missionaries did in this region. So there is a need to re-vision mission in NEI. The reason is clear because Christian missions today must re-organize the Mission of God (*missioides*) in relevance to our present context to bring edification in the lives of Christians as well as transformation in the society.

Socio-Political Context of NEI with Special references to Lack of Development, Corruption and Unemployment: Competitively and comparatively with other parts of the nation, NEI is still lacking behind in terms of several development areas. And due to socio-political disorders, developmental projects and other empowerment agencies are being stalled. Again, development works and schemes from government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) are either delayed or stuck due to trust deficit between public and developmental agencies. In the meantime, corruption has become one of the biggest obstacles to fair and equitable economic development and social justice. It is no longer a problem that is infesting in the so called “secular world” as chided by the Christians, but it has also affected Christian missions and churches. For instance, relief organizations, missions and churches are themselves part of both the problem and its solution. It is so because today’s judges, customs officers, military and law enforcement officials and all concerned personnel who maintain our societal structures are corrupted. Theologically, corruption is deeply rooted in the nature of man as it is corollary of original sin. Therefore, corruption is sinful and a moral failure, which is utterly detrimental to the hope of a free Christian society now and in the days to come too. Furthermore, it is an undeniable fact that there is a high rate of unemployment in NEI. Esmond Birnie in his article “Unemployment: A Christian Response” (1996) says that high unemployment is unacceptable to Christians and non-Christians alike. His main reasons include the cost borne by individuals and families (increased poverty, ill health, both physical and psychological), the costs to society (lost output), and “possible political instability and criminality” (Birnie 9-10). In agreement with Birnie, I may not be wrong to say that our family members, relatives, church members, and friends outside our church-

es are today seeking jobs, yet they remain unemployed though qualified. The reasons could be varied. No doubt, some remain unemployed by choice of particular preference. However, my point is that unemployment has affected our present generation like a chronic disease. Unfortunately, the problem of unemployment has hit Christians in its highest rate. According to a national newspaper The Hindu, one journalist Samarth Bansal reported with the headline as “Christians most educated, but highest unemployment rate: Survey” on February 22, 2016. It can be stated that unemployment is at the door step of mission in NEI today just as the national reporter noted.

Re-Visioning Mission in North East India in the light of TTL:

The reason why our mission is slugging in its progress in NEI including the states like Nagaland and Mizoram with ninety nine percent Christians, is because enough opportunities are not created. Rather we tend to limit opportunities only to those “appointed ones” to take care of everything. Sadly, the “appointed ones” don’t take much initiative to delegate the opportunities though. Today, there are so many passionate, capable, and potential young adults who can develop and change NEI. However, due to some rigid structure created by our churches and missions, there are not so many opportunities for these youths. So they don’t come back after their trainings to NEI for mission work or for involvement in churches; rather, they prefer to stay in other parts of India and abroad with opportunities compatible to their capabilities. Let me leave one important question for re-visioning mission in NEI: are we creating enough opportunities for the capable young adults to come back and work for development of mission in NEI through their respective churches and missions? From social development perspective, are we creating enough opportunities for Christian professionals like doctors, journalists, writers, media, teachers, social activists, engineers, etc. to come and participate in the mission? What is the position of our mission schools, hospitals and theological institutions today? Do they exist just for the sake of generating mission fund and support? Have we considered uplifting them to better institutions? Thus, for Christian missions, development should be driven by com-

munity faith efforts which will create more opportunities for young adults according to their professions and calling to serve and participate in the Mission of God.

Building Christian Integrity: One of the underlying ideas of being a Christian is to bring changes in the world through our involvement and commitment in both the ecclesial sphere and social public life. Christian formation and socio-political commitment prompt us to grow and portray Christian integrity everywhere and at all times (especially against corruption). Meanwhile, it may be also true that many church leaders do fall for greed and corruption. Does the church or Christian mission have a role to play in helping such leaders resist temptation and live with Christian integrity? How is ethical character to be formed in leaders of business, education, politics, and charitable organizations? Even Christians who belong to churches receive little lessons in the areas of discipleship, support, intellectual input and as such spiritual formation developed a “split” spirituality that separates their faith from their workplace activities (Kretzschmar). So, transparency as work ethic should be practiced and promoted by the Christians as example for other non-Christians.

Drawing a Bigger Circle: It simply means not limiting our visions and missions, aims and objectives of mission. In regards unemployment, Christians and churches can respond by educating church members and leaders about local community development schemes which are not against the Bible. It can be suggested that churches and missions in NEI should cooperate and network together for giving employment to the unemployed group. This means exploring several ways through which the churches and missions can initiate the problem of unemployment even to the government. Helping the unemployed should be one of the principles of re-visioning mission in NEI. Therefore, drawing a bigger circle is to raise issues beyond evangelism and ministry among the unreached and reflect on issues like the problem of unemployment which affects the whole society. As we seek spiritual welfare for the people, we also need to seek their social

welfare as well as sustained financial and job security.

Renewing Mission in NEI: According to the sixth point of TTL's statement, Mission is described as "a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society". Later in the section of "Spirit of Community: Church on the Move," using the word "*koinonia*," communion between believers is emphasized. It says, "living out our faith in community is an important way of participating in mission" (point 59) ('Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes' 22). It is true that "practically as well as theologically, mission and unity belong together" (22). With this emphasis, TTL intensely reminds today's mission, saying "the lack of full and real unity in mission still harms the authenticity and credibility of the fulfilment of God's mission in this word" (23). Thus, there is a need in our mission today to reflect on the wider understanding of unity under the umbrella of TTL. The idea here is considering the need to practice ways of partnership, cooperation, common witness despite our diverse missional objectives. And it should be through mutual respect and encouragement for one another and between existing missions and churches. The early church stands fit in this idea as even when they were separated, they bore together through joint efforts towards manifesting the love of God everywhere and in all circumstances (book of The Acts). Again, the example of "one body of Christ" is the unity of the purpose which is emphasized in TTL.

In NEI, one of the major hindrances to unity among missions and churches is because of lack of understanding in Christian ministry. Instead of complimenting each other's missions, we want to outrun others (reports, denominational, funds, etc.). However, let me be clear here, we are not competing in Christian ministry at least not for the sake of reports and funding. Yes, there can be room for competitiveness with the right perspective and that is to excel in the task God has given to the Mission where we need to give our best effort to accomplish it. So, let us be reminded that we need to learn to complement

each other's missions. TTL should, therefore, become the common platform for the Mission in NEI where every church, mission and Christian organization can come together to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus Christ both in social and spiritual realms.

In conclusion and implications of "Re-visioning mission in NEI in the light of TTL" would be to extend and expand missional views. As we share the Good News (Gospel) to the people, churches and missions in NEI need to live out the Gospel in relevance to the social issues faced within and outside the church. In TTL, mission is to bring transformational development both in ecclesial sphere and social realms.

