

Baptist News

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

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

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Editorial



The Council of Baptist Churches in North East India is concerned about human trafficking known as modern day slavery, and the evil crime that is so prevalent and real in the region. It is so alarming to learn that most of the state capital cities are the gateways of human trafficking from here to other parts of the nation and even to other neighbouring countries. What is human trafficking anyway? It simply means anytime a person is held in a forced labor situation, regardless of the reason, it is defined as human trafficking. It is also learned that majority of the trafficked persons are women and 80% of the victims are used for sexual exploitation.

The United Nations defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

The problem is clearly large and growing. What does the Bible teach about human trafficking? This question cannot adequately be answered without a clear understanding of God’s value of human life. The Bible records when God created humans, He created them in His image (Genesis 1:26). Every life is of great value, and God loves all individuals.

As a result, God teaches love for our neighbor (Matthew 19:19) as well as love for those in need (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus was the one who taught the [Golden Rule](#): “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for these sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Further, Proverbs 31:8-9 teaches us to “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” These principles certainly all apply to those hurt through the illegal practice of human trafficking.

How can people today practice these biblical principles of helping those in the bondage of slavery? *First*, we must pray for those in bondage. As James 5:16 notes, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” Human trafficking is a clear need that requires God’s power for any adequate change to occur.

Second, we must speak out on behalf of those in need (Proverbs 31:8-9). Those in our schools, businesses, churches, and community often are unaware of the problem of human trafficking and how to help. Perhaps God is calling you to be one of the people who would speak out and help provide justice to those without a voice in this area.

Third, we must act to help those in bondage. These actions can involve a variety of means, ranging from volunteering in an anti-trafficking organization to financial giving to teaching about the topic where you live. A growing number of organizations have emerged in recent years that provide new opportunities for Christians to serve in this area. International Justice Mission (www.ijm.org) provides many international opportunities, while others, such as Mercy Movement (www.mercymovement.com) concentrate on addressing the issue in the United States. The CBCNEI is running a project called Seven Sisters Home for the trafficked girls and the abused women through the support of the Seven Sisters International. Churches are welcome to send donations and support for the project.

In sum, human trafficking is a gross indignity against men, women, and children who have been created in God’s image. As followers of Christ, we have a responsibility to pray, to speak out against human trafficking and to live in ways that help create change in the lives of those impacted by this tragic crime. Our churches must take preventing and rescuing victims from trafficking as our mission of God—mission touches all aspects of life.

This issue of Baptist News includes articles on exploitation of the weak, bible study on together towards justice and peace, news capsules of activities, report of General Secretary’s trip to US, News Release, information on India Baptist Summit 2019, women in Baptist life: a missional call for justice, reports of human trafficking awareness programs conducted, appeals, and gender as an issue of social justice. Enjoy reading it and be blessed!



Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary, CBCNEI

Special Appeal

Dear fellow believers in the Lord,

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

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

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

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

You can send your Donation to the account given below:

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

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

In His service,



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi
General Secretary,
CBCNEI





EXPLOITATION OF THE WEAK

Mr Norbu Lama, President, Arunachal Baptist Church Council

In Philemon 1:16 St. Paul addresses "Onesimus" a slave as brother. Perhaps this is the first recorded incidence when a slave is given a status of a brother. If we look into the history of evolution of man or so to say any living creature, we find a law written in bold letter that say " ITS LEGAL TO EXPLOIT THE WEAK". All animal follow this and this was the law among human being too. In ancient days, the weak and conquered were taken as slaves. The slaves were treated as "vocal instruments" meaning instrument which can speak. The slaves had no right , no ownership. And since they were not treated as human being, they were at par with animals. They always lived at the mercy of their owner. Slaves were bought and sold and the loyalty of the slave transferred from the seller to the buyer. The status of women slaves were the worse. Having no right of possession, they had no right to acknowledge, love and regard someone as husband, son or daughter. Their children belonged to their owner and the owner enjoyed every right to use or sell or gift them in any manner or to anybody.

The crime of human trafficking i.e. Trade of human beings for the purpose of forced labour and sexual exploitation is oldest crime prevalent on this earth. Unfortunately, for thousands of years, this human trafficking popularly known as Slavery had the legal sanction and was not treated at all as crime. The Higher ups in society enjoyed possession of slaves as a social

status and an asset.

Spread of Divine love through Gospel brought in a change in the outlook towards slavery. People started to feel the pain and sufferings of those who were forced to live like animals despite being human beings. With invention and introduction of modern communication means, the human trafficking trade grew enormously and crossed national borders. A clear need was visualized by law maker to brand the activity as illegal and criminal. The Indian Penal Code 1860 declared following act as criminal and punishable;

- i) Kidnapping and maiming a minor under section 363A.
- ii) Procuring minor girl under section 366A
- iii) Procuring a girl from foreign country ... under section 366B
- iv) Buying and Selling of any person as slave Under section 370.

Article 23 of Indian Constitution prohibits human trafficking in any form. To make the laws more stringent and to ensure eradication of human trafficking, Government of India enacted the Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act 1956 and Immoral Traffick Prevention Act (ITPA), 1986.

But despite the act being declared as criminal offense with punitive provisions, the crime of human trafficking still exists. The activity to human trade has grown enormously and has become a menace at global level, The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) was conceived to promote the global fight on human trafficking in March 2007 by UN Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC). The United Nations and its agencies have been giving all out efforts to mobilize all nations to counter this plague but the goal is still far away.

The root cause is the poverty among the exploited, absence of moral values both among the Exploiters and the exploited and the lack of political will to enforce the laws in force. The Church has a great role to play in this scenario. As St Paul said, We must approach and convince all concerned that We all are brothers and sisters and it is sinful to be an exploiter Since our Lord Jesus has commanded us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. (Math 22:39) and this is the second commandment given to us after "Love thy GOD..." So if we are true children of God, we have to love human beings as our second object of love, First being God our Father.

If we truly love somebody how can we force him/her to do unpleasing things, how can we exploit him / her for our personal pleasure / financial benefit, how can we treat them as an item of trade? We must note that God created women as our helper and companion (Gen 2:18,) not as an object of pleasure and exploitation.

As a messenger of our Lord Jesus Christ everyone of us has the great responsibility to tell our family, our relatives, our friends and everyone in the society about the evils of HUMAN TRAFFICKING and infuse the spirit of universal brotherhood for peace and tranquility in society, nation and in the world. GOD BLESS US !



Together Towards Justice and Peace

BIBLE STUDY - CBCNEI AGM (April 27-29, 2018)

Text: Genesis 2: 15

Rev Dr Yangkahao Vashum, Professor, Eastern Theological College

Preliminary Remark

I have been asked to prepare and lead a Bible Study on Genesis 2: 15. JUST ONE VERSE. Possibly, the intention is, so that we might be able to get to the depth of the meaning and the significance of the text for our faith and life. There is nothing wrong in limiting to just one verse such as we do here. However, it is not always desirable to be studying just one text exclusively. The pitfall of focussing just on one text or verse is that, sometimes we end up committing the scandal of exclusivity. By this, what is meant is that, reading a particular text in isolation, without considering the larger story, spirit and intent of the scripture, could result in parochial reading of the text and meanings derived from the text. In doing so, we miss the real meaning or intent of the text. In other words,



we fail to do justice to the text.

Keeping this in mind, I have deliberately taken the liberty of looking the given text as a part of the whole creation narratives given in Genesis 1 and 2. In other words, while the given text comes from chapter 2, for a fuller understanding of the text, we must look at the overall accounts of creation (chapters 1 & 2) rather than focussing on that particular verse (2: 15) only. Secondly, I proceed assuming that we all agree that there are two creation accounts in the Bible. They are Gen. 1- 2: 4a and Gen. 2: 4b-25. Both are independent stories with no connections whatsoever between the two. Chapter two begins with no hints of knowing the accounts of creation in chapter one and therefore makes no reference to it.

It is a well established fact that they are written by two different writers or groups of writers at different historical times and contexts. Traditionally, Moses had been regarded as the author of the first five books of the OT famously known as the Pentateuch. They are: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Today, chapter 1 is widely accepted to have been written by the Priestly writer(s) sometime in the sixth century B.C.E. and chapter 2 by the Yahwist writer(s) sometime in the tenth century B.C.E. They have different theological emphasis. There are differences in the text's tone, style, vocabulary, message, presentation, and thematic and theological emphases and even beliefs. These differences are due to different historical and literary contexts.

There is of course, common interest as well as connective link between the two creation accounts. They are witnesses to the creative power of God. In a sense, they now stand together as single witness to the creation of the universe. The primary affirmation of the creation stories (chapter 1 & 2) is to show that God is the creator of the universe. Secondly, creation stories affirm God's priority of loving and caring the whole of

creation including humankind over a traditionally human-centred reading of the Bible. The fact that God's creation of the universe precedes the history of the people of Israel is a testimony to the universal activity of God. Thirdly, unlike the traditional view that holds that creations derive their identity from and through humankind, the creation accounts affirm, they have their unique identities distinctly derived from God as God's creations.

The given text for our studies is a part of this larger creation accounts and therefore has to be seen in the light of this larger context. To understand the text, its meaning and significance, we must take into consideration the accounts of creation in chapter 1 as well. Additionally, the overall teaching of the Scripture on creation, land and humanity in their totality must be taken into consideration. And this is what I intend to follow for and in our Bible studies.

Holistic Vision of Life: Inter-relatedness and Interdependence of Cosmos, Humankind and Creation

Overview of Genesis 2: 4b-25:

Generally, biblical scholarships regard Genesis 2 together with chapter 3 as one unit of creation account. It is generally agreed that the writer Yahwist had written this part of the creation story in the early tenth century B.C.E. However, for our purpose, we will be limiting to chapter 2 only. References to chapter 3 and other passages will be made whenever necessary.

vv 4b – 7

When the Lord God made the earth and heaven – and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plan of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground – the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the

ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

It begins by affirming that God created the earth and heavens. It is interesting, how the story unfolds here. The creation of plants, herbs and other vegetation on earth is dependent upon rain water. Secondly, no vegetations were possible to survive without someone to till and care for them. Therefore, the text makes explicitly clear that the first thing that God created after the heavens and the earth, was a living being – a human person called Adam. God created Adam out of the dust or soil of the earth, in Hebrew 'âdâmâ. The text clearly states that humankind are intrinsically connected to the earth and that the earth and humankind need each other for their existence. The Hebrew words, 'âdâm was made from 'âdâmâ underscore this point very clearly.

vv 8 – 9

Now the Lord God had planned a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kind of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

This particular text brings out further the necessity for the interdependence between the humankind and the earth and her produces. God planted a garden and placed the man Adam in it. The garden produces fruits and trees which can be eaten by humankind, in this case Adam. Humankind cannot live without food. For their sustenance and survival they need to eat food. And this food comes from the earth. Adam can eat the fruits of the trees for his sustenance. Traditional interpretation has often focussed on God and the man Adam and the agency of the earth is ignored. The cooperation of the earth in creation comes forcefully in verse 9: "The LORD God

made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground" Other version reads, "And he let sprout from the earth...."

wv 10-14

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

But before trees and plants could yield fruits, they need to grow. And to grow they need soil and most importantly water. Without water no plant or tree can grow, they will die on their own. God therefore, created rivers to provide water for the soil and to water the plants and trees. The fact that God created a river and spread to four different directions is significant; the river became four branches signifies the four corners of the earth, to the ends of the earth. It shows that the water is meant for all creation, land and people and not just for one group of people, areas of land or one particular creature only! It belongs to all and therefore must be shared by all creation.

v 15

This is the text for our consideration. We will come back to this.

wv 16 – 17

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.

