

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.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor: Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi

Asst Editor: Mrs Lichanbeni Tungoe Kithan

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Contact information:

CBCNEI, Mission Compound

Panbazar, Guwahati, Assam-781001

Phone: +91-361-2515 829

Fax: +91-361-2544 447

eMail: editor@cbcnei.in

website: www.cbcnei.in

Facebook: facebook.com/cbcnei

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Editorial



Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." (Psalm 85:10).

There are numerous verses in the Bible that tell us the great truth about the intertwining of the concept of Justice and Peace. We have seen it in the Bible and have learnt that God is just, people are wicked. God's moral law is for ensuring and delivering justice in society. God does not tolerate fraudulence and injustice. Man falls short of God's moral law. Biblical justice is concerned with the poor, the oppressed, orphans, and the underprivileged in society. The Bible teaches that justice must be in place for real peace to exist. When we say "Peace" it is not merely the absence of war, but it is the wholeness where the relation between God and man, man and man, man and nature are harmonious. This implies struggle for justice and abhorrence to sin. The Bible says that there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 48:22, 57:21). Peace is the consequence of justice and justified relations. Jesus called people who work for or make peace happy or blessed. (Matthew 5:9). Are we one among the peacemakers?

The word peace is used in a very broad sense in the Bible. It takes in the wellbeing and health of people, as well as the absence of violence. Christians pray for the end of conflict between nations and religions. But they are also called to promote harmony in their communities, families and anywhere that they can make a practical difference.

The main focus for this year has been on "togetherness" towards "Justice and Peace" and we hope to achieve together in the coming years is how to think about Peace, Justice and human development. These are not just social and

scriptural themes, enunciated in the Old Testament and articulated in the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament. But in order to explore these topics in the light of the uniqueness of faith, and how Christians can and should contribute to a vision for, and practical progress toward, dignity for all.

As a nation we have gained the admiration of the world for our spiritual heritage, cultural diversity, secularism and democracy. But I fear the manifold problem the people of the nation faces each day and I question the real existence of Justice and peace among us at present. We stand at the cross road of history. Our country has one of the saddest and longest records of conflict. At the foundation of this conflict is a denial of natural justice. Religious and ethnic minorities have borne the brunt of that injustice. The inheritance of the young has become a list of miseries, of migration, slavery, human trafficking, drug abuse, and more. It is a curse. Health and education are in disaster, compounding the problems of the young. Unresolved conflicts have especially affected indigenous peoples, whose rights and resources have been exploited. And attempts to answer many of these questions have defaulted to one culture, one language, and one religion. Monoculture lies at the heart of majority exploitation of resources. Our people have lived through a nauseating spiral of violence against their human dignity.

Whatever amount of religious activities we may take part in unless we maintain the right and just relationship with other people in society, our religious practice or observance of rituals will avail nothing. It is a positive attitude towards life, towards God's creations and towards the fellow human beings. This can change the world for the better; for a just and peaceful society for all. There can be no peace without justice. Therefore, it is utmost importance that we must gather together, on a common platform, to address issues that face all of us today. We not only have responsibility as a Christian but we have the opportunity to collaborate with people of other faiths to promote peace and development. We should be able to understand the context and strengthen our social mission and move from the comfort zone of our own churches and religious spaces towards a social mission in understanding the suffering of the people.



Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI

Special Appeal

Dear fellow believers in the Lord,

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

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

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

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

You can send your Donation to the account given below:

Name of the Bank: State Bank of India, Guwahati main branch.

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Account holder: Council of Baptist Churches in North East India.

Thank you so much. If and when you make donation, please let us know by calling or sending message to:

Mr Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary
+91 9435492689 | vikatoshikhu@cbcnei.in

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

In His service,



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary,
CBCNEI





Together towards Justice and Peace

*Mr Josiah Luithui, Tangkhul Theological Association,
Hamleikhong, Ukhrul- 795142.*

With the Evangelical principle of “Sola Scriptura,” we shall look into the following:

Firstly, we shall have a precise bird-eye view on the theological concept of “Justice and Peace,” and how does it addresses to a pluralistic context of India, from evangelical pulpit.

Secondly, the concept of “together/unity” and its essence will be drawn from biblical and historical vernacular.

Finally, unlike the conventional thesis method, methodological issues will be discussed in conclusion.

In the first place, before we begin, there some crucial questions I want all of us to keep in mind:

The 21st century India witnesses the rise of radical Hindu Fundamentals, and how do we address the concept of “together towards Peace and Justice” in such context, and to them in particular?

On the other hand, how do we address it for the unity of the one Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, breaking the barrier of tribalism?

With these questions in mind, I would like all of us to ponder our thoughts with a reflection from the book of Genesis 2: 15.

Miroslav Volf, in his book "Exclusion & Embrace: A theological Exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation," draws out powerfully the cause of exclusion, that arise out of the claim for identity of the "self," which distinguishes oneself from the "other."¹ This is equally true for pluralistic context of India, where the radical Hindu fundamentals claim the "exclusion" of others, and proclaims the doctrine of "Hinduism is national and the rest anti-national." It is for this fact that theological trends such as "inter-faith dialogue," and "theology of reconciliation" gained a wide momentum in the study of religion. Therefore, the issue of justice and peace remains a crucial subject in a pluralistic context of India. So the foremost task that awaits us is the proper understanding of justice and peace.

The biblical concept of justice and peace have their origin from the Hebrew words "Tsedeq" and "Shalom." These words are not derivative of human philosophical concept, but they are rooted in the being and act of Yahweh. In this way, there is real justice and peace in a society when the first two commandments are kept steadfastly. One major champion of this cause was Prophet Amos, who advocated social justice and peace through turning to Yahweh. Therefore, before we proceed further, it is of great importance to understand and distinguish the Biblical concept of justice and peace from any other of such kinds.

Philosophically, there are two kinds of justice commonly held (i) Distributive justice, and (ii) Retributive justice. The former is commonly held in social Marxism, and the latter usually associated with mystic mythology of reward for an action, for instance in the Hindu philosophy of Karma. Here, the concept of justice is posteriori, and justice can be

derived only according to the demand of the action.

But the Biblical concept of justice is “apriori,” which means, the justice of God transcends any human action, situation and condition, and justice is shown freely as grace. Therefore, we must reject the philosophical mandate of justice, and embrace the justice of grace.

Similarly, in as much as the concept of peace is concerned, unlike the pseudo- peace of religions, which seek peace through divisive talks of religion and politics, the biblical concept of peace is derived from the love of God, “shalom,” a holistic healing. This peace transcends all human ways of religion and politics, and it is this peace which drives us to love our neighbors as ourselves. It was through this peace of God that the Apostles boldly proclaimed: “There is not Jews or Gentiles in Christ.”

So far, we have been progressing from biblical understanding of peace and justice for peaceful inter-religious and inter-cultural existence. A greater task that awaits us is: will other faiths readily and unconditionally accept our biblical thesis proposal of justice and peace? We, too, can expect this question from them. Then, what are we to respond? These are some crucial questions we need to wrestle when handling a crucial topic like “together towards justice and peace” in pluralistic context of India.

Here, we cannot escape to break forth from any religious boundary and enter into a sphere of discussion of what is called “democracy.” Should we say then, that we have wandered away too far from biblical concept of justice and peace? Indeed! We have wandered away, but only to draw a conclusion that “democracy” is deeply rooted in the biblical understanding of justice and peace.

