

People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

■ VOLUME 31 ISSUE 03 ■ MUMBAI ■ FEBRUARY 10 - 25, 2018 ■ ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION Rs. 100

Symposium on

The Forgotten Luther:
Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness

God's Grace Is For All People



Martin Luther before the Diet of Worms
by Anton Von Werner



India Pre-Conference Of
The Conference On World Mission And Evangelism

'Transforming Discipleship : Mission of the Missions'



Inaugural Session: L to R: Mr. Alwan Masih, Mrs. Aleyamma Thomas, Prof. Dr. Patta Devaraju,
Most Rev. Dr. P. C. Singh, Rev. Dr. K. M. George, Rev. Dr. D. Ratnakara Sadananda & Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad

“ The Second Symposium on
'The Forgotten Luther: Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness'
was held at Church of Reformation,
East Capital Street, Washington DC, on 19 and 20 January.
The Programme, organized by *The Forgotten Luther Working Group*, was part of
the "Radicalizing Reformation" movement,
about which People's Reporter has written in past issues.
At its heart, this movement calls upon Christians in the tradition of the Reformation
initiated by Martin Luther, to study and act on the social and economic implications
of the fact that God's grace is for *all* people. ”

For Luther, the fact that God's grace is for all people, meant that the wealth of God's creation should be shared with equity, that no child should go to bed hungry, that everyone should have medical care and that all people should have enough to live on, in old age. Luther insisted that all children, girls as well as boys, should have opportunity to go to school, to read the Bible and to prepare themselves for productive work and leisure.

When *the Forgotten Luther* project began in 2015 many of us were caught off guard by the surprising response. Did Martin Luther actually do *that*? From the feedback from many congregations that had participated in the study programmes based on the first book, *The Forgotten Luther: reclaiming the socio-economic*

dimension of the Reformation (Lutheran University Press, 2016), we have been encouraged to hold another Symposium and produce a second volume. Many congregations and the World Hunger Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, are facilitating it.

Martin Luther, in collaboration with the civil authorities in Wittenberg and Saxony, initiated far-reaching economic reforms that insured that all people would have access to food, medical care, education and sufficient resources to survive with dignity in old age. Luther's actions on behalf of the poor were directly linked to the egalitarianism implied in the central teaching of the church, justification by grace through faith.

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The implications of the rediscovery of the socio-economic dimensions of the Reformation by congregations are immense. It was this dimension that had been largely hidden in the church's concern to proclaim the central teaching of justification for the *Individual*. The affirmation of the socio-economic dimensions of the Reformation is seen to be especially significant in an age – our own – that is witnessing an increasing discrepancy in the distribution of the wealth of the earth.

“ The Council for World Mission and Evangelism (CWMaE) of the World Council of Churches is bringing together world leaders from Churches, Mission Movements, Theological and developmental fraternities to Arusha in Tanzania from 8 to 13 March 2018 for the 14th Conference on World Mission and Evangelism since Edinburgh 1910, to reflect on the theme 'Moving in the Spirit: called to Transforming Disciples'. This conference is an opportunity for the Christian churches, Mission Movements and Diaconal sectors to gain inspiration from the CWMaE and to inspire the Conference with our experiences. ”

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), jointly with Church of North India (CNI) and World Council of Churches (WCC), organized a Pre-Conference of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, at the CNI

Bhavan, New Delhi, from 24 to 26 January 2018.

The theme of the Pre-Conference was 'Transforming Discipleship: Mission of the Missions'.

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From Free Trade to Trade War via Davos!

The high priests of the doctrine of Free Trade have been celebrating their annual Feast under the banner of World Economic Forum at Davos for about three decades. The top economists, heads of powerful nations and the captains of big corporations have been jointly offering at Davos the hope and stimulation for building a world based on the principles of Free Trade. But, the more the schemes and declarations on this project they make; the more the world realizes that it is an unworkable principle.

Since the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2008, more and more nations have been abandoning their faith in Free Trade and entering into bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with their neighbouring countries. Despite this reality, every year, powerful nations meet at Davos and make loud proclamations, as a ritual, about the merit of Free Trade. The global think-tank Oxfam reports every year about the growing inequality in every nation and globally do not disturb the conscience of those who celebrate at Davos. Everybody knows that inequality intensifies as a result of the growing deprivation of millions of the people. But, the leaders who meet at Davos are not concerned.

This year, the cry for Trade Wars became louder at Davos. Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, in his address to the Annual Summit at Davos warned against the danger of growing protectionism and the shrinking of the ideas of the much trumpeted globalization. He lamented about globalization losing its lustre. In fact, the exchange between President Trump of the US and the leadership of the European Union at Davos made the call for Trade War loud and sharp. At Davos, Mr. Trump expressed his annoyance with the EU trade policy. Less than 24 hours after that, the leaders of the EU replied that they were ready to hit back 'swiftly and appropriately', if the US President resorted to unfair trade measures against the 28-nation block.

During the administration of Barack Obama, the US and the EU took steps to create a massive free trade zone. But, when Mr. Trump won the presidential election in 2016, these hopes evaporated as the new President started talking about protecting American jobs and going against multilateral trade deals. Trade Wars among the developed countries in Europe were also behind the World War II. The formation of GATT helped to prevent Trade Wars to a certain extent for about half a century. It is by ignoring the contributions of the GATT, the US and the EU took the leadership to create WTO purportedly to establish Free Trade. But, within a short period, WTO proved to be ineffective to establish Free Trade; and the US and the EU began Trade Wars. The hostility between the US and the EU on issues of trade creates a highly disturbing scene. What is more disturbing is that they may devise some means to avert such a danger by shifting the impacts on the less developed countries. Sadly, the less developed countries are not discerning the games the US and the EU play, against their interests.

