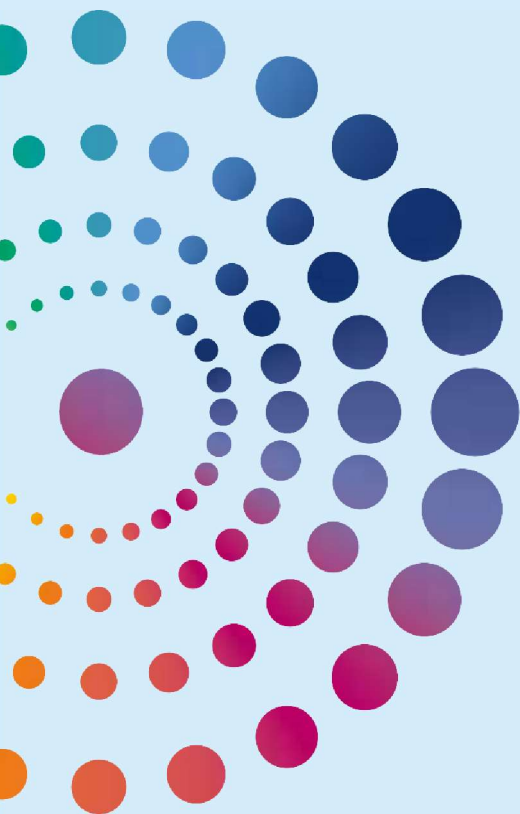


National Council of Churches in India

# NCCI Sunday

24 January 2021

*Liturgical Resources*





# *Table of Contents*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| President's message                         | i   |
| Preface                                     | ii  |
| Introduction                                | iii |
| Sermon Notes                                | 1   |
| Liturgical Resources                        | 5   |
| Collect for Unity                           | 5   |
| Prayers for ecumenical initiatives in India | 5   |
| Prayers during the pandemic                 | 6   |
| Prayers for Life                            | 7   |
| Intercessory prayers                        | 7   |
| NCCI – a profile                            | 14  |



## *President's message*

I greet you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that we will face 2021 with hope and faith in God who is with us in the pandemic and is redeeming this world from destruction of pestilences. We begin this year by praying together that God may keep us united in the ministry of growing together and affirming the life of all creation

In our context the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) is an instrument of God in facilitating this united witness. On January the 24<sup>th</sup> 2021 we celebrate this expression of unity within the fellowship of NCCI and dedicate it for the people of our country.

I urge all fellow Episcopal ministers across Christian denominations to urge the churches in their care and supervision **to observe NCCI Sunday**. The theme for the NCCI Sunday is the same as this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity "Abide in my love and you shall bear fruit" (John 15:1-1).

May the divinity of God expressed in the theology of the trinity guide us in our initiatives of witnessing together. May we be blessed with the joy of abiding in the love of Jesus, so that we will continue to be fruitful in our ministries that is spread across every nook and corner of this country, serving the poorest of the poor among fellow citizens with selfless love and utmost dedication.

I wish you all a blessed 2021

With prayers for your ministry

**Most Rev. Dr. P. C. Singh**

Moderator, CNI &

President, NCCI



## *Preface*

On behalf of the leadership of the National Council of Churches in India I wish you all a blessed and safe year ahead. We start the year amidst many fears and concerns but with the faith in the hope of a God who is in control of all situations and aberrations, strengthening the initiatives of all working to redeem creation from the pandemic

The allegory of the fruit reminds us that we are what we are depending on where we are rooted. The theme of this year's week of prayer for Christian unity is an invitation to be rooted in Jesus so as to enrich the cultivation and nurturing of life flourishing contexts and situations. It is desired that coordinated initiatives of Christ-communities will ensure such a culture and nurture life-flourishing as the essence of sustaining creation

Coordinated Christian initiatives such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are sure to be reflected in all aspects of life and living. NCCI Sunday (24<sup>th</sup> January 2021) reminds us of our specific commitment as Churches and Agencies of the Protestant and Orthodox Christian traditions to this redeeming grace of God.