We see that God for the first time spoke to Adam after creating

him out of the dust of the earth and placing him in the garden of Eden. God knows that humankind cannot live without food and so God created many trees from which humankind may eat. Humankind have enough to eat and even have the freedom to choose from any tree in the garden. God of course, put a limit to humankind. "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is off the limit; it is forbidden. Adam was warned by God. "The day that you eat of it you will die." The limit is set.

v 18

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Having addressed the needs of Adam for his sustenance, now God turns His attention to Adam's most significant need, and that is a helpmate without whom Adam's life remains incomplete. God saw that everything He had created was good but the only thing that wasn't good was that Adam was lonely. "A helper (çzer) as his partner." The word helper is used in reference to God as well in the Bible. God as the helper (çzer) of humankind (Ps 121: 1-2). Therefore, it does not in any way suggest subordination (master-slave relationship). This strongly affirms the need for companionship in our human life. Additionally, the true nature of being human is to be in relationship. There is no place for exclusive individualistic life.

vv 19-20

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever, the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was there

Here, we see God creating every animal of the land and bird of the air. Traditionally, this text is often interpreted to suggest

that humankind are superior than any other created beings. The idea is that God has given humankind the power of naming them. Naming is often understood in terms of control and superiority. However, naming does not necessarily imply control and superiority. A careful study of the text, seems to suggest that naming is about identifying different creation as well as differentiating creation from one to another. Naming is a way of humankind relating with the rest of creation. It is an affective and relational one. The text ends by reiterating that Adam is still without a worthy life partner!

vv 21-25

So the Lord God, caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God finally created a helpmate fit for Adam. The woman was created out of the very stuff of Adam – one of Adam's ribs. Traditionally, this has been often interpreted for the subordination of women to men. However, this is a misrepresentation of the true essence of the text. In as much as, humankind were created out of the dust of the earth did not imply the superiority of the earth to humankind, women created out of one of the ribs of Adam cannot be construed to mean subordination to men. Rather, it suggests the intimate relationship between Adam and Eve, men and women. The phrase, "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" literally implies "mutuality and equality." In Hebrew, the man is *'ish* and the

woman is *'ishâh*. The names suggest their distinct identity as man and woman but they are alike in their flesh and bones. "The use of ... in the naming discerns and formally recognizes the sameness and difference within humanity."

Genesis 2: 15

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

The text in particular speaks about God placing the man Adam in a garden called Eden. The man is charged with a RESPONSIBILITY: TO TILL AND TO KEEP IT. The text revolves around the following characters: God the creator, the created man Adam, and the garden Eden. The man Adam was placed by God in the garden. Adam was charged with twofold responsibilities: to till and to keep it. The placement of Adam in Eden and the charge follows immediately after the creation of Adam by God. God created Adam out of *'âdâmâ*. The creation of the *'âdâmâ* earth is not stated; it is simply assumed. God created Adam out of the available material *'âdâmâ* unlike in chapter 1, where it simply says, "In the image of God, God created male and female (vv 26, 27). Prior to creating Adam out of *'âdâmâ*, it is already assumed God had created the soil/earth.

The text clearly states the interconnectedness of earth, creation and humankind. First of all, humankind was created out of dust (2: 6). Even Eve was formed likewise, although created out of Adam's rib, she was very much a groundling of the earth. Similarly, all living beings including animals were formed out of the earth (2: 19), even when humanity's "breath of life" comes from God. In a sense, humankind and all the rest of creation are thus connected to the earth and to each other. Remember, 70% of human body is composed of water substance!

Having said this, we now come to the main purpose of God placing humankind in the garden of Eden. What for? "To till and to keep it." In other words, humankind's mission is to serve and preserve the earth and everything in it. We see that the terms "tilling" and "keeping" go together. In some translation, the word "tending" is used following the Hebrew verb *shamar*, translated as to "tend". Some others translate as to "guard or protect." All these, translations point to the fact that humankind are given the responsibility of providing "attentive and protective tending" as well as to have life sustenance in return from the earth. How do we relate this with Genesis 1:26-28 where humankind were instructed to rule (*rdh*) and subdue (*kbš*) the earth? Humankind are asked to work out a life for themselves in and with the earth. It is very clear humankind have to work; the Eden garden is not "an Elysium for sensual enjoyment" (Von Rad 1972:80) but a place to pleasantly labour.

Traditionally, the words "to rule and subdue" have been interpreted to suggest that humankind were superior and therefore have control over the rest of creation. On the basis of such understanding, nature including animals, plants and trees and everything in it were subjected to human exploitation and destructions. Because of this, Christian theology had been squarely blamed for the ecological and environmental crises in the world.

Reciprocal Mutuality and Equality

It is extremely important that we read the texts together in order to understand them in proper spirit and perspectives. The question is how do we relate the two texts (Gen. 1: 26-28 and Gen. 2: 15)? Can we say one is more important than the other and therefore emphasise one at the expense of the other? For years and years, biblical interpretation, has unfortunately taken that path. As a result, chapter 1 is often given more importance over chapter 2. To be specific, when it comes to

humankind's relationship with nature and the rest of God's creation, chapter 1 is favoured, and in regards to men and women relationships, men would embrace chapter 2 with their whole heart, mind, soul and body! And all this, based on faulty reading and interpretation of the texts. Such reading and interpretation is problematic. A responsible reading calls for a holistic view of the scripture. A holistic approach to the scripture entails looking at the Bible in the light of the wider message of the Bible and not simply confined to one text or passage alone.

Following this approach, when we look at the nature of humankind's relationship with nature and the rest of God's creation, we see that it is more of reciprocal mutuality and interdependence. It is more of a "reciprocal custodianship." The Hebrew word *radah* translated as dominion (rule) in Gen. 1: 26-28 does not mean to exploit or dominate in the literal sense of the term. Rather, it means mutual stewarding and caring and exercising wisdom in caring God's creation. It implies more of an affective and relational understanding in which, humankind's common connection with the rest of God's creation is underscored. When we look at the overall creation narratives, we are made to realize how interdependent the cosmos is with one another. The vegetation need light and water to grow, animals, cattle birds, fishes, need one another for their survival. Humans need all these for their foods, shelter and clothing and for all their survival. Likewise, the nature of relationship between men and women must be centred on reciprocal mutuality and equality. Remember, God created male and female in God's image (1: 26, 27). Remember, Eve was created out of one of the ribs of Adam, a helper (*çzer*) fit for Adam. Being created of the rib and not of the head or the leg therefore suggests men and women being together side by side not behind or before, neither above nor below.

In the Salvific Plan of God?

To further elaborate our humankind's interconnectedness with the earth and the rest of God's creation, we need to deepen our insight by looking at the overall salvific plan of God for the whole cosmos. Starting from God proclaiming the goodness of His creation (humans and creation) in Genesis to proclamation of the New Heaven and New Earth in Revelation, humans and creation are always inseparably connected together. Few of the biblical passages and stories are cited here to substantiate the biblical affirmation of the universal understanding of salvation.

God's covenant with creation (Gen. 8: 20-22): God made covenant with Noah after the great flood. The covenant was made not only with humans but the whole of God's creation. Perhaps, going further back we find that God not only saved Noah's family but also the rest of creation pair by pair, male and female together (Gen. 6: 18-22; 8: 18-19). God is surely the God of all beings and creations. God enters into covenant wilfully and freely with the whole of God's creation. Humans are part of the covenant along with the rest of creation.

The year of Jubilee (Lev. 25): Jubilee is for all creation including humans and the rest of creation. Rest is for all including humans and creation. Rights are meant for all including humans and creation. This abundantly demonstrates that God is concerned not only for the well-being of humans but for the whole of His creation.

Isaiah's ultimate Vision (Isaiah 11: 6-7; 65: 25): Envisions every creation, foes and friends, eating and living together in peace and harmony. "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them" (Isaiah 11: 6). "The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's

food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,' says the Lord," (Isaiah 65: 25).

God's love is for the Cosmos (John 3: 16): "For God so loved the world (cosmos) that He gave His only begotten son...." God's love is for the universe including all creation and humanity; God's love is not limited to human beings alone.

The whole creation longs for the coming redemption (Rom. 8: 19-22): The suffering of the whole creation is compared with that of the mother's experience of pain in giving birth. And that the whole creation is subjected to futility not of their own making. And then St Paul goes on to affirm that the whole creation waits expectantly for the revealing of the sons of God and that they will be redeemed from the corrupt bondage of corruption and into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In Christ all things hold Together (Col. 1: 15): The text is very clear: every being- human and creation – have the same destiny in Christ. In Christ all beings and things in the universe will be reconciled. "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross," (Col. 1: 19-20). Salvation is all about sharing life together in Christ and with one another and the whole of creation.

New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21: 1-6): God is going to establish new heaven and new earth. New heaven and new earth do not simply replace the old one. The world, God's good creation, is not replaced but rather redeemed and renewed. God makes all things new. "He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (Rev. 21: 5).

The inter-relatedness of humanity and creation is further

exemplified in the divine judgements upon the earth as a consequence of humanity's fall and sin. The judgement in Eden (Gen. 3: 14-24) and the judgement of the Flood (Gen. 6: 11-13) explicitly state how the earth had to bear the consequences of humanity's sin along with humanity. The consequences of humanity's sin could be summarized as follows: 1) the earth was cursed upon, 2) disruptive relationships and alienation within the earth's community, 3) death of animal, and 4) expulsion of humankind from Eden, resulting in humanity living in hostile ecosystem. Paul in Romans reminded how the whole creation had to endure pain and suffering and be subjected to futility not of their own making (Romans 8: 19-22).