Thought for the Fortnight

When the rich wage war it's the poor who die.
— **Jean-Paul Sartre**

Lenten Reflections – I

**A Lenten Chemistry
Reach deep
into the world
and the society**

David Pothirajulu



Lent does not suggest a time of inactivity.

On the other hand, Lent is a time towards intense activity.
The need of the hour is involvement
in social life with strategies for change,
with personnel as agents of change, putting to acid test the call of our Lord
to be the Salt of the earth,
to evaluate and see how far and how much
the church is "in" the world and not "of" the world.



We, as Christians attending worship in the Church and listening to the Sermons of Pastors and Church leaders, are familiar with several interpretations of LENT, which help us in the renewal of our Christian living and Faith. In this process we invariably come across a Call to Fast, a Call to Repent and a Call to Renounce and a Call to live a New Life - all as observances of the Lent, arising out of meditations on the CROSS.

One commentator calls it a PREPARATION TO EASTER. To that end do our meditations on the Cross lead us? Thus placing before us a Strategy and a Goal for Christian calling – the Strategy being "conservation of energy", and the Goal "a forward March with the Risen Lord for the Fulfillment of God's purposes for the whole of His creation and in particular for the human community to experience SHALOM, in individual and corporate life.

Let us take an analogy from nature on the "conservation of energy."

Animals in nature go into hibernation and Trees drop their leaves, a typical activity that nature sets before us as a model for movement towards "seeing new life". This seemingly inactive process is, indeed, an encounter with the environment with conservation of energy, within itself. It has undergone a process and is ready to spring up for action – the animals entering the "life filled" jungles, to re-establish its territory, and the trees blooming forth inviting bees to gather food. Every where the system is restored to establish God's purposes for orderliness.



The Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Pothirajulu is former Deputy Moderator of the Church of South India and former Bishop in the CSI- Madurai - Ramnadu Diocese. Also former Director of the CSI Synod Department of Laity Formation (1994 - 2001)

Lent, therefore, does not suggest a time of inactivity. On the other hand, Lent is a time towards intense activity. The need of the hour is involvement in social life with strategies for change, with personnel as agents of change, putting to acid test the call of our Lord to be the Salt of the earth, to evaluate and see how far and how much the church is "in" the world and not "of" the world.

The Chemistry and Physics of Jesus(!):

Jesus gave us two "life styles" of activity reaching deep into the world and the society. One, he calls "being the salt" and two, "being the Light" that turns Darkness into Light.

The Chemistry of Jesus urges you to be salt in the society - "be lost" – and be dissolved – to imbibe your characteristics of 'higher Christian values' into the rest of the society.

Where as we Christians take shelter behind the Ambedkarian Concept of a "minority", Jesus seems to consider that 'minorityness' to be an "atom" with affluent activity! Surely, the Indian Constitution makes a provision of "minority rights" offering Justice to people with minority status in number, language etc.- leading to an activity of seeking privileges which is a category of action for "survival" rather than "self emptying" for a Just cause. While fulfillment of survival needs is vital for human existence, the extraordinary Call for Discipleship seems to have a different focus in life.

The Chemistry of Jesus urges you to be salt in the society -"be lost" – and be dissolved – to imbibe your characteristics of 'higher Christian values' into the rest of the society and in the process you serve as a 'catalyst' bringing about a change without being yourself changed or losing your identity that comes from the Master. While the minority status has "Gains" as its goal for self, being salt comes with the preparedness of "losing oneself" for the "maximum good". Then comes the action process of Light that Lightens all, never losing its physical property, but acting on the multiplication model.

"God, give us grace to begin to act for you, more in LENT, to fulfill your purposes."

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Symposium on

The Forgotten Luther : Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness

Who is Jesus Christ for us today?



In the midst of changes, whether positive or negative, congregations throughout the church are asking anew the not so innocent question Dietrich Bonhoeffer raised amid the earthshaking changes of his age, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"

They are also proclaiming – in a new idiom – an age-old message of hope in a God *who*, in the words of Rorey Cooney, *is turning the world around.*



>>> *Contd. from Page 1 Col. 2*

The implications of the re-discovery of the socio-economic dimensions of the Reformation by congregations are immense. It was this dimension that had been largely hidden in the church's concern – justifiable but at times one-sided — to proclaim the central teaching of justification for the *individual*. **The affirmation of the socio-economic dimensions of the Reformation is seen to be especially significant in an age – our own – that is witnessing an increasing discrepancy in the distribution of the wealth of the earth.**

The present reality: the world is about to turn

A favorite hymn, "Canticle of the Turning," reflects the evident fact that we are living at a time of convulsive and unprecedented changes. Though every historical period witnesses change, the speed and the depth of the present transformation set this period apart.

Welcome advances in medical research and technology are countered by immense threats to the integrity of human community and to the creation itself. The intensified political rhetoric between nuclear powers has created a climate of considerable apprehension. People who live in the United States express a growing unhappiness with the polarization within the country and its governing bodies.

In the midst of changes, whether considered positive or negative, congregations throughout the church are asking anew the not so innocent question Dietrich Bonhoeffer raised amid the earthshaking changes of his age, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"

They are also proclaiming – in a new idiom – an age-old message of hope in a God *who*, in the words of Rorey Cooney, *is turning the world around.*

Though the nations rage from age to age,

we remember who holds us fast:

God's mercy must deliver us

from the conqueror's crushing grasp.

This saving word that our forebears heard

is the promise which holds us bound,

till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,

who is turning the world around.

The purpose of the symposium: Empowering of the church to speak out

At this critical time in history the *Forgotten Luther* project seeks to provide lay leaders and pastors with resources for shaping a viable response to some formidable challenges. How are we to preach the gospel faithfully in a way that speaks realistically to our situation? What is the shape of mission today? How is the church to respond when policies or actions of the government appear to be at odds with its message?

