



# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

The HOUR has come; let us get going...

October 2023

NEWSLETTER

## The Power of HER Voice: Celebrating International Day of Girl Child

Marking the International Day of the Girl Child, NCCI-Women Concerns and All India Sunday School Association (AISSA) in their combined undertaking organised a webinar on the theme 'Ensure Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Place for Girl Child' on 11 October 2023, which was attended by more than hundred registrants.



*Photo courtesy: Google*

The program exemplified the importance of amplifying the voices of young girls. The young teenage girls were the resource people for the event who unveiled multidimensional struggles of girls across the globe, such as gender inequality, access to education, child marriage, and the importance of promoting girls' rights and empowerment. They highlighted the cost of being a girl, where life is at threat from the very beginning due to female foeticide and female infanticide. Together with their testimonial experiences, these young girls bravely voiced their concerns, showcasing their resilience and determination in the face of adversities.

Their stories were both inspiring and eye-opening, highlighting the urgent need for action in support of girls worldwide. Further the program featured a panel of church leaders who responded to the concerns raised by the young girls. Bishop Rt. Rev. Ravinder Timothy spoke on how to ensure inclusive, equitable and safe place for girl child in the church, society and family. Rev. Anita Templeton encouraged working towards building up an inclusive society. And Ms. Biji George highlighted the importance of safeguarding the girl child reflecting from her experiences working with girl children.

National Level Reel Competition, the preface of the event, celebrated and rewarded the young girls for creative and informative reels. By bringing together the voices of young girls and the faith leaders, the program underscored the importance of collective action to address the various struggles that girls face and to create a brighter, more equitable future for them.



## News from Member Churches

### Sneha Sparsam: A Beacon of Hope for the Displaced Students

In the context marked by conflict, the remarkable initiative undertaken by the Malankara Marthoma Syrian Church offers solace to the displaced students from Manipur. The students were welcomed with love and were provided an education centre. This endeavour underscores the power of faith and community in transforming life. These Kuki students from Manipur, displaced by conflict, find themselves facing insurmountable challenges. They have lost enough, including their access to education. Education is often touted as the key to a bright future, by partnering with Nicholson School and educators it is ensured that these students continue to receive a quality education, nourishment and a nurturing environment. As these students continue to learn, grow and heal, they serve as a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is a glimmer of hope and potential for a brighter future.



### GSELC Bishop's Day Celebration Honouring Late Bishop Katakshamma

The Good Samaritan Evangelical Lutheran Church, Badrachalam celebrated Bishop's Day commemorating Late Rev. Dr. Katakshamma, the first woman Bishop of Asia, on 15 October 2023. Mr. B. Asher, Executive Secretary, Youth Concerns, National Council of Churches in India joined the congregation in celebration and shared the word.

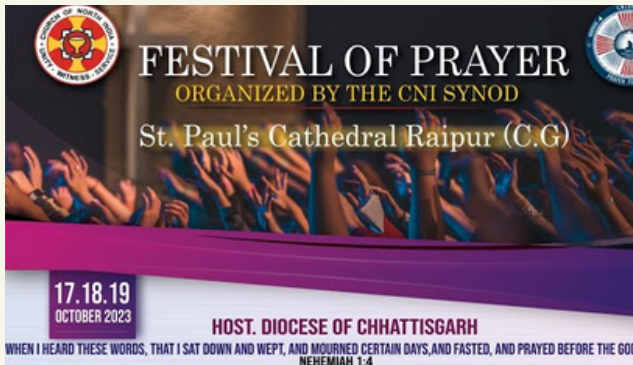


Bishop Katakshamma, who received a doctorate in theology from the Lutheran seminary in Minnesota, believed that beyond gender, duty to God should be prioritised. Her life and ministry have been characterised by unwavering faith, resilience, and a deep commitment to social development, literacy and Christian unity in Andhra Pradesh. She established primary schools and health-care facilities in the forest region of Bhadrachalam. Her journey to becoming a bishop in a traditionally male-dominated role serves as a testament to her unyielding spirit and passion. Through her ministry, she has shown exceptional dedication to the GSELC and its mission. The leadership and congregation of GSELC remembers her legacy and impact she has had on the church and the lives of countless people.



## News from Member Churches

### Festival of Prayer and Fasting CNI Synod



The Festival of Prayer and Fasting organised by the Church of North India (CNI) Synod from 17 to 19 October 2023, hosted by CNI Chattisgarh Diocese, reflected the spiritual and faith values of the community.