In the world of the Holy Bible, God gives man free-will, a conscience to freely choose; every man has the right to choose in freedom. Here, we need no go further to the theology of free-will, our intention is to draw out that de-

mocracy has its biblical origin. This is true for pluralistic context of democratic India, where everyone has the freedom of choice- a freedom to choose and practice one's faith freely. This radically excludes "exclusivism" and eventually draws together for a common goal of justice, of which the fruit is peace. Then, we can concretely draw a conclusion, that this inclusive and democratic biblical concept of justice and peace is the bottom-line for an ideal society of justice and peace. John Calvin wrote:

The moral law, then (to begin with), being contained under two heads, the one of which simply enjoins us to worship God with pure faith and piety, the other to embrace men with sincere affection, is the true and eternal rule of righteousness prescribed to the men of all nations and of all times, who would frame their life agreeably to the will of God.²

However, we need to take note, as the Lord put man in the Garden of Eden to care and nurture (Genesis 2: 15), it is a "necessity" to be engaged in this task of discipleship. This is not limited to any single individual, but humanity as a whole. This is one beautiful purpose of God's creation and His love for the world.

Secondly, Christians as believed and baptized to the one Lord are called to serve Him as one, regardless of clan/tribe/color. This is the biblical teaching of Jesus: "be one, as I and Father are one" (John 17: 21). The need for the unity of the one Catholic Church of Jesus Christ was the locus on "The why" the International Missionary Conference (IMC) was formed in Edinburgh, A.D. 1910. IMC later developed into the world largest Ecumenical body, World Council of Churches, formed in A.D. 1948. Here, we cannot avoid mentioning a name, William Carey.

The Baptist missionary, William Carey (The Father of Modern Mission), whose name is associated with the phrase "Expect Great things from God, attempt Great things for God," arrived at India in A.D. 1793.³ A new milestone in

Christian mission was set by Carey with the foundation of the "Baptist Missionary Society" in 1792.⁴ This led to the formation of various international missionary societies. Carey proposed for a World Missionary Conference in A.D. 1806, to be convened at the "Cape of Good Hope in A.D. 1810,"⁵ a dream of Carey which was later fulfilled after 100 years in Edinburgh, IMC 1910.

Therefore, the unity of the one Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, regardless of clan/tribe/color is both biblical and historical, and is its essence. The "togetherness/unity" primarily has its origin within the Church of Jesus Christ, and then without. However, we must take note, that the unity of the Church is not an end to itself but the beginning of discipleship, i.e., to preach the Holy Gospel to the end of the world, which is the Good-news of Salvation, justice and peace.

Finally, we have arrived to the point that the concept of "together towards justice and peace" is "inclusive" in its essence, and radically challenges the concept of "exclusivism." But it is to be noted that this "inclusiveness" must not necessarily be forged to "inclusivism," which in itself is "exclusivism." But regardless of our discussion the methods, the living Word of God is not at the disposal of any man's dialogue or method, but the reverse, i.e., every man's dialogue or method is subjected to the living Word of God, which is the fountain of "together towards justice and peace." In conclusion, as the Iron Law of our thesis, we shall draw a passage from the Modern Church Father, Karl Barth: "In every age, therefore, the evangelical decision will have to be a decision for the Holy Scripture as such."⁶

Sola Deo Gloria!

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(Footnotes)

¹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A theological Exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) 2.

² John Calvin, *The Institute of Christian Religion, vol.2* (trans. Henry Beveridge. London: James & Clarke & Co. 1962), 663.

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⁴ Roger E. Hedlund, *The Root of Great Debate in Mission* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1981), 3.

⁵ Hedlund, *The Root of Great Debate in Mission*, 7.

⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, vol. 1.2* (trans. G.T. Thomson and T. F. Torrance; ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2010), 583.



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A VISIT TO MARY KOM'S HOME!

M. C. Mary Kom at a Glance: Five (5) times World boxing champion, an Olympic medalist, Members of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. A recipient of Padma Bhusan, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award Bharat Ratna, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.

Il Timothy 3:7, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,I have kept the Faith.

M. C. Mary Kom was born to a humble family in a village named Kangatheh in Churachandpur District, Manipur. She is the eldest amongst her siblings. One thing that remain in her till today is her integrity for simplicity, hardworking and sincere in whatever she does since her childhood.

On date 29th December 2017, I had the opportunity to visit her home in Imphal. She was not only kind enough to host us with immense hospitality and cheerfulness but made tea herself and served us. As I spent time with her and her husband Mr.

Onler , I was amazed to see certain endearing qualities of my host of the day. Madam Mary is not just a renown athlete but also a parliamentarian. However, she has no qualms about doing the household chores like



Me with Mary Kom, Onler and their son Prince.

any other housewife. I could also see that she has neither air nor ego being a celebrity. What surprised me most was the persona she has acquired off her bout (boxing ring). I thought she must be the rough-tough lady but she is actually a very gentle nature which embodied as a source of inspiration for many women, as she rightly put in her own words *"If I, a mother of two(now three), can win a medal, so can you all. Take me as an example and don't give up."*



She is not only a role model for women empowerment but a symbol of courage and motivation for many of us. In another word, a self made person. Once I heard a story about her that during her first exposure to International

Boxing in the year 2001, she fasted a day before her final bout and got scolded from her the then coach because losing energy at that point was very crucial but she said that the story of David and Goliath inspired her that when one is with God no opponent can beat her.

I also learned from other source that she used to write "100% Jesus "on her cloaks (robes). It was truly inspiring for me as well to meet a legend in her own category who glorifies God in her profession. I really appreciate and admire her simplicity and humility. She was so hospitable and friendly when I visited her in her Imphal home during the last December 2017. May the Lord continue to bless her so that she continues to be an inspiration to many younger generation.





RESCUE THE PERSHING

Amrit Kr Goldsmith

Mathew 25:40 – AND THE KING WILL ANSWER THEM. “TRULY I TELL YOU, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF MINE, YOU DID IT FOR ME”.

Surprised, and queried - Lord when did I do all those good works to you? - reply - the things you have done to the least of my brothers and sisters – you did it to me. What an encouragement for us to provide service to those without hope for the future and of eternal life.

Few devoted Christian individuals who had Vision to open a **SHELTER HOME** to provide Shelter to the rescued minor trafficked girls (below 18 years) **with Christian love and compassion**, established the **Seven Sisters Home (SSH)** at Guwahati.

Asian Rural Life Development Foundation India Trust (ARLDFIT) provided the local logistical support and acquired the Government License to run the Seven Sisters Home. **Since 2012 the SSH is running successfully with a group of very dedicated care giving staff.**

SSH provides very warm quality accommodation, safety, health care, education, spiritual nourishments, extra-curricular activities (martial arts, fashion designing), vocational skill building trainings etc. and 24x7 care giving service. SSH runs a school (Matric standard) in the same building of SSH, affiliated to YWCA School at Satribari. The girls find dif-

difficulty accessing the existing normal school education due to their age and background factor (Stigmatized).

Legal Angle:

The Juvenile Justice ACT (JJA) provides the framework to govern the Shelter Homes also provide the statutory requirement of filing Police FIR on POCSO ("Protection of Children against Sexual Offence) cases, each girl child who has a record of sexual abuse on her, a FIR must be filed against the Perpetrator of the offence, this require professionally trained staff to handle the police and court cases, it is also expensive. The Perpetrators are usually rich and influential people (Govt. Officers, Police, Politicians, Contractors and Lawyers).

The statement 164 by the POCSO victim in front of a Magistrate gives her statement confidently of her experience of sexual abuse. The FIR and the Statement 164 are the initial steps towards procuring Justice for the sexual abuses committed on her life. Facilitating towards acquiring justice for the sexually abused girl children require very patient, courageous and dedicated involvement.