This study takes its departure from the theological heritage of Martin Luther and his conviction that government is responsible to God for maintaining peace and good order – and for ensuring that no person is hungry or in want. It will seek to make clear how Luther gave expression to this conviction in his historical context.

The main speakers at the symposium were

- Dr. Carter Lindberg, Professor Emeritus of Church History, Boston University School of Theology
- Dr. Mary Jane Haemig, Professor of Church History, Luther Seminary
- Dr. Wanda Deifelt, Professor of Religion, Luther College
- Dr. Kirsi Stjerna, Professor of Lutheran History and Theology, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Theological Faculty, University of Helsinki
- Dr. Anthony Bateza, Assistant Professor of Church History, St. Olaf College

With disastrous consequences, history has shown that when debate is stifled for the sake of an artificial 'harmony,' the church faces a lose-lose situation; spiritual growth and learning cease and the congregation becomes a simple mirror of society.

For his part, Martin Luther affirmed the role of reason in theology, gave us plenty to think about and discuss concerning the church's public witness in our world today. Lutheran theologians and professors in both *The Forgotten Luther I: Recovering the Social Dimension of the Reformation*, and now in *The Forgotten Luther II: Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness*, show us a Martin Luther who, in the name of Christian freedom and God's grace, drags us out of the pew and into the forum of public discourse. The Christian Gospel does have a public witness. What better place to give shape to that witness than the congregation!

– Reported by Paul Wee and Conrad Braaten

World Council Churches

Not just numbers, displaced people need to share their stories

How do we counter the numbing of society?

>>> *Contd. from Page 8 Col. 3*

Sara Speicher noted that in Europe, while the number of arrivals in 2017 have dropped from its peak of more than 1 million in 2015, the welcome and integration of refugees and migrants remains a highly divisive political, economic, and cultural topic.

Dr Stephen Brown, President of WACC Europe said, "We want to spark debate and look at the global response to the research."

He outlined how, "WACC believes that everyone has the right to communicate and to be in communication, in the same way that they have the right to food, shelter, and security."

"In strategic alliances, we aim to be a catalyst for change for the common good, sharing information, knowledge, and experience in the field of communication. We call this 'communication rights'."



Unfortunately, media representation is confusing and incomplete in all cases. Refugees can speak for themselves.

There is "an increasingly toxic narrative, not only about refugees but anyone who is on the move."

Refugees are not victims, but human beings; in writing about them "how do we counter the numbing of society?"



Nigerian Archbishop David Fabusoro of the Church of the Lord, Aladura (Prayer Fellowship) provided concrete examples of people on the move and noted that since Boko Haram attacks intensified in 2013, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced across the region around the north-east of Nigeria.

Niger Delta conflict

He also cited decades-old conflicts in the Niger Delta in the southwest and the emergence of Fulani herdsmen's occupation of farmlands and properties that have "resulted in massive killings and displacement of people".

"Unfortunately, media representation is confusing and incomplete in all cases," said Fabusoro, noting "The insurgency of Boko Haram and the Niger Delta were reported as

religious crises."

But he said the plight of displaced people many of whom move to Europe "are not reported and thereby made the people die in silence."

Leigh Foster, chief, Events, Campaigns and Goodwill Ambassadors, UNHCR said, "The WCC and LWF (Lutheran World Federation) have been amazing in mobilizing their membership", over refugees and migrants.

'Speaking for themselves'

She praised the discussion on the report as encouraging UNHCR's #WithRefugees campaign which aims to reinforce the message that refugees can speak for themselves.

Foster said, "There is an increasingly toxic narrative, not only about refugees but anyone who is on the move."

Cornelia Kastner, senior communications officer for the Lutheran World Federation spoke of how her experience as a journalist encouraged her in covering refugees in her work to "let the people talk".

She noted, "Refugees are not victims," but human beings and that in writing about them "how do we counter the numbing of society?"

"How do we prevent having the same story over and over again?" asked Kastner.

– WCC News



**COLLEGES
CALL ALL
of ALL AGES
to share their
knowledge
of ALL AGES**

Retired Indian Civil Servants

Open letter regarding violence and discrimination against minorities in India

'We need PM To Speak out, Govt. To Act, And Hate Crime Against Minorities To Be Stopped'

We, retired civil servants belonging to different Services and batches, wish to register our deep concern at the continuing incidents of mindless violence in the country, especially those targeting the minorities, and the lackadaisical response of the law enforcement machinery to these attacks.

The killing of Mohammed Afrazul, a migrant worker from West Bengal in Rajsamand, Rajasthan, on the 25th Anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid has deeply shaken each of us. The recording of the brutal act on video and the circulation of the justification for the killing over the internet cuts at the roots of an inclusive and pluralistic society drawing its inspiration from the teachings of the Buddha, Mahavira, Ashoka, Akbar, the Sikh Gurus, Hindu Sages and Gandhi. The violent incidents in Udaipur in support of the alleged killer are a pointer to how deep the sectarian poison has spread among the population of this country.

In the last nine months, we have seen the death of Pehlu Khan on 3rd April after he was attacked by a crowd of so called Gau Rakshaks near Behror, Alwar, on 1st of April. The killers named by him have not been arrested so far. However, seven others have been arrested and subsequently let off on bail.

The second killing on 16th of June of Zafar Khan was in the name of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The Municipal Chairman and other Safai Karmacharis in Pratapgarh reportedly beat him to death while he was opposing the naming and shaming process for making Pratapgarh open defecation-free. There is no arrest so far with the police claiming that Zafar Khan died of a heart attack.

