U^TH TURN

connect create change

YOUTH CONCERN - NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

PRIORITIES OF THE NCCI—YOUTH CONCERN

- Encouraging young people to be part of the National Ecumenical Movement.
- Networking with the Local and International Ecumenical partners for sponsorship and partnership.
- Connecting the member churches and the local youth movements with the Commission on Youth through organizing programmes both at regional and national levels.
- Strengthening direct partnerships with youth fellowships of the member churches and Commission on Youth and encouraging them to create ecumenical platforms for young people to Promote grassroot ecumenism.
- Identifying Young people to engage them in a process of articulating their faith and understanding about God.

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REFLECTION: FACE YOUR GIANTS

What are the giants that are challenging you today? Stand up now and face your giants by the same tactics that God has given to David!
What are the Giants that you are facing today?
Unemployment, depression, abuse, rejection, addiction, failure, discrimination, broken relationship.
Do you hear your Giants shouting!
You are not good enough, you can't shake your past, you don't have a bright future, your life is a mistake.
Stand up now and face your giants by the same tactics that God gave to David.

Plug in to the Source of Power 1st Samuel 17:37: David did not say the he was the one who saved himself from the paws of the lion and beard. But he Said, "THE LORD WHO DELIVERED ME". The Lord is the source of David's power. All our electronics appliances will be useless unless connected to the source of electrical power. Our life is also useless if not connected to the source of our power no other than God.

Choose the right weapons 1st Samuel 17:38-40: We see in this verses Saul clothed David with his armor but instead David he took his staff, took five stones and with a sling on his hand he went to face Goliath. Now among this three weapons the five stones was the only weapon to be utilized these five stones not only acted as a weapon but it also portrays about the relationship of trust and confidence that David had with God which we can also use in our everyday lives the five stones tells us about.
Stone of prayer with God.
Stone of Faith in God.
Stone of priority with God.
Stone of persistence with God.
Stone of Passion with God.

Keep your eyes on the right focus 1st Samuel 17:41-47: In these following verses we can see how David kept His focus in God, he was not distracted by the words of the philistine (Goliath). when we see in verse 45 David says, you come to face me with sword, spear and javelin, but I have come to face you in the name of the Lord Almighty and in verse 47 we can see David saying, All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give into our hands. For David having focus in God was not only about having Faith in Him but he was referring about faith in action which he did so and Lo and behold! Victory over the philistine was in his hands.

As a youth we come across various problems in our lives and at times these problems becomes a giant stopping us to achieve our goals and aims. The next time when a giant comes in your way and shouts, you know what to do

- Plug in to the Source of Power.
- Choose the right weapons.
- Keep your eyes on the right focus.

Mr. V. Shitovi Sema, Intern, Youth Concern

Report of the Youth Pre-Assembly

24 – 25 April 2016, Christ Church Boys' School, Jabalpur

Towards Youthopia – a JI-FI Community

The Youth Pre-Assembly of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) - Commission on Youth in partnership with Church of North India (CNI) Diocese of Jabalpur, Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), India Peace Centre (IPC), Inspired Sports and Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church was held at Christ Church Senior Secondary Boys' School, Diocese of Jabalpur, CNI. There were 72 young participants from churches of different denominations from different walks of life: theologians, teachers, church leaders, and working youth in different sectors. We had the privilege of having two participants with disabilities among us journeying together with us in sharing each other's experiences and deliberating with us for a Just and an Inclusive society.

The Youth Pre-Assembly opened with praise and worship led by the Ecumenical Jabalpur Youth Choir. The Inaugural Session started with a Vandana Dance, praising and acknowledging God the creator of the whole universe, presented by Ms. Edith Martin. The Inaugural session was moderated by Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei, the Executive Secretary of NCCI-Commission on Youth. He welcomed and acknowledged the presence of the dignitaries, delegates and the participants. Rt. Rev. P.C. Singh, Bishop, Diocese of Jabalpur, CNI, the host, extended his warm welcome and greetings to all the participants and dignitaries. Mr. Suman Biswas, the Youth Vice- President of NCCI brought greetings. Mr. Rohan Gaikwad shared his best wishes and greetings on behalf of the Commission on Youth. The keynote address was given by Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, General Secretary National Council of Churches of India (NCCI). He introduced the theme, **"Towards Youthopia: A JI-FI Community".** He stressed that though in Greek mythology, Utopia remains uthopia, 'Youthopia' on