We are grateful to Rev. Dr. Chandran Paul Martin, one of the former Executive Secretaries of the NCCI and Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, presently serving as the Consulting Regional Representative, South/ South Asia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for preparing the sermon notes specific to the observance of NCCI Sunday this year.

Please pray for the National Council of Churches in India. Should your church/ institution/ agency be able to send an offertory for the ministries of the NCCI, please send cheque/ demand draft favouring National Council of Churches in India, payable at Nagpur.

Do let us know if you are making a bank transfer. For transfer in Indian Rupee from within India: **National Council of Churches in India, Savings Bank Account Number 496981076 Indian Bank, Cement Road Branch, Shivaji Nagar, Nagpur. IFS Code IDIB000N007.**

Please visit [www.ncci1914.com](http://www.ncci1914.com) to read about the various ministries of the NCCI. Send a message on WhatsApp to +9172181 83675 if you want to receive updates. You can also send photos and updates on your activities to this number. Write to us on [ncci@ncci1914.com](mailto:ncci@ncci1914.com) about your experiences of observing the NCCI Sunday 2021

With every good wish

**Rev. Asir Ebenezer**  
General Secretary, NCCI



## *Introduction*

NCCI Sunday is an annual feature of NCCI, and it is observed every year during the week of prayer for Christian unity (Unity octave). It is celebrated by the constituent member churches, their local congregations, regional councils of churches, related agencies, theological seminaries and other ecumenical organisations. It is a time to celebrate ecumenism locally with a special emphasis on reflecting local issues from the perspective of justice, equality and peace. It encourages people to work for harmonious community living.

As we come together, we realise the need for unity in our mission and ministry to witness Christ in this land. The division of Christians is an impediment to the witness of the Church. Therefore, it is the time to confess our sin of expressing our parochial interests by intimidating our brothers and sisters. Let this worship enable us to open our hearts to accept 'others' and acknowledge their presence which makes all our lives meaningful and happy. It is also the time to make new resolutions to jointly accompany those people who are starving and yearning to experience life in its fullness.

Most of the prayers in the booklet are drawn from different ecumenical worship orders prepared and used on different ecumenical occasions. All these prayers envisage an emancipated world where the justice and peace of God can be actualised in our day to day life experiences.

NCCI encourages constituents to organise NCCI Sunday worship according to the context of the worshippers. Some useful prayers and a sermon note for NCCI Sunday is provided herewith. These can be incorporated in the worship.

**Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew**  
Executive Secretary,  
Policy, Governance and Public Witness



## *Sermon notes*

*“Abide in my Love and you shall bear fruit”*

Sermon notes for John 15:1-17:

*To abide- to stay, be connected, be loyal, live in the covenant relationship, not an option but discipleship*

We have had an extra-ordinary life in 2020 dictated by the swings and waves of the pandemic. Life felt so vulnerable and uncertain. COVID-19 changed the ways we worshiped, congregated and expressed our love. There was a growing loss of humanity as nothing was 'a given'. The worth of lives and livelihood was graded according to ones' economic status. Expressions of love too took new forms. We are reminded of the tens and thousands of migrant workers serving urban India who returned to their homes in impossible conditions, some didn't make it. We are reminded of the frontline health, and other, workers who tirelessly worked to make us safe, some even died in the process. In this setting the Ecumenical movement has chosen the theme “Abide in my Love” from the Gospel of John as something worth meditating upon as we look to new and effective ways of expressing God's Love. What does “abiding” mean? What are the expressions and manifestations of this relationship? How does this “abiding” address issues of gross injustice in a society distorted by poverty, economic disparities, caste, patriarchy, power-abuse, exclusion, intolerance and other realities? As the Churches, ecumenical movements and peoples' movements think of transiting to a post-Covid-19 future, we talk about “abiding in God's love. Let's walk together briefly as we unpack this theme to make it relevant to our faith, ministries and service.