The third killing in June 2017, was that of 16-year-old Junaid Khan on a train returning after Eid shopping in Delhi following a dispute over seats on the train when following abuses and insults he was stabbed and thrown out of the train at Asoti station, where he bled to death.

Following an outcry against this incident both within and outside India, the Prime Minister made a statement that "killing people in the name of 'Gau bhakti' is unacceptable". He repeated this once again a day before the Parliamentary session started on 15th July 2017, at an all India meeting of the BJP, where he placed the onus on taking stringent action in these cases on the State governments. However, the killings continue without any

check.

The fourth killing happened on 27th August 2017, when Anwar Hussain and Hafizul Sheikh, both 19 years of age, who were transporting cattle purchased from Dhupguri in West Bengal to Tufangunj in Cooch Behar. As they got lost on the way, a mob accosted them in the early hours and when they could not pay the 50,000 rupees demanded of them, beat them both to death. Though three persons were arrested for the lynching, efforts to identify others in the mob have not produced any result so far.

The fifth killing happened on 10th November 2017, when Umair Khan and his friends transporting cows were fired on by so called Gau Rakshaks in Govindgarh Tehsil in Alwar district. Umair Khan was killed and his body was carried to the railway track in an attempt to destroy all evidence. Of the seven killers only two were arrested. However, two of the victims, Tahir and Jawed, were placed behind bars.

The Indian Express of December 25 quotes a BJP MLA from Rajasthan – Gyan Dev Ahuja of Ramgarh – who said that "if one engages in cow smuggling or slaughters a cow, he will be killed." Such language is an open incitement to violence, acts of which are slowly poisoning the body politic and examples of which are listed above. Such words and actions have no place in a civilized society and fly in the face of established jurisprudence. Vigilantism is let loose upon a hapless group with all its tragic consequences.

Apart from the murders, we are deeply concerned to see the acceleration of a process of ghettoization through organized resistance to sale of properties to Muslims, or refusal by owners to have them as tenants. A recent case reported in the media relates to prevention of a Muslim buyer to take possession of a house in the Maliwara locality of Meerut that he had paid for. The daily indignities that the Muslims face in this and many other ways is bound to lead to an atmosphere of resentment in that

religious community that will further vitiate an already poisoned environment. The "love-jihad" campaigns of right-wing Hindu groups are again symptomatic of the efforts by extremist elements of the majority religion to interfere in the basic constitutional rights of citizens to enter into marriage with a partner of their choice.

In the past few weeks in December, we are witnesses to increasing targeting of Christians around the observation of Christmas. On 15th December, police detained groups singing carols in Satna. When a group of priests went to make enquiries, they were also reportedly detained by the police. In Uttar Pradesh, the Hindu Jagran Manch warned Christian schools in Aligarh against observing Christmas. In Rajasthan, members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad allegedly stormed a Christmas function on the grounds that this was an attempt at forced conversion.

We seek now and without delay a clear response from the Hon'ble Prime Minister and his government on these issues, along with immediate and firm action against the perpetrators of such hate crimes against minorities in this country by the respective law enforcement authorities.

These recent incidents undermine our Constitutional values and weaken the rule of law to create a new normal in society. Our existing laws provide adequate protection if they are implemented with the necessary will and determination. Legal protection alone however is not a solution when the communal virus has already spread far and wide in the society. It is essential for each of us as individuals to reflect on the repercussions of a situation where the present trends could threaten the peace and cohesion that is a fundamental pre-requisite for our growth and development. And for all of us, most of all for those who belong to the majority community, to go beyond mere reflection, to stand up, oppose and publicly condemn the communalization of our society and our country.

Signatories:

1. S.P. Ambrose IAS (Retd.) Former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Shipping & Transport, Gol 2. Ishrat Aziz IFS (Retd.) Former Ambassador to Brazil & Saudi Arabia 3. Vappala Balachandran IPS (Retd.) Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Gol 4. Meeran C Borwankar IPS (Retd.) Former DGP, Bureau of Police Research and Development, Gol 5. Sundar Burra IAS (Retd.) Former Secretary, Govt. of Maharashtra 6. Som Chaturvedi IRTS (Retd.) Former Additional Member, Railway Board, Gol 7. Javid Chaudhuri IAS (Retd.)

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Christian Unity Prayer Octave

St. Paul's Cathedral, Kolkata - 6 p.m., 25 January 2018

Theme: "Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power" (Ex. 15:6)

Unite your servants in the bond of Unity



Left to Right - Choir from Lavina House, Rev. James Gomez, Archbishop Thomas D'Souza, Fr. Dominic Gomes, Rev. Abir Adhikari.

In his homily Archbishop Thomas D'Souza referred to the Churches of the Caribbean. He said "The contemporary Churches of the Caribbean are confronted with issues like abuse of human rights, Human trafficking and modern day slavery seriously under-mining human dignity and quality of life".

The Bishop called upon the churches in India "to extend their solidarity to the Christians of the Caribbean" He prayed to the Holy Spirit, "Set our hearts on fire as we pray for the Unity of the Church. Unite your servants in the bond of Unity." He said, "Prayer is the greatest weapon Christians have. Jesus taught us to pray and love one another as He loved us to the end of His life."

The Resource Book for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was jointly prepared by the Pontifical Council For Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. It was adapted for India by the National Council of Churches in India.

— Reported by J. S. Murthy



World Council of Church



Church of North India



National Council of Churches in India



Christian Service Agency

India Pre-Conference Of The Conference On World Mission And Evangelism

'Transforming Discipleship : Mission of the Missions'

Called to Transforming Discipleship

Jooseop Keum

[Excerpts from the paper read out, at the Pre-Conference]

In March 2018 the WCC CWME will convene the 14th World Mission Conference since Edinburgh 1910, at Arusha in Tanzania, to address the theme: "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship".

