

The Ecumenical Family

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Editorial.....



DIGGING DEEPER, REACHING FURTHER

Life is a journey of spiritual growth and loving responsible relationships. It is **L**in this context that the endeavour of digging deeper and reaching further - *Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad* has important significance.

One can be often content with a stagnant traditional spirituality. This spirituality involves the routine exercise of saying prayers on waking in the morning, having a time of devotion through reading a Bible passage, a brief meditation on it (either with the help of a devotional book or through one's own reflection) and saying a prayer which is usually full of personal supplications and intercessions. It is possible that some families may manage to have a family time of singing, scripture reading, and prayer together. This morning religious spirituality may be gone through even in the evening, however most probably in the reverse order, starting with family prayers, and concluding with individual devotions. This spirituality may also find expression through weekly activities such as group/cottage prayer and/or Bible-study meetings, choir practice, Sunday worship, youth fellowship programmes, women's fellowship gatherings, etc. One's spirituality may also be enhanced through participation in special programmes such as special periods of fasting, retreats, conventions, etc. To such spirituality, the exhortation comes: Dig deeper! Note however, digging deeper does not necessarily mean having longer times of Scripture reading and prayer or getting involved in more church activities. Digging deeper involves growing closer in your relationship with God; it involves being transformed more and more in the image of Christ. It would be very much in the words of a chorus:

I want to dig a little deeper (down) in God's love
 I want to dig a little deeper (down) in God's love
 I want to dig a little deeper in the storehouse (of) of His love, eternal love
 I want to talk, a little more like my Jesus would
 I want to walk, just like a Christian should
 I want to dig a little deeper in the storehouse (of) of His love, eternal love

Similarly one cannot be complacent about one's customary Christian relationships. There is quite often a danger that our participation in the life of a congregation gets reduced to a kind of "social club" relationship. We relate with the same set of people every Sunday in church, we participate in cottage meetings only when they are held in the homes of our friends or if they belong to our state. We greet only select individuals on their birthdays and wedding anniversaries. We go for picnics only with our circle of friends in the church. "If you love those who love you, what reward do you have? . . . And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?" (Matt.5:46-47). So also when it comes to relating to people beyond our church members, we are quite happy with giving alms to beggars (they could also be the same set of individuals whom we grant our charity every week or month), or visiting orphanages, old people's homes, prisons, etc. Reaching further involves relating to strangers in the church, and relating in love with the poor, disabled, persons infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, persons of different sexual diversities, addicts of different kinds, and so on.

This relationship also has to be responsible; it should lead to transformation of the lives and situations of the persons we relate with. We may not always be able to change people's lives, but we need to persevere through prayer and our on-going relationship to reach out to them as helpfully as possible. Let us also be reminded that such reaching out may also teach us important lessons and transform us. It may also happen that in reaching out to others we may have to carry a cross of self denial and sacrifice.

So the exhortation:

Dig deeper; reach further! Grow in your relationship with God and neighbour!

[Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad is presently the General Secretary of National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and is stationed at Nagpur along with his family. He was also the first Pastor of the English Congregation.]

ANNUAL CONVENTION 2015

(23rd - 25th October)

Preacher : **Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements**Theme : **Digging Deeper...Reaching Further**

Brief Summary - Sermon No. 1

FOLLOWING GOD



- Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

The theme for the next three days is “Digging Deeper into Discipleship and Reaching Further into Evangelism.”

1Kings 16:33 – King Ahab had led Israel into absolute depravity. Then God decides to do something about it. He sends a message to Ahab through Elijah, saying there will be no rain. And then the Lord tells Elijah in the third year, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth.” God’s will, God’s initiative, God’s timing.

So Elijah stands on Mount Carmel and says to the Israelites, “How long will you vacillate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, worship Him, and if Baal is God, then worship him.” There is no room to be nominal Christians. Either we take God’s Word and follow Him, or we turn our backs on Him.

Elijah says to the priests of Baal, “Build an altar, put a bull and call your god Baal. I’ll build an altar, put a bull and cry out to my God. The God who answers with fire, He is God!”

God answers Elijah, fire comes down and consumes his offering. And the people of Israel exclaim, “The Lord, He is God.” If the Lord is God, follow Him. What does following God mean?

Mark 10:46-52 shows that. It’s a familiar story but contains mines of wonderful nuggets.

As Jesus was going out from Jericho, a blind beggar Bartimaeus was sitting by the road (v.46). He regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road (v.52). That’s the difference between just observing and following. We can sit on the wayside and watch the Christian pageant go by. But that is not following the Lord.

Following the Lord is active. It means we move step after step, behind the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what Bartimaeus did. First, Bartimaeus shouted out, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” Notice here, it was not on Jesus’ agenda to stop—it was only when Bartimaeus shouted out that Jesus stopped. Here’s a point—it is imperative that we break into God’s day. There are moments where God is saying, “I want you to call out to me, because if you don’t, I will pass by, and you will miss the window of opportunity.”

Bartimaeus cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v.47). Son of David is a Messianic title. He understood and believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Bartimaeus knew that his only chance that day was to exercise the knowledge he had. What knowledge do you have of the Lord today? What is it that you know about Him intellectually but have never put into operation?

Everybody around said, “keep quiet!” He shouted even louder! Then Jesus called him. When the people told Bartimaeus to keep quiet and he didn’t, he was losing something. He depended on the alms and the goodwill of people. When they told him to keep quiet, if he had listened he would have continued to get alms. All of us have props, things that we hold on to.

Casting aside his cloak he jumped up and came to Jesus (v.50). Jesus said, “What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus could have asked for peripheral things. But he says, “Rabboni, I want to regain my sight.” Jesus heals him. Then he gets up and follows Jesus on the road—from beside the road to on the road. That’s what an encounter with Jesus leads to. Jesus never leaves us sitting by the side of the road. An encounter with Jesus always moves us to following Him actively on the road.

The call for us today is to move on and be disciples of God. If the Lord is God, follow Him.

