

# U<sup>TH</sup> TURN

connect create change

YOUTH CONCERNS NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

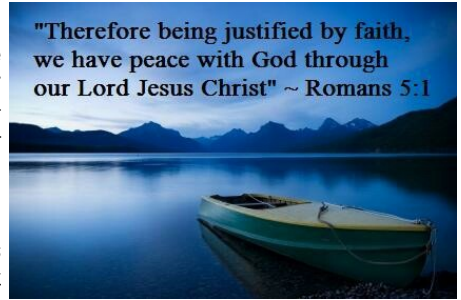
**PRIORITIES OF**

**NCCI—YOUTH CONCERNS**

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

**Divine Love (Romans 5: 1-11)**

Paul wrote this epistle to the Romans when he was in Corinth with the purpose of conquering Rome for Christ through evangelization as Rome was a great metropolitan city and a Rome conquered for Christ could mean a World conquered for Christ. The verses point out that those who are justified by faith have an unshakable hope of knowing, they will be saved from God’s wrath on the day of judgement for they are being reconciled by virtue of Christ’s substitutionary death on their behalf. With this brief background, let us understand Romans 5:1-11 through three sub points under the theme, “Divine Love.”



• **Peace through Justification (Vs. 1-2)**

“Justified by faith” (v. 1a), in Greek word *dikaiothentes* is a perfect tense, indicating a completed action. It might better be translated as “having been justified.”

This perfect tense indicates that God’s acceptance of us is not partial but total, unconditional, and complete. Paul uses the Greek word *eirenen* for **peace**, but as a Jew, his understanding of peace with God is grown out of the Hebrew *shalom* that suggests more than the absence of hostility. It speaks of “the well-being, prosperity, or salvation of the godly person.” In the context of this verse, “peace with God” speaks about spiritual harmony with God; having one’s heart and the will to collaborate with God’s will. It is possible for us to have peace with God only because of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the second verse, the word *prosagogen* (access) suggests more than mere access. It suggests being ushered into the presence of the king. Through the salvation work of Jesus Christ, we have been ushered into the presence of the grace in which we stand.

• **Rejoice in Suffering (Romans 5:3-5)**

In Vs. 3-5, Paul outlines the blessings that come through suffering. Suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us. Character (*dokimen*) has to do with testing, so Paul is saying that endurance produces a tested or a proven character; the solid character of an experienced person. This then produces hope, because the person having triumphed over sufferings in the past can hope to triumph over hardship in the future. Hope because we know that there is blessing if we endure the suffering and win over it, there is still a ray of light in our present darkness.

• **Reconciled to God through Jesus’ Death (Romans 5:6-11)**

By using “we,” Paul includes himself among the weak and ungodly. In Mathew. 9:12, Jesus said, “Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but those who are sick do.” Jesus’ logic is undeniable as to why would he save people who do not need it? Why wouldn’t he save sinners, those in need of salvation? To be justified is to be declared innocent and to be right. Reconciled has to do with relationships, suggesting a bringing together of those who have been separated (alienation). One could hardly be reconciled to a righteous God without first being justified, and one could hardly be saved without first being reconciled. The idea of reconciliation through a mediator was familiar, particularly in the case of Moses turning away God’s wrath from Israel (Ps 106:23). Those who hate God are subject to God’s wrath, so it is from God’s wrath that we need to be saved and it is from God’s wrath that Christ saves us.

**Reflection**

We know that Christian through in faith in Christ has been justified and declared righteous by God once for all. The result is that, we no longer live under the fear of judgement and the wrath of God but has peace with God. We should not only rejoice for the future Glory but also our present trails and sufferings if we are going through, not because trails are pleasant but because they produce a step-by-step transformation that makes believers more like Christ. Most importantly, we as followers of Christ have no reason to fear humiliation on the judgement day for we now belong to God. We know that we have received God’s love because the Holy Spirit poured God’s love into our hearts from the day of our transformation. One thing we should always remember is that When Christ died for us, it is not just Christ’s love that was shown in his death but also God the Father’s love. While God’s Righteous and justice led to His plan of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ, it was His Love that motivated this plan. Since we are now reconciled to God though Christ, we can be assured that we will be saved on the Judgement day, provided the fact that we no longer live like the pattern of this world, like the ungodly people but we must be transformed everyday by the renewing of our mind, and live as Christ wants us to be.