There are 24 number of Do nots and 15 numbers of Do's forwarded to SSH by the Director Social Welfare Department, which hangs in the door of SSH office as everyday reminder to all the Care Givers. The monitoring and evaluation from Child Protection Committee (Govt) is in the line of those do's a do not's as indicators.

Self-Identity:

These rescued girl children initially have no individual identity, no age certificate, and no address, no family history. All these important credentials need meticulous construction to give them individual identity. Towards giving them economic freedom the opening of Bank Account in their name is very important step and without an established identity the Bank will not open a bank account in the name of the girl child.

The rescued girl must go through health check up and specially tests of STD and HIV. Initially the girls come with bad tooth condition due chewing of Gutka, shikhar etc, and bad eye sight. Maintaining health check monitor on each rescued girls is mandatory.

Each of the rescued girl's family should be visited to collect information of the child which may be is risky and dangerous for the Social Workers due to kind of people involved in the business. The first task is to establish contact with the parents/family of the rescued girl child and assess the capability of the family to put back the child into the family. This is a very delicate process as the future of the girl child depends on the decision of handing the girl to the family or to rehabilitate her in the SSH. It was found sometimes risky to hand over the girl child to the family as she may be sold again to the flesh market.

There are few girls who attained the age of 18 years in SSH are living in Half Way Home (Transition) towards self dependency and learning vocational skill to live a normal life with dignity.

Case study:

A two years old baby girl was sold by her father for Rs.10,000/- to an Assamese Circus owner. She mostly developed the acrobatic skill and was performing in the Circus. During her life with the Circus all kinds of sexual abuse was committed to her, and that is how she grew up and knew as normal life. The girl was rescued by Goa police after 14 years of her life. The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) at Guwahati placed her in the Seven Sisters Home (SSH) for care and rehabilitation.

She came to know the other side of her life after she came under the rehabilitation programme of SSH. She resisted at the beginning because her orientation was the life in the Circus. The love and care she is getting at SSH is transforming her to a normal girl child as it should be for a girl in any

normal family.

Each of the minor rescued girls will have similar pathetic life experience of torture, sexual abuse and inhuman treatment.

So far two rescued girls were already pregnant when they came to SSH and under loving and careful nursing Isaac and Mary was born and they are doing fine in safe hands.

Mr .P. Bora, ADC, who came to verify the SSH to renew the License, commented **“it is evident from the radiant smiling faces and good health of the rescued girls that they are well looked after”.**

CBCNEI came to picture when it was required to bring foreign funds for the running of the Home. CBCNEI became a partner in running the SSH through an official MOU- (Memorandum of Understanding) with Seven Sisters International (SSI/ARLDFIT).

In 2017 when the question of renewal of the license to run the Home came, it created a new dimension, the Social Welfare Department made it clear that the License for SSH must be in the name of CBCNEI as the fund for the SSH comes to CBCNEI FCRA Account.

As Strategic Mid-Course correction the **Balika Vikash Trust (BVT)** relieving ARLDFIT from SSH’s day to Management came into picture. The BVT managed by credible Individuals will be responsible for managing, monitoring and assisting CBCNEI to run the SSH project from now on.

CBCNEI should be lauded for taking up the project of Seven Sisters Home which glorifies the name of Jesus Christ.



News Capsule

107th Annual General Meeting of Nihang Karbi Baptist Association (NKBA) (Jan 11 -14)

The Nihang Karbi Baptist Association (NKBA), the constituents members of the KABC held its 107th Annual General Meeting at Christian English High School, Diphu on the Theme “ **Christian and bearing fruit**”. Ezekiel 36:8. Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI, Rev. Davidson Ing-

ti, General Secretary, KABC, were the theme speakers.

About 1500 delegates from different churches attended the conference. Rev. Sina Lekthe, serving as Secretary of Development committee NKBA and Rev. James Rongpi, Headmaster of Hutton Bible Institute, Manja were ordained. The Churches under NKBA is blessed with the newly two ordained minister.



ABC Mission Consultation (Jan 16-17)

On invitation from Assam Baptist Convention (ABC), Rev Dr Jolly Rimai attended the Mission Consultation of ABC leaders at Golaghat. The Vision of ABC to establish 10,000 churches by 2030 was relooked and leaders were once again encouraged to work on it. Some strategies on how to make this vision a reality were also shared and leaders were encouraged.



Krima XI (Garo Baptist Convention) Annual General meeting (Jan 18-21)

A mission focused Annual General Meeting of Krima XI was held at Williamnagar on the Theme; "The Great Calling" based on Isaiah 6:8. Lakhs of believers gathered to celebrate and worship the Lord, and their love for the Lord is visible through their giving.



**Offerings
collected**

The congregation



Strategic Planning Consultation (Jan 22-23)

About 29 Executive Committee members represented their respective Conventions/Association during the two days Consultation program which was conducted at the CBCNEI Mission compound.

This consultation was organized with its core motto to relook and review the Ministries both past and present and structure afresh our ministries in every possible way. The consultation was successfully conducted and we look forward to a fruitful outcome.



The Garo Baptist Convention celebrated the glorious 150th Years journey (Feb 7-11)

The 150th years of Garo Baptist Church witnessed one of the largest assembly of believers gathered to rejoice the fruitful

journey of faith that was held at Rajasimla. Around two lakhs of believers participated in the service. Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI spoke the keynote address on “**Revisiting the Past, Envisioning the Future**” Jer 31:3-4.





Garo Baptist Convention celebrated its glorious 150th Years of journey

4th Monsang Naga Baptist Churches Association (MNBCA), Youth Camp (1-5 Feb)

The 4th Monsang Naga Baptist Churches Association (MNBCA), Youth Camp was successfully concluded at Japhou Baptist Church, MNBCA on the Theme: "We are God's Ambassadors" (2Corinthians 5:20)

All together around 200 Youths from MNBCA participated as residential campers.

Mr Mhonthung Humtsoe Lotha, Lecturer, Discipleship Bible

College, Rev. Alani Shongsir Monsang, Mission Secretary,

MBC, Rev K Kumar, Pastor, Assam Regiment, Mrs Ts. Leenda DOUNGEL, Assistant Chief technical officer, were the speakers and resource persons. Apart from worship services and classes, there were Bible study, Bible games, and other recreational games and activities.

Many were blessed through this Youth camp and many youths committed their life to be God's Ambassadors in their own fields.



Kom Rem Baptist Churches Association celebrates 110 years of Christianity (Feb 3)

Under the leadership of Rev L. Solomon Kom and his colleagues, KRBCA celebrated its Hundred Ten Years of Gospel in Tarung, Imphal. The Theme of the Celebration was, "Christ the Hope of Glory" based on Colossian 1:27. With much gratefulness, people from all

churches gathered to thank God for His grace. It was also special and heart touching celebration as we witness KRBCA blessing two people groups (Koireng and Kharam) to form their own associations. These two tribes were under KRBCA earlier, and now that they have the potentials, they were blessed to form their own associations of their own. Sooner, we will see more Associations added to MBC.



Church Leader's Conference (Feb 6-8)

The two days Church Leader's Conference organized by WSBAM & CBCNEI - NECU underwent successfully at WSBAM Mission Centre, Akuvuto, Dimapur. The theme of the conference was **"Together towards Transformation of North**

East India". The resource persons were Dr Don Ng, Former President of American Baptist Churches, USA, Dr Rex A. Roger, ABC-USA and Dr Jennifer Davidson, Professor of Theology & Worship at American Baptist Seminary. About hundreds of the west church leaders participated in the conference and were blessed.



