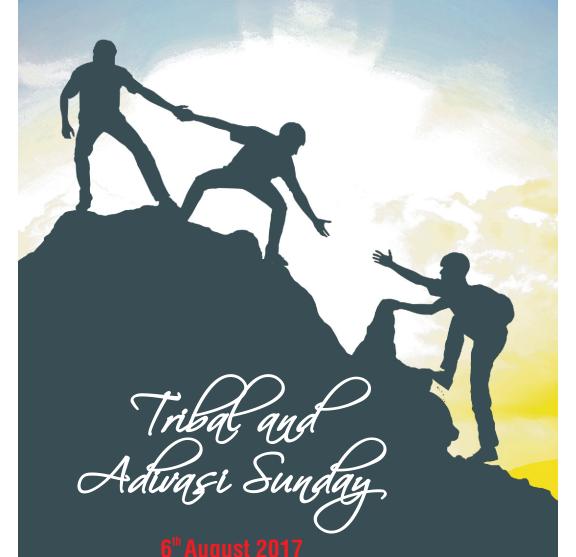


"Solidarity in Christ: Bearing One Another's Burdens"

(cf. Galatians 6:2)



Respected Ecumenical Leaders,

Warm greetings from NCCI-Dalit and Tribal/Adivasi Concerns!

Celebration of Tribal and Adivasi Sunday has become an important feature in the calendar of Indian Churches and Ecumenical movements. Over the years Tribal and Adivasi Sunday has been celebrated in many parts of our country in sensitizing the local congregation on Tribal and Adivasi Concerns. Thanks to the enormous support we have received from across the churches, dioceses, parishes and institutions in celebrating this special Sunday.

The theme for this year's Tribal and Adivasi Sunday is "Solidarity in Christ: Bearing One Another's Burdens" (cf. Galatians 6:2). We take this opportunity to invite you to celebrate Tribal and Adivasi Sunday on 6th August 2017 in your church/local parish/institution in a creative way. However, if you already have some programme on 6th August 2017, you may think of celebrating this Special day on later Sundays. Herewith we are sending you hard copies of posters and a special order of worship for the day. You may take the freedom to use the entire worship order and translate it in your vernacular language or adapt parts of it.

We would appreciate if you send a brief report along with a few photographs of the celebration to the undersigned. Let us join to celebrate Tribal and Adivasi Sunday on 6th August 2017.

Thanking you in anticipation.

With regards,

In Christ,

Pradip Bansrior *Executive Secretary*

Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns, NCCI

Foreword

As we celebrate Tribal and Adivasi Sunday this year, our focus is on the theme, "Solidarity in Christ: Bearing One Another's Burdens." (cf. Galatians 6:2)

As we are well aware, the communitarian principle is very strong in the lives of tribals and adivasis; they live for the well-being of their communities and their land, including its flora and fauna. One discerns a spirit of integral solidarity in their midst. It is said that in times such as drought or famine, even if one family has some rice, the whole community will not go hungry that day! If one family experiences bereavement, then the whole community shares the grief.

As one Mizo saying goes, "Sem sem dam dam, eibil thi thi." A liberal rendering of it would be "Share! Share! Live! Live! Be Selfish! Be Greedy! Die! Die!" When people in a community share their joys and sorrows, the community is blessed. When members in the community become selfish or greedy, the whole community suffers and disintegrates. Responsible and wholesome inter-human and pro-ecological relationships are more important than commercial monetary individual gain in tribal and adivasi communities.

The theme for this year emphasizes a basis for bearing one another's burdens: Solidarity in Christ. One is reminded of Phil.2:3-8

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God,did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of deatheven death on a cross.

With Christ as our basis for togetherness, we "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." (Rom.12:15). Every community is one organic whole. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. Therefore if one member (of the body) suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member (of the body) is honored, all rejoice together with it." (I Cor. 12:12, 26)

In our contemporary context, the systems of globalization and financialization are impacting humans to become selfish and to be obsessed with one's joys, comforts and possessions, even if they are to be attained at the cost of other people's rights and dignity. Tribals and adivasis have to be careful that such influences do not stifle their values of solidarity and concern for one another and their practices of sharing and bearing one another's burdens. At the same time all communities in Christ have to ensure that the obsession with development does not harm the lives, livelihood and lands of indigenous people. And so, "Solidarity in Christ: Bear One Another's Burdens!"