Brief Summary - Sermon No. 2
DIGGING DEEPER...REACHING FURTHER:
OBEYING THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Today I'd like us to push a little further into our theme—'Digging Deeper and Reaching Further.' I want us to look at the kind of people we ought to be so that God can use us for the extension of His Kingdom. It is not sufficient to be just Believers or Disciples but we need to be completely connected to the Lord.

Let's see what God gives us so that we can stay on track and what He expects of us as we seek after Him. We referred to the Holy Spirit, that the moment we are "Born Again" or accept Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Saviour, God puts His Holy Spirit within us. We are not rudderless people wondering what God wants us to do, because we have the clear channel between Him and us through the office of His Holy Spirit within us.

Ephesians 5:18: "And do not get drunk with wine ...but be filled with the Spirit." What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

1) It is a command.

2) It is in the present continuous tense, it actually means "be continuously filled with the Spirit of God."

3) It's in the passive voice. God is the One who fills us. We only do the emptying and say, "Now Lord, fill us." So the onus is on us to take off those things that ought not to be there—jealousy, strife, envy all of those things of the flesh.

4) It is in the plural. It's talking about all of us—not one person. It's talking to the church.

Many years ago when we were in the US and I was pastoring a church there, one member came to me after service. I could see he was very troubled. He said, "I had a dream last night. God was telling me to drive to Chicago and meet a friend there that I haven't seen in years and tell him about Jesus." But he didn't want to go driving six or seven hours to Chicago and tell the friend "God sent me." But he finally did. The friend had been diagnosed with cancer and had just a few days to live. He looked at Bob and he said, "I knew you were coming."

That's how God works when you and I are in tune with the Holy Spirit. He helps us know exactly what He wants us to do. We are really His witnesses here on earth. If the only thing God wanted us to do was to be saved, the moment we were saved He would have taken us to heaven. But God keeps His church here because we are His witnesses.

You and I are the hands and feet of Jesus. God depends upon His church. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Shine like stars in a depraved world—that's His call to His church (you and me). He says, "I depend on you that people will see a reflection of Me in you and be drawn to Me."

And how does God view the world? "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3:16). Will the church stand up and be counted?

We have the Holy Spirit within us. We hear clearly from the Lord. Yet you and I are not obedient. There are many things that God whispers to us and we say, "Not now Lord, not now."

What are things in your life that have no business being there? You need to get rid of them, because God can fill us with His Spirit then.

What are the un-confessed sins that Satan has got a finger on that is preventing you from being all that God wants you to be?

There is no sin that cannot be covered by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. No sin, however dark it may be, however big you may think, however un-forgivable you may think it is. It will be covered by the blood of Jesus, if you are willing today, to bring it to Him and say, "Lord would you take it?" Joy and peace will flood your soul and you will be perfectly tuned to go out and reach further for the Lord.

Brief Summary - Sermon No. 3**DIGGING DEEPER...REACHING FURTHER :
OUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

We've been looking at the theme "Digging Deeper and Reaching Further." We want to go deeper into our relationship with the Lord and to move further into a community around us – where there is so little hope and so much of hardship.

As we become disciples we are automatically citizens of the Kingdom. Then what kind of rules do we live by as citizens of the Most High God and citizens of His Kingdom?

Matthew 17:24-27 – Jesus pays the temple tax, though He is God's Son and should be exempt. Jesus is saying, "Put down your right and be responsible for people around you." In the kingdom of God the responsibilities outweigh the rights.

What are our responsibilities? It is twofold:

- 1) **We are responsible for the souls of people**
- 2) **We have responsibility for the plight of people**

We have a responsibility towards souls of people. In Luke's gospel chapter 16, Jesus gives the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The reality of hell is shown in Luke 16:22-23. Disciples of Jesus, who live by Kingdom values, are responsible for the souls of people and actively share about the Lord and His saving power. That's what we do from Monday through Saturday. Then we come back and get refreshed on Sunday. Only you can go into the places that you have opportunity to go to. Do you shine in those places? You can do this by bringing God into the equation.

Then He can begin to work in the spaces that you have. Responsible for the souls of people – but responsible also for the plight of people. For example, the number of suicides is a very somber statistics. What are you offering to them in terms of hope? How are you alleviating pain and suffering? How are you sharing the resources that you have? Not just money – but your intelligence, your knowledge? If our knowledge of things doesn't go to reduce inequity around the world, it's no use. Are you willing to share your knowledge to help society around you?

Think about what you have. What are the things that God has gifted you with – whether it's IT or science or architecture or engineering or medicine, you name it. What is it that you can take out of your office spaces as a disciple of Jesus, to make a difference in society?

Matthew's gospel has another very sobering passage. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus is separating the sheep and the goats. He separates those who helped and those who didn't. God's Word is warning us, "Don't get complacent, the reason you're in the world today, after you became born-again, is that I want to use you." We have a responsibility to souls; we have a responsibility towards the plight of people all around us. We cannot afford to put our head in the sand and say, "It doesn't concern me." It does! It's on our watch and we will be held accountable when we meet the Lord.

He has gifted us, packaged us differently, whether it's with five, ten, fifteen, three, one whatever. But the principle in that passage is, don't come back to Him and say, "I did nothing with it." God takes that seriously. Wonderfully gifted! The work that you can do only you can do it. Anointed by God's Holy Spirit, you are empowered to do everything that He asks you to do. Everything! God will not ask you to do something where His grace, and His love and His mercy and His power will not accompany you.

Yet the truth is that sometimes we fade in with the world – we blend in with the world and it's so difficult for anybody to know whether this is a Christian or not. The world will try to make you into its mould. Resist it because you are not a child of this world, you are a child of the King.

Dig deeper, reach further!

Brief Summary of Sermon
(Sunday Morning Worship Service)
DIGGING DEEPER...REACHING FURTHER :
PRAYER

- Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Prayer is the avenue God uses to reach His children and to empower them.

Genesis 1:26 – There are two very important words here. One is ‘rule’, which means to look after, to represent God. That was the mandate He placed on them. The second is ‘image.’ Made in God’s likeness. Those are the two most important words. God said, “I am putting you in charge and if you need me, I am there. But the avenue to get me involved in the world is prayer.”

Through the Bible we see God wanting us to call upon Him, to take steps of faith, because that’s the only way He can release His power into our situation.