The first part of the theme, with its reference to Galatians 5:25 – "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (KJV) – is profound in its very simplicity. As we discern together the signs of the times it is evident that despite the chaos of human disunity in which we live and witness today, there are many signs of the Holy Spirit giving life and creating hope. Africa, in particular, represents a site in which the Holy Spirit is breathing life into the church. Moving in the Spirit brings the notion of pilgrimage, of an ongoing journey of all believers, led and guided by the Holy Spirit. This is a pilgrimage that is characterised by constant hope for a transformed world of justice and peace and a commitment to renewal in Christ. This theme offers a prophetic message amidst the complexities of today's world.

“ Martin Luther King Jr, in his Vietnam speech challenges us, "A time comes when silence is betrayal." I believe that this is the time to "break silence" of the easy going leadership in the ecumenical movement and the global church and call for costly and transforming discipleship! The ecumenical movement ought to be a never drying water fountain for the life in its fullness of all in the world! We are called to lead this most glorious mission and costly movement. Witnessing to faith, love and hope in Christ for the divided churches, suffering people, and fragmented world!

The second part of the theme calls us to transforming discipleship. We are called to be disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, to whom we witness and whom we proclaim as we move in the Spirit. How do we understand the phrase "transforming discipleship"? It carries three profoundly different and yet closely related meanings. We are called to live a life that transforms the very notion of discipleship as it is often understood. Such discipleship is one that is constantly transforming disciples as they open themselves up to Christ's influence in their lives and to the formation that takes place in the Christian Community. And such discipleship is one that is a commitment to transforming the world that is so full of injustice, pain, and suffering.

First, the very idea of discipleship needs to be transformed. Discipleship is often understood merely in the sense of being in a loving, friendly relationship with Jesus. While



Dr. Jooseop Keum is the Director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches

this is a profound truth, the discipleship that we intend to emphasize is one that is not only a relationship, but is actively engaged in continuing Jesus' mission in the world. To know Jesus is to follow him in what he did. It calls us to witness to Jesus and to the Kingdom that he preached, and, when appropriate, to proclaim Jesus' name and his gospel as well. It

calls us to an evangelism that is done in Christ's way.

Second, we are called to be disciples constantly open to being transformed, individually and communally, in our following of Jesus. Discipleship commits us to embark on a spiritual journey that will constantly challenge us and shape us into people who reflect the Lord Jesus in our actions, words, and attitudes. Discipleship commits us to disciplines of prayer, practices that shape our character and hearts, and to the cultivation of habits that give us strength and courage to live lives of Christian witness.

Third, we are called to be disciples who are ourselves transforming, and as such we are privileged to join in the mission of the Triune God, working together towards life, living out the values of the Kingdom of God, and engaging in mission from the margins. In a world in which injustice seems almost inseparable, where hatred and racism seem to thrive, where

suffering is so widespread and terrifying, our discipleship is costly. It calls us to put a theology of the cross into practice. It calls us to spend our energy and even offer our lives for the transformation that the Kingdom promises.

What will it mean for us, as individuals and churches, to be transformed in the power of the Holy Spirit? What will it mean to join the Spirit in transforming and healing a broken world?

The world is broken. Therefore, it is imperative for the ecumenical movement to boldly witness the unity in the Triune God and to live it out for the unity of humanity. The world is yearning for a Christian discipleship which reconciles the broken and troubled world. In order to do so, unity of the Church is not an optional agenda.

In order that the church can be the light of the world, the role of Christian leaders is crucial. People see the vision of God's kingdom through us. Therefore, we ought to rediscover the simplicity, inclusivity, joy, kenosis, empathy and "prophetic imagination" of our leadership. There is no other way than to follow our Lord.

Re-imagine our missional standpoints

Prem Chand Singh

[Excerpts from the Inaugural Address]

The Pre-conference is an important event in the history of Indian Christian Mission to 'relook' and 'review' our mission strategy, to re-activate the mission to be more effective, appropriate and relevant in making us disciples of Christ through inculcation of the gospel values of Justice, Peace, Hope and Love.

We have gathered here to reflect on the past, respond to the present and re-organise and re-commit ourselves for the future of Christian Mission in India. Therefore, at the outset, I join you all in congratulating the NCCI especially the Unity and Mission for organising this

“ The traditional understanding of mission is identified by preaching the gospel to the so-called 'unreached', 'unheard' and 'heathens', whereas the Indian mission in general has engaged itself by identifying with the socially, religiously, economically and politically marginalized, excluded and discriminated communities. This is the uniqueness of the mission of Jesus Christ in India.

strategic meeting and also the WCC - Council for World Mission and Evangelism for joining the NCCI and the Church of North India.

The cross indeed reveals that the loving God can be with us in any situation of our depression and feeling alone. The cross unites us, in its mystery and in its revelation, and in our struggles, in our ministry of discipleship. We who travel



Most Rev. Dr. P. C. Singh, Moderator of the Church of North India is the President of the National Council of Churches in India

on this missional journey might find ourselves that the wind is

against us and we make headway painfully. However, we are where we should be: In the reality of life, even when it might be rough or frightening for the cause of mission. **This is where we will meet Christ. The disciples were in the boat together, facing the unknown together; then Christ comes into their boat.**

In the midst of contemporary contextual missional challenges,

it is essential for us to reflect on the theme "Transforming Discipleship: Mission of the Missions'. At this juncture, it would be ideal for us as the Indian mission fraternity to not only reflect and contribute but also to espouse the uniqueness of the nature of Indian missions and expose the challenges to the wider mission contemporaries. This not only helps us to contribute to the World Mission Conference, but also enables us re-think and re-imagine our missional standpoints and goals for further missional deliberations for Christian mission in India.

Let us take heart, and have no fear, for it is God, who shall lead us through.