### **Shape of the TEXT John 15:1-17**

- John 15:1-8: The Imagery of the Vine, explanation of the organic connectedness of the branches, bearing fruits.
- John 15:8-13: Committed relationship with God based on love

- John 15:14-17: A new definition (even naming) of the relationship based on dignity transforming us from slaves to friends, and the friendship based on loyalty, completeness and commitment

### **Our Context – Key Words**

- Ecumenism in action-various expressions including worship; service; liturgical; diakonia; communion; organic unity; confessional unity; (Global- WCC, ACT, EAA, CCA-Ecumenical Disability Alliance; National- NCCI, EFI, etc; Regional councils- Community based-Congregational) ecumenical prayers; common understanding of the BEM process
- Ecumenical actions- Unity Octave; Unity Weeks- Unity; ecumenical gatherings and observations- HIV/AIDS, Least coin, etc);
- Ecumenical paralysis- ecumenical disunity (Exclusion, gender injustice, sexism, class-caste-poverty;) speaking with different perspectives; internal strife (conflicts, power struggle; strife, corruption, lack of accountability inside the churches;
- National context- Communalism; Hindutva; anti-poor, farmers struggles; dis-empowerment; dis-enfranchisement; disillusionment with political leadership; poverty- caste- Dalit oppression, lack of political accountability, etc
- The Churches in India- Worship and Service, diakonia, proclamation of the Gospel, some continue to deny leadership, ordination in Ministry of the sacraments to women, some churches still remain exclusive, some profess Christ and practice caste, exclude certain sections from the 'ecclesia', etc
- COVID-19 pandemic- impact nationally, impact on the poor, migrants, front-line-workers, medical workers, VACCINE-accessibility-affordability- safety, livelihood recovery,

### **Some selective exegetical considerations:**

- The chapter begins with the extended allegory of Christ as 'the true vine' ("I am the true vine". The Father (read God) is the vinedresser- garden, vine-grower. Jesus's disciples are thought to be branches (Greek: *τα κλήματα*, *ta klémata*, specifically meaning vine branches) which must 'abide' in him if they are to 'bear fruit'.

- The True Vine (Greek: ἡ ἀμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή- *hē ampelos hē alēthinē*) is an allegory or parable used by Jesus as recorded in John 15:1–17. It portrays Jesus' disciples as branches of himself, who is described as the "true vine", and God the "gardener".

- That God glorified (verse 8) by the mutual abiding, there is a choice of mutuality. When this happens, disciples fulfil God's will and continue the work of Christ. That mutual abiding causes the disciples to bear fruit in the likeness of Christ. The word μένω (*meno*) means-to remain, to abide, or to stay. The use of this word in the Greek New Testament is important in describing the relationship between every believer and Christ; in that the 'permanence (lasting, perpetuity)' of the believer in Christ, and of Christ in him/her is explicated through an understanding of μένω.

- To remain stable or to stay in a state of love that abides with God implies to 'continue in a place: sojourn will abide in the house of the Lord;' abide by' also means to conform to abide by the rules, values, principles; to accept without objection; to comply with your decision. A deep and growing relationship with God will result in love, hope and peace in all circumstances, hope in trials, strength in adversity, and joy that cannot be taken from you.' Branches cannot 'be branches, branch-out' without being connected to the main vine, GOD!

### **Some Helpful Sermon Points:**

There are numerous Old Testament passages which refer to Israel as a vine: Psalms 80:8-16 (focus-turn again, have regard for this vine), Isaiah 5:1-7 (focus- vineyard of the Lord expected Justice) , Jeremiah 2:21 (focus-how did you de-generate into wild-vine?), Ezekiel 15:1-8 (focus- the vine and faithfulness), 19:10-14 (focus- this espouses the imagery of the mother as the vine, the genderisation of vine as a source of living, nurture, love, etc), and Hosea 10:1(focus- a luxuriant vine yielding fruits). The vine became emblematic of Israel, a community that God accompanied in their journey. 'This symbol reflects Israel as faithless community to Yahweh and/or the object of severe punishment. Ezek 15:1-8 very specifically talks about the worthlessness, the triviality of wood from a vine (in relation to disobedient Judah). A branch cut



from a vine is worthless except to be burned as fuel. '

The primacy of effectiveness in Christian life and the truth from one's connectedness to Christ. Using the 'Body imagery' while explaining the "Church as the Body of Christ", Paul (1 Corinthians 12), speaks about Christ as the Head and believers as members of the Body. Both metaphors bring out the central and indispensable connection which exists between Christ and believers.