the other hand, could become a reality brought about by young people working for Just and Inclusive (JI) communities with Fidelity (Fi). He drove home this fact, by referring to Daniel 1 where Daniel and his friends were alternative examples to the Nebuchadnezzar's criteria of exclusions be it physically, morally or spiritually. Likewise, young people today are to be alternatives to the exclusions that the society creates in and among us.

The sessions of the Pre-Assembly started with the Bible Study led by Rev. Dinesh Angolkar, Asst.professor, Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur.He took the Bible study from Exodus 2: 23-3:10. In this passage, we see that the Israelites moved out from Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land. He likened Canaan to **Youthopia-** which he considers to be the perfect place for us- and that we should be working and moving towards Youthopia. Youth can be the change to bring about this **Youthopia,** like

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how young Moses led his people. This session was moderated by Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei, the Executive Secretary of NCCI- Commission on Youth.

Mr. Dinesh Suna, Co-ordinator Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), World Council of Churches (WCC), took the session on **"Ecological Issues Around Sustainable Development".** He highlighted the water crises faced around the world and shared how WCC participated in the launching of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which has water scarcity as one of its major concerns. He said with such pressing issues at the backdrop, **Youthopia** should not remain only a concept, and the Youth should play the prophetic role. They should be encouraged and provided the space to discuss and debate on these issues. He stated "Youth are today's leaders" who can bring changes. This session was moderated by Ms. Esther Ao, Intern, NCCI-Commission on Tribals and Adivasis.

The Post lunch sessions started with Mr. Suman Biswas enlightening the youth on what is NCCI, its Secretariat and the nature of work it does. He then led the young people with creative games. This was followed by the session on **"The Role of Youth as Peacemakers in Building Just and Inclusive Community"**by Mr. Kasta Dip, Director, India Peace Centre**.** He commented "Youth are natural Peacemakers". Young people can participate in the Peace making among and between the communities. This was followed by group discussions among the young participants during which several issues came out.The Youth feel neglected in the major decision-making of the church, so, it was discussed that Young people should be given opportunity for decision making -be it in the church or in the socio -political aspects. Gender discrimination in the church was strongly condemned,and it was suggested that young women should be encouraged and respected for theircrucial role in the church. The church should encompass all genders be it male, female, transgender, and people with disabilityshould be encouraged and given opportunity for leadership and equal representation. It was also opined that the liturgy of the Church should be Youth-friendly.

The second day began with a worship service led by the Jabalpur Youth. Mr. Zuchonthung Ovung, Pastor, North East Christian Fellowship, Nagpur, Nagaland Baptist Churches Council, brought the Bible Study from Ephesians 4:1-16. Through this passage he spoke on the unity of the church and community. He challenged the young people through the qualities that were mentioned in the passage for maintain unity and peace, and sustaining it. The purpose of the gifts that God has given us is not about achieving some position-but its vocation: a calling to contribute for an inclusive community. Keeping this in mind it's important that we have the biblical qualities so that we can not only look towards but move towards Just and an Inclusive community.

Mr. Inbaraj Jeyakumar, General Secretary, Student Christian Movement of India, led the session on the theme **"The Role of Students in Nation Building"**. He recounted that the society is exclusive and how students need to take the active role in building the nation. He said, we must try to understand what our society is all about, but we have to face bitter reality of caste discrimination and injustice that is occurring around our society. In the society filled with patriarchy, it is the women that are affected in all the fields they are engaged at workplace, home, church and social norms.