In the next issue

We will publish, in the next issue of the People's Reporter, excerpts from some more papers presented at the India Pre-Conference



World Council of Churches



Church of North India



National Council of Churches in India



Christian Service Agency

India Pre-Conference Of The Conference On World Mission And Evangelism Global Mission Challenges

Christopher Rajkumar

[Excerpts from the paper presented at the Pre-Conference]

The twenty first century is a time of unprecedented challenges and opportunities for global missions. The terrorism of 9/11 was the first of the many cataclysmic global changes that re-shape our world. The surge of terrorism against western powers, the growth of Islam, the burgeoning of global prominence of the Majority World (formerly called the Third World) represent significant challenges for the Christian missions.

In order to meet new challenges, missionaries and

“ Answers to the challenges are not easy, and no single-solution strategy will fit every culture in all ages. We can be certain that God will make a way, but we must be diligent and faithful no matter the challenges. Missionaries must stay in the Word, in prayer, and as close to Jesus as they can get in order to tread the narrow way through an ever-changing world, bringing the Good News to all nations. ”

their agencies must constantly monitor global trends in order to re-shape strategies and methodologies. Beginning in the mid-1970s, missionaries began to strategise to reach people groups rather than just nations. This led to a focus on un-reached people groups and more recently to strategise for engaging groups where no one was seeking to plant churches. Missiologists call this the 'Last Frontier' – unreached and unengaged people groups. Reaching areas where there is no Christian



Rev. Christopher Rajkumar is the Executive Secretary, NCCI-Unity and Mission, NCCI

witness and no government

permission to do so, is one of the daunting tasks facing Mission today. On an average three countries per year legally close their doors for traditional missions.

As the world's economic centre shifts toward the global south, there is also rapid growth in the Southern Church. The churches of Latin America, Africa and Asia have produced record number of Christians and missionaries that dwarf their older Sister Churches of the North. Evangelical missionaries

celebrate this growth cautiously because, sadly, aberrant doctrine and practice abound in many southern churches.

Since the first missionaries to these areas often emphasized simply reaching groups with the gospel, they left once they had evangelized a number of people.

In our Mission endeavours we have to face various challenges : 1. Ideological Challenges – Growth of Islam, Right-wing Populism, Arm-lifting/Terrorism 2. Political Challenges 3. Economic Challenges 4. Shrinking Space 5. Theological and Missiological Challenges. ●

Role of Churches in Politics

The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) organised an Ecumenical Evening during the India Pre-Conference of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism on 25 January. Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar, Director, CISRS, moderated the Session. Prof. Dr. Mallakar, Professor, Dept. of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, delivered a lecture on the 'Role of Churches in Politics'.

Prof. Mallakar, through his lecture, initiated and invited

discussions on Churches' response to the political context in India especially in the light of 2019 parliamentary election. He elucidated the history of doing politics in India from the 18th century and the political realities of today. He said, "There is a constant divide among the minorities themselves and the social movements due to various reasons and this is promoted and maintained by the Rightwing fundamentalist groups. They have taken all possible steps to divide the minority communities and unfortunately the minority



Dr. Mallakar is Professor of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University

communities have become victims and vulnerable and the majority took the control over the minorities."

Dr. Mallakar said, "It was the politics of the neo-liberalism of 1990s that gave the entire control

of the nation to the corporate sectors. Here 'money' started to become the controller of every aspect of life of the nation including politics. This also resulted in the control over India from outside by the socialization laws and internal privatization through the multinational corporations and foreign direct investments." He also said, "Gender discrimination is a common phenomenon that has been practised for ages now. Women and other genders are still being denied of wealth and education."

Dr. Mallakar called upon the Minorities who consist of 1/3 of the population, to stand together to fight for their dignity and respect in the light of the fundamental and fanatical attitude of the Right-wing politics that is prevalent today. He concluded, "We do not have strong opposition parties. Therefore, there is a possibility for the Churches to bring all political parties for conversation to get united to respond to the Rightwing Politics and Economic Control by the Corporates and MNCs." ●

'Transforming Discipleship : Mission of the Missions'

>>> **Contd. from Page 1 Col. 4**

The main objectives of the Pre-Conference were: To reflect upon, and to contribute to, the CWMAE from an Indian perspective

To gain inspiration from the Indian Missional experiences and expressions

To invite various mission and diaconal movements in India to converse about our mission contexts

To suggest the inclusion of the Indian missional

“ It is time to question ourselves as Christians: 'Are we true disciples of the gospel?' This question is more important than any other missiological discourse in today's context. It is not numbers or resources. It is the quality of discipleship that will prove decisive. It is time for the issues of authentic discipleship to be given priority attention in ecumenical missiology. ”

experiences and concerns in the missional priorities of global mission agenda

To articulate a relevant and appropriate missiological framework for the pluri-faith Indian context.

The Pre-Conference was inaugurated by the Most Rev. Dr. Prem Chand Singh, Moderator

of the CNI. Shri Alwan Masih, General Secretary of the CNI, presided over the inaugural session.

The Rev. Dr. Roger Gaiwad, General Secretary of the NCCI introduced the programme. The Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, Executive Secretary, Unity and Mission Concerns, NCCI,

welcomed the gathering.