Garden, Land and Humanity

The relationship of land and humanity and the whole of creation as represented by the garden in Genesis 2: 15 must be further read in the light of the overall teaching about land in the Bible. This is significant because issues of justice and peace in the world, and in the society are mostly connected with land and natural resources (this is further elaborated below). Walter Brueggmann observes that land in the Bible stands for hope, blessing and security. Hence, land in the Bible is one of the most important theological themes. The first account about land is written by the Yahwist, the first theologians in the Bible. It is the promise of land by Yahweh to Abraham (Gen. 12:1:15:7).

Land is a Gift of God

Land in the Bible is primarily God's gift to the Israelites. It is the fulfillment of God's promise to the people of Israel. All the three sources – Yahwist, Priestly and Deuteronomist – talked about the concept of land. All the writers reflect the idea that land is a gift of God – a promise fulfillment. However, it is the Deuteronomist who has made the land as the central theme

of his theology (Deut. 8:7-10). God's promise of land to the Israelites is amply found in the Bible. Abraham and his descendants are promised land (Gen. 13:15). Issac and his descendants are promised land (Gen. 26:3). Also Jacob and his descendants are promised land (Gen. 28:13). Quoting Gen. 12:1-3 in which Abraham is promised land by Yahweh, Raphael Jospe says that "the promised land is thus not incidental to Israel's covenant with God, but lies, as an essential component, at its very foundation." According to Raphael and others, the biblical account of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants begins with a territorial imperative. In this sense, land is the primary content on which God entered into covenantal relationship with Israel. This is why Martin Buber speaks of land as a "primary datum" for Israel.

Besides the promise of land to the patriarchs, there is also another promise given to Moses. Here the context is the promise of Exodus. "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their outcry against their oppressors... I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that country into a fine, broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:7-8). Land, therefore, is a gift of God, who delivered Israel from captivity and gave them freedom from their oppressors. Hence, land in the Bible is a sign of freedom and identity.

Land as the Inheritance of Israel

The Bible speaks of land as inheritance of the people of Israel. There are two terms used: *nahala* (inheritance) and *ahuzza* (property/possession). Friedrich Horst opines that the two *nahala* and *ahuzza* are essentially the same. According to him, *ahuzza* is an abstract juridical term compared to the more general term *nahala*. In fact, in most cases, the two terms are used together (cf. Number 32:32, 35:2). It is widely accepted that it is the Deuteronomist who is responsible for the

theology of land in the Bible, and the identification of this land as Israel's inheritance (*nahala*). The land is a pure gift of Yahweh to her. The promised land is a result of the promise sworn on oath by Yahweh to the patriarchs. The land is promised "to your fathers" to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob (Deut. 1:8; cf. 31:7; Deut. 26:4;6:18, etc). Secondly, it is also found that land has been promised on oath by Yahweh to the Israelites directly. As Yahweh says to Joshua, "You shall bring the children of Israel into the land I swore to give them" (Deut. 31:32).

Nahala is the ownership of land as passed down from father to son. Yahweh being seen as Israel's father (Deut. 14:1; 8:5), He too has left a patrimony (heritage) for Israel. Leviticus 27:16-25, deals with the differences between land bought by commercial transaction and land acquired through inheritance. The land possessed through inheritance is inalienable and retains the right for its redemption or repurchase in the year of jubilee. In most cases, land possessed as inheritance, ancestral property, is never given out for sale (cf. I Kings 21:3f). Commercialization of land (real estate profiteering) is vehemently protested by the prophets in their time (Isaiah 5:8; Micah 2:1 ff, etc).

Israel's Conditional Ownership of Land

Although, Israel is gifted with the land as their inheritance, Yahweh is presented as the ultimate owner of the land. Israel is spoken of as a stranger on Yahweh's land. A section in the Holiness Code dealing with the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25:23,24) deals with this unique relationship of Israel to the land. For it says, "The land belongs to me", "You are only strangers", etc. Both Gerhard Von Rad and F. Horst believe that this new understanding of land as belonging to Yahweh seems to point to Canaanite theology where the Baals are the owners and the bestowers of fertility of the land.

However, there are ample evidences in the Bible which related

the giving of land with the Israelites' abiding of God's law in return. Moses in Deut. 6:17-19 has warned that their entry into Canaan (promised land) and the permanence of their stay on it is conditioned by their obedience to Yahweh and His law. Prosperity and long life on the land depend greatly on their keeping of His laws and commandments (Deut.4:40). Though, Yahweh is giving this land forever ("... for an everlasting possession" Gen. 17:8; 35:3-4), the Deuteronomist is aware that Israel can lose this precious gift in case of infidelity and disloyalty. Further Yahweh's blessing upon the land in terms of the produce of fields is conditioned upon obedience. This is evident in the concluding part of the Holiness Code (Leviticus) and Deuteronomy. The famous prayer of the farmer (Historical Credo) in Deuteronomy 26: 5-10 expresses the gratitude and thanks offering to Yahweh for the bounteous harvest he received from the God-given land. However, Israel's disobedience could result in the withdrawal of all these blessings (Deut. 28, cf. Lev. 26:3 ff). Here again the blessing of fertility is solely the gift of Yahweh. The prophets are therefore critical against those who are ungrateful to Him and admonish them to be grateful to Yahweh. "Let us fear Yahweh our God, who brings us the rains of autumn, and spring showers in their turn, who brings us unfailingly fixed seasons of harvest" (Jer. 5: 24; cf. Hosea 2:10 ff).

Ownership of Land

Land in the Bible is not given to various individuals but to Israel, that is to the people of Israel. Hence, Israel as a community is the owner of the land. Joshua 13 -19 records that all the tribes are assigned land by lot by Joshua. The meaning of the allotment according to Norman K. Gottwald is this: "All the tribes found a home in the land and settle down to a life of autonomous economic self-development based on their land-holding." The rights to land-holding have always

been Israel. Then the allotment of land to the clans and families follows. Even in the account of the second allotment of the land according to Ezekiel 48, it is the tribe that is apportioned the land. Alongside the portions of the twelve tribes, a portion is designated for a “holy reserve.” Upon it the temple is to be built. This is again a reassertion of Yahweh’s ownership of the entire land – that the entire land belongs to Yahweh. Hence, Yahweh is the ultimate owner of the entire land.

Contextual Reality: Questions of Justice and Peace

The world we live in is beset with a number of problems and crises. There are innumerable issues confronting the world. And there are countless reasons and factors responsible for the crises.

However, most of the problems and crises of the world are, in one way or the other, connected with the earth, land and natural resources. The world is reeling under ecological and environmental crises. The problem of global warming due to greenhouse gas emission is becoming alarmingly dangerous. Climate change, erratic weather, sudden cloud burst, frequent flooding, soil/land erosion, frequent earthquake, pollution of the air we breath, the water we drink, etc., all these problems are staring at us starkly.

The earth and its resources and the whole of creation are viewed as commodities to be exploited for human use. In the globalized world, following capitalistic ideology, profit making is the order of the day. Spurt by the maximum exploitation of natural resources based on human wants, the earth we call our home, is going through severe crises. The resultant impacts of the reckless human actions include global warming, climate change, natural calamities including frequent earthquakes, landslides, scarcity of drinking water, tornadoes and tsunamis, etc.

There are border, land and water disputes everywhere. Disputes connected to control over oil and gas, air space and maritime space, etc. Wars are fought between and among nations over control of natural and mineral resources. In globalized world, amassing wealth, power and control become the norms and order of the world. The rich are becoming richer and richer and the poor poorer and poorer by day. Justice is decided on the basis of might is right – wealth and muscle power! Peace is understood in terms of shutting the voices of the voiceless and trampling the rights and dignity of the people by sheer force and control.

In northeast India as well, most crises are centred on border and land disputes. All conflicts faced and experienced by the people are in some way connected to land and its resources. The northeast region in general continue to suffer alienation and exploitation from the government of India and the Indian people. The economic disparities and the unequal distribution of wealth and natural resources experienced by the region are glaring examples of such discriminations. The indiscriminate tapping of resources from the region continues unabatedly. However, it is the tribals and adivasis who are the most affected lot. They suffer from multiple exploitations and discriminations. They are exploited by both the central and respective state governments, and by the powerful corporations and companies. As well as, they suffer in the hands of dominant communities within their own states.

We are witnessing discriminations of people in the name of religion, castes and class. Violence against women and children have become the norms of our society. Cases of sexual assault, molestation and rape against women and children are taking place so rampantly. There are targeted harassments and violence against minorities. Communal violence and inciting hatred and discriminations are common recurrence today.

There are as well cases of ethnic conflicts and violence occurring from time to time in the region. These are all concerns of justice and peace.

Conclusion: Together Towards Justice and Peace

To talk about justice and peace, we must go back to our origin, where we were in the beginning, what was God's intention of creating humankind, the earth and everything in it. To understand the God given human responsibility, "To till and to keep it," it is paramount on our part to study carefully the nature of our relationship with God, with our fellow humankind and the rest of creation. In the beginning, what? Why was and is the universe created? What is the nature of our relationship with God, with fellow humankind and the rest of God's creation? Our examination of the Bible helps us to understand the fact that there can be no justice and peace unless we recognize our oneness, relatedness, and interdependence with the cosmos and the whole of God's creation. Following the Earth Bible Project undertaken by several biblical scholars under the leadership of Norman C. Habel, I would like to reiterate the following principles for our faith affirmation:

- **The principle of intrinsic worth:** the universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
- **The principle of interconnectedness:** Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are Mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
- **The principle of voice:** Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.
- **The principle of purpose:** the universe, Earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.

- **The principle of mutual custodianship:** Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community.
- **The principle of resistance:** Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the place of humankind in the overall plan of God's creation? How do we relate and understand the idea of creation in the image of God and to rule over (ch.1:26-28), and God entrusting humankind "to till and to keep it" (ch. 2:15)?
2. What is (are) the significance(s) of the creation stories in the Bible?
3. Identify what are the factors responsible for the problems and crises in our land? How do we address them?
4. Are there, such things as natural calamities/disasters without humankind's roles?
5. How can we address the issues of justice and peace in our land and the world? Suggest some possible steps.
6. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it," (Ps. 24:1). How do we affirm and understand this in our practical living?

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Applications are invited for the post of the **Chaplain, Shillong Tyrannus Hall**, Council of Baptist Churches in Indian (CBCNEI), Guwahati, Assam.

Interested candidate should submit their application and resume along with **two passport size photos, bio-data, recommendation from Association or Convention, email ID and mobile number** on or before **February 28, 2019**.

Original certificates and other documents should be produced at the time of interview.