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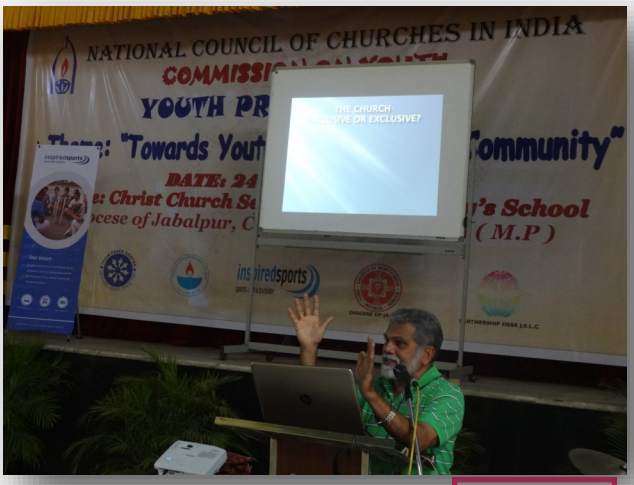
Mr. Jeyakumar reaffirmed that the youth meeting is one of the platforms where social issues and concerns are to be discussed for social change. He further said that youth are the tools to break the barriers of divisions among the people of different faiths. Highlighting from Acts 17:6, he enthused the youth to be the people who can turn the world upside down, whose challenge is to participate in the struggles of the people and bring a change. Mr. Inbaraj demanded the youthrealize the need to deconstruct and reconstruct a new society and church with love, justice and peace. He concluded the session encouraging all to share the love of God for building a new world where God's reign is possible. The session was moderated by Mr. Jerry Varghese.

A session on **"Overcoming Gender Inequality and Discrimination in Career Decision Making/Workplace"** was taken up by Ms. L.M. Sathe, Principal, Christ Church Boy's Senior Secondary School. Ms.Sathe claimed that women are made out to be commodity and seen as commercial. Wages and sexual harassment are the two problems that women suffer as part of discrimination. She stated that the awareness of equal rights of education, laws and amendments, and sexual harassment committees among the women should be broadened. She concluded the session with a strong suggestion that all humanity should work together for a social change towards Just and Inclusive Community irrespective of differences. The session was moderated by Rev. Samuel Lalremsanga, Commission member, Commission on Youth-NCCI.

A group discussion on how the changes can be brought in the society and participate in the transformation as a youth was led by Mr. Kasta Dip, Director, India Peace Centre. Two groups were divided in finding the root causes of the social problems and the possibilities of changes youth can bring. Social problems such as caste discrimination, inequality, poverty, corruption and communalism were some of the root causes that allow growing untouchability, gender discrimination, illiteracy and prejudices within the society. This further breeds the social problems of religious fanaticism, patriarchy, child labour and abuse, sexual harassments, censorship, racism, *saffronism*, forced conversions, bureaucracy, red tapism, global warming and the like.

There are possibilities of changes that can be brought in, promoting equal rights to the students, providing homes for the homeless, building second line leadership among the youth in the church and society, and more active participation in national political parties.

Rev. Sam Abraham, National Director, Inspired Sports shared the necessity of sports among the youth in both physical and community health within the church and society. He urged that there is a need to equip Churches and involve youth-he felt it is time to shift and widen the horizon of the ministry among the youth through sports and interactive activities. Providing the platform for the youth- not only the spiritual nourishment but also the sports professionalism -is the need of the church among the youth by providing proper training and equipment.



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Fr. Philip Kuruvilla, Coordinator, ESHA shared the session on "Choosing the Right Life Partner" focussing on the sex and sexuality of human beings and the right to choose one's own life partner. He emphasised the fact that though more and more youngsters choose their life partner outside of one's community, creating an inclusivity, one should also be aware of the practical and social difficulties that await such unions. He stated the sad reality that, "The world is not ready" for such freedom and the right to choose one's partner beyond one's community.

This was followed by presentation of the statement by the drafting committee and the deliberation of it by the participants. This was then accepted.

The Youth Pre-Assembly wrapped up with a wonderful cultural programme with several presentations from the Ecumenical Jabalpur youth, women and children. The evening witnessed the creative potential of the youth through the cultural items and social issues through the presentations.

Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, General Secy. NCCI, encouraged all the people –especially the young to keep the theme of the Youth Pre-Assembly alive. Mr. Jianthaolung delivered the vote of thanks and Rev. Caesar David ended the programme with prayer of thanksgiving followed by benediction by Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad.