Another aspect that stands out is the Jesus' characteristic reference to God, always CONNECTED, COOPERATING, OPERATING together- the collective God-head (cf. 5:19-23). There is this strong imagery of being "cut-off" at the root that is used by John the Baptist in Matt 3:10— "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." More importantly, however, the imagery of being cast-'into the fire' constitutes pointing to a process of judgment, is also close to the Johannine imagery in 15:6.

There is this strong affirmation of the relationship between Jesus and the disciples and/or Jesus and God. It also points to and emphasizes the permanence of the relationship (6:56, 8:31, 8:35, 14:10). This permanence is embedded in the notion of faithfulness, remaining in the 'covenant of and organic relationship' that bears 'fruits' in the realm of sinful forces.

We can conclude, therefore, that the branches (read disciples/ followers, etc) who are not faithful in the 'connectedness, the loyalty, the faithfulness' are the ones who affirm God, BUT continue to live in the 'Christ- contradictions. They who continue to confess their faith in God, BUT practice caste, patriarchy, sexism, and are not genuine believers, are hypocritical believers and refuse to remain in the main vine. Those who profess allegiance to Jesus but who in reality do not belong to him, they too may be thought of as branches that did not bear fruit. They departed from the ranks of the Christians because they never did really belong, and their departure shows that they did not belong.

(Prepared by **Rev. Dr. Chandran Paul Martin**,  
Consulting Regional Representative, South/ South Asia,  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)



## Liturgical Resources

(You are free to use all or any of these resources)

### Collect for Unity<sup>1</sup>

O Triune God, the Prince of Peace: give us grace to realise the great dangers we are in by our unhappy division; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Creator of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and mouth glorify you; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

### Prayer for the Ecumenical Initiatives in India

1. O God of eternal life and everlasting peace, we remember the Church in India. While we are proud of our heritage of Christianity in India especially the early stages of its emergence, we recognise our shortcoming to exemplify your name by leading a just and peaceful life. We realise our shortcomings in developing mutual respect and acceptance for each other as equals in our community life. We are divided in different ways, yet we are challenged every day by your manifestations through ecumenical expressions in this country. We give thanks for the National Council of Churches in India, its constituent members, office bearers and its staff. We give thanks to you for allowing its existence in this country for more than a century. Let your grace guide NCCI in identifying contemporary challenges in this country and helping the churches to address them with a vision of transforming communities with the values of mutuality, equality and peace. Let your reign be a reality where all can have dignity in you. **Amen.**

2. Our creator God we thank you for all those who were pioneers in the search for bringing unity among churches. We praise you for the National Council of Churches in India, its constituent member churches, its regional councils, its related agencies and All-India Christian organizations. We give thanks to

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<sup>1</sup>Source: adapted with altered from "The Book of Common Prayer"

you for its office bearers, executive secretaries and the staff members. May the interventions of NCCI become the catalysts to establish justice, peace within our Church and Society at large. We also pray for ecumenical fellowships with the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Fellowship of India with whom NCCI is in partnership in mission. O God, from the depth of our hearts we turn towards you and praise you with all those whom your Word has illumined and called, that your Holy Spirit might move us: those whom you desire to bring together in one baptism, one faith and one communion, in praise of your glorious name. **Amen**

### **Prayer(s) during the Pandemic<sup>2</sup>**

1. Gracious God, You are our Peace when we face chaos and confusion. You are our Comforter, when threatened by situations and circumstances over which we have little or no control. You are our Healer when we are sick or experiencing physical and emotional pain. You are our Saviour when we are overwhelmed and feel lost in the throes of life. You are our Refuge and Strength in times of trouble and despair. You are our Emmanuel, the Triune God, who abides with us eternally through all the changing scenes of life. You are our Hope when life seems to be in ruins and when we are in despair. Gracious God, You are Love, and Life. **Amen**