Minimum Qualification Required:

1. BA- BD / MA / MSc
2. Basic Communication Skills
3. Having five years of Christian ministry experience
4. Committed Christian
5. Age between 35 - 45

Kindly send your complete application along with the supporting documents to the address below:

(INCOMPLETE APPLICATION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED)

To,
 The General Secretary,
 CBCNEI Mission Compound
 H.B. Road, Panbazar, Guwahati – 781001 Assam

NEWS CAPSULE

Nihang Karbi Baptist Association (NKBA) Leader's Retreat (17-19 April)

The NKBA leaders retreat was held at CBCNEI Conference Centre where more than 25 leaders took part. Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, Mr Malthys D Sangma, Secretary for Justice & Peace and Mr Vikato Shikhu, Finance Secretary of CBCNEI were the resource persons. Rev Benting Teron, Executive Secretary NKBA welcomed and introduced the participant. Dr Solomon took sessions on "Ef-

fective Church Administration", Mr Malthys spoke on "Challenges of Freedom in North East India" and Mr Vikato taught them regarding "Financial Integrity". During their retreat, Rev Dr Jolly Rimai and Mr Unique Terang took the morning devotion respectively.

Mission Strategy Envisioning for Krima 13 under GBC (4-6 July)

As part of the Mission Strategy envisioning program, the Krima 13 of the Garo Baptist Convention conducted a two



day Consultation to learn more on how every church can be more involved in Mission. Pastors from all local churches under the Krima attended the Program. The Mission Secretary of the Council along with Rev. Rettiar Momin, Mission Director of GBC attended the program as resource persons. The Pastors were excited in seeing the possibilities of sending over 100 evangelists in to Tawang in Arunachal, their new mission field. Let us continue to pray for Krima 13 so that they will be able to do great things for the Lord.

Mission Consultation with Nepal Baptist Church Council at Itahari **(24-26 July)**

In order to have good relationship and partnership between

Nepal Baptist Church Council (NBCC) and the missionary sending Associations and churches under CBCNEI, a two-day mission consultation was held at Itahari, Nepal. Mission leaders from Nagaland Baptist Church Council, Garo Baptist Convention, Assam Baptist Convention, and Manipur Baptist Convention attended the program. From Nepal Baptist Church Council, the President, former General Secretary, Mission Secretary, Association Secretaries and many pastors and leaders attended the program. In the process of discussions, it was learnt that there were lapses on both sides and a declaration was signed to have good relationship in future. We thank God for this meaningful consultation. Nepal government has declared Anti-Conversion bill and there-



fore let us continue to pray for Nepal church leaders, believers and our missionaries working there. There are over 100 missionaries from our churches working in Nepal. Another very exciting experience was, over 90% of the Nepal Pastors and leaders were the ones born and brought up from North East India. We also realized how important it is to treat these migrants well and tell them about the salvation found in Jesus so that they go back and become witnesses of Christ.

One-day workshop on Formation & Strengthening of CBO & PO (August 6)

A one-day workshop was or-

ganized by CBCNEI in partnership with CASA at Solmari, Nasiriba Bhawan in the project area. The program was conducted on 06th September. The workshop was attended by 27 delegates. The resource persons were Mr David Kujur, State Coordinator for Assam and Mr. Phungreiso Varu, the CASA Regional Communication Officer. Mr Varu during his session had briefly introduced CASA from its inception and its vision, missions etc. He clearly explained about the organization, its collaboration with CBCNEI and the project. He further went on to clearly explain to the community about the project's main objective to empower the community in different fields like rights to food, work, expression, worship etc.





Mission Korea

During the session on Understanding CBO and its importance, Mr David have explained what CBO is at a very primary level and have helped them realize of having a CBO in each of the villages in order to work more effectively in regards to their rights and entitlements.

After the discussion hour, Mr Varu led us in a game-play where the central theme of the game is to make them realize about the importance and need of working together in the community.

It is learnt that the community people were delighted to have the CASA staff as their resource persons. It is also observed that they were interested and serious about having a CBO in each of their villages.

**Mission Korea
(6 - 10 August)**

There were two main objectives for which Mission Secretary wanted to participate this Conference. Firstly, he wanted to learn what and how Mission Korea? Secondly, he was also asked to share CBCNEI new Mission strategy to mission leaders of the Global South.

The first and foremost thing learnt from Mission Korea was youth participation. There were over 2000 young college going students in the conference. This is something we need to learn so that the passion for mission does not end with church leaders, but pass on to the younger generation from all walks of life. Hope to see this envisioned among the

churches in North East India in the near future.

Secondly, they had invited Mission leaders from the Global south. Over 200 leaders from Global south attended the conference. During special session for Global south, he was asked to present our New Mission strategy of "Each One Catch One". By the grace of God, it was well accepted and he was invited by few other countries if he can go and present the strategy to their leaders. They asked him if they can also use the same strategy with few modifications which will be relevant to their context. Some Missiologists from ACTS and TORCH Trinity College attended his session, and they were very impressed with the new strategy.

Those coming from Garo Baptist Convention, Manipur Baptist Convention and Mission Secretary had the opportunity

to visit Baptist Convention of Korea and their University and met their leaders. We were taken to different big churches to experience how Korean churches grow. This has really impressed us and we hope to adopt some of the models for the growth of our churches.

One-day workshop on Advocacy, Networking and Alliance Building through Campaigns on Livelihood Rights. (August 11)

A one-day workshop was organized by CBCNEI in partnership with CASA at Solmari, Nasiriba Bhawan in the project area. The workshop was attended by 34 delegates from the 17 villages. The resource persons were Rev Kabispou Gangmei who is the Development Consultant for CBCNEI and Advocate Malthyus D. Sangma, Secretary for Peace & Justice, CBCNEI.



Rev Kabi during his session on Networking and Alliance Building had spoken on the necessity about food, clothing and shelter and health and education from where he went on to explain about the importance of health and education as a primary source of livelihood. He had also spoken on the need to work together among communities and thereby achieve development in the communities. During his session he had also interacted with the delegates and brought out the issues faced by them. Advocate Malthus D. Sangma took a session on the subject Advocacy where he had clearly explained the Constitutional Rights given to its citizens. He clearly elaborated Article 21 which talk about the Protection of Life and Personal Liberty. During the session, he had also

explained about various livelihood schemes from the government and banks. It is noted that during the session, delegates raised various questions on why their rights were being discriminated and how they could fight for their constitutional rights. Advocate Malthus had later addressed to these questions and made them clear.

Maram Naga Baptist Association Repentance Program (31 August - 2 September)

The Maram Naga Baptist Association conducted Repentance program to confess and to ask God's blessing at Lairouching Baptist church. Pastors, Deacons, women leaders, youth leaders and many social workers and politicians attended the program. God, in



Repentance Program

His grace, moved us and we had meaningful time of repenting and praying for the tribe.

Maram Naga tribe is still listed as Primitive tribe in Manipur. Let us pray for them so that God's abundant blessing will be upon them and become a strong witness for the Lord.

MBA Mission Conference (17-19 September)

The first ever Mission Conference for Meitei Baptist Asso-

ciation was conducted at MBA Centre. Hundreds of pastors, evangelists, and sponsoring churches attended the program. They were challenged to be not only missionary receiving Church but to be missionary sending Church. The concept of "Every Church is a missionary church, every home a missionary support centre, and every individual a Missionary" was strongly emphasized during the conference.



Report of My US Trip

Introduction

I really thank God for the grace and mercy granted to me for the US trip from **15 June to 17 July 2018**. I must also thank the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chan, Area Director, International Ministries (IM) for inviting me to the World Mission Conference and paying my round trip tickets. The WMC was held at Green Lake, Wisconsin from 4-8 July where many missionaries from around the world participated. Ms. Asha Sanchu, Director of Miglat Ministry of the NBCC was also invited to share about her ministry during the Conference. Rev. Samaresh Nayak, Secretary of IMCC was also invited to the conference and was allowed to share about the Baptist Summit in 2019 in different forums. Before and after the WMC and after I got the privilege to visit churches, church leaders, seminaries, potential donors, Naga American Foundation and friends during the one month long trip. My detailed itinerary was made by the Rev. Dr. Jerry Cain, the Chair of the FNECU for which I am so much grateful and indebted to him. I must also thank the Governing Council granting me fifty thousand for the NECU promotional work during the trip.

Boston, Massachusetts

I landed at Boston on 15 June and Dr. Mar Imsong picked me up from the airport and hosted me at their beautiful home at Bedford, MA till I left for Atlanta on 20th June. With the kind arrangements made by him, in Massachusetts I first met the advocates of Migrants and Refugees. I shared the brochure of NECU

and requested them to support and help identify potential donors. Then on 17th June I preached at Medford First Baptist Church on "You are the Salt of the Earth." After worship I shared the need of NECU to some members and appealed them to support NECU in every way possible. Then on 19th June Dr. Mar organized a cook out fellowship for the members of the Ministers' Council of Massachusetts. During and after the dinner I shared the vision and needs of NECU. I hope and believe Dr. Mar Imsong will continue to do the follow up work and he can be included as a member in the FNECU board.

Atlanta, Georgia

From 20-22 June I was hosted by Mr. Samuel Bandela in Atlanta. I could meet Dr. David, dean of the McFee School of Theology of the Mercer University over lunch. Shared the vision of NECU and encouraged him to help identify potential donors. We also discussed the possibility of having partnership on some courses with NECU in the future. For my exposure Sam took me to see the Jimmy Carter's Library and Museum; Museum of Martin Luther King Jr. We went to see the American Baptist History Society Archive but unfortunately it was closed because it was on Friday. I am so thankful to Sam for his kind and warm hospitality. I am so grateful for his generosity that he shared some clothes with me. God bless his ministry.





Indiana & Kentucky

From 23-29 June I went to Indianapolis and was hosted by Dr. Joseph Huse and his wife, Diannah. On 24th June I spoke at the worship service of First Baptist Church of Indianapolis. I was taken by the Pastor to two Sunday School classes and introduced myself and to take two minutes sharing about NECU. I preached on "Who is My Neighbor" based on Luke 10:30-37. Then on 25 June Joseph and I went to Indian Creek Baptist Camp where students come from all over Southern Indianapolis for the Summer Camp. Joseph and I spoke about NECU and encourage the students to be part of the University by enrolling in online courses and we showed a short video clip of NECU. From there we visited Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky to meet some of the students from North East India. During and after dinner I had shared the vision of NECU and asked them to be part of it in every way possible. The next day that is on 26th June Joseph and I visited the office of the two Executive Ministers of Indianapolis and Kentucky for a lunch on meeting. Shared with them the great need to raising fund for the University and

requested them earnestly to help identify potential donors. They are willing to share the email ids of the contacts and Dr. Joseph Huse will have the freedom to contact them. Immediately after that we went to meet a potential donor, who was a business man from Rushville. He seems to be interested with the vision we shared and I hope he would come forward to support NECU. I really appreciate and thank Joseph and Diannah for their warm and loving hospitality.