Rev. Dr. Roger GaikwadGeneral Secretary

National Council of Churches in India

Introduction

Tribals and Adivasi people in India are not the last but the first in many aspects as history proves. They existed in India around 2500-3000 BC, much before the Aryan invasion took place in 1500 BC. Thus they could be said to be the original settlers of the country. It is the Tribals/ Adivasis, who through their indigenous methods of forest management have preserved our country's natural resources for centuries. It is indeed quite a paradox: while tribals and adivasis have been the original inheritors and caretakers of nature and its resources, today in the name of development they are considered backward, deprived of their inheritance and displaced from their native places, and natural resources are exploited.

There is a difference in the value systems and consequent ways of lifeof so called developed or advanced civilizations with their religions and those of indigenous people when it comes to relationship with natural resources (*Jal, Jungle, Jamin*). The developed societies and their organised religions and traditions view natural resources as items for the sole use and enjoyment of human beings, but the tribal/adivasi people and their religions and traditions consider nature as the very centre of all existence. Therefore while the perspective becomes homo-centric in advanced societies and their religions, it is nature-centric in tribal/adivasi societies and their religions.

The comparison and contrast between the tribal/adivasi and the non-tribal/adivasi world views makes us realize that the ultimate cause of the destructive approaches to economic development which are in vogue today. Without being prejudiced or judgmental we must not conclude that everything in the tribal/adivasi world view and system is just and perfect and everything in the world view of the non-tribals/non-adivasis is unjust and imperfect. In fact both, the tribal/adivasi civilizations and the non-tribal/non-adivasi civilizations have much to learn from each other. However because the majority population in India belongs to non-tribal/adivasi

societies, the tribals and adivasi people are looked down upon; their simplicity and honesty is exploited; their rights and dignity are trampled upon; they are made to struggle for life and livelihood.

Standing at the start of new era/beginning, we must work for a new society. We need to bear one another's burdens. We need to question our assumptions, values and approaches and make them more integrated, holistic and humane. The criterion of this change must be twofold- how to bring about a more just and inclusive community/society and how to make use of the resources judiciously, allowing them to be restored and regenerated. Thus the joint human and ecological principle must be our creed and guiding force. A radical change is required in our worldviews and working styles if they are found inadequate and wanting, so that we can bring about a real change in our Church and society.

Pradip Bansrior

Executive Secretary
Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns
National Council of Churches in India

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Theme: Solidarity in Christ: Bearing One Another's Burdens (cf. Galatians 6:2)

(Suggested Texts: Isaiah 6:8; Luke 10: 25-31;II Chronicles 7:14; Micah 6:8; Mark 9: 33-35)

Preparation and Note for Worship Leaders

- Please feel free to adapt this worship order as the Spirit leads you and in ways that are appropriate to your context. Since many tribal churches do not follow a formal liturgy, worship leaders are advised to creatively adapt the content and principles of the proposed worship order in your respective local settings.
- Leaders who will be initiating the worship are requested to prayerfully go through the document before using it in your respective congregations.
- Artifacts, objects, plants and flowers that are connected to tribal, adivasi and indigenous peoples can be used to decorate the worship place.
- Traditional musical instruments such as the tambourine, flute, and drum may be arranged. Adivasi ways of chanting, singing, dancing and drumming can be made through a LCD Projector or enacted by different groups.
- ▶ The terms adivasi, tribal and indigenous are used interchangeably in this document. However, local congregations can pick one of the terms that is more familiar and meaningful in your context.

The Act of Congregating for Worship

Leader: The world belongs to God, and all the people of many races, tribes, tongues and cultures.

All: How good and lovely it is to worship God together. We are all the children of God.

Leader: Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, boys and girls, clergy and laity, we have come here to worship God who offers us freedom through our Lord Christ Jesus.

All: For the Spirit of life in God has set us free from the law and the sin of death.

Leader: In the name of the living God, I call all people of God to prayerfully join in celebrating the struggles and hopes of our tribal and adivasi communities.