Works Cited: Bevens, Stephen. "'Together Towards Life': Reflections on the Proposed WCC Mission Statement'. Web. 7 June 2016. Birnie, Esmond. 'Unemployment: A Christian Response'. *ACE* 21 (1996): n. pag. Print. Dozo, Phuveyi. *Revolution of Mission*. Dimapur, Nagaland: SP. Printers, 2013. Print. Kretzschmar, Louise. 'Christian Leaders, Corruption, and the Church'. *Nurturing Faith*. N.p., 11 July 2014. Web. 19 Aug. 2016. 'Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes'. Busan, Korea. 2013: n. pag. Print



But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Luke 6:35

India's Look East Policy: A Missional Response



Dr. Atola Longkumer, SAIACS, Bangalore

India today: state of affairs - aspirations and reality A Sen and J Dreze *Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions* (Princeton, Oxford, 2013)- economic growth do not match social progress and justice and freedom - human capability “**Asian Century**” - confident - **But** realities amidst potential Christianity/Church: contradictions **Yet** potentials: growing: South Korea, Philippines, India and China (Walls, Jenkins, Robert, Fenggang Yang)

Northeast India: Christianity - history and complex contemporary reality - Church a socio-cultural institution - Christianity: a cultural/modern identity - For instance, on Nagas conversion to Christianity, Historian Robert Eric Frykenberg, in his book *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford, 2008) writes about Naga Christians, “[t]hese were peoples who, for ages untold, had never been Sanskritized or Islamicized and who were only too eager to escape from conditions of brutality and insecurity. This having been so, Christianity has simply become an accepted and vital part of a Naga ethnic identity, as this was ‘constructed’ (or ‘invented’) during the past century. As such it has separated them from peoples from whom they fervently want to be separated - namely, Hindus and Muslims.” Frykenberg summed up, “modern education and literacy in Roman script has not only given them easy cultural access to all of India but to the entire Anglophone world.” (422)

Together Towards Life: mission re-affirmed, re-directed, positioned

Margins: value, voice, “Flourish of all Creation” - Asian leadership - J Keum, G Coorilos, K Kim (woman/Asian spouse)

Together towards Life: Mission in New Landscape and reaffirms the understanding that “Mission – as a common witness to Christ – is an invitation to the “feast in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15). The mission of the church is to prepare the banquet and to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance. It is a sign of liberation and reconciliation of the whole creation which is the goal of mission.” (101)

Christian mission is about sharing and demonstrated the abundant love of God to every creation, ensuring flourish of life for all. The task of every faithful follower of Jesus Christ is to witness this love of God that expressed itself in the incarnation event, of God taking human form and sacrificing his very self on the cross. *Together towards Life*, proclaims, “[m]ission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life destroying forces in the power of the Holy Spirit.” (2)

Within this backdrop: Look East Policy

India’s Look East Policy / Act East Policy

May 2014, India’s Prime Minister, Narendra Modi addressed the 12th India-ASEAN Summit and declared “a new era of economic development, industrialization and trade has begun in India. Externally, India’s ‘Look East Policy’ has become ‘Act East Policy’” (MEA 2014)

India’s Look East Policy was launched in 1994 for economic necessity and purposes Unofficially, launched in 1992, for purposes of trade growth, open access to key markets, strategic alliances, India’s Look East Policy aimed to establish closer and deeper relations with countries in Asia would be key to achieving these aims.

The aim of the Look East policy was connecting India’s economy

through trade with ASEAN and the 'tiger' economies of East Asia, therefore in 1993 and 1995, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao led economic missions to Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and South Korea to spread the message that India was open for business. Exports - employment - develop infrastructure - consumer market - manufacturing.

The growth of China also played a role in India's Look East Policy - bilateral trade. According to Lavina Lee, the Modi government's Act East policy is particular in developing the dismal physical infrastructure connections between India and ASEAN markets. E.g. Mekong-India Economic corridor, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, and India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project.

These highway projects, will connect the economically depressed and neglected and with many self-determination movements.

Lee sees opportunities for Northeast if these highway projects take off.

Lee, "Overall, India's Look East' policy has achieved a core objective of the policy - opening up export markets for India in absolute terms, and ensuring India is not left out of economic integration initiatives." There will surely emerge an inter-connected network of goods, services, investment, technology and human capital flows. By some estimate, trade with Asean countries was a mere \$2.5 billion in 1993 when this policy was initiated and in 2010-11 it was estimated to cross \$45 billion.

The most recent visit of Myanmar's President U Htin Kyaw last month (August 26) and the India-Myanmar joint statement illustrates India's engagement with its Asian neighbour. Among the many areas proposed for bilateral cooperation between the two states is the maintenance of border haats and India's assistance in building Yangon's Children's hospital. Herein lies, both the potential and perils for the people. Herein lies a missional call to the churches and community of faith to be proactive and prophetic.

North East Missional Response

NE: Christian: History Experience Resource

NE: Strategic location: Perils of exploitation, gateway: Asian economy

Proposal: economic, human resource, awareness, human rights, religio-cultural

CBCNEI can contribute/participate:

Agricultural/local products: Organic – Art/crafts: local artisans– concept and practice of fair trade – protect and steward earth and its resources

Seminars for creating awareness: risks of exploitation, victimization – perils and potential of border – where trade is, there is exploitation of labours, degradation of environment

Human Rights: protect most the vulnerable: women, children, labourers: human trafficking, sex industry. When economic powers intersect, most vulnerable are the victims

Partner with Asian Churches: Baptist and ecumenical. CBCNEI can facilitate – movement of people – engage the other – not in antagonism but with Christian hospitality – Gemma Cruz

Promote Learning of Asian languages: translation and cultural knowledge. Bible translation has been revolutionary in mission movement

A Christian university: provide skill labour, knowledge economy, contextualised knowledge development and learning

Theological colleges/education: exchanges, women leadership, scholarships, writing

Share the good news that empowered us

A Peaceful. Flourishing society. KOG. Witness. The gospel transformed for us – 19th century onwards – we need to share – TTL

Record of exchange between a Baptist missionary and British officer

Lavina Lee, “India as a Nation of Consequence in Asia: The Potential and Limitations of India’s Act East Policy” in *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015), pp.

Testimony



Translated and edited by Mrs Lichanbeni Tungoe Kithan, Asst.editor, Baptist News as narrated by Mr Manuyal Oroan, BD 1st Year, Witter Theological College, Wokha, Nagaland.

I hail from a very small and remote village of around 15 household at Sebdella Jote, Siliguri, West Bengal and is a church member of Sebdella Jote Baptist Church which is a small church founded and established by Wokha Village Baptist Church. Not many know about our village and we were all from Hindu background. It was in 2010 when Pastor Anoj Oraon, Local Evangelist came to our village to share the gospel and eventually 7 families out of 15 accepted the gospel and decided to follow Christ. But personally, I felt the need to know more about Christianity before I decide to follow so even after my father's persuasion to let the whole family follow his decision, I did not accept the gospel by once. There was always an inner struggle for peace which I never found in my devotion to my God's, offering them countless sacrifices and prayers to please them. But I always felt there was no God listening to me because even after countless rituals and prayers, the fights, the misunderstandings seems to increase more day after day. The problems were never ending and there was no peace in my family. So I wanted to know more about the gospel and find a solution. Because I somewhat believe that the gospel may give me the peace I am in search of. One day, I decided to personally talk to the pastor and ask him why I should become a Christian. He just gave me his bible to read James 4:2-3 " **You desire but do not have, so you kill. You**

covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” He told me to think about it deeply while I go to sleep and even told me to ask him if I do not understand it at all after mediating on it. But the verse was so clear that it opened my heart and I was really inspired by it. This was the moment when the gospel really changed my heart.