Huntington, West Virginia

From 27-29 June, I went to West Virginia, hosted by Pastor Trent Eastman and his family of New Baptist Church, Huntington. The same evening, I spoke at the Wednesday Prayer Service and shared short video clips of NECU and the Asia's largest Baptist Church dedication in Nagaland to encourage them about the growth of the Baptist churches in NEI. I preached on "Who is My Neighbor." They were excited about the University and appreciated my sharing. I hope they will do something to support NECU. Then together with Pastor Trent Eastman, I met the pastors of Huntington at Bealah Baptist Church and shared much about NECU and the factors that are leading to the opening of new university. The email ids of the pastors will be sent to us by Pastor Trent. Then in later in the same afternoon, I was taken to Heritage Farm to see the farm museum cum sales. It was an eye-



opening experience for me to learn how to preserve antiques for such a farm and business. It has become a tourist spot now. Late afternoon, I visited Rob Ely, Minister of the Baptist Campus Ministry of the Marshall University. Organized by him, I taught 35 university students in a Bible study from Matthew 5:23 "You are the Salt of the Earth" and encouraged them to join the NECU in the near future and Rob Ely encouraged them to go to NECU along with a mission trip. I also encouraged them to take online courses that will be offered in the near future. I also requested them to inform their parents about NECU and encourage their parents to become donors for the University. I am very thankful to Pastor Trent Eastman, his wife and son for their warm hospitality. I must also thank Rob Ely who arranged the Bible study with the University students and who took me around to see few important places in the city of Huntington.

Omaha, Nebraska

From 30th June to 2nd July I was in Omaha, Nebraska, hosted by Pastor Bill Prather and his wife Priscilla at their home where Bill's elderly father is living. On Sunday I shared about NECU to the senior Sunday School class and Rev. Dr. Bill challenged the congregation to support NECU right after my presentation. A lady came forward to donate \$10 which is given to Ben Chan during the FNECU board meeting by Bill Prather. I was informed that some of them would send check to the FNECU. I also visited few places in Omaha and had enough time for rest. We also visited the Executive Minister of Nebraska, the Rev. Dr. Robins and shared about the vision of NECU. We requested him to help identify potential donors and share their contact addresses. I hope he will do so. On 3rd July we drove from Omaha to Green Lake for the World Mission Conference. I thank Pastor Bill and his wife Priscilla for their warm hospitality.

Green Lake, Wisconsin

At Green Lake, I attended the inaugural service on 4th July where Rev. Sharon Koh, Executive Director of International Ministries gave the keynote address on SALT of the EARTH. I was given the opportunity to share at the Table Talk on NECU one time and at



Dinnertime to a group of 25 invitees. It was a responsive gathering where I gave the talk on the great and urgent need of opening a new Christian University in NEI. Many were impressed about the sharing. On 5th July we had the FNECU Board meeting where Jerry Cain chaired the meeting. I was inducted as an Ex. Officio member of the FNECU in that meeting. I shared my report of the trip and we discussed how the strategy of fund raise could be changed. So we decided to appeal for student's scholarship which will come to \$440 per student for the whole year.

Elgin, Chicago, Illinois

From Green Lake I went to Chicago along with the Rev. Dr. Rex Rogers and had lunch with the Rev. Hellen Chhuka, a former colleague in NCCI at the Lutheran School of Theology, in Chicago. Then we did some sightseeing with him in and around Navy Pier, Millennium Park, Bean, and dock area. Then I went to Rockford and stayed with Rex Rogers and his wife Connie. Next day that is on Sunday, the 8th July, I preached at First Baptist Church of Elgin in two worship services. A warm welcome from the pastor and I had a good discussion on NECU and many were challenged with the vision. Some have mentioned that they will write check and send it later. I am extremely happy to inform you that Rev. Dr. Rex Rogers has donated altogether \$1620 and

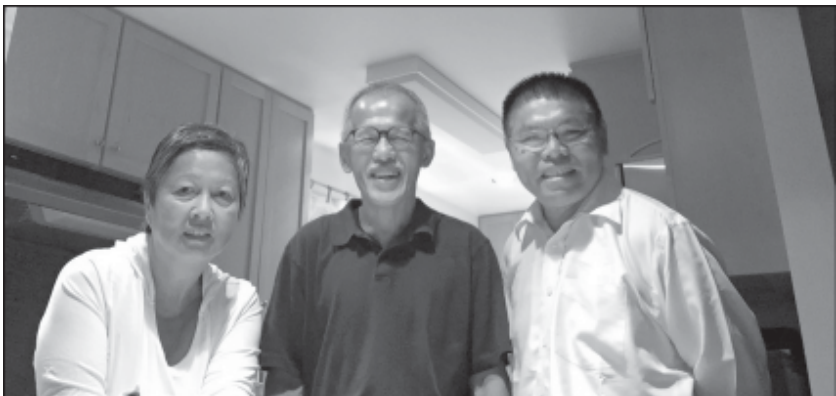
has become a founding member of NECU for which we must be thankful to him.

Los Angeles, CA

Then the next day I left for Los Angeles where my friend Sol Labrado picked me up from the Van Nuys airport bus station. I had the privilege of meeting the Pastor and leaders of Faith of Christ Church, a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Simi Valley, LA. I shared the vision of NECU and invited them to support. They were very positive and assured me that they will start the process how they can support the university. Then on 11th July I visited the Universal Studio with Mr. & Mrs. Domingo and later went to China Town to buy few things. I am really thankful to Rex and Connie for their warm hospitality and friendship. I must also express my heartfelt thanks to Sol Labrado for his help and support during my visit to LA.

San Francisco, CA

From 12-15 July I was in San Francisco. I left at 11am and reached SFO airport at 6:30 pm. Dr. Don Ng waited for me and we reach home by 8:00 pm. We went out for dinner together at Thai Restaurant nearby. After which I went to sleep. Next day on 13 July we went to meet Dr. Jim Brenneman, the President of ABSW, Berkeley. And we had fruitful discussions on how the two institutions can work together by exchange human resources in the near future. The bases for seeking partnership with this semi-



nary are that many of the graduates were from this seminary and Dr. Davidson from this seminary had already visited NECU early this year. At 3:30pm we went to Santa Clara to attend the Naga American Foundation Biennial Conference inaugural program. We displayed the NECU posters and brochures and inter-



acted with the delegates who came from all over the states. It was a good opportunity for me and Dr. Don to be introduced and welcome by the NAF during the dinner fellowship. The next day also we joined the NAF Biennial Conference meeting when more people to hear about the NECU. We are very thankful to Miss Honili Sumi, President of NAF for allowing us to be part of the Conference and a time given to share a little bit about the vision of NECU to the people who have gathered there at the Mess Hall. After 5pm we left for Sausalito and reviewed my sermon for Sunday worship on the theme: Who is My Neighbor? based on Luke 10:30-37.

On 15 July I attended a senior Sunday School class and learned important things about "Being Mindful" for the first time. Don and Joy have been so generous and hospitable. I am really thankful to both of them. Don is planning to bring more friends to the MBC 125 Anniversary from 4-6 February during which time we will conduct an "Envisioning. Consultation on NECU" from 7-9 February 2019. I left San Francisco at 9pm on 15 July after having treated by my Filipino friends and reached Guwahati on 17 July at 2:30pm.

Conclusion

Once again I thank God for the journey mercies granted to me and provided friends who facilitated my visit. I am really thankful to all of you for your prayers and moral support. I must thank Dr. D. Khathing, Vice Chancellor for all his support and financial help extended towards this trip. I express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to FNECU board members especially to Dr. Jerry Cain, Chair and Dr. Don Ng Vice Chair of FNECU for all the arrangements made for my visits to different places and churches in the US. I must also mention once again that I am very thankful to Rev. Dr. Benjamin S L Chan for inviting me to the World Mission Conference and paid my return fare. The envisioning of NECU is crucial at the moment. It is obvious that we have not done our homework well before we actually launched this university in 2014 with regards to raising fund from our churches and well-wishers. There is also a bigger challenge to invite other denominations to partner with us in this great venture. We need to collaborate and get the support of other churches in NEI both moral and financial support. I humbly request that all Governing Council members take serious in raising fund for NECU and much more aggressively than before. I also appeal all the GC members to become founding members so that we have more moral right to ask from others.



Solomon Rongpi

Chancellor, NECU



NEWS RELEASE

*Reported by, Limatula Longkumer, Dean of Research/SATHRI
Senate of Serampore College*

The Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA) and the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA) joint consultation on "Revisioning Innovative and Transformative Theological Education in Asia in the Context of Proliferation and Quest for New Forms of Education/Formation," was hosted by Sabah Theological Seminary, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia from September 12-16, 2018. Altogether 27 participants from ATESEA, ATA, ATEM, PERSETIA, SSC, SPATS, and CCC-TSPM attended in this historic conference. A participant from the University of South Africa and four members from FTESEA including the Chair, Vice-Chair, and a Board member along with Dr. H.S Wilson, Executive Director attended the consultation. Six participants from PTCA along with Dr. Wati Longchar, Dean of PTCA, and the Vice President for Programs of the United Board of Higher Education in Asia attended the conference. On the first day, five researchers presented case studies on proliferation of theological education in Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, India and South Korea. On the second day, challenges and prospects for theological education in Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, Philippines, Thailand-Mekong were presented. Following that Wong Wai Ching from United Board, Marilyn Naidoo from University of South Africa and Huang Poho from Chang Jung Christian University presented the challenges and prospects of theological education in the context of secular/public education in Christian colleges/universities. In the context of changing scenario of Asia, the representatives from

ATESEA, SPATS, SSC and ATA shared short-term and long-term theological support mechanism. And finally, ecumenical partners from FTESEA, UB and Asia-PacificForum-North America shared their program priorities for possible partnership towards strengthening theological education in Asia & Pacific.

The case studies revealed that proliferation of theological education is meeting the quest for theological education by different segments of Christian communities as bulk of theological institutions are denominationally based and offer inherited curriculum from the missionary past. However, without the willingness to cooperate with each other and the existing theological education programs, they weaken theological education and formation and lead to unhealthy competition, fragmentation and quality of theological education.

The participants recognized that theological education needs to focus on the formation of the whole people of God; it should not be narrowly confined to training of clergy; In the context of poverty, illiteracy, different forms of violence, urban-rural divide and growing religious fundamentalism, Christian communities need multi-forms theological education that cater to the needs of diversified contexts.

A crucial concern in Asia is the need of contextualization of theological education. The inherited traditional western fourfold curricula (Bible, theology, church history and practical ministry) patterns of theological education is still prevailing in Asia and it is not liberative and transformative. Asian contextual issues are different and it is difficult to insert/integrate new emerging courses within this paradigm. Asian theological educators must thus seriously engage in developing curricula relevant to Asian Christian context, since majority of Christians are from socially and economically poor backgrounds. We cannot talk about transformative theological education without addressing the problem and issues faced by the people in the margins. The issues, problems and context of the people in the margins are crucial in transformative education. This calls for restructuring or developing alternative theological curriculums viable to Asian realities as life-affirming and transformative.