All: May the Lord prepare our hearts and minds so that we can connect with the stories of our fellow brothers and sisters.

Leader: As followers of the Way, we bring our strengths and limitations under the redeeming cross of Jesus Christ

All: As members of the body of Christ, may your spirit unite us to share the burdens and dreams of adivasi churches.

Opening Song: "Help Us Build a Christian Family"

(Tune: Love Divine all Love Excelling)

Help us build a Christian Fam'ly God most loving and gracious. With love break existing barriers To bear a Christian witness. Help us build a new society Where the pride of sex and race, Color, caste, class disparity Will be wiped out with much ease

Help us build a Christian fam'ly
God most loving and gracious.
Help us work with hope, peace, and trust
Confidence and love precious.
Stand together against evil
Hand in hand for good and just,
Make our visions and dreams come true
That each fam'ly abide in you

Help us build a Christian fam'ly With new values and with love. With our partners, parents, children Nature and with you above. Celebrate the newness of life Bring forth peace and harmony Through your Holy presence with us And your overwhelming grace.

Prayer of Thanks giving and Aspiration (All stand if convenient)

Clergy OR a Male: We thank you God for inspiring our visionary leaders to form the NCCI in 1914.

All: May the grace and prophetic spirit of God continue to empower the leaders of NCCI.

Female: In particular, we thank you for your blessings in all the activities of the Tribal and Adivasi ministry in NCCI.

All: May your spirit guide the leaders of the Tribal and Adivasi ministry in NCCI.

Male: Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the missionaries and evangelists who have toiled hard to establish Tribal and Adivasi churches for your glory.

All: May you help all of us to appreciate our Christian heritage and take pride in our Christian identity.

Reflection:

"Solidarity in Christ: Bearing One Another's Burdens"

(cf. Galatians 6:2)

The theme *Solidarity in Christ: Bearing One Another's Burdens* is based on Galatians 6:2. Apostle Paul presents this theme as a theological imperative that every believer must practice as members of the body of Christ (*I Corinthians* 12: 12-14). Those who are "crucified with Christ"

express "solidarity with Christ" (*Galatians 2:20*). Paul reminds us that solidarity is the practice of Jesus' command to love one another (*Galatians 5:14*). Consequently, love of our neighbor is best manifested in the bearing of each other's burden. In so doing, we follow the example of Jesus Christ who said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (*Matthew 1:28a*).

What then are the theological implications of bearing one another's burdens? Bearing each other's burdens is a gift from God. It is not to be viewed as an act of patronizing Christian charity or social action. We bear the burdens of our fellow sojourners, as Christ has already borne our burdens on the Cross. The fact of our spiritual reality is that faith communities need each other as we are all created by God to partake in the pains and joys of others. Believers complete each other as well as make one another's burdens lighter through the practice of burdensharing.

According to Paul, the practice of Christian solidarity entails an act of permanent spiritual, social and eschatological commitment. Spiritually, Christians are called to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit through the practice of burden-bearing (*Galatians 5: 22-23*). Likewise, followers of Christ should bear each other's load at all levels of social relationships. Bearing of Christian responsibility is a never-ending process which will be fulfilled only in the final realization of God's reign. Indeed, it is an eschatological process in which believers are called to keep their eyes fixed on God (*Philippians 5:12-14*).

Solidarity in Christ calls Christians to serious acts of spiritual and socio-political responsibility. Christian communities ought to support each other spiritually by resisting sins in their lives and by confronting the evils of others. As Paul mentions in *Galatians 6:1,* believers are called to work for the restoration of people from their sins. Above all, since God is the ultimate forgiver and bearer of our sins and burdens, the spiritual task of the church is to assist each other

in drawing closer to God. The spiritual burden of a believer is to point fellow believers towards God's justice through acts of prayer and honest counsel. For instance, while commitment in the struggles of tribal and adivasi people is indispensable, we should first remain grounded in God's love and mercy and then only work toward easing the burden of others. The burdens we seek to share should be permeated by God's love and this will help us to avoid attitudes of self-righteousness (*I Corinthians 13*). During Paul's time, socio-political solidarity took the form of care for the weak, sharing of resources in the community, relieving families of social and economic burdens, etc. This principle of burden-sharing was based on the Pauline notion of "radical equality" of men and women before God and in the society (*Galatians 3:28*). Let us study these biblical insights by asking some questions that are specific to the context of believers in India.