STATEMENT OF THE YOUTH PRE-ASSEMBLY

The Youth Pre-Assembly of NCCI met in Christ Church Boys' Senior Secondary School, Jabalpur, on the 24th and 25th April, 2016; and deliberated on the theme, "TOWARDS YOUTHOPIA – A JI-FI COMMUNITY".

The Pre-Assembly saw adequate representation from various delegates of the member churches of the NCCI. During the course of the two-day deliberations, certain conclusions were arrived at. It was agreed upon that our collective Indian Church and society at large was hindered in building a just and inclusive community due to various problems and issues.

The Youth **affirms** that God is *just and inclusive*. The Youth firmly believes that in the household of God, we all are *accommodated*, and encouraged to *live life in all its fullness*.

The Youth **realizes and identifies** itself as the *natural peacemakers,* but feels that the Youth's participation in the mission of peacemaking is limited by church hierarchy.

The Youth strongly **rejects and condemns** all the existing discriminatory practices that challenge life and perpetuate injustice.

After much discussion, the Youth now believes that only by attaining the following ideas and implementing the following solutions can we aim to build a just and inclusive community.Therefore, the Youth **recommends** ideas and solutions as follows:

1. To make compulsory the allocation of funds from the annual budget of the Church and creation of a separate bank account so as to enable the Youth to autonomously carry out its yearly work and activities.
2.To promote involvement of the Youth in Bureaucracy and Politics for Nation Building, through National Leadership Programmes and projects related to train our youth as capable MP's, MLA's and Bureaucrats.
3.To recognize and respect the identity of the youth in mainstream decision making processes in the administrative affairs of the Church, and related socio-political and spiritual aspects.

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4.To make certain the Liturgical and Eucharistic participation of the Youth, (irrespective of denominations) in all Churches of the NCCI, universally.
5.To make conscious efforts in organizing orientations and sensitization workshops to eradicate gender discrimination within the Church.
6.To acknowledge, encourage and respect the crucial role that young women play in building the Church, and to simultaneously ensure that all practices that discriminate against young women are eradicated, so as to ensure the creation of an atmosphere of equality and inclusiveness in all Churches throughout India.
7.To ensure that the Church is all-encompassing, and includes all genders, that is, male, female and transgender; and enable, encourage and enhance all, especially the differently abled leaders and laity within the church to take up positions of leadership and responsibility. This also includes the establishment of accessible infrastructure in Churches for the differently abled faithful.
8.To focus on strengthening the existing institutions of Sunday School and/or Youth Movement, and to not undermine the important role that these institutions play in the life of a Christian youth, when it comes to social and spiritual support.
9.To promote secular scholarships for capable and meritorious students, apart from the theological aspirants or students.
10.To encourage interfaith and interreligious dialogues and programmes at the Youth level to foster kinship, fraternity and unity among all Indian citizens, as envisaged in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.
11.To guarantee environmental protection and sustainable development as will be mandated by special committees set up for this very purpose, whose job will be to set achievable and realistic goals, and involve the Youth in concrete, hands-on work at the grassroots level, thus also ensuring an increased awareness and sensitivity towards ecological issues.
12.To create a pan-Christian, pan-denominational newsletter that can be accessed by both print and social media. This weekly newsletter will contain studies on each member Church of the NCCI, its history, distinctive doctrines, specific features and characteristics, the social work it undertakes and the projects of its Youth. We believe that this will promote and foster healthy relations and fellowship among all the Youth members of the NCCI churches, by challenging common stereotypes and creating an opportunity to respect the uniqueness of each member church.