Justice and Peace Committee Meeting (Feb 20)

Justice and Peace Committee Meeting was held at CBCNEI conference centre, Panbazar. Justice and Peace Secretary Mr Malthus D Sangma read the ministries reports of the department to the committee members which was followed by the reports from the conventions. The previous year's meeting actions and minutes were reviewed and new strategy and planning's were set for the year 2018-19. The next meeting is scheduled to be conducted in the month of September.



NCCI Executive Committee Meeting (Feb 20-21)

CBCNEI for the first time record had the opportunity to host the NCCI Executive Committee Meeting at the L M Auditorium at Panbazar, Guwahati.



Around 49 delegates represented Churches and institutions from all over India.



**Karbi Anglong Baptist
Convention Annual General
Meeting**

(Mar 16-18)

The Annual General Meeting of Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention was held at Hangrum Baptist Church under Zeme Baptist Association Assam under

the theme “Christian Stewardship” based on Matt.25:14. Altogether, 234 Association leaders were present during the AGM. Mr Nysenthang Rengma was elected as the new President of the Convention, and new officers of the Convention were installed during the meeting.



**Mission Consultation of Sadar
Baptist Association**
(Mar 26-27)

A special Mission Consultation on Adoption of unreached Districts by Associations was held t MBC. The new strategy

evolved by CBCNEI was presented and all Pastors and Mission leaders readily accepted the strategy and adopted unreached district as their new mission field to pray for and plan for church planting in future.





Indigenous Youth Pre-Conference and Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) Arusha, Tanzania

As reported by Miss Sulika Swu, BD Final Year, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat

The World Council of Churches on Indigenous Youth Pre-Conference was held on 5th-7th March and Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) was held on 8th-13th March, 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania. WMC is characterized as a younger mission leaders' conference and this conference is important as the indigenous youth visibly and meaningfully participate in making that vision a reality. More than half of the Pre-Conference delegates are from the indigenous communities in Africa itself, including from within Tanzania. The Indigenous Pre-Conference was organized on the theme, "Moving in the Spirit: Indigenisation as Transforming Discipleship." 20 indigenous delegates from different parts of the world attended this pre-conference. There were Bible studies, keynotes and interactive small group discussions. Some of the important topics discussed on this conference were: "Christ Transforming me for Discipleship"; "We matter"; "Reaching Out"; "Gender Inequality." Some of the issues identified and discussed include Gender Inequality, Migration, Education, Sexuality, Climate Change, HIV/AIDS and Identity Crisis. We were given space to tell/share our own stories and experiences. Through this we were able to bond with one another as members of indigenous communities representing diverse indigenous communities from across the globe.

On 10th March the Indigenous group took up the third plenary on the theme "Becoming Disciples: Transforming the World," which affirms the understanding that mission now and into the future is lived and practiced at and from the margins (Luke 4:16-21). On 12th March 2018 "Mission from the Margins *Sokoni*" was hosted by Mission from the Margins Network which includes



Indigenous (EIPN), Disability (EDAN), Migration/Multicultural Ministry (M&MM), Racial Justice (RJ) and people living with HIV. *Sokoni* is a Kiswahili term for a community Market place where people gather to exchange commodities and products. It is a common space for sharing ideas, stories about life in that community. We, the participants from the Indigenous Youth Pre-Conference represented communities at the margins involving in the activities in this *Sokoni*.

CWME was held after the pre-conference based on the theme "Moving in the Spirit- Called to Transforming Discipleship." This Conference was attended by more than one thousand people who are members of WCC. Different speakers spoke on different topics centred on the theme, although the different issues discussed in the conference were not new issues. In order to live by the spirit we need to understand how to get freedom by liberating others and it is to be open to change our lifestyle and leave even our own comfort. According to Rev. Najla Kassab Abousawan, "the urgent need of the Church is to go outside the walls of the Church." Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, the General Secretary of WCC said, "We need to be serious about our decision to the calling of Discipleship. Disciples are not called to be alone but to have a mutual relationship and sharing with God."

I sincerely thank the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), under the leadership of Rev. Dr Solomon Rongpi, its General Secretary for giving me the opportunity to attend this auspicious conference. I also thank our college (Eastern Theological College), under our Principal, Prof. Rev. Dr Akheto Sema, for granting me leave to go and attend the conference.

RESPONDING TO RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN INDIA

*Tehmina Arora*¹

Sustained Violence against Christians

SINCE JANUARY 2017 THERE HAVE BEEN 216 INCIDENTS. HOWEVER, THE POLICE FILED CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS OR FIRST INFORMATION REPORTS ONLY IN 43 INCIDENTS.

The Constitution of India protects the freedom of conscience and the right to practice, profess and propagate the religion of one's choice. However, there are frequent violations of the religious freedom of minorities across the country.

According to a statement made by the Government in the Indian Parliament on the 7th of Feb. 2017,² over the last three years (2014-2016), approximately 278 persons have been killed and 6500 people were injured due to communal violence in over 2000 incidents.

According to the World Watch List 2017, India is now ranked 15th in the list of countries where the practice of the faith is a high-risk activity. India was ranked 31 only four years ago. More than 700 cases of attacks on Christians were reported on the United Christian Forum (UCF) toll free helpline number 1800-208-4545 since 2014. Last year, 216 incidents were recorded and this year approximately 220 incidents were reported.

Out of 29 states in India, at least 19 regularly witness attacks on Christians. Tamil Nadu tops the list with 41 incidents as on November 30th followed by Chhattisgarh (39)

Uttar Pradesh (27), Madhya Pradesh (22), Maharashtra (16). Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttarakhand and West Bengal are the other states.

The states of Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh accounted for over 50% of the incidents recorded. The violence of incidents includes ghar wapsi; refusal to grant permission to establish and run places of worship; false accusation of forceful and fraudulent religious conversions; physical and verbal assault on Church pastors and members; damage and desecration of places of worship and arson; disruption of prayer services and restrictions on religious gatherings. Apart from the violence, social exclusions were also common tactic used to victimize minorities by denying basic human rights that are common to every citizen. These exclusion orders make Christians vulnerable to excessive violence and denial of social privileges like access to water, electricity and work.

In addition, to the violence, the selective impunity enjoyed by the mob is a cause for concern. According to date collected, the police filed complaints only 43 criminal complaints or First Information Reports (FIRs) in spite of the information about attacks against Christians being provided repeatedly to them in over 200 incidents.

Speech Inciting Violence and Hostility

Frequent statements against religious minorities made by some of the political leaders have served to exacerbate the discrimination and hostility being experienced by religious minorities in India. For instance, in Jharkhand, the Chief Minister claimed that “those involved ‘in conversions’ of tribals were behind protests against the state government’s attempt to make an amendment” in local land laws.³ The Government of Jharkhand in August published a full-page advertisement in many local newspapers misquoting Gandhi, denouncing Christian missionar-

ies for their act of conversion and proselytising among Adivasis and Dalits.⁴

Anti-Conversion laws

Freedom of Religion Acts, more commonly known as anti-conversion laws, enacted in different states of India have also proved to restrict religious freedom. Reports from the various minority communities and human rights agencies reveal that these laws foster hostility against minority communities.

However, despite the enactment of these acts in some states for over fifty years⁵, there have been very few convictions, though cases are registered under the Acts almost every month. These cases bring in deep sense of insecurity among Christians who cannot freely practice their faith in the state where anti-conversions laws have been enacted.

The recent incidents in Madhya Pradesh are evidence of the blatant abuse of the anti-conversion laws. On three separate occasions, Christian children traveling in a train for a Christian camp were taken into custody at railway stations by the Railway Police on the grounds that the children were being "kidnapped to be converted."