In our work for the rights of the oppressed communities, there is a danger of trumpeting the agency of human role (leaders, churches, denominations) instead of glorifying God. How can we work with adivasi Christians in ways that allow us to bear witness to the image and will of God?

We carry each other's burden because of the radical equality that a man and a woman, and a rich person and a poor man share as members of the body of Christ. Genuine sharing and transformation of burdens happen in an inclusive and open environment that nurture values of mutual interdependence and respect. What kind of space and values do our churches promote today in our work with tribal brothers and sisters?

Paul was particularly concerned about alleviating the economic hardships of fellow believers in the early Christian community, as economic disparity worked against genuine fellowship and unity in the body of Christ. Who are the socially and economically dependent members in your local congregations today? How can well-to-do

churches share the burdens of struggling indigenous churches in India?

Despite the solidarity that Churches express for the cause of tribal Christians, the continuing subjugation and struggle of tribal people show us that we have not shared much of their burdens. How can the Indian churches address the historical roots of these unshared burdens?

As one of the most marginalized communities in India, the adivasi populations carry the weight of injustice on their shoulders. They are being forced to take on "disposable" and "expendable" identities in the present economic and political system, that do very little to protect their culture, survival and social security. On his way to Mount Golgotha, the burden of the Cross was just too heavy for Jesus, and so Simon from the city of Cyrene (*Matthew 15:21*) had to be forced to carry the cross of Jesus. We are not sure whether Simon carried the cross willingly, but what is important for us to note here is that we need many "willing Simons" from our Indian churches who can carry the cross of the weak and the over burdened communities. What is the Cross that the churches are called to carry today?

The climate change that we are all experiencing today reflects the ecological burden that all of us carry. How can we work in alleviating the pain of the groaning earth and the struggles of many indigenous communities that live in close communion with nature?

It will be difficult to understand the true meaning of solidarity in Christ in our context if we fail to locate the individuals and communities who are being crucified everyday for the greed and sins of others. How can we develop a faith that embraces the plight of the crucified dalit and tribal/adivasi people in India?

We live in a world that praises comfort, independence, and individual security that human wealth can afford. How can we reconcile a faith that demands interdependence, vulnerability and sacrifice for the sake of others with a world that is predominantly driven by greed, power and individualism?

Working to transform the burdens of fellow Christians is a blessing as it helps us to complete God's purpose in our own lives and communities. How can we understand solidarity with the adivasi and indigenous communities as an act of communion with God and God's people?

(OR)

Scriptures

Old Testament : Micah 6:8
New Testament : Galatians 6:2
Gospel : Mark 9: 33-35

Sermon: A sermon may be preached using the texts suggested above or any other suitable passage relating to the theme.

Confession

Leader: Come; let us confess our indifference that has kept us away from the struggles of adivasi and indigenous folks.

All: Loving God, stir open our eyes from the inhuman act of sleepiness and allow your spirit to shake-up our frozen Christian consciences.

Leader: O God, teach us to translate our spirit of solidarity into genuine acts of accountability.

All: Help us to pray following the model of Jesus: praying to God in solidarity with people around us.

Leader: We invoke your Spirit to enable us pray in conversation with the lived realities of the adivasi people.

All: Teach us how to pray in ways that would allow us to affirm and heal the burdens of our fellow members in Christ.

Leader: In saying the Lord's Prayer, I cannot say--OUR

All: If my faith has no space for the tribal, adivasi and indigenous communities.

Leader: I cannot say--FATHER

All: If I do not treat them as my Christian brothers and sisters.

Leader: I cannot say WHO ART IN HEAVEN

All: If I cannot share the plight of thousands of adivasi people who do not have land and space to live.

Leader: I cannot say HALLOWED BE THY NAME

All: If I, who am called by God's name, am not Holy.

Leader: I cannot say THY WILL BE DONE

All: If I am so focused on my own selfish will. God of justice, what kind of prayer should I say when the "will and aspirations" of tribal people are crushed mercilessly every day?

