



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

NCCI Newsletter | May 2019

Observance of Nakba Day on 15th May 2019

The commemoration of 71 years of Nakba was jointly organized by National Council of Churches in India - Dalit and Tribal/Adivasi Concerns, Urban Rural Mission and India Peace Centre on 15th May 2019 at IPC Nagpur. People from various walks of life, from different faith communities participated to understand the complex reasons responsible towards the mass exile of the Palestinians from their land which now is under the captivity of Israel. Mr. Rajesh Jadhav explained in brief the historical background of NAKBA by giving details of the Israeli Zionist thought process in the Exodus and occupied areas of Gaza strip.



Mr. Pradip Bansrior, Executive Secretary of Dalit and Tribal/Adivasi Concerns - NCCI highlighted the issues existing in the Indian society and about the invisible wall which is present in the Indian society in the form of caste system and its practices. In between, the Muslim friends offered the sunset prayer *Namaaz* commemorating the Holy month of Ramadan after which they break their fast with *Iftar*. Dr. Suresh Khairnar, National President of Rashtra Seva Dal, Nagpur shared and brought insights and his experiences which he had during his visit to the Gaza strip and Palestine. Dr. Khairnar spoke extensively on the problems faced by the people living at the borders of Israel and Palestine and the key issues which are mutual recognition, borders, security, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement, and the Palestinian right to return. Dr. Khairnar was eloquent in bringing out the how the world media is reluctant towards the problems faced by Palestinian. The program was concluded with the final remarks on standing together and striving for a justice oriented community and society. This was yet another opportunity wherein the National Council of Churches in India once again stood in strictly objecting the violation of human rights done by Israel in the case of Palestinian and affirming that it stands for peace, justice and love which Christ Jesus commands to share with every human being and the whole creation at large.



Farewell to Rev. Fr. Devasagayaraj, National Secretary of CBCI SC/BC Commission

A farewell meeting was organized on 25th May for Rev. Fr. Devasagayaraj, the National Secretary of SC/BC Commission of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), who has completed his tenure and transferred to Puthucherry diocese. There were around 50 friends gathered who represented Church institutions and Civil Society organizations.



Fr. D Raj rendered his service for the last 7 years collaborating with many CS organizations for the rights of Dalit Christians. He was a bridge between NCCI and CBCI. Representing NCCI, Rev Dr. Abraham Mathew, the Executive Secretary and Mr P Raju, the administrative officer of Delhi office handed over a memento. The newly appointed National Secretary Fr. Vijoy Kumar Nayak was also welcomed with a shawl.

The programme was organized by National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC), National campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) and Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF).

NCCI Congratulates Rev. Kasta Dip for his Ordination in Church of North India, Sambalpur Diocese

Rev. Kasta Dip ordained by Rt. Rev Dr. Pinuel Dip of Sambalpur Diocese of Church of North India at Central Church, Bolangir on 16th May 2019.



Rev Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary of NCCI and Chairperson of India Peace Centre delivered the sermon. Rev. Kasta Dip will continue to work at India Peace Centre and remain as a Presbyter at in the Church of North India.

North East India Christian Council (NEICC) organized 2 days seminar on “Contemporary Issues” in North East Churches

With the concern of ongoing issues that are affecting the churches in North East states of India, NEICC the regional body of NCCI organized two days seminar on “Contemporary Issues” at Agartala, Tripura on May 22nd -23rd 2019.

At the seminar contemporary issues such as i. **partnership in missions in the context of North East India Doing Mission**, ii. **Responding as Christians to the Changing Political Scenario in India Today**. iii. **A Critical Approach to the recent Supreme Court ruling on IPC 377 and IPC 497, and their implication for churches in North East India** were dealt and discussed seriously which was an eye opener for the churches of North East India to come together and stand for unity with mutual



understanding and respect knowing the changing scenario that is bringing various contemporary challenges in doing God’s Mission. In the seminar around 90 church leaders of North East from various denomination attended and took part in the seminar. The resource persons at the seminar were Rev. Dr. C. Vanlaldika, Baptist Church of Mizoram, Rev. Dr. K. Lalrinkima. Presbyterian Church of India, Rev. Dr. Sanyu Iralu, Nagaland Baptist Churches Council.

North East India Christian Council Youth Assembly (NEICCYA) 18th Biennial Conference

The North East India Christian Council Youth Assembly (NEICCYA) celebrated their 18th Biennial Conference at the Bajugaon Presbyterian Independent Church, Bajugaon, Assam on 17-19 May 2019. The three-day conference was conducted under the theme “Blessed are the Peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9).

Mr. A.K. Goldsmith, Secretary, Northeast Christian Forum led a seminar on “Christian Youth in Peace Process-North East India Perspective”. He urged the youths to follow the principles of trust and love of God, courage, humility, voluntarism and selflessness in making the service visible as demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

The conference also has elected the new office bearers for the period of 2019-2020. President: Rev. Al Kharshiing (KJP Synod Sepngi); Vice President: Mr. Malsawmtluanga (CKTP, Mizoram Synod); Secretary: Er. Lalremmawia (Salvation Army Youth); Asst. Secretary: Mr. K. Vabeitha (Evangelical Church of Maraland); Finance Secretary: Rev. Kisaming Newme (PYF, CHT Synod) and; Treasurer: Mr. Manbhalang Chyne (Church of God Meghalaya-Assam).