Earlier there was no church at all in my village so, small fellowships were held at my home initiated by our Pastor. By God’s grace we now have our small church constructed under the assistance and hard work of Wokha Village Baptist Church and their Missionary Sir Khoben Tungoe. My village is one Mission field of the sponsoring church and it is only through the effortless work of the church we came up this far. I have been encouraged by everyone to go for theology and through the full sponsorship offered to my entire study course by Wokha Village Baptist Church, Mission Department, I am able to come to Witter Theological College, Wokha to pursue my BD. The main goal of my decision to study theology is to know deeper about the bible and train myself to serve the Lord. I am finding it very difficult as I do not know anything and I am very poor in English. Being brought up in Bangla Medium School, this new English language is very hard for me and the toughest part is to read and write in English. But I am slowly learning it and I have friends who are so helpful and supportive. It is only through God’s grace and your prayers that will make me overcome the hardships and challenges I am facing now. Please pray especially for my studies and my church members as well. May God bless you all.





God and His Mission for the lost World

Rev. Dr. Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI,
Panbazar

Genesis 3:8-9 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

God created the world and everything that is within it for his glory. However, because of the fallen nature of human being, they were separated from God. But God "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" to save the world (Jn.3:16). Therefore, as Willis says, *Missions originated in the heart of God. It is not something we decide to do for God, but God reveals his purpose to us so that we may have a creative part in his mission. (Willis 1985, 23)*

The ultimate goal of mission therefore is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations.

Since the Church was founded by God through Christ, who has a missionary heart, the Church needs to be missionary as well. Brunner writes, "*The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith*". (Brunner 1931, 108)

Here he is saying that the New Testament church is essentially a missionary body. When a "church loses its missionary vision and ceases

to be missionary, it loses the right to be called a church in the New Testament sense” (Terry 1998, 118). The apostle Paul says, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor.9:16).

Today many churches seem more concerned about their facilities and infrastructures than doing missions in obedience to the Great Commission of the Lord. They seem to have forgotten that they were founded by dedicated missionaries in humble obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord. Nurturing believers into Christian maturity within the local church is an important part of the church, and equally important is its mission to the world. Jesus commanded his disciples to, “*Go and make disciples of all the nations...*” (Mt.28:19-20)

In obedience to this command to make disciples of all nations, as the church grows into maturity it should also bear fruit through sending missionaries to proclaim the good news and make disciples. It is not wrong to construct church buildings; it is necessary. However, simply having a big church building does not fulfill the purpose of its existence. Jesus wants His church and people to bear much fruit, *John 15:8. Herein is my Father glorified, **that ye bear much fruit**; so shall ye be my disciples.* Every tree that does not bear fruit is cut and thrown into the fire (Mt.7:19). As Christians are we bearing fruit?

When God chose Israel to be his people, they were not separated physically from the nations around them. They continued to live among the nations, but with a responsibility. In the words of Conn, “*In her (meaning Israel) internal communal life she was to serve as a model to the nations, indicating what a blessed life eventuated when both God and neighbors are given their due. The law of the living God was to take incarnate form in her daily communal life. She was to show hospitality to the strangers and foreigners, with one law governing the life of the home-born and the strangers*” (Ex.12:48-49; 20:10; Nm.9:14; 15:30). Conn continues to say that when God made covenant with Abraham there was an indication that Israel was to fulfill a certain role with regard to the Gentiles, which is to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gn.12:2-3).

God's intention to "*bless all the peoples of the earth*", which is a missionary message, is clearly seen from the Old Testament. In fact, the promise of God to deliver the lost and fallen human race went all the way back to Genesis 3:15, where God promised "the Seed" from the woman.

The faithfulness of God in keeping this promise is seen in his selecting of Israel and different individuals to be his witnesses. Kaiser writes, "This promise of a universal blessing to the 'peoples' or 'families' on earth is repeated in Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14" (Kaiser 2000, 19). God's call to Israel to be 'a light and blessing to the nations' is also repeated throughout the Old Testament (Is. 42:6; 49:6; Jer.3:17; Zec.2:11; 8:20-23). This is a clear indication of God's intent to save the whole nations of the earth.

This pattern of calling and sending is repeated throughout the redemptive history. The Old Testament pattern is repeated when Jesus called his disciples, set them apart, and sent them out to make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19-20.)

With the coming of Christ to this world as the final fulfillment of redemptive history, he calls the disciples and instructs them that they will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Church, as we have today, is the same body of believers whom Jesus commanded to be his witnesses.

The Church is a body redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (1 Pt.1:18, 23), a called out people, set apart for a special purpose (1 Pt. 2:9; Ex. 19:4ff), and sent by Christ (Jn.20:21). The Church lives in the world among the nations, and yet with a responsibility. Miller says, "The church is *called out* of the world to *go* to the world" (Miller 1958, 69). Thus the supreme task of the church is to continue the work of Jesus Christ into the world (Manson 1958, 14). Stott writes, "*Mission is an activity of God arising out of the very nature of God. The living God of the Bible is a sending God, which is what 'mission' means. ... He sent His son into the world. He sent the apostles, and the seventy, and the Church.*" (Stott 1975, 6)

Therefore the mission of the Church arises from the mission of God which was set even before the foundation of the world (1 Pt.1:20; Ephe.1:4).

Christ has redeemed the Church by his own blood (Acts 20:28). He is the Head and Lord of the Church (Col.1:18), and therefore wants his Church to continue the mission of his salvation. Seamands is right when he says, "*It (mission) is not just a department of the Church, but its very lifeline. For the Church of Jesus Christ exists for the sole purpose of carrying on the work that He came to do, namely, to seek and to save the lost*".(within bracket added) (Seamands 1964,16)

Miller, in his book, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, says, "Mission is not a special function of a part of the church. It is the whole church in action. It is the body of Christ expressing Christ's concern for the whole world" (Miller 1958, 69).

Missions is not simply part of church ministry, but the church itself is mission. Neither the church nor the mission can be separated from each other. The church was founded by mission and mission grows through the church. Jesus was sent by the Father into the world and the church is sent to the world by Jesus. It is therefore, as Schweer writes, *Mission begins and ends with the nature of God. Mission springs from God's grace and loving nature. Mission is God's mandate, God's plan, God's provision, God's power, and God's intent.* (Schweer ed. by Terry 1998, 112)

Although God's salvation begins and ends with his purposes, he sovereignly chose to include believers in the process. He calls them and appoints them to be available for his use in the mission of his salvation. We would therefore conclude that Christ's command to be his witnesses throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations is incumbent/urgent call upon the church today.