Drafting Committee: Mr. Inbaraj Jeyakumar (Convener), Mr. Kasta Dip, Mr. Angelious Michael, Mr. Jerry Varghese, Ms. Leaha Susan John, Mr. Hrinii Zho, Ms. Ruth Mathen

THE NATIONAL THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS CONFERENCE

The National Theological Students' Conference — 2016 was jointly organized by the BTESSC, SCMI, NCCI-Youth, and ECC from May 3 to 5 at the SCM Programme Centre, Bangalore. The theme of the Conference was 'Transformative Theological Education and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement." A total of 93 students representing 35 theological seminaries in India took part. The first day's morning session commenced with a Bible Study by Rev. Ch. Sweety Helen based on Exodus 3: 1-15. The inaugural function was chaired by the Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas, Director of ECC, and Mr. Inbaraj Jeyakumar, General Secretary of SCMI, welcomed the gathering. The theme was introduced by Rt. Rev. Dr. John Sadananda, Master, Serampore College/University. Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer, Secretary of BTESSC, and Dr. A. J. Anandan, Treasurer, SCMI, greeted the gathering. The keynote address was delivered by Rev. Dr. Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, Programme Executive, Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation, WCC. The afternoon session commenced with a panel discussion on Students' situation in India. Dr. Kiran Jeevan, Professor of Social Work at St. Joseph's College, moderated the session. Two students of St. Joseph's College, Bangalore, Adelin and Leonard, spoke on problems and issues faced by youth in India. The last session of the day was led by Akkai Padmashali on the topic 'Human Sexuality and identity'. Ms. Akkai clarified the difference between sex, gender and sexuality.

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She motivated the participants to respect, include and acknowledge their social responsibility towards sexual minorities. The day ended with creative cultural programmes by theological students from the Northeast and North India.

The second day began with a Bible Study by Rev. Chrisida Nithyakalyani based on Genesis 47:13-26. The next session was led by Rev. Christy Gnanadasan on the topic 'Future of Theological Education'. The afternoon session commenced with a presentation on the topic 'Grass Root Ecumenism' by Ms. Esther Jamir. In the evening, three theological students — Enolyne Lyngdoh, Andrew Arvind Samuel and Vinith Mathew — spoke on theological formation, ministerial formation and personal formation respectively. The day came to a close with cultural programmes by theological students from South India.

On the final day, the participants had the opportunity to interact in an informal session with Rev. Dr. Santanu K. Patro, Registrar, Senate of Serampore College. Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer moderated the session. The Conference ended with the concluding address by Rev. Dr. Patro.

SCMI REGIONAL PROGRAMME

The SCMI Regional Programme for the SCMI Fellowship Programme students was conducted on 3-5 June 2016 at AshirvadKanti, Gorewada, Nagpur.

The programme started with an opening session in which Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei, Executive Secretary-Youth Concern, NCCI delivered the introduction speech about the goal and its purpose of the Programme and a singspiration led by team from Ashirvad Kanti. A Keynote Address and a short devotion was taken by Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, General Secretary, NCCI focusing on the Christian values that concern for one another and sharing to one another uplifting the poor and needy with inclusivity in God's reign.

In the afternoon session, students were divided into three groups and there were English learning based interactive games and competitions. There were inputs and response from the students in English grammar and vocabularies. The first day was concluded with an English movie show for the students after the dinner.

The second day started with a singspiration and a devotion led by Ashirvad team. The morning session was taken by Dr. S. Waghmare took the session on "Environment, Health and Nature" from Christian perspectives.

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He dealt with the various issues of environment and its creation, health and immunization, and a responsibility of humankind towards nature as stewards. He further led the session with a biblical reference from Ephesians 5:14 and Revelation 8:20 speaking of the truth in love upbringing justice and equality in society.

The afternoon session was taken by Ms. Jaya Elizabeth Bobby on "Team Work". She presented the session with a PowerPoint converging on the need and importance of teamwork and its responsibilities and benefits. The second day was concluded with an English movie show right after the dinner.

Mrs. Pushpa Waghmare delivered an exhortation speech for the students and various experiences shared by the students. Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei rendered the vote of thanks and the Regional programme was concluded attending the Sunday morning service at All Saint Church Cathedral, Nagpur.

INTERNSHIP

Mr. V. Shitovi Sema has completed his M. Th. (Master of Theology in Missiology) from Aizawl Theological College, he is a member of Dimapur Sumi Baptist Church, Dimapur, Nagaland. He has recently joined NCCI as an intern under Youth Concern—NCCI in the month of June.

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"The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."

— ***Martin Luther***