On May 22 and 23, 2017 nine elders and a minor were arrested by the Railway Police when they



were accompanying 71 Christian children for a summer Bible camp to Nagpur from Indore. On June '3, a Catholic nun and four girls were detained at the Satna railway station. On October 21, two elders and seven children going for Bible Studies were detained and not allowed to meet the parents.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, noted in her report after a visit to India that, "Even in the Indian states which have adopted laws on religious conversion there seem to be only few – if any – convictions for conversion using force, inducement or fraudulent means. In Orissa, for example, not a single infringement over the past ten years of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act 1967 could be cited or adduced by district officials and *Despite the existence of the Anti- Conversion Acts in some states since 1967, there have been very few convictions, though cases are registered under the Act almost every month*

senior officials in the State Secretariat... However, such laws or even draft legislation have had adverse consequences for religious minorities and have fostered mob violence against them."⁶

The report further stated that, "there is a risk that Freedom of Religion Acts may become a tool in the hands of those who wish to use religion for vested interests or to persecute individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief. While persecution, violence or discrimination based on religion or belief need to be sanctioned by law, the Special Rapporteur would like to caution against excessive or vague legislation on religious issues which could create tensions and problems instead of solving them."

Recommendations to the Government of India

- Guarantee the security of religious minorities: There should be a clear signal, from central, state governments and police, that the protection of the safety and

security of religious minorities is vital aspect of the ethos of India.

- Enforce legal protections for religious minorities: In addition to ensuring the rights guaranteed in the Constitution, the Government of India should take strict measures to end the culture of impunity, ensuring that violations are effectively identified and appropriate and timely action is taken by police and the judiciary.
- The government should implement a process of education and training on rights of religious minorities among police and judicial officials.
- The legislature should actively identify and repeal various discriminatory laws and policies which curtail the freedom of conscience and the freedom of religion of belief.
- The government should take steps to strengthen human rights monitoring mechanisms, including the National Commission for Minorities and the National Human Rights Commission.

Recommendations to Christian Mission Organizations

- i) Legal Literacy: The church and other civil society groups should helping communities better understand legal processes and basic human rights frameworks. Christians will be more resilient to violent religious persecution as they understand how to navigate the human rights framework.
- ii) Litigation Assistance: Legal systems are slow and complex; and victims often require assistance follow up cases and take to their logical end in the courts. As victims and witness are fearful, vulnerable and alone, the church should stand alongside these victims to follow through of these cases by setting up and supporting legal assistance to the victims. The church must also, where appropriate, initiate legal action against agencies or individuals who incite violence against religious

minorities, by filing complaints with the police.

- iii) Address the Propaganda: It is imperative the church and civil society confront the lies that are repeated over and over again against the community with truth. Christians must be encouraged to read in Indian history, understand the tactics of radical nationalist groups and use social media to create and share articles, blogs, videos about India's diversity and composite culture.
- iv) Educate our Children: Opportunities must be created in schools and colleges to help children and younger people understand the composite culture of India. No one religious community can lay claim on the culture and history of our nation.
- v) Forge Common Identities: Churches must create opportunities for the body of Christ to work on common events with the public at large on issues that concern the larger good. Far too often, divisive politics drives Christians into silos. We must resist that temptation and rather embrace our larger and common identities to forge new relationships with our fellow citizens.

(Footnotes)

¹ Tehmina Arora is a lawyer practicing in Delhi. She is the Director of ADF India, an alliance building human rights organization that advocates for the right to life and liberty. Tehmina can be contacted at tarora@adfindia.org

² <http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/11/AU849.pdf>

³ [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/54437126.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

[54437126.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/54437126.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

⁴ <https://thewire.in/167252/jharkhand-gandhi-advertisement-christians/>

⁵ Freedom of Religion Acts were enacted in Odisha (1967), Madhya Pradesh (1968), Arunachal Pradesh (1978), Chhattisgarh (after the state was carved out of MP in 2000, it is governed by the MP FOR Act 1968), Gujarat (2003), Himachal Pradesh (2006) Rajasthan (via HC Guidelines in Chirag Singhvi Vs. State of Rajasthan) (DB Habeous Corpus no. 149/2017). The state of Tamil Nadu repealed the TN Freedom of Religion Act in 2004

⁶ United Nations, General Assembly, Promotion and Protection Of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social And Cultural Rights, Including The Right To Development: Report Of The Special Rapporteur On Freedom Of Religion Or Belief, A/HRC/10/8/Add.3 (26 January 2009) available at <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/5744267.70210266.html>

Report of the Relief & Development Unit of CBCNEI

Rev Kabi Gangmei, Development Consultant CBCNEI

There has been progress with the tasks of CBCNEI's Relief & Development unit working under the guidance of Secretary i/c Peace & Justice. In the last six months or so the unit has been working hard to build capacity of Churches under CBCNEI, and helped them respond to the need arising out of natural disasters.

Capacity building:

With the assistance from APBAid, support was given to Mr. Athungo Shitri, the then Secretary for Peace and Justice, CBCNEI and his successor Mr. Malthys Sangma to attend APBAid Development Consultation on Sept 22-24, 2017 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The same support was also given to Mr. Karang Maram, Development Director Manipur Baptist Convention and Ms. Wanne Momin, Project Coordinator of Garo Baptist Convention. Earlier a small support was given to Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) to send Mr. Karang Maram, its Director of Peace & Development so that he may attend a training on Tropical Agriculture conducted in Kathmandu, Nepal by ECHO Asia.

DRR program:

CBCNEI also helped Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) to conduct a DRR program hosted by Salampatong Bap-



tist Church under Vaiphei Baptist Churches Association on Nov 1–2, 2017. About 37 participants from 11 Vaiphei villages of Salampatong area along with their village chiefs, pastors and church elders participated in the 2-days DRR workshop.

Relief work:

The R&D unit also worked hard to help the churches affected by different disasters. They were -

- On May 5th, 2017 hailstorm struck Sirmola village in Nagaon district under Nagaon Baptist Association, and devastated 125 homes – all of them were poor Garo families. Their homes were leaking badly and they struggled



to keep themselves warm and dry. CB-CNEI was able to lend a helping hand by distributing plastic sheets to

these affected families. Along with the assistance the leaders of the church were encouraged to motivate the villagers to help one another in time of such need. The relief distribution was done on July 24, 2017.

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



Immediate Plans:

We remain thankful to Ms Levish Leivon, HFH representative in NE India who had brought the needed skills and opportunity to work with a national Christian NGO like



Habitat For Humanity India (HFH) and get acquaintance with their standards and working system in response to a disaster situation. The R&D unit is working toward a long term partner-

ship between CBCNEI and HFH-India.

The R&D unit also works with CASA team to develop a proposal for Community Development project to be implemented in Goalpara district, Assam. The initiative had been well received and necessary formalities were already done, and now the unit is awaiting green signal from CASA to start with the project.

With the onset of this year's Monsoon, the R&D unit is gearing up to face the challenges of season's calamities such as flood, landslide and hailstorm. These are common natural events that besets NE India region every year, followed by common diseases such as viral fever, malaria and water borne ailments. The CBCNEI leaders solicited every support and prayer for its R&D unit so that the team may face these challenges effectively.