**Wapangyngla Ao, Intern, NCCI-Youth Concerns**

**Inside Story**

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## Religious Fundamentalism & Freedom of Religion in India

*A seminar in Dimapur offers multi-layered insight*

A seminar was held on the theme “Religious Fundamentalism” and “Freedom of Religion or Belief” jointly organized by National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), Trinity Theological College (TTC), Oriental Theological Seminary (OTS), and Baptist Youth Fellowship Dimapur and hosted by WSBK at Thahekhu, Dimapur on the 25th March 2018 to address the issues related to fundamentalism, communalism, human rights violations, atrocities against religious minorities and Dalits and Adivasis, and the role of churches and the global community in response to such issues.



The seminar was divided into two sessions – the first dealt with Religious Fundamentalism and the second with Freedom of Religion or Belief – both of which were addressed by Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, General Secretary of NCCI, followed by responses from faculty members of Trinity Theological College, Dr Akatoli Chishi and Oriental Theological Seminary, Dr. Sashinungla Pongen respectively. The seminar had a good student, youth and church leaders' participation besides members of the organizing bodies.

In the first session, Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad brought out the concept of religious fundamentalism and its link with communalism. Situating the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism in the contemporary Indian context, he pointed to the complexity of the issue in India today and how sentiments of religious identity of the majority of the Indian population are being manipulated for ulterior goals of power and benefits by fundamentalist communal groups. Citing reference to North East India, he underlined how Hindutva ideology is being imposed and its strategies are at play at the socio-cultural and religio-political level in India. He drove the point home that our response needs to be ‘multi-dimensional: a non-reactionary one, appropriate and focused’, informed of how the Hin-



dutva strategies operate while at the same time being mindful of falling into fundamentalist attitudes ourselves, be inclusive and collaborate with others on issues of justice and peace.

The second session dealt on the topic “Freedom of religion or belief”. Here, Rev. Dr. Roger began by highlighting the Constitutional mandate (Article 25-28) that guarantees the fundamental right to freedom of religion. Exploring the socio-political and historical context of India, he pointed out the rise of violence against religious minorities who are not followers of the Hindu religion, violence against women as a result of communal riots, displacement of Adivasis communities by industrial projects, hate crimes against Dalits, curbing of press freedom and free speech in Universities, and shrinking spaces of civil society. Backed with a number of references and strong evidence from the context, he explored the various ways in which structural violence manifests itself with its impacts on religious minorities and the marginalized communities. Outlining the immediate and medium term measures that evolved as a result of NCCI and civil society response to discriminations and violence against Christians and Muslims in India followed by UPR recommendations that support freedom of religion act, he emphasized the need for minorities to actively engage at the social and political level in the state as well as the central government, be aware of various bodies/groups/organizations that stand for human rights, and take initiatives for promotion of secularism. He concluded with a question as to how the ecumenical movement can make its response more effective in light of caste and religious discriminations in our country.

**Dakerlin Mukhim, Faith, Formation and Praxis Desk, SCMI**



## Justice for Palestinians

A one day seminar on Palestine was jointly organized by the civil society, NCCI and SCMI at SCM House, Bangalore on 6th April 2018. The programme, which focused on the sufferings of the Palestinians, was chaired by Rev. Dr. Roger, General Secretary of NCCI, who began with a quote from Mahmoud Darwish: 'A person can only be born in one place. However, he may die several times elsewhere: in the exiles and prisons, and in a homeland transformed by occupation and oppression into a nightmare.' His introductory words were followed by an elaboration by Mr. Ranjan Solomon on the need for justice for Palestinians. The youth who were present, along with seniors such as Ms. Apoorva Gautham, Dr. Vincent Manoharan, Mr. Samuel Jayakumar, Mr. Inbaraj Jayakumar, Mr. Irfan Engineer, Mr. Aariz Mohammed, and Rev. Prasad discussed at length how they should respond to the challenges face by Palestinians. Following were the important concerns addressed:

**This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> year of Nakba:** Nakba Day, *Yawm an-Nakba*, meaning "Day of the Catastrophe" is generally commemorated on **15 May**. The day was inaugurated by Yasser Arafat in 1998. For the Palestinians it is an annual day of commemoration of the displacement that preceded and followed the Israeli Declaration of independence in 1948. During the 1948 Palestine War, an estimated 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled, and hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages were depopulated and destroyed. The displacement, dispossession and dispersal of the Palestinian people is known to them as *an-Nakba*, meaning "catastrophe" or "disaster". The 70th year of *nakba* needs to be observed meaningfully in India.