Since salvation through general revelation is not acceptable and not biblical, the Church is obligated to respond positively to the mandate to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt.28:19). The Church should not be a silent spectator but an instrument of God for his mission. For, whoever

calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But, *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? (Rom.10:14-15)*

Whose Mission is it anyway?

The local autonomy of Baptist churches has, in some way, contributed to make believe that mission belongs to individual family, local churches, societies, associations, and Conventions. It is very natural for us to say, “My Mission, or Our Mission” which, according to the writer is incomplete. If mission originated from the very heartbeat of God, if the fruition of mission is through the coming of Jesus Christ sent by the Father, if mission is continuing through the Church founded by Jesus Christ who is sent by the Father, then ‘our’ mission belongs to God the Father who is the Lord of the Harvest (Mt.9:38).

At the backdrop of this, the followings may be taken as the present challenges in Mission:

1. Making Mission as a movement, and not as part of church program.
2. Making every Christian home a Missionary home, and every believer a missionary.
3. Uniting Churches in Mission, more focused and intentional.
4. Strengthening the churches in the Mission Fields.



Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.

Proverb 10:12

NEWS FLASH

XXXII Youth Annual Conference Adi Baptist Council Youth Department

Pasighat, 30 May: With the theme “Let God Transform you” Adi Baptist Council Youth Department has conducted its 32nd Youth Annual Conference at Baptist Church, Silluk. Rev. Dana Pertin inaugurated the Conference.

Rev. Banbo Pertin, Executive Secretary, DLBCA and Mr. Mark Boje, DTO Pasighat were the resource person of the occasion.

More than 500 youth from across the district actively participated the conference. Tapi Gao, Director of Elementary

Education Government of Arunachal Pradesh and Rtd Group Captain Mahanta Pangging, attended as the Special Invitees.

During the conference meritorious students of Class AISSE and AISSCE 2015-16 have been felicitated.

Praise & Worship Team of Adi Baptist Council led the praise & Worship

during the conference. The venue for the next conference is at Adi Baptist Church Mission Center , which will be held in the month of May 2017.



Women Leadership Seminar

Guwahati, 6 - 7 July: The Moyon Naga Baptist Association in collaboration with Council of Baptist Churches in North East India conducted a two days seminar on Women Leadership. The theme of the seminar was "Women's Role in Church Ministry."

Around 30 members participated in the seminar. The topics discussed in this seminar were: Women's Role in the Church Ministry by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, Women Empowerment in the Leadership by Ms Atola Subong , Finding Freedom in Christ by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Women in Ministry of the Church by Ms T. Hoiphal, Women & Family Dr Lucita Momin.



Relief Ministry in Karbi Anglong District Windstorm Disaster on 30th April 2016

Diphu, 7 July: Council of Baptist Churches of North East India distributed some relief material to the two villages; Serlongri village and Hidim Teron village under Karbi Anglong district in Assam, which was affected by the strong windstorm on 30th April 2016. CBCNEI distributed 90 bundles of CGI sheets to the 65 families for their shelter funded by BIM and APBF. The relief distribution works was successfully done along with the help of the KABC and NKBA executive members.





Music and Worship Seminar at Matchakol Baptist Church

New Tura, 28 - 30 July: The CBCNEI Baptist Youth Fellowship in North East India MUSIC AND WORSHIP SEMINAR was conducted at Matchakol Baptist Church New Tura with the Theme: ***"Sing to the Lord"*** Psalm 96:1. Music and worship Seminar was organized by BYFNEI in collaboration with Worship Central and GBC. This Seminar was mainly organized for the worship leaders, youth leaders, music directors, choirs and praise and worship team for the region under CBCNEI.



MoU with ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM India Trust (ADF India Trust)

Guwahati, 5 August: The Council of Baptist Churches in North East India has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ADF India Trust. ADF India Trust is registered Trust with an objective to promote activities to defend human rights and dignity and fundamental freedom as safe guarded in the India Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Council will thus collaborate with it in organizing legal awareness training in North Eastern States especially at convention levels , training course for seminary students in theological studies and also organize regional conferences for the whole of North East.

Advocacy and Legal Training on Religious Freedom in India

Guwahati, 5 - 6, August: State of Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) in North East India, consultation and Strategy meeting was at CBCNEI Guwahati, Assam. Programme was jointly organized by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and CBCNEI. The main purpose of this two day seminar was to give awareness among the Christian leaders the disturbing trend of rise of the RSS activities in the North-East region. Moreover, seeking to defend and understanding against the tide of communal intolerance and the attacks against the freedom of conscience speech and expression and equality.





Independence Day Celebrated

Guwahati, 15 August: The 70th Indian Independence was celebrated at CBCNEI campus. Ms Istrella Sangma, Manager, CCC led the program followed by an

invocation by Rev TP Mordecai, Director, CLC. The flag hoisting and short speech was delivered by Rev Dr. Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary which followed by a blessing prayer offered by Mr Talimoo, Chaplain, LM Hostel.



Lewis Memorial and White Memorial Fresher's Day meet

Guwahati, 25 August: A combined hostel fresher's meet was conducted at LM hall, Panbazar. Around 50 fresher's were welcomed from both the girls and the boys hostel. The very purpose of organizing a fresher's day program is to generate the feeling of fraternity among seniors and juniors. The program started with an invocation and the highlights of the program were dances, traditional show, drama, plays and self introductions of the fresher's. The program winded

with benediction prayer followed by a sumptuous lunch prepared by the hostellers.



Babupara Christian Hospital Renovation

Babupara, September 1: With the dedication of the new Eye Operation Theatre at BCH, the 67 years old hospital under the Healing Ministry of CBCNEI has gain another upgradation for the welfare of the people. The hospital has a Eye Specialist Dr J.R.N.Sangma who visits the hospital every Thursday. With the establishment of a perma-



Lewis Memorial and White Memorial Fresher's Day meet



ment Eye Operation Theatre, the hospital had almost been completely renovated now.

Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary along with Dr Lucita Momin, Medical Secretary graced the dedicatory ceremony held at Babupara.



Half Yearly Mission Board meeting

Guwahati, 6 September: The Half yearly Mission board meeting was held at CBCNEI to review the half yearly plan of actions and activities of the Mission department. Various agendas like implementation of research work, signing of MOU with OMF, updates on kids for Mission project, self reliance building and upcoming mission leadership consultation Diphu 2017 were discussed.

Mission Leadership Consultation

Guwahati, 7 - 9, September: A three days Mission Leadership Consultation on the theme "Together Towards Life" was jointly organized by World Council of Churches (WCC) & Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI).