The participants also recognized that participation and contribution of women in theological education is a serious

concern though attempts have been made by many theological institutions to promote women in theological education. It is affirmed that more effort needs to be done in pedagogical and curricula areas. Theological fraternity should continue to give priority to women's leadership development.

The leaders of theological education stakeholders affirmed that respect, openness and solidarity are key to healthy growth. The participants vowed to continue working together towards a structure where institutions collaborate for sustainability and ensuring quality theological education in Asia and come together in a common platform to promote mutual learning and collaboration, resources sharing and contextualization of theological education. The participants also affirmed that considering Asian economic, cultural and multi-religious context, the respective constituent bodies launch a pilot curricula program to develop innovative and transformative curriculum in Asian context. It was also agreed to promote more exchange programs among for doctoral students and faculties in Asia and Pacific by all the stakeholders.

The participants recognized the importance of ecumenical partner's support in faculty development especially those who are interested in community transformative studies. Asian colleges will be more benefitted if partners give priority to those scholars who are interested to do research on Asian issues in Asia. The participants further identified theological resources and digital library resources sharing as priority in which the support of mission partners are crucial. The new community transformative curricula needs to be accompanied by teacher's institute and production of theological resource books in Asia. We urge FTESEA to give priorities in those initiatives. The participants of the conference concluded with a note of gratitude to FTESEA and PTCA for their continued commitment, support and partnership in strengthening contextualization of theological education and theology in Asia.





INDIA BAPTIST SUMMIT 2019

(Organized by the India Mission Coordination Committee)



Date: October 3 – 6, 2019

Venue: Leonia Holistic Destinations, Shamherpet, Hyderabad, Telengana

Registration Form

I. *Personal Profile:*

Name (In block Letters): _____

(First Name) (Surname)

Age: _____ Sex: _____ Occupation (Please specify) _____

Email: _____ Mobile (M)/WhatsApp (W): _____

Address: _____

Contact Person's Name & Phone Number for any emergency: _____

Any Special need/health concern: _____

II. *Registration, Hotel and Food (for delegates within India)*

A) *Registrations:*

- The registrations will be done through the partners for whom it is applicable and as per the allocation provided to each partner organizations.
- Registrations other than the partners will be accepted with due approval by the Summit Office and Committee on Local Arrangements.
- A subsidized Registration Fee of Rs. 500/- (Rupees five hundred) will be charged to all the delegates covering Conference Hall, utilities, registration pack and local transportations from Airport, Railway Station and Bus Stations for the out station delegates.
- Person(s) without registration will not have any access to the Summit (Conference Hall, Dining or to the rooms).
- The Registration fees will be accepted with due approval of the delegation.
- Last date for the registration will be June 30, 2019.

B) *Hotel & Food package:*

- Leonia Resort provides rooms from 3 star to 5 star categories and most of the delegates will be accommodated in 3 star category rooms in triple sharing with all required hotel amenities and with bottled drinking water and coffee makers available in all the rooms. Total cost of room and food per person for four days is Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) and above. The first meal of the

Summit will begin with Lunch on October 3, 2019 and end with breakfast on October 7, 2019. Apart from breakfast, Lunch and Dinner there will be morning and evening teas with snacks. However, the Summit will charge only Rs. 2,000/- (Rupees two thousand) per head to each delegate for Hotel and Food in addition to the registration fee of Rs. 500/- which is only 20 % on the Hotel and Food.

- Kindly mention 2 names with whom you would like to share the room:

----- & -----

C) Local Delegates:

- **Registrations:** The Summit will have limited local delegates from the Baptist Churches in Hyderabad and Secunderabad who will be required to register themselves in advance through the local Summit Office by paying Rs. 500/- (Rupees five hundred) as registration fee.
- **Meal Plans:** Each buffet Lunch and Dinner cost Rs. 800/- (Rupees eight hundred) per head. Local delegates wish to join the meal will have to buy the meal coupons in advance from the Summit Office with a subsidized rate of Rs. 300/- per head/per meal.

III. Church affiliation:

Name of the local Church: _____

Name of the Association/Convention: _____

Name & Contact No. of the Convention Leader: _____

IV. Travel Information:

(Arrival and Departure at Hyderabad and Secunderabad)

Arrival flight No./Train name & number /Bus (with date & time): _____

Departure Arrival flight No./Train name & number /Bus (with date & time): _____

Please send your registration forms by June 30, 2019 to;

Office:

India Baptist Summit 2019

C/O: Centenary Baptist Church

Clock Tower

Secunderabad – 500 003, Telangana

Email: indiabaptistsummit2019@gmail.com

Please send your registration fees and donations to:

India Baptist Summit 2019



Women in Baptist Life: A Missional Call for Justice

Dr Atola Longkumer, Assistant Professor, South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS)

Introduction

“Women in Baptist Life” is the title of a chapter in the book *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* by the renowned Baptist historian David W. Bebbington.¹ I have borrowed the title for this brief essay wherein I will highlight the participation of women in Baptist churches and call on the churches to seek for intentional inclusion of women in witness and leadership of Baptist communities, particularly in northeast India Baptist Christian communities. The essay will shed light on some historical aspects of Baptist women participation in mission movement pairing it with the critical role of local women (often described as native women and/or Bible women in mission documents) from the early Baptist communities in the work of the gospel. The contemporary reality of complex role and involvement of women in the church will form the second aspect of the essay. The essay concludes with some suggestions for intentional inclusion of women as a commitment to a mission of justice. The theological position of credence in the infinitely wise God the creator and the sovereignty of the triune God over all creation undergirds the call for inclusion of women as partners in building of God’s kingdom.

Baptist women in history of the church

In his book on *Baptists Through the Centuries*, Bebbington rightly begins the chapter on women in Baptist community with the recognition of the negligence of women’s contribution and faithful presence in the life of the church. As historians begin to correct the exclusion and lack of recognition of women, these his-

torical readings are discovering "that there were capable female leaders in Baptist denominational life as well as innumerable faithful church members who were women."² Such historical studies and readings that include women and recognize women's work and participation have been initiated from about mid-twentieth century. That women were active participants in the life of the church is not an argument, but women need to be recognized and accepted as capable leaders is the persistent call.

A number of gifted women from among the different strands of Baptists are discovered from the depositories of history and also oral histories. Preachers, deacons, writers, hymn writers, social reformers, teachers and mission stateswomen are some roles in which we discover faithful Baptist women actively serving the cause of the gospel. Names such as Catherine Scott, Martha Stearns Marshall, Abigail Harris, Anne Dutton, Annie S. Hawks, Hannah Marshman, Ann Judson and Helen Montgomery among others are Baptist women who rose above the patriarchal structure of the society in their times to be active and faithful participants in the work of the gospel.

Among the many extraordinary women from the pages of Baptist history, there is one woman whose leadership continues to shine a light in the darkness of bias and injustice in the church and society. Helen Barrett Montgomery was a Baptist woman, who was a social reformer and a strong supporter of women missionary movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Helen Montgomery advocated equal suffrage for women and was an ardent supporter of mission work. In 1910, Montgomery wrote a book *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, which remain a popular book to encourage the support of women missionaries. The Women's World Day of Prayer (1919) was an idea of Helen Montgomery. In 1921-1922, Helen Montgomery served as the president of the Northern Baptist Convention. Helen Montgomery told the Baptist World Alliance in 1923, "Jesus Christ is the great Emancipator of woman."³

If Baptist women in the erstwhile mission churches were faithful and ardent advocates for a better society that bears the marks of the gospel, the local women were eager participants and able assistants. The reality of women bible women and present day women theological educators among the Baptists in northeast India, is evident of the response and participation of women in the life of the community. Despite the existing culture of patriarchal authority and its control upon women's freedom, women have participated and contributed to the work of the gospel, ushering significant transformation in themselves as well as their communities. Such is the response and engagement of women that historian Dana Robert has stated that World Christianity is a women's movement.⁴

The glimpses of Baptist women active participation in the history of the community need be mirrored with the realities and experiences of women in Baptist churches and communities today. Issues of patriarchal structures and practices, education, exclusion, and biased discrimination persist.

Women in Baptist Life in Northeast India Contemporary Realities

The role of women, experiences of women and attitude towards women remain complex, intersecting various aspects of society. While there is visibility of women in almost every dimension of society and the church, women continue to be regarded as second class member often experiencing layers of exploitation and discrimination. Women, particularly in the northeast Baptist churches have enjoyed relative freedom and acceptance right from the inception days of mission. Women could avail the modern education afforded by the mission and the colonial (via "civilizing" policy), which is one of the critical reasons that the ratio of literacy rate between male and female is not starkly different in this region in the country.

There are also no overt policies of social segregation, economic discrimination and religious exclusion among many communities in the northeast, particularly the largely Baptist faith communities. In many churches, women association, women pasto-

ral leadership, women theological educators were initiated almost in tandem with the male counterparts. Ordination of women has also been accepted in many churches (although, critical reflection on the acceptance of women as full pastor of local churches remains a need). Baptist women in higher theological education would form one of the largest groups in the north-east, if not nationally. In many of the churches, a casual observation will indicate the fact that women fill the pews and women contribute the most in the non-paid services such as Sunday school teachers and active members of different church committees such as evangelism, hospitality and neighbourhood prayer groups. Despite all these visibility and involvement of women, when it comes to the decision making committees such as the deacon boards, finance and property committees, there will hardly be any woman member.

The realities of the larger society are not any different. There is uncritical attitude of gender discrimination and cultural bias towards women. Domestic violence, sexual violence, uncensored circulation and use of pornography, social expectations of servitude from women, control of their rights to property, employment and health continue to victimize women. One of the serious social and moral realities today is the availability of pornography, which feeds a culture that dehumanizes women and children, and contributes to an industry and economy that generates millions of dollars by exploitation of women's body and dignity.

The intersection of discrimination and exploitation of women with a technology enabled globalization can produce consequences that will threaten the very survival of faith communities. In other words, a faith community that is ignorant or complicit with the exploitation of women will lose its meaning and value to half of its members.

The church should lead the society in ensuring dignity and empowerment of women. In the following section, some comments are presented for the community of faith particular the Baptist churches to work towards a society that includes gifted women

as partners and a society that is vigilant against exploitation of women.

Women in Baptist Life towards the kingdom of God

Women leaders: Helen Montgomery provided able and prophetic leadership in an era when women equal participation was still a challenge. Today, we have behind us history as well as sufficient studies along with persuading examples of women as capable leaders. A prophetic embrace of inclusive faith would be to make intentional commitment to recognize gifted women from among the Baptist younger generation and give them leadership position. In the global family of Baptist community today, there are many Baptist women who are serving their call from God as leaders of the community. For example, Jamaica Baptist Union is led by a woman President Rev. Karen Kirlew, another woman leader is Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley, a Baptist, who heads the Jamaica Council of Churches. Rev. Regina Claas also served as General Secretary of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (Baptists) in Germany until 2013. CBCNEI can also identify, mentor and position capable women as leaders.