2. God our Healer, show your compassion for the whole human family that is in turmoil and burdened with illness and with fear. Come to our aid as the coronavirus spreads globally, heal those who are sick, support those in distress and protect their families and friends from the infection. Grant us your spirit of love and self-discipline so that we may come together, working to support those who lost their livelihood. Make us vigilant, attentive, and proactive in the eradication of all diseases that cause suffering and often result in death. Heal us from our self-centeredness and indifference that make us worry only when the virus threatens us, open ways beyond the timidity and fear that too easily ignore our neighbours. Strengthen and encourage those in public health services and in the medical profession: care-givers, nurses, attendants, doctors, all who commit themselves to caring for the

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<sup>2</sup>Adapted from 31032020\_COVID-19and SGBV.pdf (oikoumene.org) and from The Lutheran World Federation (with alteration)

sick and their families. **Amen.**

### **Prayer(s) for Life**

1. God of life, we give thanks to you for binding us together in faith and love. Our gratitude overflows since you have given us life in abundance. Our gratitude overflows since you have shown us a way of life that adds more meaning to our existence. Our gratitude overflows since you have shown us how to celebrate life in the midst of death. Our gratitude overflows since you have taught us to be more inclusive in our life journey by extending our friendship to all. We give thanks to you for your accompaniment in our life which challenges us to be sojourners with those in distress and in need. In giving thanks we recognise our ministry and mission that you have entrusted upon all of us. Let your Holy Spirit continually breathe upon us so that we may experience new meaning in every moment of our life. **Amen**

2. Compassionate God, we give thanks to you for all your wonderful creations. You have crafted them in a unique manner, as a part of a web of relationships, in which each one enjoys the warmth of fellowship. When your handiworks glorify your name God, we pray for your blessings in becoming stewards of your creations. May your Holy Spirit give us the discernment to recognize the significance of preserving the eco system which sustains and promotes life. Let your love rule our minds and bodies so that we can be your ambassadors in our areas of involvement. **Amen.**

## **Intercessory Prayers**

### **Witness among People of Living Faiths**

We as part of Christian community owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person to every people and to every creation. Let us pray to God to make us witnesses of Christ in the immediate context of our neighbourhood, where people live by different and varied religious convictions and ideological persuasions. True witnesses follow Jesus Christ in respecting and affirming the uniqueness and freedom of others. We confess as Christians that we have often looked for the worst in others and have passed negative judgement upon other religions. We hope as Christians to learn to witness Christ to our neighbours in a humble,

repentant and joyful spirit. **Amen**

### **Freedom of Religion or Belief**

O God of freedom we pray for those in trouble due to the emerging religion-centred political mobilisations worldwide. Many of our brothers and sisters in different faiths and belief systems are becoming the victims of religion-based polarisations. Many are killed, persecuted and are being socially boycotted. O Jesus Christ, we recollect how you transformed the cross as the power for the continued proclamation of freedom. The custodians of power both in the political sphere and in the religious sphere continue to nail you on a cross since 'freedom' challenges their power expressions. O God of Spirit, we affirm your power to overcome the forces of death through resurrection. The long list of martyrs reveals your power that sustains us in the midst of persecution. With ardent hope in the reign of God we specially commit into your loving hands the persecuted churches and people along with those who receive humiliation for their faith, We believe in your power which strengthens us in the midst of suffering. **Amen.**

### **Farmers**

Merciful God, we remember our farmers who are struggling to ensure their rights over their crops. They are the hands that tilled, the hands that harvested, the hands that processed, the hands that transported, the hands that stocked and the hands that distributed. As we gratefully remember them O God, we commit their struggles before you. We pray for their well-being and for an end to their struggles. May your wisdom be showered upon all responsible people so that they may find ways to resolve the struggles of all people working in the agricultural sector. **Amen**

### **Women<sup>3</sup>**

1. Spirit of life, we remember today the countless women-both famous and nameless, who in the course of history have used the strength and gifts that you have given them to change the world. We call upon these our ancestors in the faith to help us to discover in ourselves this strength and the way to use it to bring in the Kingdom of justice and peace.