This consultation has been hosted by CBCNEI at Lewis Memorial Auditorium, Panbazar, Guwahati for the first time after getting full membership at World Council of Churches. The major topics presentation were on:

1. Look East Policy: A Missions Response by Dr Atola Longkumer
2. Redefining and understanding the Kingdom of God by Dr



Akumla Longkumer

3. TTL: New Prospective and Emphases in Mission Theology by Dr George Coorilos

4. Prophetic Witness from Margin's Perspectives by Dr Wati Longchar, and

5. Development in Northeast India: Missions Response from Ecology Perspective by Dr Lovely Awomi James

Around 90 delegates from all part of North East India participated in this consultation



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PROPHETIC MISSION FROM MARGIN'S PERSPECTIVE



Rev. Dr. Wati Longchar, Professor of Theology & Culture at Yushan Theological College & Seminary, Hualien, Taiwan

Issues on Margin

Millions of people are pushed to the margins due to injustice. Ableism, ageism, patriarchy, racism, casteism and tribalism are unjust institutions and structures that perpetuate, disenfranchise and dehumanize person with disability, indigenous people, women, dalits as they do not fit into the normative scheme of dominant powers. They are looked down upon as inferior, incapable, self-imposed, and that they are poor because they are lazy, not smart and lack intellectual capacity. In spite of challenging such myths and unjust structure, the dominant cultures, traditions and theology justifies and nurtures marginality as a part of the divine creation, and also advocate that this world is an illusion and the best is yet to come. ("Margin" in *Ecumenical Missiology*, p. 309)

Therefore, mission from the margin's perspective search for a fullness of life not from the position of power and privilege, but with empty hands, in resistance to powers, and in struggle for life with dignity

and justice (Ibid).

One cannot understand the good news of Jesus Christ without locating in the context of margins. God in Jesus Christ opted for the marginalized people like persons with disability, gentiles, widows, lepers not because they are humble, innocent and pitiable but primarily because they are created in God's own image to celebrate fullness of life and yet they are denied of the promise of the fullness of life through imposition of unjust power structures, cultures and traditions.

Mission from the margin therefore, challenges all forms of hegemonic and domineering powers and calls the churches to join in God's mission with the marginalized. "Margin" is a missiological approach that critic all the dominant value systems that dehumanize, exclude and push some people to marginality. It calls the powerful and the privileged for repentance.

We are aware that margins are not a homogenous group, and there are many forces and factors that contribute to marginalization of people. There are different layers within the margins and each of the groups deserves recognition and response as their experiences differ from one group to another. This paper does not give specific focus on different layer of marginality but just give an overview for further discussion.

We need further clarification of the concept of "margin" to understand the meaning, function and role of prophetic mission.

The Bible and the Margin

The Gospel writer St. Luke records,

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

This parable explains about two persons - one is in the “Centre” - the Rich man, and the other one is in the “Margin” - Lazarus. Where and whose context do we locate our prophetic leadership today? What kind of prophetic leadership role do we discern from this parable? What is prophetic leadership in the context of systemic denial of justice to the poor and marginalized?

The Rich man

See the Rich man **DRESS** “*There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen* (v19.a.). The text says he dressed in purple and fine linen everyday, not just for special occasions. It is very strange that the rich man is identified with the dress he wore- purple and fine linen attire. He is not identified with his name! He is identified with is wealth. Was it a Jews custom or an insult to the rich person?. In the bible, purple and fine linen is mentioned in a few places (Rev. 18:12; Prov. 18:12; Ezek. 27:7) This attire, the most luxurious fabric, is associated with royalty or quasi-royal dignity.

This signifies that the rich man is a royal and rich. This true sea purple was a most precious and rare dye and was scarcely used by princess and nobles of very high position. Many scholars assume that the fine linen was worth twice its worth in gold. This shows that the rich man was a multi-millionaire who could afford all luxuries.

EATING STYLE - since the rich man had everything at his disposal, it says he “*feasted sumptuously everyday*” (v. 19 b)—note the word ‘**every day**’. Again an unusual life-style. The diet of the simple folks was simple and at times these people passed the day without proper food.

But for this rich man, it was not only occasionally for he feasted **sumptuously** every day; banquets were a matter of daily occurrence. The parable says he feasted lavishly, not just on special occasions. Feasting on special occasions seems reasonable, but everyday? Thus with all the accompaniments of grandeur this nameless mighty one lived. We can imagine that his halls were ever filled with noble guests with all rich attire, his ante-chambers with servants. Everything

that could make life splendid and joyous was in profusion/abundance. His wealth was earned on the backs of the poor through the oppressive patronage system of his time. This system was based on wealthy patrons who loaned money to poor clients with heavy taxation. When the clients failed to pay their loan, their land was confiscated. He accumulated massive wealth due to unjust system.

HOUSE - The rich man lived in a 'house' with a gate (not door). Gate symbolizes what in today's society? Some NT scholars suggest that the gate refers to a large ornamental mansion. It means the rich man was living in luxury like a King. Here Jesus is alluding to some of the most powerful Jewish families of the times who were rich and corrupt.

Is there a person without **NAME**? There cannot be a person without name. We give name even to our pets. We give name even to flower, fruits, plants, animals, mountain, etc. Not to name is an insult to the person, especially to a rich or a person in high position. Having no name means the person is nobody, worthless, and identity-less. Jesus attitude - I DO NOT CARE YOUR WEALTH - Is Jesus action not prophetic?

The Marginalized Lazarus

Where does he lives? He lay at the gate of the rich man. V.20 says, *"And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus"*. To live at somebody's gate waiting for the leave over food or burnt bread is terrible and painful.

What was he waiting for? He was waiting for food near garbage with the dogs. In the olden days the bread used to be baked in fire. It is said that nobles and high priests would not eat burnt bread. Eating such portion was sign a of impurity. This means the Rich man is pure/holy and Lazarus is impure/unholy/untouchable associated with stigma.

And how does Lazarus look like? *"Covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table"* (v 20 b and v 21 a), Lazarus is seen not only hunger and thirsty but with sores, carrying a loathsome incurable disease (perhaps leprosy. He was not only untouchable but was also extremely sick. It implies a

sign of impurity and pain.

Did he have any friends? He apparently could not get around for himself of hunger and ailment; he was as good as dead. Since he is an impure person, Lazarus did not have any relatives, friends and helpers. He was left alone, except dogs. Some commentators opine that the dogs were the wild homeless dogs so common in all Eastern cities (stray dogs), who act as the street scavengers and were regarded as unclean. The bible says that things associated with dogs were unclean, so this is another sign of this man's outcast condition (see Exodus 23:31; 1 Kgs 21:19, 24; LXX Ps 21:16; Matt 15:26-27; Mark 7:27-28). The dogs lick the juices that ooze from the afflicted man's sores and ulcers. Hungry, sick and dogs licking his sores does not sound like a desirable condition. It also affirms that Lazarus was defenseless that he could not even ward off the dogs. All in all this was an ugly picture. It appears that dogs were acting like doctors and nurses for this poor man. Lazarus presence **pollutes** others.

Is Lazarus a sinner? Yes, he was a sinner according to Jewish perspective. During the days of Jesus, a beggar was regarded as a sinner. Poverty was often spoken of as a punishment from God. Nobody should touch or associate with such persons. He is a person cursed by God. To bear incurable disease is another sign of sin in Jewish's eyes.