Theological education: As noted earlier, Baptist women from the CBCNEI churches most probably make the largest number of women in higher theological education in the country. Theological education remains a vital vehicle for the survival of a faith rooted in understanding and conviction of the basic theological affirmation in the Triune God. Within this part of the church, women receive the call to participate in this important aspect of the church. How are the churches prepared to engage the gifts of the theological trained women in the church? The answer to this question is critically important to the acceptance of women in the church to lead, preach and teach as equal members of the community.

Women empowerment: Another dimension of women in Baptist life is expressed in the churches intentional programs for empowerment of women. This is not limited only to the gathering of women for occasional fellowship, but, a vision towards women empowerment calls on a critical evaluation of the mas-

culine authority in relation to women. Empowerment of women will need all members of the community to be committed to an inclusive church.

Management of resources: A renewed understanding of mission is required for this suggestion. To have women participating and to create awareness for women's dignity and empowerment, a considerable shift need to be taken in the way resources are managed. Funds would be needed to conduct workshop, seminars and produce pamphlet materials to disseminate the theological position of accepting women as created in God's own image.

Bible study: CBCNEI can commission and prepare bible studies that re-discover women in the bible and re-evaluate passages in the bible from a women's perspective. Biblical stories such as the daughters of Zelophehad, the prophetess Hulda, the Syrophenician woman, Lydia, the purple merchant, Priscilla the teacher, along with her husband, and the many women assistants, including an apostle of Paul (Romans 16) are worth re-reading from a women's perspective.

Conclusion

Baptist communities in their diversity have women participating in different ways, some more prophetic, some less admirable, yet, women comprised the faithful communities even in unchallenged patriarchal contexts and eras. A call to women empowerment and recognition of women leadership is more than a reactionary or trendy position. It is part of the commitment that the global Baptist community has taken to protect and include women and girls. Given the persistent violence and discrimination of women, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has included a "Resolution Opposing Violence and Abuse of Women and Girls" in the 2018 Assembly. I conclude this essay with the reproduction of the resolution. The lengthy quotation of the resolution is to emphasize the spirit of urgency captured in the words with the hope that the Baptist News readers and others will be inspired towards actions that translate this vision. The resolution reads as follows:

"Affirms that women and girls are created in the image of God and invested with inestimable worth and dignity as gifts from God, and are essential to the health and vitality of families, churches, communities and national life."

...."The church has at times stood silent," the resolution states, "or has been guilty of perpetuating biblical and theological interpretations regarding women and girls that render them vulnerable to violence and abuse in the home, the church, and society; and hinder their ability to live into the fulness of God."

The resolution "Notes that the harassment and violence against women and girls worldwide are immoral," and that "the church has too often been guilty of abusing and demeaning women and girls, and of covering up instances of abuse."

The resolution calls on BWA member bodies to "enhance the appreciation of the worth and dignity of women and girls in all aspects of family, church life, and in society;" to "provide access to counseling and safe places for women and girls who are victims of abuse;" to "ensure a system of transparent accountability that includes reporting of suspected abuse to appropriate authorities both inside and outside the church;" and to "design and implement culturally contextualized curricula to educate ministerial leadership and congregations about the multi-faceted problem of violence on women and processes to prevent such violence."⁵

(Endnotes)

¹ David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People*, 2nd edition (Waco, TX. : Baylor University Press, 2018).

² David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, 157.

³ David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, 169. For a more detailed biography, see, Kendal R. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery: The Global Mission of Domestic Feminism* (Waco, Tx. :Baylor University Press, 2009)

⁴ Dana L. Robert, "World Christianity as women's Movement" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 30, No.4, October, 2006. Pp. 180-188.

⁵ Tony W. Cartledge, "BWA speaks on religious liberty, women, immigrant families" in

<http://bwanet.org/news/news-releases/684-bwa-speaks-on-religious-liberty-women-immigrant-families>. September 14, 2018.

Student Ministry of the Council

The Council runs three hostels for college students, one for girls and two for boys. Through these institutions the boarders have the opportunities to attend Bible camps, vesper services, theological lectures, Bible studies, games and sports.

1. White Memorial Hostel Ministry:



The motto of W M Students' Ministry is "Quality Life" and the purpose is to nurture in the minds of the young girls a balanced development of intellect, of thought, of academic excellence, of spirituality thereby producing a quality life.

Whenever new session begins, students are engaged in different activities. Being the Christian institute, we emphasize more on Christian moral values and discipline apart from their studies. The social aciton committedorganises social work every alternate day and the sport committee members initiates fellow friends to play games and sports during their leisure time to keep themselves physically fit.

Number of students - Statewise:

Assam: 14; Arunachal Pradesh: 2; Manipur: 6; Nagaland: 15

2. Lewis Memorial Hostel Ministry:

Lewis Memorial (LM) Hostel has a capacity of 57 boarders with students studying from higher secondary level to Master level.

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

Students are always encouraged to participate actively in all

| Sl. No. | Community | Total |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1 | Adi | 1 |
| 2 | Anal | 1 |
| 3 | Angami | 2 |
| 4 | Ao | 7 |
| 5 | Bodo | 2 |
| 6 | Garo | 4 |
| 7 | Hmar | 1 |
| 8 | Karbi | 1 |
| 9 | Khamniunggan | 1 |
| 10 | Konyak | 1 |
| 11 | Kuki | 2 |
| 12 | Lamkang | 1 |
| 13 | Lotha | 3 |
| 14 | Mao | 4 |
| 15 | Mishing | 1 |
| 16 | Mizo | 3 |
| 17 | Nepali | 2 |
| 18 | Paite | 1 |
| 19 | Poumai | 3 |
| 20 | Pochury | 1 |
| 21 | Rongmei | 4 |
| 22 | Sumi | 2 |
| 23 | Tangkhu | 2 |
| 24 | Vaiphei | 2 |
| 25 | Zeieing | 2 |
| 26 | Zerne | 3 |
| Grand Total | | 57 |

the hostel activities for wholesome development. Thus keeping this in mind hostel always plan and create an opportunities of various activities. This time the entire borders are divided into four smaller groups known as FLOCK GROUPS, namely: PAUL, JOSHUA, DANIEL and NEHEMIAH to give enough opportunity to participate. Time to time they meet in group wise and spend time in Prayer and inter-actions. Again, on every Friday evening flock group conduct vesper on turn basis. Monday evening vesper is a time where all the boarders are given chance to take part in leading, singing, sharing, and moreover we collect offerings to develop a discipline of giving to God. And this offering is mainly used for helping needy and for vesper maintenance. Also, we used to invite guest speakers



from the Christians Organizations and secular Institutions on every Wednesday evening and had a good time of fellowships. Social work and Sports are another part of our hostel activities which keeps boarders physically active and display their talents. We also plan and visits hostel & Fellowships. And besides the hostel activities boarders are also actively participates in the local Church & fellowship program. Hostel in-charge persons are given responsibility to take care of over all activities in consultation with the Chaplain.

*** Shillong Tyrannus Hall:**

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

The wide-ranging activities of STH have enabled these raw and crude young boys to be transformed into fine men. For example, morning joggings, the emphasis paid to develop community cooperation and importance of doing social works, Bible study and theological lectures; all have contributed to mold the students physically, mentally and spiritually. The restrictions and regulations laid out for them have enabled their transformation and growth. It is a great joy to see the process of changes taking place in them as they mature and become responsible young men.

STH will continue to be a place where young disciples live together to prepare themselves through peer discipleship to face the world. God bless the ministry of STH as we work to multiply effective and obedient disciples for Christ!



Brief report on Anti-Human Trafficking awareness

As reported by Mr Malthys D. Sangma, Secretary for Justice & Peace Ministry

Of late India's Northeast Region (NER) become hotspot for human trafficking. As it shares a long international border (open and unmanned) with countries like China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan, it invariably becomes source, transit and destination for varied forms of human trafficking. It becomes easy for organised syndicates to operate undetected in and out of the country.

Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) in collaboration with different convention took up a challenge to mobilize faith communities to combat the menace of human trafficking by sensitizing them and inculcate the shared value of life, justice and dignity for every person. Awareness workshop on anti-human trafficking will be organize in all the six convention within this year.

1. ARUNACHAL BAPTIST CHURCH COUNCIL (ABCC)

Frist awareness programme was held at Adi Baptist church Pasighat, Arunachal (ABCC) on 7th and 8th August 2018. Church leaders from many places attended the program and shown keen interest to took up the project and bring more awareness in their churches. The main purpose of this project is to bring awareness and to make the people serious about the trends of trafficking in North east region. People of this region needs to be educated about the severity of trafficking and the impact on the society in the long run and also to prevent or combat the menace of trafficking in the region

The consultation was attended by 112 delegates mostly



composed of youth, mission and women secretaries, and officials of Baptist Associations affiliated to ABCC. The delegates came from far flung places of the State. From CBCNEI side the delegates were Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, Mr. Malthus D. Sangma, Justice & Peace Secretary, Rev. Kabi Gangmei, APBAid official and Dev. Consultant.

The session was divided into three parts. First, Rev. Kabi Gangmei led the session on current situation of Human Trafficking and its consequences in North East India. He explained understanding of Human Trafficking in the region and how churches should be facing these challenges. Mr. Malthus D. Sangma led session on legal aspects which over lapse with law enforcing agencies like Police, Courts and Government Social Welfare Board. In the last session Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi led the session on biblical/theological aspects of Human Trafficking. He took the example of salt as told by Jesus in the Gospels. He exhorted the delegates to be like salt in the society. If salt lost its saltiness it becomes useless.

The awareness consultation brought in dept awareness among the church leaders; they expressed their gratitude to CBCNEI for the great opening in bringing the messages for the first time.

2. MANIPUR BAPTIST CONVENTION (MBC) On 22nd and 23rd August 2018 another awareness program was conducted at Imphal, Manipur (MBC). The first day of Workshop begin with Highlight on Purpose & Aim of the programme, and also high-



light on how Public Support can be a Solution to the vulnerable victims, explaining how trafficking is done in Northeast India, where Trusted men in the Society can become the main trafficker of innocent's young girls and women also send to country like Philippine, Singapore and other Asian countries with a promise of employment. But on reaching the countries, the traffic girls are sexually exploited to work as prostitute and were trap with confiscation of their passports by the traffickers. We also urge how Church leaders in the Association can become a part to bring solution through awareness to reach each members of the society.