The event was held at St. Paul's Cathedral Raipur on the theme "When I heard these words that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (Nehemiah 1:4)". Reflecting how Nehemiah, upon hearing about the distressed state of Jerusalem and its broken walls, responded with deep sorrow and turned to God in prayer and fasting, similarly the church gathered seeking repentance, restoration and divine guidance in times of adversity, wars and bloodshed. This serves as a reminder that our actions in mission must be accompanied with faith, fasting and prayers to overcome challenges in face of difficulty and hopelessness.

### Envisioning Borderless Ecclesia: The Comprehensive Mission of the Church

With the theme 'Envisioning Borderless Ecclesia', a workshop for missionaries and pastoral assistants was held at the CSI St. Mary's Church, Ranipet, on 24 October 2023. Representing a significant step towards fostering a more inclusive and forward-thinking approach to ministry, the workshop seeks to empower missionaries and pastoral assistants with knowledge and tools necessary to address the challenges in the context.

This visionary workshop marked a pivotal moment in the mission and evangelism work, emphasising the importance of embracing diversity and adapting ministry practices to meet the needs of an ever-changing and dynamic world. It encouraged a mindset shift towards a more inclusive and empathetic approach to ministry, reinforcing the Church's commitment to reaching out to people from all walks of life and ensuring that no one is left behind in their spiritual journey. By fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose, participants were better prepared to minister to diverse communities breaking down barriers of prejudice, precept and customs.







## News from Member Churches

### Faith in Action: Feeding the Hungry and Nourishing Hope

Marking World Food Day, the Believers Eastern Church distributed food providing sustenance to the poor and needy, on 16 October, 2023. Members of parishes across the nation came together to cook meals, pack, and distribute them, ensuring that no one goes to bed hungry. Warm meals were distributed to hungry children, slum dwellers, leprosy patients, beggars, and people living on the streets. The church's involvement in feeding the poor and needy transcends borders and faiths. Their mission goes beyond merely providing food; it embodies the value of empathy and caring for the less fortunate.



Through their tireless efforts, the church fosters a sense of community, unity and shared responsibility. The active engagement of churches in such endeavour highlights the potential for positive change when individuals and organisations come together to tackle these pressing issues.

## News from Related Agencies

### The 31st Biennial Council Meeting of CISRS



The 31st Biennial Council Meeting of Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) took place at Madras Christian College in Chennai, on October 5, 2023. Justice Muralidhar, the former Chief Justice of the High Court of Orissa, delivered the 14th P.D. Devanandan & M.M. Thomas Memorial Lecture on the topic 'Justice Concerns: Perspectives toward an Inclusive Nationhood'.

Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan (Mar Thoma Church), Dr. Paul Wilsom (Principal, LCC), Rev. Dr. Packiam T. Samuel (President, CISRS), Rev. Margret Kalaiselvi (CSI) and Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer (General Secretary, NCCI) received the first book in the Religion and Society series published by CISRS, "Sacrafanations: Dalit Religion(s), Epistemology, Theology and Politics", which was released by Justice Muralidhar.



## News from All India Christian Organisations

### Healing Hearts and Minds: YWCA Inaugurated Counselling Centre to aid Mental Health

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) attained a significant milestone in their journey towards mental health and well-being. On 10 October 2023, YWCA inaugurated a new Counselling Centre in YWCA of India, New Delhi. This Counselling Centre will provide essential mental health service and support to those in need. In a world that often seems to be moving at an unprecedented pace, mental health and well-being have become increasingly vital aspects of our lives.



With the theme "Mental Health is a Human Right" for the inaugural event, YWCA recognises the need to address this issue and provide a safe, supportive and inclusive space for individuals seeking help and guidance, this Counselling Centre is a testament to their commitment to this cause. This Counselling Centre is not just a physical location; it is a beacon of hope and a symbol of YWCA's dedication to supporting mental health and well-being and an embarking step towards a healthier, happier and more resilient community.

### Transcending Barriers: Bible Society of India Telangana Auxiliary launched Telugu Transliterated Bible

The Bible Society of India, Telangana Auxiliary released the first-ever Telugu transliterated Bible into English script marking a significant milestone in making the Bible more accessible and comprehensible to the younger generation. This event, held at Centenary Baptist Church in Secunderabad on October 28, 2023, has far-reaching implications. This innovative Bible adaptation serves as a bridge, addressing the needs of young individuals. It removes language barriers, and not only facilitates religious engagement but also promotes cultural preservation among the young Telugu-speaking population, providing a sense of belonging and a deeper connection to their heritage and faith.

During the release event, the Telangana Auxiliary demonstrated their commitment to this cause by generously distributing 500 copies to young people. This ensures that a substantial number of youngsters will have the opportunity to enrich their spiritual and cultural journey. This recognition underlines the importance of such initiatives in reaching a wider audience, preserving the cultural and spiritual identity and making scripture accessible to all.