Lazarus was a person in the margins and excluded person.

Why the marginalized person was **called by name**? The Greek name Lazarus is derived from two Hebrew words *Eli-ezer* meaning "God helps/God helped". Naming implies identity which involves recognition, respect and right. With name the person becomes somebody. Jesus introduced him with a name. By naming, Lazarus is no longer nobody, but somebody with right, dignity and worth.

In whose context do our mission needs to be located? - that of the Rich man or that of Lazarus? Affluence or abject poverty? Lazarus represents the excluded poor in the margins who are denied of rice in our context today, the marginalized, the afflicted and the oppressed.

Today we have millions of ***Lazaruses in the world due to unjust economic structures, religious, social and cultural system which marginalized poor and the whole of God's oikos. The deliberate option of Jesus for Lazarus calls that our churches, organization, our movement and our efforts must to be located in the context of people in margins.***

Christian mission will miss the core focus of its vision and programmatic plans if we miss this location. There cannot be prophetic mission without locating in Lazarus' context.

Margin - the Site of Prophetic Mission

The 'margin' is **true site** where we are called to call to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. It is the place where human encounter God as **liberator**, it is also space where God revealed himself as just God among the victims. The agenda from the **periphery is the agenda of God**. The **real future of humanity** comes from here and not from the decisions and deliberations of the centres that dominate the world. It is from the site of God's visitation - the margins- that a new world, a new Asia, a new India will take shape. This is our hope.

With the slogan "minority should sacrifice for the sake of majority", many poor people, especially indigenous people in India and Asia have been forced to sacrifice their land, forest and water. The dominant extractive growth model has become a threat to all lives. Unmindful extraction of natural resources of all kinds; of minerals, natural gas, petroleum, timber, and hydro-power, among others:

- threatens the waters that are sacred to people and means life for all human beings and all of creation;
- removes people from their traditional lands, and threatens the food web that we human beings and all creation are dependent upon;
- enables genocidal effects to human beings, where indigenous peoples, vulnerable peoples, and the poor are displaced.

poisoned, and killed so that multi-national economic systems can reap benefit for the sake of a few beneficiaries.

Today we see this is happening right at our doorstep due to unjust policies and propaganda:

- a) **Objectifications of people:** Indigenous people, migrant workers, women are objectified as mere property. Cooperate market do not count human value. Today neo-economic development and commercial tourism are projected as a tool of liberation for poor countries at the cost of human values. They objectify everything as commodity for enjoyment and pleasure. Consequently, poor peoples and marginalized women are forced into the cheap labour and flesh market.
- b) **Commodification of culture:** Indigenous people's culture, customs, rituals, sacred shrines, places of worship, sacred music, ceremonial dress, traditions, and handiwork are commodified for commercial purpose. Musicians, dancers and other artists perform, exhibit and sell their creativity to earn some income, at the cost of their self-respect. Today indigenous people's sacred music and dances have turned them into mere cabaret performances for enjoyment.
- c) **Enslavement for Development:** The development of ecotourism, airport, industry and other infra-structure is causing wide-scale eviction of indigenous peoples and poor from their ancestral lands leading to breakdown of traditional values and land-centred spirituality. Today's sole objectives of economic expansion are mere profit, pleasure and enjoyment. It does not respect life, culture and spirituality. It denies the right to live in dignity especially to the poor and marginalized people.
- d) **Marketization of nature:** Reductionism makes people to believe that there is nothing amazing about the cosmos. By detaching God from nature, natural resources are seen as something to be manipulated and exploited without any

compunction. Nature has only an instrumental value, determined by the extent to which human can utilize it. The market operates within this destructive ideology. God's creation is seen merely from a utilitarian perspective denying the integrity and its wholeness. The sanctity of worship places, sacred groves and shrines are mere object for gaze.

- e) It is here in this context that ***prophetic mission needs to take shape***. Then, what is the role of prophetic mission in this context.

Prophetic Mission in Margin's Context

Prophetic leadership' is entering into the struggle of the marginalized people for radical change in the system of oppressive structures proclaiming and making known that Jesus Christ is the liberator of all humankind and God's creation. It involves dismantling the existing systems and institutions that perpetuate systemic injustice to many people and God's oikos. In some cases it involves continuous collective struggle against the misuse and abuse of power which would demands organizing protest movements, non-cooperation movements, campaigns through peaceful means, etc.

The Hebrew prophets spoke of structural transformation of social, political and economic system. They pronounced God's judgment upon those who exploited the poor, widow and strangers. The prophets always understood God's liberative action in terms of political freedom. Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom also embraces total well-being of people. He challenged the religious formalism, legalism, misuse of power, and unjust economic structures that oppressed and marginalized people. Prophetic mission which is merely in the sense of individual is essentially a contradiction to the Good News of the coming of God's Kingdom. The Kingdom which Jesus preached was the Kingdom of those who were deprived of life. Jesus' uncompromising defense of life led him to a life of conflict with the powerful ruling class of his time. This conflict resulted in Jesus' death

on the cross. To follow Jesus is to witness to the abundant life for all in words and deeds. Then, prophetic mission involves individual persons and of the society as a whole.

For centuries, Christian mission was understood narrowly in terms of planting and organizing Christian Church among the so-called non-Christian world. In other words, Christian witness was perceived merely as proclamation of “the gospel to all creatures, to gather the ignorant and godless from every corner of the earth, and to lead those in deplorable error to the flock of Christ and to the recognition of the shepherd and Lord of the flock.” Christian witness has been understood largely in terms of charitable works. This has contributed to passive attitude towards social realities. It also created subject-object relationship between the givers and the recipients and helps to maintain the *status quo* based on unjust power relations. In the process, the poor and marginalized people were co-opted into the empire’s social structure. In such context, traditional preaching, proclaiming, evangelizing and charitable works are not enough. They do not challenge the evil system. The church which does not participate in creating a just social order is not the true church, they are not doing God’s mission. They become mere agent of oppressors.

Prophetic mission is not an emotional and temporal act; it is a ***continual struggle and commitment for transformation of the sinful social structure and liberation of the victims***. It involves two levels of actions. First, it requires ***raising consciousness*** of both the victims and perpetrators by exposing the unjust structure and certain belief systems. We need to raise consciousness of the people on how political leaders and capitalists abuse power, involve in corruption, create ethnic/caste violence, etc. for their vested political gains. Raising awareness will provoke people to take critical stand against these structures and motivate them to take up responsibility not only for personal development but also for the development of the whole society. It is very encouraging to note that many churches in North East India is deeply committed to this endeavor – but do we

take the position of margin consciously.

The second level prophetic leadership has to do with ***mobilization of collective justice action groups*** not only Christians but all civil societies. In this attempt the respect for human dignity and protection of life sustaining Mother Earth should be the motivating ground for collective action. As a church committed to justice, we can give prophetic action and leadership by strategizing collective action groups to globalize the hope to live. Silence to unjust system is denial of justice.