Leader: I cannot say ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

All: Unless I am truly ready to bear the burden of my adivasi Christian friends.

Leader: I cannot say GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD **All:** If I continue to accumulate and fail to share my resources with the tribal families who are going hungry every day.

Leader: I cannot say FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

All: If I continue to harbor grudge against the sin and mistakes of tribal communities.

Leader: I cannot say LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

All: If I continue to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted to participate in denying the rights of indigenous peoples.

Leader: I cannot say DELIVER US FROM EVIL

All: If I am not prepared to stand for the social, economic and political emancipation of the tribal and adivasi Christians.

Leader: I cannot say THINE IS THE KIN/DOM

All: If I fear what my friends, church and community will say when I speak up for the rights and inclusion of alienated indigenous Christians.

Leader: I cannot say THINE IS THE GLORY

All: If I keep glorifying my church and seek my own glory.

Leader: I cannot say FOREVER

All: If I cannot trust in you and become too anxious and preoccupied with temporal affairs.

Leader: I cannot say AMEN

All: Unless I can honestly say, "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

Assurance of Forgiveness

Leader: Living God, thank you for speaking to us through your Spirit to discern our sins. We are assured that, if we seek you in truth, we receive forgiveness of our sins through the life and death of your son Jesus Christ (*John 3:16*).

All: Truly, we do not want our apology to be mere words but a genuine lament for our inaction and insensitivity.

Leader: We ask forgiveness for all our shortcomings, even as we pledge to forgive our fellow Christian friends (*Matthew 18: 21-22*).

All: Help us to forgive because we are a forgiven community in Christ. Help us to reconcile and bear each other's burdens as we have been reconciled through your Son Jesus Christ (*II Corinthians 5:17-20*).

Affirmation of Faith (All stand if convenient)

We believe in God who created dynamic and inclusive human communities, the beautiful planet earth, and all living creatures. We confess that it is God who gives life to the forests, rivers and land that sustain the indigenous communities. We affirm that God is the source of life amidst abundant food and waste on one hand, and hunger and poverty on the other. In a context of religious vigilantism, we renew our courage to worship God without any fear.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. We confess that the Church is called to serve as a witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ, we believe that Christ Jesus calls us to bear each other's burden and practice solidarity in a world of greed, conflict and division.

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit who enables us to discern and act in the right way. In a world where money and profit driven economic order have become the chief deciding factor for individuals, Christian groups and nations; we re-affirm our belief that the Spirit of Truth should guide every step of the Christian community (*John 16:13-15*).

Celebrating the Gifts of Adivasi and Tribal People (All stand if convenient)

Leader: We celebrate the tribal/adivasi symbols of life: *Jal* (water), *Jungle* (forest) and *Jamin* (land).

All: May the tribal/adivasi communities inspire and lead us in the healing of the planet earth that is in deep crisis today.

Woman: Let us celebrate the serenity, simplicity and resilience that many tribal women exhibit amidst situations of pain and social hopelessness.

All: We value the tribal women's wisdom of survival in today's stressful and confusing digital culture.

Youth: We affirm the drums, dances, folklores and many forms of art that give life and expression to the cultures of indigenous peoples.

All: May these symbolic resources continue to allow indigenous communities to nurture hope and resist prophetically.

Man: You toil hard day and night; you are treated as an object; you are dispossessed and evacuated anytime of the day. But you amaze me as you continue to serve humanity with faithfulness.

All: May your hard labor and the social suffering that you undergo bear good fruits through your children and communities.

Elder: We adore the fresh air of the wild forests and the innocent healing sounds of the brooks that are inhabited by the adivasi and indigenous peoples.

All: May those living in towns and cities appreciate the healing value of fresh air and water.

Intercession

Leader: Prayer is essential in a time like this. Pray hard. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirit up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

Elder: We are deeply pained by the experiences of demoralization that the tribal/adivasi people are under going due to the negation of their cultures and identities. We cry out against the different forms of structural, symbolic and physical violence that the minority populations in the nation are undergoing.

All: Lord, hear our prayers.

Male Youth: We are distressed about the extreme harassment, violence and death that many indigenous citizens face under the cruel military and police forces. It pains us to see that victims of military and state violence are left with no legal recourse as the perpetrators enjoy legal impunity.