The conference witnessed the activities from the unit members with NEICCYA Office Bearers 15, Choir Members 223, Unit Delegates 319, Minister 32 and participated by more than 500 youths.



Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar elected as the President of WACC Asia

Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar was elected as the President of World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) Asia, in Asia Regional Assembly cum Consultation on Undocumented Migrants, Hong Kong in May 2019.



Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar is working in Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) as the Director. He is President of Christian Union of India.

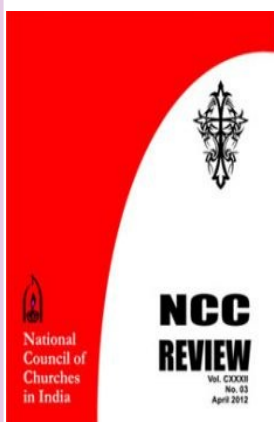
NCCI congratulates Rev. Dr. Rajkumar for his new assignment.

Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi completed his tenure as the General Secretary of CBCNEI

Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi has completed his 5 years tenure as the General Secretary of Council of Baptist Churches in North East India. Dr. Rongpi comes from the Karbi Community after serving for the last 36 years of Christian Ministry in different capacities at different places and organizations in India. He also worked with NCCI as an Executive Secretary of Commission on Unity, Mission and Evangelism from 2011 to 2014.



The new General Secretary Rev. Dr. Akheto Sema took charged from 1st June 2019. Rev. Dr. Sema was Principal in Eastern Theological College, Assam.



NCC Review is the oldest ecumenical journal in India. It was published as *The Harvest Field* since 1862 and is the official organ of NCCI being published as the *NCC Review* since 1922. The articles in the journal focus on themes relevant to the Church and Society and on emerging issues from a theological-ecumenical perspective with a view to Informing people, debating diverse views, challenging ideas and concepts, facilitating discussions, and eliciting responses towards promoting Life-enabling values.

NCC Review Subscription and donation

NCC Review is published eleven times a year. The subscription rates are highly subsidized. Further discount is available for bulk subscriptions and for Pastors, students and theological educators.

NCC Review articles

Articles are invited for publication in NCC Review. Article can be 3000 – 4000 words in length in MS Word (.doc) format, reviews of recent theological or related books and Bible studies. Article submitted must be unpublished and original work of author.

Send articles to nccreview@ncci1914.com with "Article for NCC Review" written in the subject line.

Advertisements

NCC also invites advertisements to publish in the Journal in single or multiple insertion.

For more information, please see [NCC Review](#)

VCLC Maps Issues and Resources in Vidarbha Region

The Vidharbha Coordination Committee Meeting (VCC) met in NCCI on the 17-5-19 along with 8 Coordinators from all over Vidharbha to discuss and map various issues of farmers in the region. The common voices expressed that the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra is known for its rich diversity of crops and good black cotton soil. But for the last few years, this region is known for farmers' suicides which is the reflection of low agricultural production and lack of proper irrigation facilities. In the past 15 years, Vidarbha has been recognized as a farmer's suicide prone area in India. Active workers from various 9 districts gave their insights.

The participants discussed about the ground realities of Vidarbha region and the reasons of poor cultivation.

Some action plans were taken in this meeting such as Propagate and promote the importance of Procurement and Pricing, Team Work, Catching up with the times and The methodology of Consenting farmers.



CMAI invites all pastors, chaplains, and people who are interested in Healing Ministry to attend **33rd Annual Course on Pastoral Care for the Sick and Suffering** scheduled on **10th-24th September, 2019** in New Delhi.

[Brochure](#)

[Invitation Letter](#)

Association of Theologically Trained Women of India (ATTWI) 
requests all Theologically Trained Women of India to associate with ATTWI.

For further information, Please contact-

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New Leadership in NWICC

North West India Council of Churches elected its new leadership for the term of 2019– 2021 in the General Body Meeting held on 29th April 2019.

The new Office Bearers are

President— Rt. Rev. Gregorios Mar Stephanos (MTC)

Vice President— Dr. Priya John (CMAI)

Bishop Collin C. Theodore

Secretary/ Treasurer— Rev. Sujeev Das (MCI) .

Bishop Dr. Anilkumar John Servand is appointed Master of Serampore College

Rt. Rev. Dr. John S. Sadananda, the Master of Serampore College has announced the appointment of Bishop Dr. Anilkumar John Servand as a Master of Serampore College with effect from 1st June 2019.

Bishop Dr. Anilkumar John Servand hails from Karnataka and currently is the Bishop of Mumbai Episcopal Area and North India Regional Conference of MCI. He is also a Chairperson of Medical Council of MCI and Women Council of MCI.