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<sup>3</sup>Adapted from: A collection of Prayer for Peace – 2006 DOV, WCC and from Read more at: [https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/family/prayers\\_for\\_women.html](https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/family/prayers_for_women.html)

We remember Sarah, who with Abraham answered God's call to leave their native land and put their trust in a covenant with the Lord.

We pray that you grant us her strength of faith.

We remember Esther and Deborah, who by their personal deeds of courage saved their nation.

We pray that you grant us similar strength and courage in acting for the good of many.

We remember Mary Magdalene and the other women who followed Jesus, who were not believed when they told of his resurrection.

We pray that you grant us their strength of belief when confronted with scepticism.

We remember Phoebe and Priscilla and the other women who were leaders in the early church.

We pray that we may also receive the same strength in spreading the Gospel and inspiring other communities of believers.

We remember the abbesses of the Middle Ages who kept faith and knowledge alive.

We pray that you will grant us also the same strength of leadership they manifested.

We remember our mothers and grandmothers, whose lives have shaped ours.

We pray that we may receive the particular strength that they sought to pass on to us.

We pray for women who are victims of domestic violence.

May they find strength to overcome fear and seek solutions.

We pray for women facing a life of poverty and malnutrition.

May they find strength to hope and work together for a better life.

We pray for women who have led the way in making a breakthrough for women.

May they find strength to persevere and open up new opportunities for all women.

We pray for our daughters and granddaughters.

May they find strength to discover a life that is distinctively theirs.

(Add here the names of women whom you wish to remember or for whom you wish to pray.)

2. O God who walks beside us, each moment of each day. You know us by name, see each joy and sorrow. Your faithfulness towards womanhood has been manifested through granting an ability to carry and care for new life. You blessed them with your wisdom so that they could be meaningful ministers in your vineyard. We pray for the entire womanhood in India who face gender-based discriminations in the mother's womb, at birth, at home, in society, in churches, in organizations, and in political spaces. Although you created women in your own image, they are becoming the victims of hatred and violence. Most of the time they are being considered as unholy and impure especially in religious places. They are criticized and judged by assumptions and cultural stereotypes on their personal lives. Let us break these false assumptions and build spaces of support and affirmation, so that women can exercise leadership in creative ways. **Amen**

### **Tribal/ Adivasi<sup>4</sup> Communities**

1. We pray for the Tribals and Adivasis who are among the most marginalised and neglected sections of the society. Although land is their identity and their livelihood, day by day they face the attempts by land mafias to snatch away land from them. Their struggles are intensified by their living condition where they suffer from wide spread poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity. Bring healing to those who are enduring pain, bring value to those who are disregarded, bring joy to those in great sorrow, bring hope to those who have none to live for, bring provision to those who are hungry, bring shelter to those without a home, bring community to those who are lonely. We know that you are a God whose heart cries out for justice, that you are a God who longs to feed the hungry. Fill us with your compassion, give us your eyes to see, the boldness and selflessness and wisdom, so that we too might cry out for justice and feed the hungry, so that your light may shine throughout the earth. **Amen**

2. Almighty and Everlasting God, Sustainer of the Universe and the God of diversity, You have made all nations to inhabit the

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<sup>4</sup>(Adapted with alteration from NCCI Tribal and Adivasi Sunday Liturgy, 2019) & composed by Prof Dr Lalnghakthuami of Aizawl Theological College.

whole earth, and you have allotted the times of our existence and the boundaries of the places where we would live; Let there be Shalom, peace within ourselves and with our neighbours. As the sovereign authority has introduced militarization over many states in the North East, the identities of the citizens are in question. The existence of those who live in that region as human beings is disturbed and threatened many a time. Let there be Shalom, peace between the sovereign power and the tribal people. We pray for peace in all our regions, let your comforting hands be upon us. Let there be Shalom. **Amen.**