News Courtesy – Mr. David George Norfolk





## News from Autonomous Bodies

### Brewing Peace Conversations and Coffee

The Coffee & Peace Initiative was introduced by the India Peace Center on October 13, 2023, at its Nagpur program office. The goal is to have a discussion, debate, art, music, book and movie reviews, and other activities around peace-related topics while sipping coffee.

'Together with Gandhi Today: Journey towards Peace' was the theme of the first gathering. Ideally, participants in these sessions will have the chance to learn from one another and share ideas.



The opportunity to exchange ideas and pick up new skills from others will be provided by this program. The Coffee & Peace Initiative made it evident that conversation around Just Peace is not Only limited to media and authority but everyone can be a contributor.

### Face2Face: Young Adults Discoursing on Peace through Culture Exchange



The Face2Face Programme 2023 themed "Building Life-Affirming Communities – Poverty and Peace-making in Plurality", is held in India Peace Centre, Nagpur, New Delhi from 20 September to 29 October 2023. It seeks to promote peace-making in a pluralistic global environment by fostering a better understanding of diverse world views and building relationships of respect.

Face2Face seeks to promote global conversation on theology, spirituality, and mission by providing immersion, bible studies, and seminars that encourage participants to consider mission in a post-colonial framework.

The six-week program will provide theological students, both enrolled and recently graduated, with an opportunity to engage with the lived realities of local multi-faith communities, think on the purpose and approach of mission in various areas of the world, and apply this thought back to their own contexts. Students will be expected to contribute to the creation of an international network of young theologians, and provide local students and communities with the richness of intercultural exchange following a series of exposure visits and thematic sessions on various religious practices and understandings.



## News from International Partners

### WCC established new commission of the churches on Health and Healing

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing held its inaugural online meeting on 20 October, 2023. This newly-established commission will foster deeper engagement of WCC member churches in WCC's work on holistic health and healing. It will also assist the council in calling the attention of member churches and ecumenical partners to gaps and challenges on health and diaconal matters and suggest ways Christians may act effectively upon those issues in their respective communities.



Rev. Miriam J. Burnett, a commission member, spoke of the group's three pillars of work, namely, church engagement, advocacy and health service delivery. Understanding these pillars is the foundation of unity, she emphasised. "We come under the banner of unity realising that health care needs and access are inseparable from the needs of the people that we are called to serve; these include emotional needs, housing, and other social and physical determinants of health", she added.

### LWF's venture for Gender Justice Advocacy

The Lutheran World Federation and partners provided an opportunity for local gender justice advocates to connect with global mechanisms. From 17-20 October 2023, training week in Geneva for people working in gender justice advocacy was conducted. Participants from various countries talked about the contextual problems, like, early marriage and sexual abuse of girls, especially in remote or rural areas. Several speakers highlighted the challenge of religious texts being used to justify the subordination of women and the need for awareness, education and authority to break down patriarchal interpretations and promote a more gender just reading of Scripture. The participants also visited the United Nations headquarters in Geneva to take part in a session of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Participants will have the opportunity to talk with CEDAW commissioners about their work and to explore ways in which this global mechanism can support their efforts to protect women and girls in their own countries.



## News from Other Partners

### NDCW welcomes the new leadership

The National Dalit Christian Watch welcomed its new Chair, Dr. Richard Devadoss, effective from October 2023. Dr. Devadoss, a Founding Member of NDCW and the former Director of the Diaconal Ministry of the Church of South India, has been actively engaged in launching initiatives and strategies aimed at empowering marginalised communities in South India, specifically Dalits, Adivasis, and, notably, women. Among his many contributions, he played a pivotal role in promoting various programs, including the Alternative Front for Dalit Christian Liberation and the South India Coalition for Land Rights. These initiatives combat gender and caste-based discrimination and address issues related to access, utilisation, and ownership of land.

National Council of Churches in India wishes and prays for the endeavours of NDCW and leadership of Dr. Richard Devadoss.





## News from CSA

### The Lok Kalyan Yojana promotes Interfaith Harmony

On the occasion of the Dhammachakra Pravartan Festival, the Lok Kalyan Yojana - CSA, in collaboration with the Nagpur Slum Coordinators and partner organisations, arranged a Food Distribution Drive on October 24, 2023. This day is marked for Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism with other 5 Lakh followers. On 14 October 1956, at Deekshabhoomi, Nagpur, many embraced Buddhism, denouncing caste-based discrimination and social injustices. Many pilgrims from India and across the globe visit Deekshabhoomi on this day remembering the affirmative action of promoting human dignity and social equity.