NCCI congratulates Bishop Rev. Servand and wishes him well as he guides the Senate family..

Telangana Council of Churches distributed Relief Material to Survivors of Bonded Labours on 1st May 2019 (Labour Day) in Mahabubnagar

Telangana Council of Churches distributed food materials and clothing to the bonded labour survivors at Banda Midapalli, Mahabubnagar district, Telangana . The help provided to 29 families rescued from Bonded labour. These laours are living without electricity, proper drinking water and any other basic facilities. Presently they are shelter less, living in open lands, fields and jungles.

The programme organized by Rev. Dr. T. Bhasker, General Secretary, Telangana Council of Churches .



Interfaith Consultation on Building Gender and Sexuality Inclusive Communities: Identifying Stakeholder, Process and Role of faith based agencies

An Interfaith Consultation was organized at the CSI Synod Centre, Chennai from April 15-16, 2019, by the NCCI – ESHA Project, bringing together key LGBTI+ activists and a few faith leaders to discuss the role of faith based agencies in building gender and sexuality inclusive communities in the country. The consultation was organized in the context of the largely perceived notion of inclusiveness and tolerance in the Indian society while significant gaps prevail in contentious areas of gender and sexuality. Many undergo severe mental trauma, abuses, isolation from their own homes and communities, because of which, they are unable to lead a healthy and dignified life. There is a high rate of suicide among the SOGI communities in India. Many being school drop-outs, are unable to access higher education and livelihood options, in spite of the government reservations available today. Access to healthcare has either become a traumatic experience or are unaffordable.

The delegates shared various issues faced at grassroots, such as, it was largely felt among the LGBTI+ communities to be accepted and be part of their existing faith communities, rather than having to be discriminated and asked to start their own faith community. While there are contentious issues concerning the acceptance of homosexuality and the gay community, there were no such issues regarding accepting the transgender people. In spite of this reality, they continue to face discrimination and abuses. It was observed that there are hardly any positive conversations and discussions around sexuality at large, whereby, there is a big need to create a healthy atmosphere to learn and discuss some of the basic aspects of human sexuality. Gender and Sexuality are often mixed together and wrongly understood, there is a need to engage with both separately.

It was also observed that there are more factors other than scriptural, which influences the way a society or a faith community understands gender and sexuality identity. These are cultural, ethnic, traditional factors, which also influences how they interpret the scriptures, and hence their understanding about gender and sexuality. In such realities, sharing of testimonies by the marginalized has helped faith communities understand them better. Suicides, attempts of suicides, health issues whereby HIV related issues are some of the major issues faced by the LGBTI+ communities, whereby the need for providing legal services, health care and counseling services was stressed. Existing services in these areas by government and non-government agencies are not sufficient and efficient. Many of such issues are also linked with livelihood, whereby many face challenges and often risk their lives for the same. The existing government schemes needs to be assessed and opportunities for networking needs to be explored.

The NCCI General Secretary shared about the formation of the standing forum of NCCI, i.e. the National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Diversities in 2014, as a significant step taken by NCCI towards inclusivity and stressed the need to embrace this vision within the NCCI.

Annual Steering Committee Meeting of NCCI – ESHA with Partners

The annual Steering Committee Meeting of NCCI – ESHA with Partners, Kerk in Actie and Church of Sweden took place at the CNI Bhawan, New Delhi from May 2-3, 2019. The meeting had the participation of Mr Ravi Agarwal (Deputy Director, Innovative Change Collaborative, Delhi), Mr Joseph Thomas (Programme Manager, Kerk in Actie, Delhi), Ms Karin Bodin (Programme Officer, ACT Church of Sweden, Uppsala), Dr Dieter Mitternacht (Consultant, ACT – CoS, Hongkong), Fr Philip Kuruvilla (Consultant, ESHA, Bengaluru), Fr Thomas Ninan (General Coordinator, ESHA) and Mr Vijayan Pillay (Programme Coordinator, ESHA) and was presided by the General Secretary, Rev Asir Ebenezer. The meeting took a review of ESHA's activities through the last one year, giving recommendations for further improvement of the programs. Some of the key highlights of the meeting was, to assess the relevance and usability of the various HIV policies implemented within the NCCI network, namely the Policy guideline for churches, the Work Place Policy, the Policy on Education, the Social Inclusion Tool and the publications brought out by ESHA in 2017. The much awaited two training modules, namely one for churches and the other for theological faculty will be ready for sharing by the month of July. The effort towards creating learning centers in the two theological colleges, namely the UTC, Bengaluru and the Bishop's College, Kolkata has taken longer than planned, due to various difficulties that were beyond the reach of the project. Hence, it was suggested to explore the scope of developing a training centre in Nagpur at the NCCI Campus. The standing forum of NCCI, the National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Diversities (NEFGSD) also recently met in Chennai to revive its activities with the addition of new members in its Core Group. The Core Group will meet in July in Nagpur to further discuss plans. Discussions for the new phase also started with suggestions towards developing programs in new areas.