**US Embassy to be moved to Jerusalem:** President Trump announced late last year that the U.S. will formally recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel – and it looks like the new U.S. embassy in Jerusalem **will open in May 2018** in order to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel declaring its independence, the Trump administration said on Feb. 23. The Trump administration's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital was heralded by many pro-Israel activists but decried by Palestinians and America's Arab allies. Religious leaders, including Pope Francis and Christians living in Israel, have expressed dire concerns that the move would incite unrest in the volatile region. The sanctity of Jerusalem as the Holy City of Jews, Christians and Muslims needs to be maintained. Therefore, the intention to make Jerusalem the capital of Israel has to be condemned.

**Israeli occupation of Palestine:** At the heart of the Israel/Palestine conflict today lies the question of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since the war of 1967, which include the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Key issues that have plagued the stalled "peace process" include: Israel's occupation, Israeli settlements and settlement-building, the Israeli wall, security for Israelis and Palestinians, shared sovereignty over Jerusalem, and the right of return of 3.7 million stateless Palestinian refugees. Therefore, pressure has to be put on Israel to de ceased from all unjust activities and to give Palestinians their rightful place in the country.

**BDS Campaign:** One way of exerting pressure on the Israeli government is by engaging in the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) campaign. People in India should be inspired to be committed to different expressions of this campaign.



## Two Indian activists shortlisted for Commonwealth Youth Awards

Two Indian activists have been named among 20 finalists from across 53 member-countries for the Commonwealth Youth Awards 2018 for their work in the field of gender equality.

Mirnalini Dayal has been recognised for her work as a campaign leader for 'Health Over Stigma' and Yogesh Kumar as the founder of social enterprise 'Even Cargo'. Both Delhi-based Indian finalists were singled out for their work in the field of achieving United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on gender equality. "The awards recognise outstanding young people aged 15 to 29 whose innovative projects and programmes have had a significant impact on their communities," a Commonwealth Youth Programme statement said. "This year's focus is on celebrating young people's contribution towards a fairer, more sustainable, more secure and more prosperous future for the Commonwealth: the four sub-themes of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) taking place in London in April," the statement said.

Dayal has been shortlisted for her efforts to challenge the stigma associated with accessing sexual health services and create a safe haven for women to seek out reproductive health facilities in India. Through 'Health Over Stigma', she also supports women to gain the necessary skills to run advocacy campaigns and positively impact the lives of other women. The group claims to have successfully trained more than 450 young activists till date. Kumar's 'Even Cargo' enterprise promotes gender equality through the employment of women couriers, which has traditionally been seen as a male profession in India. His organisation works to overcome the barriers of unemployment through skill development of women, training female drivers in motorcycle driving, self-defence and logistics.

The 20 finalists this year span every region of the Commonwealth, including Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe, and the Pacific. They were shortlisted from more than 400 applications from across the globe. Regional Young Persons of the Year will be selected from among the finalists, with one exceptional entrant being recognised as the overall Commonwealth Young Person of the Year during the Commonwealth Youth Forum in London, which will coincide with CHOGM next month. In addition to a grant of 1,000 pounds to continue their development work, all finalists will be awarded a trophy and certificate. The Regional Young Persons of the Year will receive 3,000 pounds, and the Commonwealth Young Person of the Year will pick up 5,000 pounds. "The finalists this year have initiatives and projects that aim to build a more secure, prosperous, fairer and a sustainable future for all in the grassroots levels and exemplify the outstanding contribution of young people from across the Commonwealth in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and realising the CHOGM 2018 aspiration 'Towards a Common Future'," the programme said.

The Pan-Commonwealth adjudication panel for the overall winners of the 2018 awards, convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat, included the High Commissioner for Saint Kitts and Nevis, representatives from the High Commissions of Fiji, Malaysia, and Kenya, a trustee of the British Youth Council and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

CHOGM, to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with heads of government from across the Commonwealth membership on April 19-20, will also include the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) elections. Among this year's several nominees is one Indian, who is contesting the elections in the category of Vice-President, Partnership & Resources.

Ravi Theja Muthu, from Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, has declared his intention to strengthen existing partnerships if elected. The elections to the CYC's executive will lead to the appointment of a new set of youth leaders for the 2018-2020 term until the next CHOGM.