### **Dalits and Dalit Christians**

Look favourably O God on the cries of those among us who are discriminated on the basis of our work or descent. We stand banished from the site of those who seek to privilege caste and those that belong to the upper echelons of such stratification. As if this is not enough, we are punished again for choosing to follow Jesus. Strengthen our resolve to faithfully confess you even as we urge you to prosper our efforts and bless all those in church and society who fight against this heinous practice of caste. We give thanks to you and look forward to a time when caste based discrimination and caste-selective discrimination based on religion will be a thing of the past. Hear our petition according to your revelation in Jesus our saviour. **Amen**

### **Youth<sup>5</sup>**

We pray for various organizations which show the courage to transcend and disrupt the prevailing sinful order. We especially beseech your grace for the youth across the world in their attempt to challenge the dominant narratives by creating a radical counter-hegemonic space safe. We pray for all the youth of our country and across the globe who go through difficult challenges in terms of peer group pressure, drug & substance abuse, and juvenile crime, which also stands as a daunting task for the whole world. **Amen**

### **Persons with Disabilities<sup>6</sup>**

We pray for your Church throughout the world. We give you

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<sup>5</sup>Adapted from: the order of worship- National Council of Churches in India – Youth Concerns, International Youth Day, 2018



thanks, Lord God, for all persons with disabilities in our churches – for those who lead and minister, for those who struggle with physical barriers, and for those who speak of your love and yet have no verbal language. We give you thanks for those who are less mobile, who teach us to be still; those who have experienced mental distress who teach us how to have faith in you, and those who live with pain and teach us how to see things differently. And we bring before you today all those who long to belong but feel excluded, committing ourselves to treat as equals all people of varied abilities. **Amen**

### **Ecological Initiatives<sup>7</sup>**

"The Evangelistic Witness is directed towards all of the ktisis (creation) which groans and travails in search of adoption and redemption ... The transfiguring power of the Holy Trinity is meant to reach into every nook and cranny of our national life... The Evangelistic Witness will also speak to the structures of this world; economic, political, and societal institutions... We must re-learn the patristic lesson that the Church is the mouth and voice of the poor and the oppressed in the presence of the powers that be. In our own way we must learn once again 'how to speak to the ear of the King', on the people's behalf... Christ was sent for no lessor purpose than bringing the world into the life of God." **Amen**

### **Persons of different gender identities and sexualities**

God of Grace, in ways beyond our understanding, you formed humanity with the same joy and care that birthed the rest of creation. We rejoice that each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made in your Divine image. Yet we see the differences in the name of one's gender and sexual identities. When many of us are struggling within the cage of gender stereotyping, we understand that we all are called by you under one name – beloved. Let all of us understand the diversities in creation and accept it as a reality. O God we realise that many of our friends, your children, go through pain, discrimination, lack of dignity, lack of a safe place to stay, lack of livelihood. They face shame and suffering even in your

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<sup>6</sup>Diocese of Bath and Wells, Church of England. Disability Sunday\_Layout 1 (bathandwells.org.uk)

<sup>7</sup>"Confessing Christ Today, Reports of Groups at a Consultation of Orthodox Theologians," International Review of Mission 64, no. 253 (January 1975): 10 and 3.

sanctuary. O God we pray for a good understanding about gender and sexual minorities among us so that we all may be considered as your beloved and celebrate life together. **Amen**

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<sup>7</sup>"Confessing Christ Today, Reports of Groups at a Consultation of Orthodox Theologians," *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 253 (January 1975): 10 and 3.



# NCCI – a profile

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) is an ecumenical community comprising about 14 million members from 30 Protestant and Orthodox Churches, 17 Regional Christian Councils and 25 other Church related, ecumenical bodies rooted in the Gospel as revealed in the person, life and work of Jesus Christ.

## **Vision**

NCCI envisions just and inclusive communities which enable the full realisation of the human potential individually and collectively, and live together in harmony, justice and peace.