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

To live a life of dignity, respect and freedom is the intrinsic right of all beings. It is a divine gift to all beings. The victims can celebrate God's given life in abundance only when justice is restored to them. A primary function of the church is thus to be involved in eliminating all forms of oppressions that destroy human dignity and life sustaining God's resources.



...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31



Suffering is a beautiful part of Life when we trust God

Rev. Angam Chahong, Assistant Director, CLC, Imphal

Suffering and pain is difficult to fathom what this word of scripture really means when life is strike by it.

Isaiah 41: 10 says *“Don’t fear, because I am with you; don’t be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand”*. I was truly having experienced the strength and courage to go through this moment of life.

It was a fine Sunday morning at about 8:30 AM on 10th July 2011; we were ready for Sunday worship. A day we committed to worship the Living God with the fellow believers. It was not such a beautiful Sunday for my family. Suddenly my son looked so exhausted and something unusual in his face, my wife said let’s go to the hospital, I immediately got a vehicle and rushed to the hospital. My wife started crying on the way to hospital as she hold our son. I felt strongly emotional and wanted to cry out, but I kept my feeling inside, and I told her, “It will be all right, keep faith in God.” It took us about 10 minutes to reach the hospital from home. He was admitted into the emergency room, the doctor and nurses were doing their best to do medication for about 35 minutes to save our son, however the doctor came to me and said, “I am sorry, I cannot save your son.” It was such a unbearable moment and it

seemed like all the pressured of pain was over me, no words and it was beyond my understanding why this thing happened. My wife and I rushed inside the room where our son was still sleeping peacefully without any movement, when I touched my son he was still warm. I wished he was sleeping in while and ready to wake up. When I sat beside my son's lifeless body, my wife was crying. I realised I need to be strong yet I can't stop my tears. I was silently praying, "Oh God help me."

I've gone through many circumstances of pains and suffering in life, but never such a trauma I've ever felt, the pain was so strong and extreme hopelessness. Life seems not fair and fear overshadowed me. All my strength faded away. There are no easy answers to the problems of suffering specially loosing someone we dearly love. My son was just 11 months old, he was just starting to stand himself and a time of the most adorable smile on his face. He was dearly loved by everyone at home, especially by his elder sister. I have no answer why my son left us so early when my daughter asked me why her brother have to die. The story of Job in the Bible reminds me how painful he had gone through such suffering yet he still has faith in God, eventually he lost all his children and wealth still he have never lost his faith and hope in loving God. How true when he says in Job 1:21 "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart, the lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised*". Losing someone I love was really a painful moment to live; it takes a few months to realize the purposed of such situation yet this situation shaped me and brought me closer to God. My family started a new journey of life by trusting God in the midst of suffering. I do believe that God has given us resources to live when we struggle with suffering and pain. We can live on because we believe in a loving, gracious, all-powerful God. Great help come from many friends who are also Christians, they inspired us and encouraged us to face such situation to trust God fully.

Jesus said in John 16:33, *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"*. The word of God brings hope and the situation taught me to live a life of trusting God without any doubt and complaining. Suffering and pain are a part of life; it is inevitable yet life is fair when we live with faith knowing who holds our future. The Bible testifies to the fact of suffering. We see this in lamentations, of course, but also in so many other biblical books. Scripture teaches us that suffering is not imaginary, but rather an inescapable part of existence in a world broken by sin.

The Bible also affirms that suffering is not part of God's good intentions for us. Though God can certainly use suffering and pain for good, he did not create the world as a place of pain and suffering. So, we rightly long for the day when God will wipe away every suffering and tear. In the meanwhile, those sufferings and tears are undeniable part of our lives. Suffering is a beautiful part of Life when we trust God.



Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

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Last date of issue of forms is **January 25, 2017.**

Last date of submission of the application form to CBCNEI office is **January 31, 2017.**

Sd/

Dr Lucita Momin

Medical Secretary, CBCNEI

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SERVANT LEADERSHIP AMIDST LEGIONS

Texts: Mark 5:1-9

Rev Dr Wati Longchar, Professor of Theology & Culture at Yushan Theological College & Seminary, Hualien, Taiwan

The servant leadership is not a passive and emotional act but a continual struggle and commitment for transformation of the sinful social structure and liberation of the victims. Servant leadership cannot be divorced from the context of those in the margins. It is not an option, but a divine mandate. In his life and work, Jesus was involved in and identified with the grassroots, ground reality. He did not belong to the elite, rich class. He was with, for and from the people. People's problems and predicament were his concerns. He did not understand his spirituality in terms of separation from the people in pain, but in terms of total identification. In Jesus ministry, there is a reversal of values from the exercise of power to servanthood. In Jesus' teaching servant leadership is always understood in terms of ***energizing, accompanying, sacrificing, empowering, mobilizing solidarity and transforming people of nobody into somebody.***

Risky and Lonely Road

Servant Leadership is a vocation that involves ***risky, challenging and lonely road.*** yet full of joy and fulfillment. Gospel writer Mark has recorded the risky terrain of servant leadership.

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when he had stepped out the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him

anymore, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from distance, he ran and bowed down before him; and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me. For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." (Mark 5:1-9)

This passage speaks of an uncontrolled man, very powerful person who has been living in the graveyard. Everyone was scared of him, nobody is dare to go nearby him. No one was able to control and tie the man up, not even with a chain. Even if he is chained, he would break it and smashed the leg with the irons. He was yelling and cutting himself with stones. Moreover, he was living in the graveyard. No one like to live in graveyard, it is a place where dead were buried. It is the place we do not want to visit or even remember. Our love ones are buried there, it is a place where our hearts are broken.

This passage depicts our society today. It portrays a society totally controlled by unjust political, religious system and economic relation. Corruption and manipulation is so rampant, but no one can stop. Killing, rape, forced labourer, arrest of innocent people without reason are taking place but nobody can say anything. We have heard the abuse of power by army, by so-called freedom fighters, forced collection of taxes, but no one has courage to speak out. In the name of religion, we have heard killing of many people in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Indonesia, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh but nobody can speak out or do nothing even if we know that it is against religious teaching. In the name of protecting our culture, sometimes we treat women as second-class citizen. Some churches even refuse to ordain women, we do not want to speak about equal opportunity in ministry. Our global economy is controlled by a few rich nations, or a few individuals in the country. Some rich people have accumulated so much wealth that they

do not know how and where to invest their wealth, while the poor people are dying of hunger on the street. It is said that top 10 rich Asian get about 5000 US dollars in a few seconds or minutes, while millions of people do not even get even a dollar per day. Asia has 40% population living in poverty who cannot afford to have square meal a day. Being threatened of their livelihood thousands of farmers commits suicide. Lack of clean drinking water leads to 5 to 10 million deaths in the Third World countries. But we have no courage to raise justice voices. People/leaders who have raised their voices have been eliminated, killed and tortured. Religious fundamentalism destroys whole secular fabric, but no one can stop. Insurgency movement destroys harmony in society, but nobody can chain them. Our society has become uncontrollable like the strong man in the tomb. Our society is becoming like a graveyard where we have many sad memories. The name legion suggests that many demons, rather than one demon possessing the man and this meaning is confirmed by the following phrase, for we are many (v.9b). A Roman army legion was made of 6000 men; the powerful and well organized army at the time of Jesus. The Roman became empire due to their mighty army. Today evil and unjust system is institutionalized like mighty Roman soldiers. Just like the poor cannot challenge the Roman soldiers at the time of Jesus, it is almost impossible to challenge unjust system in today's society. This is our society. We cannot run away. It is here that we are called to exercise servant leadership.