Luke 4:6 – The devil is telling Jesus, “I will give you all this domain for it has been handed over to me.” This happened when Adam and Eve chose to obey him. It cost the incarnation of Jesus to take back from Satan which we lost in the fall. So it’s important to pray, because God waits for His people to say, “I need your help.”

Revelation 5:8 – Every prayer that we send heavenward doesn’t get lost in cyber space; it gets collected in golden bowls in the throne room of God.

Now, let’s look at different kinds of prayers that the Bible shows us.

In Matthew 16:18 we find **authoritative prayer** that’s available to us. We can say “In the Name of Jesus” and whatever is coming our way has to stop. We can say to Satan, “Be gone in the Name of Jesus.” And he has to obey. 1 John 4: 4 – Don’t ever back away from Satan because the power that is resident in you is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Dynamite power available in you and in me.

The second is **persistent prayer**. Luke 11:8 – The man’s request here is granted because of his persistence. God wants us to be persistent with Him, to keep coming back saying, “Lord I will not let you go. I am going to be coming back and coming back and coming back to You.” Someone wrote: “When you are praying PUSH.” That’s an acronym for **Pray Until Something Happens**.

Then we have **tenacious prayer**. Matthew 6:7 – Tenacious prayer is not just repetitive prayer, it is holding on to God. Elijah battled with the priests of Baal. God had said, “Go and I will send rain upon the face of the earth.” And yet Elijah prays for rain. (1 Kings 18:42).

Authoritative prayer, persistent prayer, and tenacious prayers are different types of prayer that God offers us. Are you praying persistently for the things that God has laid on your heart? Are you being authoritative in the things that you ought to be authoritative in? Are you tenaciously holding on to the Lord and saying, “I will not let You go?”

What are the visions He has placed in your heart? In God’s scheme of things, there’s always a time gap between conception and birth. And when we jump the time we only make things difficult, like Abraham did. Don’t sacrifice an Isaac for an Ishmael.

Here’s another question. Why do our prayers go unanswered? Here are some of the things that prevent God from hearing us:

First, Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18). Second, Pride in our hearts (Luke 18:9). Third, Wrong Motives (James 4:3). Fourth, Not asking according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Fifth, Having an unforgiving heart (Mark 11:25). Sixth, Not honouring one’s wife (1 Peter 3:7).

For digging deeper and reaching out to people, we must have an active, intentional prayer life.

Brief Summary of Sermon
(Youth Session)
TEMPTATION

- Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

We can learn some lessons on temptation from David's experience in 2 Samuel 11. "In the spring of the year when kings go out to battle David stayed at home." Here's what David did wrong first. He was in the wrong place. Instead of leading the battle he sent Joab and stayed home. Temptations often come strongest when we are in the wrong place because we are not walking in the will of the Lord.

David walked around on the roof of the king's house, and he saw a woman bathing. You often cannot help the things you see as you pass by. The problem is dwelling on what you see. When David saw Bathsheba, the proper thing to have done was to immediately avert his eyes. He didn't! As you're working on your computer, so much of stuff comes, for instance, a pop-up picture of something seductive. The thing to do at that point is to immediately shut down that screen and move away. Do not dwell on the seductive image.

That is what led David into the next step. He sent for her. Dwelling upon her, which was a mind action, became a behaviour. When he didn't stop it at that point it led him to act on the feelings he was going through. In most cases, feelings come from the things that we see, and touch and feel. But sin comes when we act. This is a point at which David went deeper into sin.

From this point on it's a slippery slope. Satan and Sin and fall – it's a slippery slope. David couldn't hold it. He went all the way down. Uriah was one of David's most valiant men who would give his life for David, and he slept with this man's wife.

Knowing that she was now pregnant, he could not afford to let others know that she was pregnant by him. The end of that story is that David got Uriah killed. God had said David is the man after His own heart, and yet he fell into this very dastardly deed.

The truth is that we are all prone to temptation and sin. It would be a mistake on our part to ever think that we are beyond what happened to David. All of us are susceptible to the wiles of Satan. The question always is how we can walk as the children of the light. I do things that I ought not to do. Then I messed with doing things to cover it up. So one sin is used to cover up another and another and we keep going down that road.

So how can we live as overcomers? All Scripture is God-breathed and meant for instruction, including this. What do I do when temptations come? 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Remember that every temptation you face is common to everybody else. There's no temptation that is particular or specific only to you. It's common to all.

"God is faithful." Just think for a moment about times in your life when you have seen the faithfulness of God, and be thankful. God is faithful! Hang on to that. He was faithful in the past, He will be faithful again. Whenever you reach a crisis point, look at that crisis and say, "But God is faithful."

Every single temptation that comes our way, God has already seen and approved it. That's the first nugget—you will not be tempted beyond what you are able.

The second one is, with the temptation He will provide a way of escape also. Why do we fall into temptation? Could it be that we don't listen to God and take His escape route?

Three very good notes in this: First, when you are tempted, call up a friend and ask for prayer. Second, remember that God has okayed that temptation, because you can overcome it. Third, the temptation comes always with an escape route, take it.

Temptation is not sin, yielding is. Remember even Jesus was tempted, but He did not sin. When you are tempted, ask God to show you the escape route. Or turn it around and use it for prayer and you will see how quickly that temptation will go away. It's the behaviour that gets attached to temptation that will decide whether you sin or not.

With God's strength you can defeat every temptation that comes your way.