From Kachai to Kentucky: Is my context so different from yours?¹

Statements such as “all theologies are contextual theologies,” “there is no supra-cultural truth,” “we can never read the text objectively, we always read through our contextual lenses” etc. provoked me to examine my own biases and implicit assumptions. At times such statements have made me question whether my theological understanding of the Bible, salvation, and God is a mere artifact of Western thought. I have wondered whether the theology that I learned in a church as a young convert or those



that I learned at a seminary in India are still relevant for me here in the US. “How can the theology taught by my pastors and Indian teachers who have never been to the States still be relevant?” I asked myself. But I have come to the conclusion that the statements of the limitations of theology stated in the beginning, while prompted by good intentions, are misleading. All theologies arise from a particular context,

but all theologies are not necessarily limited to a specific context. Let me explain why and how I think so.

I don't doubt that we are children of our contexts. We make decisions, choose options, and execute judgments based on our limited knowledge that is shaped by our context—cultural, linguistic, geographical, etc. In fact, I want to argue that even some of the decisions we make on a daily basis are already predetermined by several factors—market, culture, financial limitations, etc.—such that we can only choose what we are given to select. For example, the limited choices (or unlimited choices) on the local store determine what we buy and consume. We think we are making 'free' decisions but our options are limited by what we can see, experience, and obtain. Our jobs, institutions, ideas, etc. etc. are no exceptions. I experience this contextual limitation and difference almost every day. My thoughts, experiences, education, etc. are so powerfully shaped by my tribal identity and Indian educational system that I often come to opposite conclusions from my Western friends. For example, when I see a bird of any kind, my immediate reaction is to take my slingshot (by the way, I always carry it with me in my car) and kill the bird for food. I wonder why my American friends do not like bird meat – one of the best meats. Since eating dog-meat abhors Americans or my other Indian friends, their reaction to cute, fat dogs is quite different from mine. But this difference surpasses food habits. Once, we were discussing the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus and when my Western friends began to wonder aloud why Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus house. "That was kind of inappropriate," some remarked. To me, such a gesture was an honor for Zacchaeus and something normal in an Eastern context. I use this simple example to point to the fact that we tend to act and think following our contextual limitation and how we understand reality. But that is not the whole story.

As much as I can learn and understand Western culture, my Western friends can understand mine. It didn't take

long for them to realize that my desire to kill any moving creature for food was because everything (almost) that flies, swims, and creeps (except humans) was food in my context. They also quickly understood that Jesus inviting himself to Zacchaeus's was not only acceptable but also was honoring Zacchaeus in that culture; they could grasp the significance of eastern culture upon some inquiry. If we would spend time together discussing and learning, we can see things more objectively. But what about my friend's argument that some of us are able to come to a similar theological conclusion because we read similar books, go to institutions with similar structures and learning experiences? In other words, if we were never exposed to the same author or similar theological reasoning we would have very different theologies. The assumption behind such logic is that there is no 'Theology' valid for all people at all times; there are only 'theologies.' There is no Biblical Theology (BT) or Systematic Theology (ST). BT and ST are theologies that arose from Westerners who were shaped by their particular context. They are only theological perspectives from Westerners. But if such is the case, why not say theological perspective from Asia or Africa or Latin America rather than Asian Theology or African Theology or Latino Theology? But if we are left to formulate our own theology, who can determine whose theology is more true to the Bible? How do we evaluate some of the erroneous teachings within these different theologies? If we can check the validity of others' beliefs through the Scripture, then can't we come up with what the Scripture teaches on specific issues?

Can there be an Asian Theology that is accessible only to/by Asians? Are the experiences of Asians so unique that others cannot see things from their perspectives? Is my experience as a tribal Christian so different from those of my Christian friends from Kentucky? As humans, we share more commonality than differences. I have found that my friends from America, Nigeria, Korea, Myanmar, Philip-

pires, Europe and many parts of the world operate on similar logic. At the core, we all share similar views on life, go through similar experiences of birth, marriage, death, etc. There is almost nothing I cannot comprehend when it comes to why my Nigerian friends or American friends do what they do, and why they do. Of course, I need explanation. But the difference is certainly not always due to the fact we hold a worldview that is radically different from one another. The difference is not even in our methodology to deduce truth and perceive reality. Those are contributing factors, not determiners. In fact, I have more agreement with some of my Nigerian friends than some of the theologians in my hometown. Therefore, our differences cannot be merely due to our perception of reality conditioned by our culture. It is something else. Maybe it is our prior theological commitment, denominational difference, our fear of losing our position or even abandoning our deeply held conviction, one that does not hold water under the scrutiny of the text, or worse, our unwillingness to submit to the authority of the Bible. The point is that, even though our backgrounds shape our reasoning, we can see from others' points of view. We may not come to the same conclusion about some issues, yet we can understand our differences. We can work together to eradicate our biases and submit to the claims of the Scripture. We are not trapped in our cultural cocoon such that we cannot escape its shield and learn from others.

But I have not answered the charge that some of us can see eye to eye or at least agree on a majority of the issues because of our similar exposure—education, culture, economy, historical timeline, etc. This charge ignores two significant premises, among others: We have a shared Scripture that is authoritative and valid for all peoples at all times, and we have the same Spirit of God that guides us in understanding the Scripture. If the Bible is equally authoritative and valid for all people, our aim must be to submit to the claims of the Bible. Of course, our goal is not

to read the Bible in a way that is entirely irrelevant to our context. Our objective is to read the Bible in a way that is relevant to our context and at the same time faithful to its intent. The interpretation of the Bible is not the monopoly of the Westerner, so also is it not the monopoly of the rest. We, Westerners and Easterners alike, stand under the authority of the text. We don't impose our experiences on the text, but we exegete the texts. We ask the help of the Holy Spirit in reading the text. The Spirit of Truth will guide us to understand the claims of the text.

The claim that all theologies are contextual theologies to the extent that there is no transcultural truth arises from misunderstanding. Such a claim too quickly abandons the text understood in terms of its horizon and that of the interpreter with the former serving as the controlling factor. To theologize, then, is first to ask what the text means within the textual, epochal, and canonical context before we ask what it means to us. We interpret the text on its own terms. Even though our own linguistic, cultural, and philosophical influences cannot be avoided in understanding the text, we allow the biblical categories that are already embedded in the text to drive our interpretation. The NT writers utilized the popular cultural, linguistic, and philosophical categories to assist in constructing theology but they were not the foundational elements. It is true that our knowledge of reality, God, his Word, and the world around us, is always mediated by human linguistic, cultural, and moral limitations. However, it is not necessarily always mediated by our particular culture such that we cannot objectively and corporately grasp the truth. Our contextual theologies must arise as a result of our inquiry of the belief furnished by the biblical writers. While my quibble with some evangelicals may be eradicated by clarifying the meaning of theologization and contextualization, my disagreement with others who deny that there is such a thing as BT is harder to reconcile. I believe their position com-

promises orthodoxy in the name of relevance.

I belong to a tribal community call Naga, and some of our tribal Christian brothers and sisters are of the opinion that there should be such a distinct theology call Tribal Theology (TT). TT can be defined as an attempt to theologize using tribal resources and experiences by reflecting on the truth of Christianity as revealed in the Bible. TT has its merits, but where it is in danger of erring is its attempt to place the tribal experience and worldview on par with the Bible. The text and the context are mixed such that the preeminence of the former is ignored. I see the same danger, or at least similar trajectory, in so-called African Theology, Asian Theology, or Minjung Theology. I am not convinced that "all theologies are contextual theologies," "there is no supra-cultural truth," "we can never read the text objectively, we always read through our contextual lenses," etc.

Orthodoxy is not passé. Orthodoxy, however, is not the end goal; Christian orthodoxy must lead to orthopraxis. We are called not just to debate about theological orthodoxy but to live in a way that authenticates our belief. After all, actions speak louder than words.