With almost two thousand pilgrims receiving food on this day near Nagpur Railway Station, reflects interfaith harmony and the spirit of humanitarianism. It demonstrates the respect for diverse beliefs and fosters solidarity, compassion and unity. This act of benevolence embodies the universal value of love and goodwill that extends beyond religious levels and bridges the cultural and religious gaps. It contributes to a more inclusive and harmonious society, where people of different communities can come together to promote the welfare of all.



### Empowering NGOs and Community Organisations: Insights from Vidarbha Centre for Labour Concerns



A Consultation on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was organised by the Urban Rural Mission, Vidarbha Centre for Labour Concerns, and Arraycon Youth Foundation on October 20, 2023, for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community organisations. Approximately 55 people from 12 districts in Maharashtra's Vidarbha area attended the consultation.

The primary objective of the consultation was to provide a platform for participants to deepen their understanding of the concept of corporate social responsibility and how it can be harnessed as a powerful tool for social and environmental transformation. By bringing together individuals from various walks of life, the organisers aimed to foster rich exchange of ideas, experiences, and insights, inspiring a more comprehensive and innovative approach to addressing pressing societal issues.







## Upcoming Events

**Earth Care - Our Calling**  
**Fellowship of the Least Coin**  
 Join Online Ecumenical Worship on  
**Date: 9th November 2023 Time: 5:30 pm**  
**Zoom Id: 88405351708 Pass code: 965345**

**Celebrated in India By Womens' Concern,  
 National Council of Churches in India.**

**Artwork: Sr Eleanor Llanes, ICM, The Philippines**

For Any further information please contact us at  
[ncci@ncci1914.com](mailto:ncci@ncci1914.com), [jyoti@ncci1914.com](mailto:jyoti@ncci1914.com).  
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**National Council of Churches in India**  
**Youth Concerns**  
 National Ecumenical Youth Assembly

**NEYA 2024**  
 COMING SOON...

**1 Thess 5:11**  
 Build ONE another UP

**DALIT LIBERATION SUNDAY**

**November 19 - 2023**

**"No One Can Serve Christ and caste"**  
**Mathew 6:24a**

**National Council of Churches in India**  
 Commission on Dalits  
 Christian Council Campus,  
 Civil Lines, Nagpur - 440001  
[cod@ncci1914.com](mailto:cod@ncci1914.com)

**Office for SC / BC**  
 Catholic Bishop's  
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 CBCI Centre  
 New Delhi - 110001  
[cbciscst@gmail.com](mailto:cbciscst@gmail.com)

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**T.I.R.T.H**  
 Traveling into Religion Through History

**Ecumenism Pilgrimage**

**IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT AND FROM EACH OTHER.  
 WHERE PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS AND BELIEFS WALK  
 TOGETHER, VISITING PLACES OF WORSHIP ALONG THE WAY.**

**DELHI TOUR**  
 FOR DETAILS CONTACT  
[COMMUNICATIONS@NCCI1914.COM](mailto:COMMUNICATIONS@NCCI1914.COM)

**NCCI National Office:** CNI Bhavan (4th floor) 16, Pandit Pant Marg, New Delhi

**NCCI Regs. Office & Prog. Centre:** Christian Council Campus, Post Box 205, Beside Maharashtra State Biodiversity Board, Civil Lines, Nagpur - 440001, MS, India

Phones: +917122531312; +917122561464 | Fax: +917122561397 | Email: [ncci@ncci1914.com](mailto:ncci@ncci1914.com)

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National Council of Churches in India  
Indian Disability Ecumenical Accompaniment  
**ACCESS TOGETHER CAMPAIGN**



**Mark Your Location to Make a Change**

Step 1: Download Google Maps, sign into your google account, locate nearby places to review

Step 2: Upload Details, Add Photos of Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, Add Photos of Barriers for sensitizing Change and submit your contribution

Step 3: Share your contribution in social media platforms with #Access\_Together\_Campaign and encourage others to participate

Step 4: Take a Screenshot of Your Google Review and share it with us through the QR Code below

**Award Ceremony will be held on Dec 3 (Sunday) along with other participants during the Mega Event on International Day of Persons with Disabilities.**



Voice out, Voice loud.  
Say No To Gender Based Violence.



**#StopViolenceAgainstWomen  
#THURSDAYSINBLACK**

Need Help?  
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\*Till is a global movement of people who commit to wear Black on Thursdays

YOUTH HEALTH MATTERS

**Stop the abuse.**


It doesn't just affect your life.  
It affects every one.






**NO DRUGS**

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA  
YOUTH CONCERNS  
CAMPAIGN AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE



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