CONVENTION TESTIMONIES

A Call For Perseverance



*Anisha Ann Daniel,
Senior class, E.C.S.S.*

I was born in a Christian family, fortunate to have God-fearing parents who brought me and my sisters up in the love of God. From childhood, we were taught about God and His marvelous deeds which are always right. The Sunday school played a very important role in my life. I came to know more about God and His beloved Son, Jesus Christ who died for my sins and was resurrected. Before, I remember that I had a good deal more of love for Christ than for God the Father. I looked upon God as a stern judge while I regarded Christ as the mediator who had come in between me and the stern judge. But when I got a little better acquainted with my Bible, those views fled away from me. When I think of the love God must have had for this world that He gave His only begotten Son to receive the most humiliating death on the cross, I began to build a strong faith in God and in Christ. Though my faith is shaken at times, due to evil which always suggests some compromise and enslaves me if I listen to it, the Lord always sends me an aid to turn away from the evil. Our church conventions have been a blessing for all who attended them – the renewal of spirit, enriching everyone in a special way. The Convention that was held from 23rd to 25th October 2015 really challenged me. The theme, ‘Digging deeper... Reaching further’ initially was not understood by me but when I attended the meetings, I believe the Lord worked in me. The Preacher, Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements spoke about God and his call and in the quiet time told us to rise up from our place and confess all sins. He said that the Lord calls us. I responded to the call and praise the Lord for what He has done in my life. I have decided to follow my Lord and do His will in my life. I realized that prayer has a miraculous power in life, as on the third day of the Convention, I learnt about the necessity of communication with God and the need of intercessory prayer and prayer with hope. It is now my prayer that the Lord will guide me to lead a life that is pleasing in the sight of God. I believe that the Lord will hear our prayer if we confess our sins, give up pride and wrong motives.

I didn't regret those three days with the Lord. It gave me hope, strength and a renewed life in Christ through the Spirit of God. The theme of the Annual Convention 2015 “Digging Deeper...Reaching Further” gave me a direction of where to go and who I should be as an ambassador of Christ. During the Convention, Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements gave us sound teaching from God's Word and he's such a man filled with the Spirit that through his preaching I rededicated my life to Christ. I knew right at that moment that a life in Christ is a journey of prayer, digging deeper to reach the lost souls in a community of lost hope, longing for the Father's embrace and renewed life through the Spirit. Saved by grace, I declared myself as Christ's disciple with a mandate that I must reach further and show that sufficient grace to the people out there somewhere, wherever the Spirit leads.



*Akortiplang Donshiew,
RIPANS.*

CONVENTION BLESSINGS

I'm really glad that I could attend this E.C. Convention. It really inspired me and showed me the best way to behave as a Christian. – **Marina, 3rd Yr. B.Sc.(N), RIPANS**

It has been a delightful experience for me to attend the E.C. Convention. It enhanced my knowledge about the Bible and I'm so blessed. – **Ruati, 4th Yr. B.Sc.(N), RIPANS**

I feel very blessed and it makes me realize how responsible our E.C. committee members are for arranging such a Convention. – **Thai, 3rd Yr. B.Sc.(N), RIPANS**

I was very blessed to attend the E.C. Convention as I learnt about forgiveness and how I, as a Christian, should live my life and treat others. – **Kimi, 3rd Yr. B.Sc.(N), RIPANS**

CONVENTION 2015



Digging Deeper



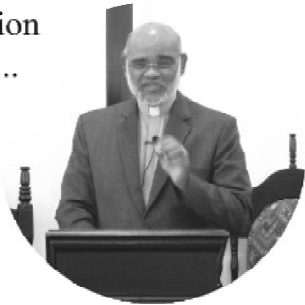
23rd - 25th Oct,
2015
Preacher:
Rev. Dr. Cecil
Clements

Senior Pastor
Church at Powai
Mumbai

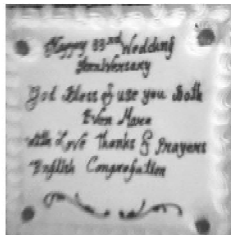
Reaching Further



Convention
contd...



Wedding Anniversary
Celebration of
Preacher & Wife



So faith comes from hearing, and
hearing through the word of Christ.
-Romans 10:17

Recent Events in E.C.



Farewell to Smriti
(10-4-2016)



Mother's Day - (8-5-2016)



Choir from Blind School



E.C. Anniversary
(15-5-2016)



Condolence meet for Mapuia at Pastor's Residence
(18-6-2016)



Father's Day - (19-6-2016)



Special Number by Dheeraj Rai on
Father's Day



Condolence meet for Mr. Lahmingliana Saiawi
(19-6-2016)



Dedication of Baby Gloria,
d/o Mr. & Mrs. J. Khongsai
(10-7-2016)



Dedication of E.C. Website
www.eccaizawl.in
(10-7-2016)

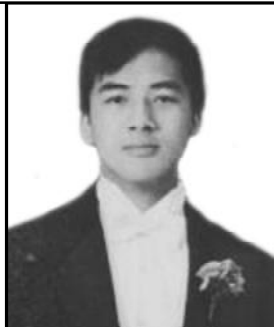


Cleaning Fellowship on 30-7-2016



Farewell to Final Year Students of RIPANS - (7-8-2016)

OBITUARY



MAPUIA HMAR
(21/3/1996 – 28/2/2016)

The Congregation was greatly shocked and deeply saddened by the passing away of Mapuia (19 yrs.), the beloved, youngest son of our dear Pastor, Rev. Dr. H.Vanlalruata and wife, Mrs.Lahmingmawii (Nuteii), in the USA, under very tragic circumstances.

The Congregation, shares in their grief and pain, and prays for God's healing comfort, His strength and His peace to rest upon the family and all loved ones as they pass through this time of tremendous grief and unimaginable loss.



LALHMINGLIANA SAIAWI
(3/9/1937 – 6/6/2016)

Mr. Saiawi had been associated with the English Congregation for a number of years. Having joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), in the year 1964 under Maharashtra Cadre, he served in Maharashtra with utmost integrity and without any blemish till his retirement.

He returned to Mizoram in 2002 and settled down in Aizawl and was part of the Presbyterian Church in Chaltlang. Whenever he did not have any assignment in the local church, he made it a point to attend the Sunday morning Worship Service in the English Congregation and has preached in the E.C. on quite a few occasions. He also used to take part in all the special programmes of the Congregation including the Annual Convention meetings.

He was a very dear friend and well-wisher of the E.C. and loved to participate in all our Services. He will be greatly missed.

HAPPENINGS IN E.C.