(Footnotes)

¹Sochanngam Shirik is a Ph.D. student in the Intercultural Studies (Historical and Theological Studies) program of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky., USA. He hails from a tribal village called Kachai in northeast India. This article was initially published in <http://biblicalmissiology.org/2017/11/27/cant-we-really-read-together/>



Peace Riders

Motto: PEACE FOR ALL

*Report of Peace Tour cum Clean and Fair Election Awareness Drive
2017-2018*

North East India represents a cauldron of rich unity as well as diversity with regard to peoples, cultures and socio-political life. This region time and again draws the attention of the people mainly due to political reason wherein it is viewed as a 'conflict' or 'disturbed' region. Conflicts in this region generally can be classified into two: external conflict and internal conflict. It is within these two bodies of conflicts that the overall public section of the population finds themselves sandwiched in between in almost every sphere of life. To name a few, we have serious problems such as boundaries issues; betrayal of trust in relationship, disrespect; oppression and violations of human rights; warfare; problem of 'isms' on linguistic, tribal,



village and ethnic lines; enmity; retaliations and counter-retaliations and all kinds of atrocities imaginable taking place under many different oppressive powers and structures.

While India had had the blessing of celebrating its independence and freedom from foreign or external oppressive rule for more than 69 years, NEI region and its states have not much to celebrate due to many different factors of conflict. For decades or for as long as we can remember, our Northeast region has not known real peace owing to varied webbed factors affecting the lives of the population. The people in the region now hunger and thirst for peace, love and justice – to live fuller life of dignity and peaceful co-existence. Hence, with this challenge of spreading the urgently-needed message of peace to the region, the Peace Riders have organized Peace Tour on Bikes cum Clean & Fair Election Awareness Drive in Nagaland State covering around 1500-2000 kilometers in seven districts and four subdivision of the State.

In the midst of these situation in our region, we the Peace Riders, comprised of theological teachers, ordained ministers, theologians and church leaders (both men and women), around 20 of us, having felt the urgent need for Peace and Clean and Fair Election in our land, committed ourselves to take out this time to go and spread this message to the different districts in Nagaland. This time we have earmarked seven districts of Nagaland (Dimapur Dist., Wokha Dist., Mokokchung Dist., Zunheboto Dist., Phek Dist., Kephire Dist., Kohima Dist.), and have received much positive response from fellow-Nagas and the churches and for that we thank God and thank every individuals and churches for their support and partnership. We also express our heartfelt gratitude to our media partner *The Morung Express*, Dimapur, for being our partner in this much needed cause.

In spite of so many obstacles from different corners, the Peace Riders were able to cover seven districts and four sub-division centres of Nagaland. The Peace Riders' **"Peace Tour on Bikes cum Clean and Fair Election Awareness Drive"** flag-off ceremony was held at Thahekhhu Village Baptist Church, Dimapur, at 2:00 p.m. on the 12th of December 2017. Some of the Church leaders, women leaders, youth leader and young people with the like-minded people who are in support of Peace and Clean and Fair Election were present there for the flag off ceremony. The gathering was addressed by different leaders and the convener of the Peace Tour Rev. Dr. Woba James briefed the gathering about the purpose and rationale of this Peace Tour cum Clean and Fair Election awareness drive as well as about the route of the tour.

Peace Riders were hosted by Patkai Christian College for the night with the initiative of Rev. Akho, the chaplain of the College. On 13th December Peace Riders had meeting with the Tseminyu town people where the Peace concern and clean and fair election by the Co-convener of Peace Riders Rev. Phenanmo Kath and also by Ms. Livika and Mr. Lanusengit. Peace Riders proceeded to Wokha, on the way we also had meeting with the six Kandinu villages in their football ground. The six village leader also brief the gathering and the Peace Riders convener Rev. Dr. Woba James challenge the gathering regarding to maintain peace and be truthful in voting 'one person one vote.'

Around 4.30 p.m. we reached Wokha and stayed there for the night days. Peace Riders had service with the Wokha Village Baptist Church as they hosted us. They shared their difficulties as two candidates are contesting from the same village. Rev. Dr. Woba James and Ms. Ngamlh Konyak addressed the gathering and challenge them the need of maintaining peace and also not to sell their voting rights for money. The next day the Peace Riders proceeded to Mokochung and had brief gathering at

Hotel Whispering Winds and we were hosted by the Mr. Tsukti Longkumer the owner of the Hotel. In the night we were hosted by Aghunato Town Church where we had common gathering and Rev. Phenanmo, Mr. Ms. Sarah, Mr. Amughato and Ms. Khelibo challenges the gathering to maintain peace and stand for just truth during election. The next day we proceeded to Zunheboto and had gathering with the Sumi Baptist Church Town SBAK with all the youth leaders and unit leaders of the church. The gathering was addressed by Rev. Dr. Woba James, Mr. Lovito, Mr. Hupeka, Mr. Atoho and Ms. Vini Murii shared the need of maintaining peace and clean and fair election during State election. The next day we proceeded to Kipheri where were welcome and hosted by the combined churches of Kipheri town. During the meeting the different tribe pastor and church leaders gathered at Sangtam Baptist Town Church. Many leaders agreed to stand for peace and clean and fair election. The next day we proceeded to Pfiitsero where the youth leaders and some of the members of Pfiisero Town welcome us and ride throughout the town and in the evening the meeting was called at Mission Church. In the gathering Rev. Phenanmo, Mr. D. Vio, Ms. Kaisibou and Ms. Vini Murii challenges the members for to stand for peace and clean and fair election. The next day proceeded to Kohima for closing ceremony. The closing ceremony was organized by the Rengma Baptist Church Kohima on 18th December 2017. The church leaders, deacon members, women leaders, youth leaders, some of the church members and well-wishers with the Peace Riders gathered for the closing ceremony. The gathering was addressed by Peace Riders Convener and by some of the Peace Riders members the importance of this peace tour cum clean and fair election awareness drive.

Many of them spoke about the peaceless condition in the state. They urged that such kind of peace initiatives should be taken more often. It was a great blessing and

encouragement to see that people in our region and state are hungry for peace and peaceful living. Many people whom we met during the tour shared and expressed their problems as well as their longing for peace. Leaders of different societies both political as well as religious and other organizational leaders appreciated our endeavor and shared their willingness to be part of this peace venture. Many of them supported us in our tour by being our guests during our gathering as well as many of them came forward in contributing financial and other material help for the Peace Riders

Contact

Rev. Dr. Woba James, Associate Professor
Convener (Peace Riders), Eastern Theological College
P.O. Rajabari, Jorhat, Assam, 785014
08876553253 | woba.james@yahoo.com



Adieu to the outgoing Property Secretary of the Council

CBCNEI secretaries and staff bid adieu to the outgoing Property Manager Mr Pawan Bhuyan who had long served the Council for 17 years in the best of his capacity. The farewell service was chaired by Mr R.K Raychawdhuri, President, CBCNEI and he exhorted from the gospel of Psalms 23:4 on God who is always there and that God will keep us safe no matter where we are placed. Dr Jolly Rimai pronounced the invocation and blessing prayer. Mr Talimoa, LM Chaplain shared his thoughts on behalf of the staff and thanked the outgoing secretary for his help in every capacity towards the hostel ministry as well. Mr Vikato, Dr Lucita Momin and Dr Jolly Rimai shared their thoughts on working with such a gifted and talented person all these years and shared on how CBCNEI values his service.