Date: 27-03-2018; Source: <http://ddinews.gov.in/people/two-indian-activists-shortlisted-commonwealth-youth-awards>



## Keep shouting, don't become Anesthetized, Pope tells Young people



VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope Francis, starting Holy Week services leading to Easter, urged young people on Sunday to keep shouting and not allow the older generations to silence their voices or anesthetize their idealism. Pope Francis waves from his Papamobile after the Palm Sunday Mass in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican, March 25, 2018 REUTERS/Stefano Rellandini.

Francis spoke a day after hundreds of thousands of young Americans and their supporters answered a call to action from survivors of last month's Florida high school massacre and rallied across the United States to demand tighter gun laws. He did not mention the demonstrations. Catholic News Service (CNS) said Gabriella Zuniga, 16, and her sister Valentina, 15, both students from Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, where 17 people were killed in February, attended the service with their parents.

CNS posted a photo of the two holding up signs in St. Peter's Square, with one reading, "Protect Our Children, Not Our Guns."

The 81-year-old Francis led a long and solemn Palm Sunday service before tens of thousands in the square, many of them young people there for the Catholic Church's World Day of Youth.





Carrying a woven palm branch known as a “palmurello,” Francis led a procession in front of the largest church in Christendom to commemorate the day the Bible says Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was hailed as a saviour, only to be crucified five days later.

#### “YOU HAVE IT IN YOU TO SHOUT”

Drawing on biblical parallels, Francis urged the young people in the crowd not to let themselves be manipulated.

“The temptation to silence young people has always existed,” Francis said in the homily of a Mass.

“There are many ways to silence young people and make them invisible. Many ways to anesthetize them, to make them keep quiet, ask nothing, question nothing. There are many ways to sedate them, to keep them from getting involved, to make their dreams flat and dreary, petty and plaintive,” he said. “Dear young people, you have it in you to shout,” he told young people, urging them to be like the people

who welcomed Jesus with palms rather than those who shouted for his crucifixion only days later. “It is up to you not to keep quiet. Even if others keep quiet, if we older people and leaders, some corrupt, keep quiet, if the whole world keeps quiet and loses its joy, I ask you: Will you cry out?”

The young people in the crowd shouted, “Yes!”

While Francis did not mention Saturday’s marches in the United States, he has often condemned weapons manufacturing and mass shootings.

Palm Sunday marked the start of a hectic week of activities for the pope.

On Holy Thursday he is due to preside at two services, including one in which he will wash the feet of 12 inmates in a Rome jail to commemorate Jesus’ gesture of humility towards his apostles the night before he died.

On Good Friday, he is due to lead a Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) procession at Rome’s Colosseum. On Saturday night he leads a Easter vigil service and on Easter Sunday he delivers his twice-yearly “Urbi et Orbi” (to the city and the world) message.

Date: 25-03-2018; Source: <https://in.reuters.com/article/religion-easter-pope-palmsunday/keep-shouting-dont-become-anesthetized-pope-tells-young-people-idINKBN1H10NL>

## Meet us at our hang outs, Youth tell Church

Vatican City: It might be called Cappuccino Catholicism. Young Catholics told their Church elders on March 24 that the faith should be spread in the places where they like to hang out, such as coffee bars.

“We would like the Church to meet us in the various places in which she currently has little or no presence,” reads part of a 12-page document written by some 300 young Catholic delegates from around the world, who met for a week at the Vatican.

“The Church should try to find creative new ways to encounter people where they are comfortable and where they naturally socialize: bars, coffee shops, parks, gyms, stadiums and any other popular cultural centers,” it said.

The delegates met in Rome to share their ideas and concerns with Vatican officials ahead of a synod, or meeting of bishops, in October.

At a news conference presenting the paper, which will feed into a larger working document to be used by the bishops, participants said they wanted their Church to be more open and transparent and less severe.

“If it is difficult for young people to feel a sense of belonging and leadership in the Church, it is much more so for young women,” the document said.

They said they wanted to “encourage the Church to deepen its understanding of the role of women and to empower young women”. The document called for a greater role for women in the Church, which bars them from the priesthood.

“What are the places where women can flourish within the Church and society? The Church can approach these problems with real discussion and open-mindedness to different ideas and experiences,” it said. “If it is difficult for young people to feel a sense of belonging and leadership in the Church, it is much more so for young women,” the document said.

Earlier this month, Catholic women led by former Irish president Mary McAleese, demanded a greater decision-making role for women in the Church, urging the pope to tear down its “walls of misogyny.”

The document said the 1.2 billion-member Church “oftentimes appears as too severe and is often associated with excessive moralism.” It called for a Church that is “welcoming and merciful... and which loves everyone, even those who are not following the perceived standards”.

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