(Highlights from the period October 2015 - August 2016)

I. ANNUAL CONVENTION 2015 (23rd – 25th October) : Proved to be a time of spiritual blessing and renewal for those who attended, when God used His servant and Guest Preacher, Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements, Senior Pastor, Church at Powai, Mumbai, to bless and challenge the Congregation to live out the theme for the Convention – “Digging Deeper...Reaching Further.” He was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Sheila Clements, who led the Women’s session. We were led in meaningful worship by Bro. Zauva and his team. The meetings were very well attended, and there were special numbers by groups/individuals and refreshments served after the meetings by Mr. Harish Bajaj and his team. The presence and move of the Holy Spirit was evident in all the meetings.

II. A TOTALLY UNEXPECTED BLESSING! : Mrs. & Mr.J.Wilson Sundara Raj visited Aizawl after a gap of 27 years for a stay of little over 2 months (7th April – 15th June 2016) with their son, Mr. W. Sam Joseph and family. Though they are now aged, and the Pastor and Congregation members they knew and worked alongside with are no longer here, still it was a great joy for them to be introduced to a brand new Congregation and to see the faithful hand of God upon the E.C. and for the wonderful way He is fulfilling His purposes through it. For the Congregation members it was indeed a privilege and blessing to have them in our midst. Mr. Sundara Raj (whom God used as one of His instruments in the formation of the Congregation) was the first Secretary of the E.C. and served as Law Secretary to the Govt. of Mizoram from 1977 – 1984. Ever since his retirement, they have been in Chennai, actively serving the Lord and giving of their best as far as their age and health permit. Let us give thanks to God for their lives and continue to uphold them in prayer.



At E.C. Aizawl, April 2016

III. MORE VISITS BY FRIENDS/MEMBERS : The following persons visited us over this period –

- a) Miss Lalrinmawii Fanai (Teteii)
- b) Mr. Ajit Kumar Singh
- c) Mr. Jaison Joshy
- d) Mrs. & Mr. Jacob Rasaily with their son Hriday
- e) Mr. Alan Sabu
- f) Mr. Dheeraj Rai
- g) Miss Lalrinpuii Hmar (Puiuii, d/o E.C. Pastor)

IV. SPECIAL SERVICES CELEBRATED :

- a) Advance Christmas Carol Service (6/12/15)
- b) Christmas Service (25/12/15)
- c) New Year Service (1/1/16)
- d) Maundy Thursday Service (24/3/16)
- e) Good Friday/Holy Communion Service (25/3/16)
- f) Easter Sunday (27/3/16)
- g) 38th E.C. Anniversary Thanksgiving cum Pentecost Sunday Service (15/5/16)

V. SPECIAL DAYS OBSERVED : The following special days were observed in the Congregation –

- a) World Sunday School Day (1/11/15)
- b) Sunday School Final Day (6/12/15)
- c) Mother's Day (8/5/16)
- d) Father's Day (19/6/16)

VI. BLESSINGS : We continue to count our blessings and give thanks to God for –

- a) **Miss Monisha Daniel** (d/o Mrs. & Mr. Daniel Thomas) who is now Dr. Monisha, having successfully completed her MBBS degree from Christian Medical College (CMC), Ludhiana. She is presently doing her Internship there.
- b) **Mrs. & Mr. J. Khongsai** who were blessed with a baby girl, **Gloria**, on 11.5.16 and she was **dedicated** on 10.7.16 by E.C. Pastor, Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata.

VII. BOARD EXAM RESULTS : We thank God for once again answering our prayers and granting success to our children. Hearty CONGRATULATIONS to –

1. **Miss Diya Sabu – (Class XII) – Distinction and Letter** in 2 subjects.
Diya is presently in Bangalore doing her Pharm D, in Acharya College of Pharmacy.

VIII. WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP (W.F.) : Annual Retreat : Was held on 25.11.15. Resource persons were – 1) Miss Silme Cheran, 2) Dr. Mrs. Grace Skariah, 3) Mrs. Lalhmingmawii (Nuteii), 4) Mrs. Lahunzawmi.

IX. FAREWELL: The Congregation bid farewell to our dear members who actively involved themselves in E.C. life during their stay in Aizawl –

- a) On 10/4/16 :
Miss Smriti Chamling Rai
- b) On 7/8/16 :
 - 1) **Miss Lalhminghlui (Mahlui) Famhawite**
 - 2) **Miss Chimik A.B. Marak**
 - 3) **Miss Lawmsangzuali**
 - 4) **Miss Akortiplang Donshiew**

X. ELECTION OF E.C. COMMITTEE MEMBERS (for the period 2016 – 2018): Was held on 7.8.16 and the same committee members were re-elected unanimously. (*See photo on page 21*).

XI. DEDICATION OF NEW E.C. WEBSITE (www.eccaizawl.in) : We are happy to report that E.C. now has its own website, thanks to our God first, and then Jaison Joshy who took the initiative to design and create this website. It was launched and dedicated on 10.7.16 by E.C. Pastor, Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata. Dear readers, you can now download our church bulletin 'The Ecumenical Family' from the website.

Prayer may not change all things for you, but it sure changes you for all things.

DIGGING DEEPER, REACHING FURTHER :
CHRISTIAN FAITH AND RESPONSIBLE ACTION
(A Reflection On The Letter Of James)



- K.R. Samuel

The benchmark for God's child is to be like God the Father. "But you are to be perfect, even as the Father is perfect." [Matt 5:48]. James put it in this way "So let it (endurance) grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing" [James 1:4]. As a child, we need to ask what, why and how to find things needed for our growth. According to James [James 1:2- 4], our spiritual growth towards perfection begins when our FAITH is tested with diverse troubles, difficulties and problems.

The day I began to write this article, problems with my children's health, disagreement with my daughter's landlord and her urgent need to find a new rented place within 24 hours, my vehicle was dented by another car while parking at the Church and the same evening my car's engine would not start and the service center refused to send the mechanic. My wife and I were left at the parking lot of a shopping complex till 9pm. How do I respond to these situations? My natural response is anger and frustration. Then, the Spirit of God prompted me to be calm and trust God. I should not worry for my children's situations, rather I should just seek God's mercy for my daughter's health and for her stay arrangement. I listened to my inner voice and kept my mouth from saying anything that would have weakened my faith in God, **in who He is.**

Testing of Christian Faith: According to the book of James, **Christian faith has to be tested.** So, testing of our faith by diverse troubles should be considered as an opportunity for great JOY. This is the way for our endurance to grow and fully develop, so that we will be perfect and complete, needing nothing (James 1:4). So God has allowed the diverse troubles to come to refine us and make us depend on Him at all times.