All: Lord, hear our prayers.

Female Youth OR a Community Leader: We lament for the fast disappearing art forms and cultural practices of the indigenous people; and the communitarian values of sharing resources for harmonious coexistence with people and nature that contribute to the richness of community building.

All: Lord, hear our prayers.

Male Youth OR a Government Servant: We are dismayed by the structures and policies that push many tribal people into poverty, suicide, prostitution and political confrontation.

All: Lord, hear our prayers.

Woman OR a Community Based Organizer: We mourn for our inaction in the context of the ill health, and loss of livelihood and food security of indigenous people, which are caused by displacement, shifts in patterns of cultivation, deforestation, and use of genetically modified plants.

All: Lord, hear our prayers.

Man: We pray for freedom of worship, and respect for religious sentiments and sacred places. We are saddened by our inability to exercise the Christian calling of social justice and service in the secular world.

All: Lord, hear our prayers.

Act of Commitment

(Note: Expression of symbolic solidarity. Symbols may be placed in the centre of the worship place or passed around after the act of every symbolic expression)

Symbol of HUNGER/SUSTENANCE: Rice, Millet, Ragi, Vegetables (*Use an item that is meaningful in your context*).

Leader: Hunger and poverty in a world of market-driven abundance is an insult to God's creation.

(Then the leader places or passes the symbol of sustenance in a basket to the congregation)

All: We are here, creator God; use us as your instruments to bring abundance to the poverty-stricken adivasi communities, to the landless tribals, and to the needy indigenous peoples. We renew our commitment to joyfully share with the adivasi communities and to guard ourselves from indulgence in greed and luxury.

Symbol of INJUSTICE/DIGNITY: Cultural attire, Piece of cloth (or any relevant item).

Leader: Here I stand, my brothers and sisters being dehumanized, treated indifferently, vandalized, murdered, abused, molested. What a pity! What a shame!

To my subjugated adivasi widow mother, to my alienated indigenous friend.

To my landless tribal farmer sister, to my uprooted tribal father. I just look and stare with foolishness. For I am selfish and insecure. (Then the leader places or passes the symbol of dignity to the congregation)

All: We are here, weeping God, with sorrow, with wounded and broken hearts. Let us be your channel of love, your angel of mercy and messenger of Hope. For this is the time for fullness of life for all. Empower us to work for the dignity of the indigenous peoples.

Symbol of VIOLENCE/PEACE: Flowers (or any other item symbolizing peace).

Leader: It's deafening, the silence of the oppressed tribal. I hear people living under constant threat and fear of the military forces. I see divisions and conflicts among indigenous tribes and ethnic groups. I

see corrupted leaders, broken institutions and dying communities in indigenous societies.

(Then the leader places or passes the symbol of peace to the congregation)

All: Here we are, Lord. We humble ourselves before you. Let us renew our minds, our hearts, our souls towards a better understanding of the plight and struggles of our fellow tribal, adivasi and indigenous friends. Give us the strength to carry each other's cross as we journey together in Christ.

Closing Song

(A suitable bhajan or a song can be used which is relevant to your local context)

I, the Lord of sea and sky I have heard my people cry All who dwell in dark and sin, my hand will save I who make the stars of night I will make their darkness bright Who will bear my light to them, whom shall I send?

Chorus:

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night I will go Lord, if you lead me I will hold your people in my heart

I, the Lord of snow and rain; I have borne my people's pain I have wept for love of them, they turn away I will break their heart of stone give them hearts for love alone I will speak my word to them, whom shall I send?

I, the lord of wind and flame; I will tend the poor and lame I will set a feast for them, my hand will save Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied I will give my life to them, whom shall I send?

Benediction

Return to your families, communities and workplaces And reveal God's saving Spirit through the quality of your life Dance the good news and sound the drum of solidarity Heal, walk together, bearing one another's burdens of body and spirit In good times and in bad times, commit to live for the glory of God.

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Order of worship is prepared by Dr. Pangenungba Kechu and Renemsongla Ozukum. They are members of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council. Based in Dimapur, Nagaland, they are involved in teaching and Church ministry. Their family is blessed with two sons, Lenir Kechu and Akumdong Kechu.



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