Jesus Style of Servant Leadership

How did Jesus do? Jesus name the evil – Jesus asked, “What is your name?” Naming involves personal encounter, it involves personal confrontation. Naming also involves knowing the specific issue and problem, it means identifying the root cause of the evil. Discharging servant leadership includes ***identifying and confronting life threatening forces***. True servant leader is the one who have ***courage to name and confront various forms of exploitation and unjust system***. When Jesus asked, “what is your name?”, the evil possessed man replied, “My name is Legion” – As noted Legion is a battalion of Roman soldiers, a soldier well-equipped, armed, trained to fight. It represents power, authority to attack, control, suppress and oppress others. They are always ready to obey the command of the higher authority. Legion symbolizes collective power and structure. The

most important aspect of this name is that the evil spirit works in group or collectively just as the Roman soldiers. So then, what/who are the legions in our society today? We have many legions. The oppressive system, well-structured and institutionalized military junta around the world, cooperates multi-nationals, patriarchy, caste system, tribalism are all legions. Politically, misuse and abuse of religion to gain political power is legion. Attempt to control political machinery through militancy or manipulation is legion. Gun culture, organize crimes are all legion. Economically, globalization and unending competition of consumerism, excessive exploitation of natural resources are legion. Religiously fighting against each other in the name of expanding one's denomination or religion is legion. Many people who raise their voice against legions were killed and continue to be killed and sacrificed their life because they name the evil. Servant leadership in today's world involves ***courage and sacrifice***.

Therefore, the words of Jesus "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45) should not be understood ***submissiveness and idealistic terms***. It is a ***radical and costly leadership***. Jesus' understanding and practice of servant leadership was radically different from the exercise of power by Pharaohs, Caesars, kings and other non-religious and religious leaders of the time. For Jesus, servant leadership involves ***liberating marginalized people from the yoke of religious formalism, legalism, misuse of power, and unjust economic structures that oppressed and marginalized people***. Servant leadership requires ***struggle for structural transformation of social, political and economic system***. There is no servant leadership without ***subversive action*** for the marginalized people. Jesus' uncompromising defense of life led him to a life of conflict with the powerful ruling class of his time. This conflict resulted in Jesus' death on the cross. Similarly, the disciples and followers of Jesus of Nazareth confronted the 'principalities and powers' of structural/institutional/systemic empire structure that exploit the poor of their times. They risk their life for Christ's sake and became martyrs for justice.



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:

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We are Christians

God the father,
God the son,
God the Holy Spirit.
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Ye the lone king
We are groomed by your grace
Dare all even to face
Because we are Christians
Dauntless else stern
By every celebration,
We let approved our position
No doubt, meek, calm and naive
If needed be rest be in grave
We are thunder
Spark of splendour
Have with us lot dignitaries
Doctors, engineers, labours and warriors
Cry less but take to fight
The sword of peace and love fastened by right
We can have a brook pain
Stay akin in summer or rain
We have a pride

Drift never off in ebb or tide
We confide everyone
Any caste, creed and religion
Hence we are Christians.

Mr Amal Dev



Mission Department to organize TESOL and Missionary training program

CBCNEI Mission department will be conducting TESOL course from 7th-19th November 2016 Guwahati CBCNEI Conference Centre. The Details are as follows:

For TESOL Course:-

1. Registration fee for each participant will be Rs. 5000 only (can be payable on arrival).
2. Arrival will be on 7th November before Lunch and Departure on 19th November.
3. Only 20 students will be enrolled on first come first reservation basis.
4. Preference will be given to those candidates who are planning or already involved in Cross Cultural ministry recommended by their respective Conventions or Associations.
5. Since the medium of teaching is English therefore each students needs to be well verse in English.
6. Those Missionaries serving in Church run Schools can also enroll for this course.
7. Since it is a certified course any students/candidates leaving half way of the course will be not be given certificates.
8. For confirmation and reservation of seats, the last date is fixed on 28th October 2016
9. Fees once paid are not refundable.

For reservation kindly contact:

- a. Mr. Mhabemo Kithan (08724068553 | mhabemo@cbcnei.in)
- b. Mr. Siamliana (09859981628 | siamliana@cbcnei.in)



On a Mission

*Mr. K. Nepuni Pfozeh, Associate Pastor, Song Song,
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Nothing takes God by surprise. Everything moves according to a plan, and God wants you in that plan. The Devil also has a plan for the world. You will have to decide which plan you are going to fit into.

God allows us 70 years and some beyond. The first 15 years are spent in childhood and early adolescence. 20 years are spent in bed; and in the last 5, physical limitations starts to curtail our activities. That gives us about 30 years to live as adults. If we take out time for work & family, we are down perhaps to 15 years. Our time is short! The time we can invest for God in creative things, in reaching our fellowmen for Christ, is short! God's plan is that those who have received His grace seek actively to persuade others to accept His divine, free gracious offer to them. If I fail to invite others to reconcile to God in Christ, I cease to be an agent of reconciliation, and I show sign of having received God's grace in vain. Therefore, my involvement in evangelism helps me to share the treasure of God's grace. Person to person communication of the Christian Faith is God's intended way of building the Church; it is the most credible form of demonstrating God's Grace. When I communicate God's intention to others through words and deeds, the Good News is personalized, and it ceases to be the theory or a set of abstract ideas. People are not born Christian, they become Christian. Evangelization is the means

by which people are introduced to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Christianity cannot long survive without Evangelism.

This is the logic that the Apostle Paul sought to impress on the Roman Christian. 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?' Romans 10:14; KJV.

Dwight L. Moody says: "When a man is filled with the Word of God you cannot keep him still, if a man has got the word, he must speak or die."



Urban Mission Training Program

CBCNEI Mission department will be Urban Missionary Training program from 7th-11th November 2016 at Guwahati CBCNEI Conference Centre. The Details are as follows:

1. Registration fee for each participant will be Rs. 1000 (Non refundable)
2. Date of commencement 7th-11th November 2016. Arrival is on 7th November before Lunch and departure will be on 11th November after Dinner.
3. Only 20 seats are reserved for this program.
4. Any Intending candidates or those already in the mission field can register on first come first resevation.
5. The medium of program will be conducted in English.
6. Last date of seat reservation is fixed on 28th October.

For reservation kindly contact:

- a. Mr. Mhabemo Kithan (08724068553 | mhabemo@cbcnei.in)
- b. Mr. Siamliana (09859981628 | siamliana@cbcnei.in)

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