How do we live out our FAITH in Jesus Christ? First, we must ask ourselves 'Why do we trust in God?' Is it for blessings and security for our lives on earth and safe passage to heaven? If this is our faith in God, we will be disappointed when we face diverse troubles. All His blessings and salvation are already guaranteed to every child of God. They are already ours. ***The purpose of God for us is not just to bless us on earth, but to be like Him.*** That is why James continued to emphasize on how to get this done in our lives. Firstly, **PRAY FOR WISDOM IN FAITH** [James 1:5]– to know the mind of God, so that we do not look at the troubles and struggle with them, but follow what the Spirit of God is teaching us from the troubles. Secondly, **LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD AND OBEY** [James 1:19] – The Word of God is already planted in our heart when we receive Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. However, unless we are **QUICK IN LISTENING** to God's Word, we will be quick in speaking and quick in anger. The latter two do not produce righteousness. If we **DELAY** in listening to God's Word, the devil uses the delay to sow the seed of doubt, senselessness, fear and anger. If we are quick in listening to God's Word revealed to us, we will be able to **CONTROL** our tongue and use it for blessing others and praising God. Then, we will be able to **SURRENDER** our anger (energy) to God and humble ourselves before Him to avoid all filth and evil from entering into our heart that comes from anger. Thirdly, **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELVES** [James 2:8] – because the JOY of the Lord comes from loving and caring for each other. May God bless you all.

(Mr. Samuel is a former E.C. committee member and is presently the Deputy Gen. Manager, Northern Audit Cell, SIDBI, Lucknow, where he resides along with his wife).

**DIGGING DEEPER, REACHING FURTHER :
EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD, ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD**

These words came from William Carey, the great Founder of Modern Protestant Missionary Movement. The occasion was a conference of the Northampton Association of the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist Churches in the month of May, 1792 at Nottingham, UK. Carey had great concerns for the evangelization of the world. He had the inspiration from reading Captain Cook's book about his travels. Pastor Carey was given the pulpit then. He selected Isaiah 54:2-3 which reads thus, "*Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide...lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities*" (NIV). S. Pearce Carey, who wrote a book on William Carey described how William Carey preached, thus, "His words were not for display but for persuasion, not to secure personal pulpit success, but to win a case, a very battle, for his Lord," (S. Pearce Carey: William Carey, The Wakeman Trust, London, 1993, p.77). The case which he was determined to win was "evangelization of the world."



- Rev. Dr. Lalchungnunga

Carey had written a book called "*An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*" wherein he addressed the main objections to missionary endeavours. The objections were :

- (i) We must not force our way in, but wait for openings
- (ii) Prophecies in Revelation 11 had not been fulfilled
- (iii) There is enough work to be done at home.

The general atmosphere with the Churches was that people did not have any concern for preaching the Gospel to those who never heard it. In the subsequent meeting of the leaders of the Church, Carey proposed to discuss mission, but a senior leader Ryland Sr. thundered at him, "*Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine.*" The "young man" Carey, desperate in fighting his case of world mission, seized the hand of Mr. Fuller, another leader and enquired *whether they were going away without doing anything*. Fuller, then convinced about the need of world evangelization, supported Carey's case. The meeting then decided to have "*the establishment of a Society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen*" discussed in the next meeting. The next meeting, was held at Kettering on 2nd October 1792. After the day's work was over, twelve pastors had an extended meeting in the home of Mrs. Wallis, a widow, and after a long deliberation, formed a Missionary Society which later became Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). They contributed from among themselves *thirteen pounds two shillings and six pence* to start the mission fund. Carey expressed his offer of all the sale proceeds of his book *Enquiry* toward the Society's fund.

Carey volunteered himself to go with Dr. John Thomas as the first missionaries of the Society to India. He arrived, after a six-month long voyage through the rough seas, at Calcutta on 11 November 1793. Going through many hardships, he moved from one place to another, and worked in an indigo factory of the East India Company to earn a living, but did evangelizing work. He made no convert during the first seven years of his labour. He lost one of his sons whom he himself carried to the grave, dug it and buried him there. His wife Dorothy became mentally abnormal after the death of their son.

Of the many achievements Carey and his team of missionaries and helpers made, mention may be made of those in four areas:

(i) In **Education**, he and his team formed a hundred vernacular schools where many natives had their basic education. He with Joshua Marshman and William Ward (Serampore Trio) started a college in 1818 with just 37 students of which 19 were Christians. The Serampore College was given a Royal Charter by King Frederick VI of Denmark. Currently it runs education in Arts, Science and Commerce. As a theological university, more than 50 theological colleges are affiliated to it, and it awards degrees from Diploma level to doctoral level.

(ii) In **Social Reform**, Carey helped substantially in campaigning for the end of widow burning, offering of children in Ganga river, and burial of lepers alive and many such wild social practices prevalent in his time.

(iii) In **Bible Translation**, the contributions of Carey and his team at Serampore are immense. It is said that Bible translations more than doubled all over the world because of Carey's work at Serampore. Number of languages of Bible translations done by Serampore team under Carey are: whole New Testament = 29, portions of New Testament = 6, Pentateuch = 11, Histories = 9, Prophets = 7, Hagiographa (Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles) = 7, all together 69.

(iv) In **Journalism**, Carey and his team published newspapers and periodicals, *Samachar Darpan*, *Dig Darshan* and *Friend of India*, which was the mother of today's *Statesman*, published from Kolkata. If you read the editorial page of the *Statesman* paper, you will find at the top the caption which states that it is *Incorporated and directly descended from Friend of India*. The contributions of the *young man who expected great things from God and attempted great things for God* to India and to the Church and her mission are really GREAT.

(Rev. Lalchungnunga was the former Principal of Serampore College and is presently the Chairman of the Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE). He was also EC Annual Convention Speaker for the year 2010)

**God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him.
- Jim Elliot.**

DIGGING DEEPER, REACHING FURTHER :
IN THE CONTEXT OF SUFFERING
(A Reflection on Job)



- Hepuni Kayina

Suffering for the gospel is expected and easy to explain because of the opposition to it by the world, the Enemy and even because of Christian pettiness and selfish ambitions.