Papers on various aspects of the theme were presented by the Rev. Dr. D. Ratnakar Sadananda, Most Rev. Dr. P. C. Singh, Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, Rev. Dr. Kennedy Dhanabalan, Rev. Dr. Roger Gaiwad, Fr. Dr. K.M. George, Sr. Dr. Teresa Joseph, Rev. Dr. David Udayakumar,

Rev. Dr. Sunil Caleb, Fr. Dr. M.D. Thomas, Dr. Belinda Bennett, Dr. Sushant Agrawal, Dr. Bimal Charles, Fr. Dr. Monodeep Daniel, Dr. Vinod John Wesley, Ms. Celina Falk and Prof. Dr. Mammen Varkey,

Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei, Ms. Karin Bodin, Mrs. Aleyamma Thomas, Lt. Col. Daniel Dasari Raju, Bishop M.A. Daniel, Prof. Dr. Patta Devaraju and Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar moderated various sessions. ●



Participants in the Pre-Conference



Christmas Reflections - 5

Mary's response to the visit of the shepherds

"And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.... And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them'". Luke 2: 8-20 (RSV)

Before we conclude our reflections on the message of the angel to the shepherds and their journey to the Baby laid in a manger in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling cloths, we should unfailingly reflect on the response of Mary to the visit of the shepherds.

The 'Son of the Most High' in an ordinary manger!

The response of Mary to the visit of the shepherds is, very meaningfully and thought-provokingly, summarized in Luke 2: 19. **"But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart."** The terribly huge mental stress and physical hardships

that Mary was passing through, during those days, are not at all easily understandable. The angel had told Mary, "Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you! Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." Luke 1: 28, 30-33. The angel had told Mary that the child she would bear would be called the Son of Most High. But Mary did not have even a proper place to give birth to the Son of the Most High! The child who would be given 'the throne of his father David', had no proper place to lie down! He got a place only in a manger, along with a herd of sheep or cattle! She had been told by the angel, "For with God nothing will be impossible." But the child was not given even a proper place to be born or to be

laid! The agony of Joseph and Mary, the loving and concerned parents, during that time with the baby in their hands, is indescribable. No ordinary one can either comprehend it or reconcile oneself with it. **But Mary reconciled herself to it.**

The Son of the Most High was hailed first by unclean workers!

Again, who were the first visitors of the child in the manger? Not wise men from the East! Not prominent and powerful people to see the heir of the David's throne. Only poor shepherds! They did not bring gold, frankincense or myrrh! Or any gifts!! Mary also knew well who the shepherds were. A set of unclean people, "despised by the good people of those days"! To greet first, the 'Son of the Most High', a set of unclean workers! Mary had to witness to it! What a traumatic experience it must have been for Mary! The birth of the child was hailed not by holy people, prominent people, respected people!!

Luke writes that Mary, while

she was carrying the child in her womb, visited Elizabeth. "In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country ... and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greetings of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry,..." blessed is the fruit of your womb..." Luke 1:39-45. In response, Mary said, "... he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree..." Luke 1; 46-55(RSV) A new light was shone. Mary must have had a new vision. She must have seen the visit by the unclean shepherds as the fore-runner of the great transformative process that would be led by the baby, in history- "the exalting of those of low degree" Luke 1: 52.

The visit of the despised, unclean shepherds must have, in immeasurable way, equipped Mary to prepare herself for the events to be unfolded in future.

To be continued



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Retired Indian Civil Servants

Open letter regarding violence and discrimination against minorities in India

'We need PM To Speak out, Govt. To Act, And Hate Crime Against Minorities To Be Stopped'

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38. Sunil Mitra IAS (Retd.) Former Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Gol
39. Ruchira Mukerjee IP&TFAS (Retd.) Former Adviser, Telecom Commission, Gol
40. Anup Mukerji IAS (Retd.) Former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Bihar
41. Deb Mukharji IFS (Retd.) Former High Commissioner to Bangladesh and Ambassador to Nepal
42. Pranab S. Mukhopadhyay IAS (Retd.) Former Director, Indian Institute of Port management, Kolkata, Gol
43. Sobha Nambisan IAS (Retd.) Former Principal Secretary (Planning), Govt. of Karnataka
44. Sivakami Palanimuthu IAS (Retd.) Former Special Commissioner, Stationery & Printing Department, Govt. of Tamil Nadu
45. Niranjan Pant IA & AS (Retd.) Former Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
46. P. R. Parthasarathy IPS (Retd.) Former Director, Anti-Corruption Bureau, Govt. of Maharashtra
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48. M.Y. Rao IAS (Retd.) Former Chairman, Orissa State Electricity Board, Govt. of Orissa
49. N.K. Raghupathy IAS (Retd.) Former Chairman, Staff Selection Commission, Gol
50. Satwant Reddy IAS (Retd.) Former Secretary to Gol, Ministry of Chemicals and Petrochemicals
51. Julio Ribeiro IPS (Retd.) Former Adviser to Governor of Punjab & Ambassador to Romania
52. Sayeed Rizvi IAS (Retd.) Former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Gol

53. Aruna Roy IAS (Resigned)
54. Manabendra N. Roy IAS (Retd.) Former Additional Chief Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal
55. ManMohan Sagar IPS (Retd.) Former CMD, Assam Police Housing Corporation
56. Umrao Salodia IAS (Retd.) Former Chairman, Rajasthan Road Transport Corporation, Govt. of Rajasthan
57. Deepak Sanan IAS (Retd.) Former Principal Adviser (AR) to Chief Minister, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh
58. Deepak Sandhu Indian Information Service (Retd.) Former Chief Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission
59. E. A.S. Sarma IAS (Retd.) Former Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Gol
60. N.C. Saxena IAS (Retd.) Former Secretary, Planning Commission, Gol
61. A. Selvaraj IRS (Retd.) Former Chief Commissioner, Income Tax, Chennai, Gol
62. Ardhendu Sen IAS (Retd.) Former Chief Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal
63. Aftab Seth IFS (Retd.) Former Ambassador to Japan
64. Har Mander Singh IAS (Retd.) Former Director General, ESI Corporation, Gol
65. Jawhar Sircar IAS (Retd.) Former Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Gol, & CEO, Prasar Bharati
66. Geetha Thoopal IRAS (Retd.) Former General Manager, Metro Railway, Kolkata
67. Ramani Venkatesan IAS (Retd.) Former Director General, YASHADA, Govt. of Maharashtra

'Seva Rathna' Award to Inderjeet Khanna



The Rajasthan State Minority Commission organised a Christmas Programme on 21 December 2017, inside the Secretariat of the Rajasthan Government. During that programme, noted christian in the State of Rajasthan, Mr Inderjeet Khanna IAS, a former Chief Secretary, former Chief Election Commissioner of the Government of Rajasthan and a Social Worker was honoured with 'Seva Rathna' award by the Government of Rajasthan.