Dr Solomon Rongpi recalled how the Bhuyan's have been involved in the ministry of the Council since the earlier generation of the family. He further quoted that **"Mr Pawan is a man of principle and has immense level**



of patience, diligent and steady to deal any kind of issue.” He wishes him success for the new assignment at Jorhat Medical College on behalf of the council. Mr Pawan Bhuyan thank the staff and secretaries for the honor and alluded his utmost honor to God Almighty for enabling him serve for so long. He reckoned how God brought the fresh unacquainted young man into the ministry of the Council and how he eventually grew along with the new responsibilities.

The service concluded with the pronouncing of the Lord’s prayer and the official handing over of the duties to the new Property Secretary Mr Rajib Zillie.





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The Reasons of Jesus Resurrection

Mrs. Amenla Mar, Chaplain, Impur Christian Hospital,
Mokokchung

In demographics, the **world population** is the total number of humans currently living, and was estimated to have reached 7.6 billion as of December 2017. When 'Christianity was by far the world's largest religion, with an estimated 2.2 billion adherents, to this day Christians all over the world celebrate Easter. Easter celebration is a movable feast because it doesn't fall on same day every year like any other special days. The other events like Christmas (25 December), Father's Day (June 3rd Sunday), Mother's day (May 2nd Sunday) are fixed in calendar, however, Easter it can be varies year to year, such as in 2017 Mar 27, while for 2018 Easter falls on April 1. The simple reason is 21st March which day is called Spring Equinox, calculated a full moon after Spring Equinox, then the immediate coming Sunday is being celebrated as Easter Sunday. However, on first Easter Morning when Christ was resurrected, the people of his time did not belief, assuming it as unnatural. Out of many arguments, I wish to underline three points.

Firstly, naturalist claimed that, nothing that dies lived again. Dead is dead, a grave was a grave forever and heaven and earth bore witness

of it. Therefore they stand against Jesus' resurrection. Thus 1909 a scholar and Theologian **Reinach Orpheus** accepted the law of nature and advocated that it was not full resurrection.

Secondly, the ghost theory; they only saw a ghost and thought it was Jesus that resurrection cannot be happened. (*Luke 24:39 behold my hand and feet that it is I myself, handle me and see; for a spirit had no flesh and bones*).

Thirdly, in the New Testament times people commonly believed that, His disciples took away His body, rather than some crucified was resurrected, because this idea was advocated by Jewish leaders, chief priest, Pharisees, ref. Matt. 27; 62 ff.

Many people will tell that "based on human logic" the Resurrection makes no sense. The first thing we need to remember is that "human logic" is not omnipotence. God makes it very clear that "(His) ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts our thoughts" (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). The resurrection is mentioned 104 times in NT. Christianity is the only religion with a living originator, let us see some of the reasons of Jesus Resurrection.

The Reasons of Jesus Resurrection

1. The guard of the Tomb (Mat. 28.4)

There was a great earthquake and the stone rolled away, the nature of earthquake moves the stone away. The guard becomes a death man. Guard reported to chief priest but the elders tried to bribe the guard by giving money to tell lies that disciples came at night and stole away. Yet the testimony of guard can't be denied.

2. The empty tomb which cannot be ignored

Three days later, the tomb was empty, and the stone had been moved a great distance away (Mark 16:1-8). The women, Mary Magdalene other Mary saw the empty tomb. Peter and other disciples saw empty tomb and belief (Mat.28:6).

3. The testimonies of angle (*Mat.28:5-6, Luk 24: 5-7 'why seek ye the living among the dead, he is not here, but he is risen'*)

4. There were post-resurrection appearances, to hundreds who witnessed Jesus bodily resurrected

Over a span of six weeks, He appeared to eleven times in various occasions, groups and individuals, appeared to Mary Magdalene, women, Peter, Mark, disciples on the Emmaus road, eleven disciples, to Thomas, sea of Tiberius to disciples, five hundred people saw him in reality (1Cor. 15:6). To the eleven at Bethany where he was ascended to heaven. Early morning Jesus appeared to disciples while they were fishing and they saw Jesus and had dined with Peter and John. (John 20:17, Mar.16:1ff, Luk 24: 34-51, Acts 1: 23-26, Joh.20; 25,Mt 28;16.)

5. The prophecy in the Old Testament about Messiah

It was prophesied that He will die and resurrected. It was foretold centuries before Christ. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Hosea, and Micah (just to name a few) all pointed to Christ's death and resurrection hundreds of years before they occurred. The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) predict the death and resurrection of the Messiah (see Ps. 16; Isa. 53). Jesus predicted, on numerous occasions, his own death and resurrection (see Matt. 16:21).

6. By His appearance to Stephen at his martyrdom (*Acts 7.56 'and said, behold I see the heaven opened and son of man standing at the right hand of God'*). Same vision was seen by Paul on his way to Damascus.

7. Testimonies of millions of Christians who have proof him to be a living savior. The disciples were immediately transformed from hopeless and fearful after the crucifixion (**Luke 24:21, John 20:19**) into men who were confident and bold witnesses of the resurrection (**Acts 2:24, 3:15, 4:2**) and most of them become martyred for the sake of gospel. Historian, great man like Abraham Lincoln, who abolished slavery, Martin Luther freedom for black, to Indians M.K.Gandhi they all live and died, they doesn't live in human mind and become an history. But Jesus life and death and resurrection experience lives in people's mind and even today we experience the living savior in our lives.

8. The Easter morning is unusual morning sight to every Christian

Sun seems to be brighter and pleasant then before, echo of birds singing more clearly and wind of victory blows everywhere. Do you realized that?

To many us Christians, life of a Christian begins with the story of Jesus birth but for me I like to start Christian life with the story of his life with his death and resurrection, then his ministry and birth. Without resurrection, our faith in Jesus Christ is in vain. The word '**Christ**' in Greek is '**Christo**' which meant "**anointed one**". In the context Christ anointment was done following the resurrection. Before resurrection He was known as Jesus, Yisu, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus son of Joseph just like any one of us known by name as, Amenla, Suresh etc etc. But after the resurrection he was known as '**Jesus Christ**'; Eg. Mary called him **Jesus Christ**, Apostle Paul called him **Christ**. After resurrection Jesus attained his completeness of Christology. Jesus was fully anointed and there was fulfilment of the scripture with His final resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith. When Jesus rose from the dead, He confirmed his identity as the Son of God and his work of atonement, redemption, reconciliation, and salvation for you and me. The resurrection was a real, literal, physical rising of Jesus' body from the dead.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."

—Peter 1:3



A Clarion Call from North East Christian University (NECU)

The North East Christian University (NECU) is the biggest joint mission venture in the history of CBCNEI. The visionary leaders of the 6 Conventions and 105 Associations have committed to the establishment of NECU and pledged to support it through prayers and giving. By God's grace, Nagaland Government has been gracious enough in enacting NECU's Bill as a private University and donating 248 acres of land at Medziphema Village. Another incredible blessing is the gift of a prime land worth crores of rupees and a building with 6 rooms by well-wishers in the heart of Dimapur city. At present NECU activities are being carried out through this building, ANCHOR. The extension and additional building project at an estimated cost of rupees 17 crores has been finalized and the work has begun in faith. This will be the City Centre of NECU which will serve as the nerve centre for all purposes.

The NECU City Centre project is urgent for without which classes and activities cannot commence. The project is feasible when all the 7851 churches under CBCNEI excel in the grace of giving, cheerfully and generously. Many have responded and the rest are urged to respond soon to expedite the building process. This project deserves top attention and priority as education is the greatest agent of social change and transformation. *"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."* (Prov.29:18).



List of contributors for NECU up to March, 2018

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