It is the suffering unrelated to the dissemination of the gospel nor that which is brought upon oneself by any apparent default that is difficult to explain. A baby born with aids; shocked children becoming orphans after parents get killed in a freak crash; a young mother suddenly finding herself the only parent having to raise her kids on her own with no employment; innocent family members killed by a terrorist's mindless bombing, etc. And here we are talking about people who belong to the body of Christ. Why do the righteous suffer?

We know that suffering is now natural to this fallen world, but this wasn't so in its original state of creation; nevertheless, we are not satisfied by this glib sounding reason. There is a deeper desire to understand such suffering in the context of a loving God. We are afraid to say it out loud but we anguish over that nagging voice that sometimes threatens to break out in a scream, "If He is a loving God why did He allow this to happen?"

Matthew 19:17 says that, "there is only One who is good" (NIV). It follows therefore that God does not cause suffering, and though He apparently allows it, as seen from the story of Job, yet if it is yielded to Him, He surely will intend the evil for good. It helped me greatly to put faith in God in clearer perspective to hear one Canadian friend make a comment on the question of whether it was fair to the children of Job to be all killed at once for something that was purely between God and Satan over Job. To this matter my Canadian friend said something like, "If it is good to God and brings Him glory, I would happily die at God's whim." It is always good to be reminded that it is all about God not us. Ultimate good consummates from accepting that.

Job exhibited a similar trust in the sovereignty of God in all things because He is faithful regardless of circumstances or one's condition. When he famously declares, "Though He slays me, yet will I hope in Him," Job is actually saying, "No misery on earth can deny me the goodness of God." The story eventually unfolds to the suffering, edifying Job for a deeper relationship with his Maker.

Suffering does not necessarily always happen as a consequence to one's misbehaviour. We see this truth from how the accusations of Job's three counsellor friends, that he must be suffering for his sins, were dismissed by God. In fact this was a serious misrepresentation of God's ethical government and for which they could have come under judgment had it not been for Job's intercession on their behalf.

Could his suffering then be attributed to God chastening him for the purpose of purifying his experiences, as Elihu suggested? This sounds like a more convincing likelihood where Job is concerned. But it turns out that in this case this is not so too.

Job indeed was a "blameless and upright" man and one cannot but admire his integrity as he outlines his passion to uphold it in chapter 31. This fact makes it all the more difficult to

understand the catastrophes that befell him. In the face of attacks against his integrity with various and strong arguments, Job is hard put to defend his ‘undeserving’ lot. He argues back with equal fervour to justify himself because he was “righteous in his own eyes” (Job 32:1). Understandably then we are drawn to sympathize with Job when he cries, “..... let the Almighty answer me....” (Job 31:35). Nevertheless, justifying himself also did not provide the answer to his suffering.

This fact underlines another truth, that the righteous are not immune to suffering or that suffering is not peculiar only to sinners. It is not only related to what we do or don’t do, but also to who God wants us to be.

It is interesting to note that the wisdom of Job, his counsellor friends and Elihu leaves them all bewildered, still without answers to the situation of a righteous man undergoing horrific suffering.

That’s when God steps into the story, revealing Himself to Job, especially His majesty and power through chapters 38 – 41, allowing Job to see a glimpse of the greatness of God’s goodness. Now, how impudent and irreverent his ‘goodness’ looked! He saw how he actually was worse than anything he had ever done! Job 42:6 says he despised himself and repented.

The suffering that was attracted by his “blameless and upright” reputation worked to show Job who alone is true goodness, and that there is no extreme length God will not go to, to show His love and bring us into that love! The good thing for us is to revere and rely on God’s goodness not ours, for we own none, and it took suffering to perfect that vision in Job.

Suffering sobers up our spirit to enjoy God for the eternal joy that He alone is to our eternal soul. We are perfected by it (Hebrews 2:10) to enter into deeper intimacy with God, for suffering cannot exclude us from His love, rather it intensifies it.

(Mr. Hepuni held the post of Joint Secretary in the E.C. Committee and has contributed greatly to the spiritual growth of E.C. He along with his wife and daughter are now with ELIC in China and are supported by the E.C. with prayer and finance.)



*Prayer for newly elected E.C. committee members by Upa Lalthlengliana
(7.8.16)*

**DIGGING DEEPER, REACHING FURTHER :
LEARNING FROM THE HYMN - TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY**



- Dr. Lalzawmliani Kayina

1. *Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.*
2. *Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.*
3. *Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide,
And run not before Him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.*
4. *Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.*

Did you know that this hymn was first sung in India way back in the autumn of 1890? The writer was an Englishman named William Longstaff but it was an American musician named George Stebbins who set it to music and brought it to being. It has remained a favourite of Christians over the ages.

Each line of this hymn is instructive and meaningful in a believer's endeavour to 'dig deeper and reach further'. I would like to summarize the message of this hymn in this way—

1. The secret life of a Christian : The more time we spend speaking to and being in the presence of the Master, reading and meditating on His Word, the deeper our spiritual roots go. This is a big challenge for me personally and it is a daily battle as so many things in life scream for our attention even from the first waking moments. Therefore this song encourages us to **take time**. This is a deliberate choice we have to make each day. A choice to get up a little earlier... sleep on time,... instead of watching that TV show, or that movie....?

2. The conduct of a Christian : As one spends time in His presence, His image gets rubbed off on one. Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights with God and when he came down from Mount Sinai his face shone (Exodus 34:29). It is true that we get influenced by the company we keep, therefore a Christ-like character can only be acquired by being in the company of Christ and His followers. The mark of a true follower of Christ is humility and submission to Him and His people. Do people see that in you and me?

3. The focus of a Christian : The world recognizes and applauds the rich, the successful (never mind how they attained success), the beautiful, the glamorous, the achievers, the strong. And because we live in this world it is a temptation to seek the approval of its people. However, for a Christian, the approval and pleasure of the Master is his/her focus. He/she keeps in step with the Lord, not going ahead or lagging behind. In good times and seemingly bad times, his/her faith remains unshaken.