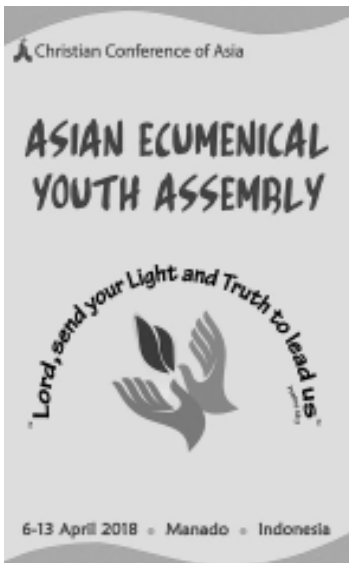
Shri Inderjeet Khanna entered the Indian Administrative Service in 1966. He was the Chief Secretary of the Rajasthan State for 3 years from January 2000 to December 2002. After Retirement, he held the post of the State Election Commissioner, Rajasthan for 5 years.

On the invitation of Mr. Jasbir Singh, Chairman, Rajasthan State Minority Commission, Rt. Revd Darbara Singh, CNI Bishop in the Diocese of Rajasthan, Most Revd. Dr J Ravikumar Stephen G, The Presiding Bishop of the Dioceses of the Episcopal Church in South Asia and Acharya Vikas Massey delivered the Christmas Messages.

The Choirs from CNI St Andrew's Church, Jaipur and Methodist Church, Jaipur sang Christmas carols. Members of the Rajasthan State Minority Commission, Diplomats and Secretaries in the Government of Rajasthan and leaders of other Faiths were also present.

— Reported by J. Ravikumar Stephen G.

CCA Initiates Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly



Christians to develop a viable regional ecumenical youth network.

Prospective participants, between the age of 20 and 35, are encouraged to apply with endorsement by respective member churches or councils. CCA and local hosts will arrange board and lodging for all participants.

Limited travel bursaries will be made available upon requests to participants from South and South East Asian countries.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the CCA stated, "Although several issues surrounding young people in the world today are not new, the underlying issues faced by young people are much different from yester years. The society we currently live pushes many young people to beyond their physical and mental limits as myriad issues continue to threaten the Asian youths. In this context, the AEYA will inspire young representatives from Asian churches to come together to beseech divine guidance to lead them in light and truth amidst complex realities".

Focusing on the theme 'Lord, Send Your Light and Truth to Lead Us', the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA) initiated by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is scheduled to take place in Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia from 6 to 13 April 2018.

Organised jointly with the local hosts, Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa (GMIM) and the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), the AEYA intends to provide a common platform for selected young Asian

The deadline for receiving applications at the CCA Secretariat: 15 February 2018.
For details:

Christian Conference of Asia, Payap University, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Tel: +66 53 243 9067; Fax: +66 53 247 303
Email: cca@cca.org.hk, Website: www.cca.org.hk

Gratitude is the fairest blossom
which springs from the soul

— Henry Ward Beecher



World Council Churches

Not just numbers, displaced people need to share their stories



Photo: Peter Kenny/WCC

"Changing the narrative: Media, Migrants and Refugees" Discussion Participants

“ There are currently over 65 million people around the world who have been forced from their homes, according to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, but all those who are displaced, are not mere statistics. ”

The displaced are people, something that can be missed by the mass media, in reporting on them. This observation was highlighted in a discussion at the World Council of Churches (WCC) on 30 January when representatives of church groups, the United Nations and a Christian media organization discussed media coverage of refugees at a "tray-lunch" presentation.

The discussion was titled: "Changing the narrative: Media, Migrants and Refugees". The WCC director of communications Marianne Ejdersten moderated the

discussions.

Participants discussed "Refugees Reporting", a research and advocacy project conducted in 2017 to support the communication rights of refugees seeking safe passage into and through Europe.

'Challenging public attitudes'

The project seeks to challenge public attitudes of intolerance and discrimination against them.

Peter Prove, director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, commended the "very important

research project".

"This report gives us empirical evidence that can be used in re-engaging in a more constructive manner the public discourse on refugees," he said.

"Migration has always been a feature of human society, but it is going to be even more of a feature in the future."

"We have no choice but to manage these population movements and make migration work for us all," said Prove, citing a recent report by UN secretary-general António Guterres.

The project coordinators are the WCC-backed World Association for Christian Communication - Europe Region (WACC Europe) and the ecumenical Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

Sara Speicher, development manager for WACC and a WCC communication officer said, "We believe that the representation of refugees and migrants in the media plays a major role in the tone of the public debate and, ultimately, in the welcome and integration of refugees and migrants into their new countries."

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People's Reporter

Printed and Published by
Vattukalathil Chacko John
No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial
Estate, Nehru Road,
Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East
Mumbai - 400 055

for and
on behalf of
New Education and Welfare
Service Trust
and

Printed at
Anita Art Printers,
No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial
Estate, Nehru Road,
Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East
Mumbai - 400 055
Ph: 022 - 26652978

and
Published at
No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial
Estate, Nehru Road,
Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East
Mumbai - 400 055

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Valiyapurayidam
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Best wishes
from

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Karottu Parambil,
Mundakayam,
Kerala