3. ASSAM BAPTIST CONVENTION

On 31st Oct-1st Sept, 2018, consultation on 'Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness' was conducted at Jubilee Complex, Nagaon. It was hosted and organised by the Youth Department of Assam Baptist Convention (ABC)

The consultation was attended by 51 delegates mostly com-



posed of youth, mission and women secretaries, and officials of Baptist Associations affiliated to ABC. From CBCNEI side the delegates were, Mr. Malthys D. Sangma, Justice & Peace Secretary, Ms. Vashti Rani Barik, Ms. Pratibha (Seven Sisters Home). The session was divided into three parts. First, Mrs Rachel Prodhan, Former Women Secretary NCCI led the session on biblical/theological aspects of Human Trafficking. She emphasis on Genesis 1:26,1 John 4:20 and told the delegates that whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar as who cannot love their brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have seen and so we should love mankind in our own image, in our likeness. In Second session Ms. Vashti Rani Barik share about her personal experience working in the Seven Sister Home, Guwahati and convey the following types and its causes and prevention for Human Trafficking. In the Last Session Mr. Malthys D. Sangma led session on legal aspects which over lapse with law enforcing agencies like Police, Courts and Government Social Welfare Board and discussed on the Follow-up of action and concluded with word of prayer. The awareness consultation brought in dept awareness among the Youth church leaders; they expressed their gratitude to CBCNEI for the great opening in bringing the messages for the first time.

4. Second anti-human trafficking awareness program at Tangsa Baptist Association, Kharsang, Arunachal on 21st and 22nd September 2018.





Please Pray for:

A. CBCNEI Theological Scholarship recipients in 2018-19:

1. Bachelor of Divinity : 22 Students
2. Master of Theology : 1 Student
3. Doctor of Theology : 9 Students

B. CBCNEI Sponsored Students who are studying in Christian Medical College, Vellore and Ludhiana:

| Name | Course | Place |
|-----------------------------------|--------|----------|
| 1. Miss Joice Muchahary | MBBS | Vellore |
| 2. Miss Kajini Rebecca | MBBS | Vellore |
| 3. Mr. Tokato X. Yeptho | MBBS | Vellore |
| 4. Miss Kalibo Jakhalu | MBBS | Vellore |
| 5. Mr. Kavingulie Savino | MBBS | Vellore |
| 6. Miss Hupekali K. Ayeme | MBBS | Vellore |
| 7. Miss Madhushree Rao | BDS | Ludhiana |
| 8. Miss Urapem Kashung Shimray | MBBS | Vellore |

C. India Baptist Summit 2019, to be held from 3-6 Oct 2019 at Hyderabad where 15000 Baptist leaders from all over the national & aboard will gather for fellowship.

D. Persecuted churches in India and around the world.

E. North East Christian University: The Chancellor, vice Chancellor, staff and students.



NORTH EAST CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY DIMAPUR CAMPUS, NAGALAND

APPEAL

The North East Christian University is an ambitious project of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India. The Vision of the University is of a distinctive centre of excellence committed to integrating faith and knowledge, character and service. The mission of the University is to provide a wholesome education that is global in perspective, upright in character and praxis in its approach. Its motto is "Truth and Liberty." NECU is a secular university which offers courses and training programmes on a wide range of subjects from religion to humanities, science and technology.

Looking at North East, it has the most theological colleges in India. The majority of these colleges are either affiliated to Asian Theological Association or Senate of Serampore. Neither of these two accrediting agencies has a University status. Hence, the theological degrees conferred by them do not have the same weightage with that of secular degrees. Besides this, the theological graduates are seldom accepted for higher studies in secular universities and for employment purposes elsewhere apart from church. Therefore, NECU intends to start a department of theology in the near future.

The educational system in North East India still continues along the colonial system of education. This type of education might not equip the graduates with the necessary skills to become employable. In connection with this, NECU gives special emphasis on programs related to skill

development to cope with the changing status of education. With this shift, it is anticipated that NECU will usher a secured future for people and act as a springboard to impact South-East Asia and beyond. Thus, this university aims to focus on the all round development by liberating people from the doldrums of social, spiritual and economic bondage through Christian value-based Education under the motto, *'Truth and Liberty'*.

The university has commenced its first academic session since August 2018. At present, we have majors in English, Political Science, Public Administration and International Relations at the undergraduate level and English TESL (Teaching English as Second Language) at the Post Graduate level. The city campus is at Burma Camp, Dimapur. However, the permanent campus is at Medziphema which is located between Dimapur and Kohima. We are deeply indebted to the Kevichusa Foundation for donating a prime land for the city campus and the Government of Nagaland for donating 248 acres of land for its permanent campus.

In spite availing the land for the university, it needs appropriate infrastructural facilities to cater the needs of the learners. A team of experts (architects, landscapers and environmentalists) are tirelessly working towards the fulfillment of this project. For the expansion of this university, NECU appeals for support from all churches, government bodies and well-wishers to bring changes to our society with special reference to education. *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* Acts 20:35.

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Gender as an Issue of Social Justice

Akani Kinimi

Introduction

Gender is a universal power relationship that shapes men's and women's choices and opportunities in every sphere be it political, economic, social, and interpersonal, and at every level from household to global. While other structures, such as ethnicity, age, disability, caste, sexuality, can have a profound impact on individuals, gender is all-pervasive in a sense that we are all gendered, and we all act every day within and upon a web of gender relationships. The discrimination or subordination of one gender by another has been a global issue that affects all aspects of life of every country and society in the world. It also undermines the theological understandings that all human beings are of equal and unique value and worth. In order to redress the power imbalances between women and men the underlying composition and dynamics that produce them must be comprehensively brought to light.

1. Gendered Social Norms

Every society has certain commonly accepted norms that bind its members, and they operate at all levels of a society. However, there is increasing evidence that much of the norms are gender biased. There are social values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices that support male dominance, weaken women's sense of self-worth, and validate discrimination of women and girls. And there are different ways in which the gendered social norms can interfere with just outcomes. One of the problems in relation to gendered social norms, *vis-à-vis* social justice, is much of it operates at the unconscious level, and hence not directly controllable. Even individuals who consciously reject gendered social norms tend to unconsciously evaluate women and men according to different criteria and expect each person to do better in those respects that are traditionally associated with his/her gender. Moreover, most of the people, including women, are unconsciously sensitive to gendered social norms and thereby, perform their duties which are expected, on the basis of gender. The issue with

most of gendered social norms is that, in general, they make it more costly for women than for men to obtain certain valuable things such as fulfilling careers and self-esteem, and the social recognition that comes with them. The lingering worry is that the very fact that a gendered arrangement is adequate to the kind of people they are may be a sign of background injustice. For instance, a gendered division of labour, even when it burdens women and men equally, is unjust if it is set in a social context that endorses gender norms that make some choices cheaper for women and other choices cheaper for men. Indeed, much of the feminist work on justice reflects this fact. An analytically powerful way to understand gender itself is by reference to its essential connection to social advantage or disadvantage.

2. Man-Woman Dichotomy

The historical and traditional stereotyping of men and women ushered in man-woman dichotomy which has limited the autonomous capacities of women and men alike. The very concept of 'gender justice', involves the comparison between the two genders, thereby, assuming that a dichotomy exists. Take an example of a heterosexual family, intact over time, and adopting an equal, but gendered division of labour where the man is a full-time breadwinner and the woman a full-time homemaker. It is not very difficult to see the unfairness of implicit bias and stereotype threat and of the ensuing differential treatment of women and men: they invite unjustified discrimination. The systematic overburdening and denial of benefits that others enjoy to some individuals because they belong to a particular sex are forms of injustice. It is observed that the victims of violence and discrimination do not just happen to be women, rather, they become victims of injustice because they are women. Additionally, the imposition of different standards of evaluation of performance on women and men unjustifiably limits the scope of occupational choice, or the equality of access, for some. Once a person starts to systematically behave in ways that conform to others' expectations, it becomes increasingly hard for that person to resist them. It becomes difficult because it is subjectively hard to break patterns of action that have become part of one's regular lifestyle, and perhaps more importantly, because patterned behaviour generates legitimate expectations.

3. Family

Many of the injustices that characterise gender relations arise in the 'private' sphere of family and community relations. Gender inequality often begins in the home and is perpetuated by families, schools, workplaces, communities, customs, cultures and religions as well as structures within society. The most straightforward approach to the issue of social justice within the family would be to include the family among the list of major social institutions that constitute the "basic structure of society," which assigns fundamental rights and duties to individuals and determines people's initial prospects in life. On this way of regarding the family, it is to be regulated by the principles of justice that regulate the basic rights and duties and practices of family life. The family must be just if we are to have a just society, since it is within the family that we first come to have the sense of ourselves and our relations with others that is at the root of holistic development.

4. A Principle of Social Justice

Social justice means that no one can be denied justice or discriminated based on one's gender, caste or creed. It requires that nobody should be expected to carry higher overall burdens, or enjoy overall lesser benefits than others, without due compensation, simply because of they are minority. The term 'minority' here refers not to a group's numerical strength in the population but to groups that are marginalised or disadvantaged in some way.

Practically all forms of subordination, e.g. race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, implicate both mal-distribution and misrecognition in forms where each of those injustices has some independent weight, whatever their ultimate source. Treating members of minority groups with equal respect requires special accommodations under certain circumstances. On the other hand, such accommodations cannot be permitted to violate the basic rights and liberties of individual members of minority groups. The principle of social justice is capability of accounting for cases where the injustice lies at the very deep level of determining agency by shaping individuals. At the same time, it explains at least some of the gender injustice of the entire range of examples of socio-economic discrimination, stereotypes and the gendered division of labour. Gender justice means social justice and

just power relations between women and men, in which both are valued equally in society and empowered to pursue their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Concluding Remarks

The whole discussion suggests that the justice we search and work for should seek empowerment and opportunity for each and every person, respecting each as an end, rather than simply as the means or supporter of the ends of others. One way in which individuals perpetuate gendered social norms is simply by conforming to them. In societies permeated by gender social norms, both the good of individual freedom of choice and the good of equal access are indirectly compromised when individuals engage in the gendered life assigned to their sex. The social norms also influence the course of family life, and the norms might be biased against women. Hence, in a just society nobody should be burdened by gendered norms in the pursuit of things important and deserving of them. To achieve gender and social justice, we need to identify, challenge and change the visible as well as invisible power structures and relationships. We should endeavour to make a world where men and women live alongside one another in peaceful and just relationships, equal in God's sight. Every individual has a vital role to play in helping to establish safe spaces in which visions for gender and social justice can be formulated and achieved. Furthermore, gender relations, roles and norms vary between cultures, societies and generations. As such, achieving social justice would be a constantly evolving process in which women and men explore together how they can both live lives of dignity, free from fear and oppression, and in pursuit of their human rights.

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