4. The destiny of a Christian : For a follower of Jesus, this world is not the ultimate destination. It is only a training ground for higher and better service in the Glorious Kingdom of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. As he/she eagerly waits for this kingdom, the toils and troubles of the world pale in significance.

(Dr. Zawmi is a former member of E.C. and taught in the E.C. Sunday school for a while. She along with her husband and daughter are with ELIC in China and supported by E.C. with prayer and finance.)

DIGGING DEEPER, REACHING FURTHER : CHILDREN, THERE AIN'T NO USE IN BELIEVING IF YOU DON'T PLAN ON BEHAVING



“Children, there ain’t no use in believing if you don’t plan on behaving” is a phrase that was used by a Sunday school teacher following each lesson, to remind the children to practice what they had learned. It is easy to go through lessons each Sunday and forget to apply the spoken and written Word of God. His Word should influence our beliefs as well as our lifestyle. Do we live in submission to God’s Word or neglect the words we receive from Him?

Receiving God’s Word at a young age in Sunday school helps to lay a spiritual foundation for your lives. Think about a house foundation. A building cannot stand firm unless the foundation is secure. Listening to and applying God’s Word helps us to be established firmly in Christ as the foundation of our belief. Whenever you encounter wrong influences, wrong choices, or teachings that are against God’s Word you will be able to stand firm. On the other hand, if you fail to apply God Word in your lives you will easily be wrongly influenced or swayed.

We once visited a church. Although the main Sunday service was good, the children’s Sunday school was a surprise. Most children did not pay attention to the lesson; instead they were busy engaging with friends and cell phones during the service. They had lost the fear of God and the purpose of attending church. In this case, the children were not only disobedient to teachers; they were not receptive to God’s Word. When one begins neglecting God’s Word he/she will eventually become completely unreceptive or hardened. It is therefore important to listen as well as apply what you learn from each lesson.

The words in the above title are not only meant for young children, but also for us all as God’s children. Do we live by God’s standards or live a life of compromise?

A few years ago I served in a Christian organization where we ran discipleship training schools. We had people from different backgrounds, all coming together for the purpose of “knowing God and making Him known” - the discipleship training theme. It was easier to live as a believer in the community where life was Christ-centered and living as a Christian was almost natural.

When I left the organization, I was faced with the challenge of living as a Christian in a secular world, where others were not believers, and godly values were compromised for the sake of convenience or fitting in with others. It took more effort and self-discipline to develop in Christian life, such as reading the Bible regularly, personal time in prayer, praying for others, and fellowship with believers.

In the epistle of James, believers are challenged about listening and doing: **James 1: 22-26 (NKJV)** ²² *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.* ²⁵ *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does* ²⁶ *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.*

Doers of the word means acting up to the full knowledge of God’s Word, whether spoken or written. Hearing involves an appropriate response. If what we hear does not integrate into our lives, we are deceiving ourselves. James was talking to people who were facing different trials, just like we do today. No matter the circumstances, our relationship with God can deepen and grow if we let His Word influence our lives. This reminds me of the popular phrase “walk the talk and talk the walk.”

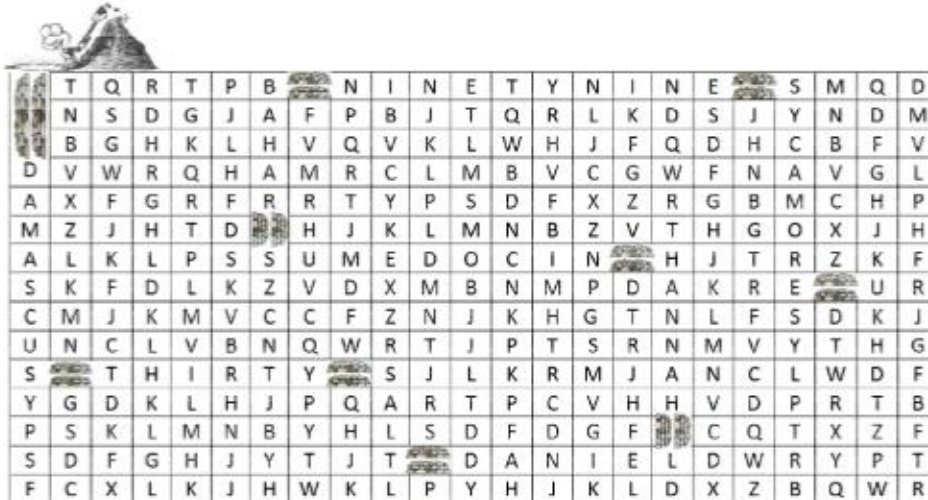
[Mrs. Anne is a former E.C. member and was used by God in various ways to bless the Congregation. She along with her family are presently residing in Delhi and are with Youth with a Mission (YWAM).]

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Help our friend here to dig deeper and find his way further to save his unsaved friends by finding and shading the answers to the questions given below:



- Jaison Joshy

Questions:

1. Towards which city was Saul travelling when he encountered a light from heaven? (Acts 9:3)
2. At what age did Jesus start his ministry? (Luke 3:23)
3. To what preservative does the Lord compare his disciples? (Matthew 5:13)
4. Whose prayer resulted in his being thrown into a den of lions?
5. Who went up yearly to worship God in Shiloh, and prayed one year to God for a baby? (1 Sam 1:3-11)
6. To whom did Jesus say "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"? (John 3:1-6)
7. What was the name of the woman who hid the spies at Jericho? (Joshua 2:3-4)
8. In the parable of the lost sheep, how many sheep did the shepherd count safely into the fold?
(Matthew 18:12)
9. What type of tree did Zacchaeus climb to see Jesus? (Luke 19:4)
10. Where was Abraham born? (Genesis 11:31)

(Jaison has been part of E.C. for a long time and is now doing his M.Tech in Computer Science in National Institute of Technology Annamal Pradesh)

ATTENTION!

The English Congregation meets every Sunday for Worship at 10 a.m. in the English Congregation Church building, within the Synod Office compound, at Mission Veng.
ALL ARE WELCOME!

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