## **Mission**

NCCI is called to facilitate and strengthen ecumenical bonds of unity among the churches, as a visible expression of being members of the one body of Christ. Through such ecumenical togetherness, it is committed to serve all of creation by giving expression to the various implications of the gospel. Through such unity and service, NCCI continues to bear witness to Jesus, the gospel and the movement for the realisation of the 'reign of God'.

NCCI is thus called to bear witness in the Indian society and the world, sharing a common task with all of creation, participating in efforts towards realising societies based on principles of justice and inclusion.

The mission of NCCI is to participate in efforts towards realising just and inclusive communities through collaborative programmes with the churches at local, national and international levels, people's movements, grassroots communities, community based organisations, faith communities, and governments.

Affirming solidarity with the social, economic and political initiatives of the communities such as Dalit, tribal, women, children, youth, migrants, persons with disabilities, different sexual orientations, religious and linguistic minorities, and PLWHA who have been historically disadvantaged and excluded, NCCI will facilitate and accompany the churches through joint action simultaneously reforming church and society.

## **Core Values**

Equality, dignity, justice, love, peace, inclusion, transparency and accountability, are the core values of NCCI, and they will be practiced in all dimensions of our life together. NCCI commits itself to a church of the poor and for the poor.

NCCI acknowledges the complementarities of cultures, and affirms the uniqueness of all faiths, ideologies, traditions and beliefs that respect all people and do not discriminate.

### **Strategic Objectives**

To actualise the vision and mission NCCI will have four strategic objectives (SOs). These four strategic objectives embody and express the essence of the gospel.

**SO 1:** Unity: Be a common platform for wider Christian communities.

It is in the pursuit of and commitment to this vision that the churches are called to play a responsible role being united together (Jn.17:21) loving one another (cf. Jn.15:12), facing all the challenges that may come in their way (Jn.15:18-27).

**SO 2:** Witness: Facilitate expressions of wider ecumenism.

The vision of God's involvement is one of all embracing ecumenism in which there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (cf. Gal.3:28), where there is an innumerable multitude of people from every nation, tribe, and culture (cf. Rev. 7:9), indeed all of creation experiencing fulfilment (cf. Rom. 8:21).

**SO 3:** Service: Promote just and inclusive communities with good governance.

Jesus Christ started his ministry laying emphasis on the reign of God (Mk.1:14-15), calling upon people to direct their views and ways of life to the purposes of God in all of creation, as exemplified in the Nazareth Manifesto (Lk.4:18-19).

**SO 4:** Practice: Actualizing a just and inclusive church for all.

Thus churches are required to so structure and administer themselves that they serve as bearers of the gospel of justice, love, fellowship, peace, and fulfilling life (cf. Phil.2:1-8).

## **MINISTRY PRIORITY AREAS**

### **1. ECUMENISM AND MISSION**

Facilitating 'Prophetic', 'Ecumenical' and  
'Responsible ' missional and ministerial interventions.

### **2. HUMAN RIGHTS**

Affirming and asserting 'Right to Life' with dignity of all  
and dignity for all.

### **3. PEACE BUILDING**

Promoting relationships and cultivating a culture of peace with justice and care for creation.

### **4. MIGRATION**

Expressing solidarity with hospitality for migrants, leading towards 'responsible' integration in society.

### **5. TRAFFICKING**

Intercepting human trafficking: Healing brokenness and facilitating restoration.

These five priorities seek to pursue of four objectives of Unity, Witness, Service and Practice as outlined by the evaluation and Strategic Planning Process of NCCI conducted in 2013 in connection with the centenary of NCCI in 2014.

#### **Program Clusters of NCCI**

1. Policy Governance and Witness
2. Dalit & Tribal/Adivasi Concerns
3. Youth Concerns
4. Women Concerns

#### **Project of NCCI**

1. Vidarbha Centre for Labour Concerns
2. ESHA: Towards Greater Inclusivity in Churches and in Theological Education

#### **Fora**

1. NCCI Indian Disability Ecumenical Accompaniment (IDEA)
2. NCCI National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Diversities (NEFGSD)

#### **Autonomous Bodies**

1. India Peace Centre (IPC)
2. Urban Rural Mission (URM)