

The Ecumenical Family

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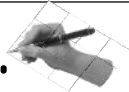


Called to Witness!

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Cover design : Abel Lalmuanpuia Gaikwad

Editorial.....



CALLED TO WITNESS! INSPIRATION FROM TWO STORIES

This August 25, 2018, it will be ten years, since the biggest anti-Christian, violence, biggest communal violence in Odisha. It was on this date, in the wake of the slaying of VHP leader Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati on the night of August 23, 2008, that a nun working in the Dibyajyoti Pastoral Centre of Kandhamal, ran away from the centre with Father Thomas Chellam fearing attack from a violent mob. She was forced out of her shelter the next day and was subjected to horrifying physical and sexual violence. In the communal fire that raged over Kandhamal, two hundred Christian villages and 127 churches and prayer halls were either destroyed or burnt. Apart from this, schools, hospitals, hostels and convents were damaged. The shocking fact is that all these incidents took place in full view of police and the police remained mute spectators. Seven innocent Christians from Kandhamal are still languishing in jail following the mysterious murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati. These innocent Christians – six of them illiterates including a mentally challenged – were convicted in 2013 for the murder touted as a Christian conspiracy. Such a context calls us to bear witness to the gospel and to stand for the principles of justice and secularism as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

- Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad

Drawn by the plight of poor leprosy patients ostracised by their families, Graham Staines arrived in Odisha in 1965. Fifteen years later, Gladys reached there to work for a Christian organisation. Their paths crossed in 1981. They got married two years later. Gladys was struck by the way her husband, who had set up the leprosy home in Baripada in 1982, “devoted himself” to treating leprosy patients from poor families in and around Mayurbhanj. She too lent her hand in this ministry. Their three children were all born in a Kolkata hospital. Like their parents, they picked up Odiya and took to local culture. The Staines family was a happy one — until that wintry night of 1999, when their world fell apart. Graham Staines and his two sons, Philip and Timothy, were burned alive in the car (a station wagon) in which they were sleeping, by Hindu extremists on 22 January 1999. Graham’s widow, Gladys decided to continue their ministry to lepers in India. She stayed on with her daughter, Esther. Staines stresses that her faith in God pulled her through the trauma of losing her husband and children. In 2003, she told the media that she has forgiven the killers of her husband and two sons. According to a report in *The Hindu*, she said: *I have forgiven the killers and have no bitterness because forgiveness brings healing and our land needs healing from hatred and violence.* In 2004 Gladys moved back to Australia because her daughter Esther, after finishing her secondary education from Hebron School in Ooty, wanted to go to college in Australia having a desire to study medicine. Gladys may be in Australia, but she says she remains in Graham’s Orissa in spirit. She is happy that Graham’s dream for the poor has blossomed in Odisha, though, sadly, after his death. The Mayurbhanj evangelical mission now runs a 15-bed spotlessly clean hospital in the memory of Graham Staines.

In today’s India of politicized religious communalism, consumerist corporate globalization, and publicized popular miraculous quick-fixes, we are called to bear Christian witness. ■

[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.]

REFLECTIONS ON ACTS 1:8

After resurrection, before He returned to heaven, Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father that He had been talking to them about. God had promised to pour out His Spirit on all flesh, even their sons and daughters would prophesy. Jesus, for forty days after His resurrection, had been appearing to them in different situations and different places, and He had been talking to them about the Kingdom of God. It was His desire that they be sustained in this world by the hope of the coming kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. So the disciples asked Him if He would at this time restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus answered them by saying that it was not for them to know the times and seasons which the Father had appointed by His own authority. But when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would receive power, and they would be His witnesses in this world.



- Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata
Pastor, E.C.

What Jesus emphasized was - 1) The power of the Holy Spirit that they would receive, and 2) The call to witness. The power of the Holy Spirit was going to make them Christ's witnesses. William Barclay expounded certain things about this Christian witness. First, a witness is a man who believes that his knowledge is true. In a court of law a man cannot give in evidence a carried story; it must be his own personal experience. Second, the real witness is not of words but of deeds. In line with this definition, St. Francis of Assisi also stated, *preach the gospel at all times, when necessary, use words*. Third, in Greek the word for witness and the word for martyr is the same (*martus*). A witness had to be ready to become a martyr. To be a witness means to be loyal no matter the cost.

Christianity is not an easy religion. From the very beginning, the followers of Jesus Christ were tested and opposed by many people, including government authorities. But it increased and continues to grow till today as a result of faithful witnesses.

We are also called to witness Christ's resurrection and salvific works in today's world. In order to be a faithful witness, we have to experience the resurrected Christ personally and receive the Holy Spirit in our life. It is high time that we show our faith not only in words, but also in action by serving others with love and mercy. To give a personal testimony is to share the good news of God's love, which can be used by the Holy Spirit to bestow the gift of faith that makes possible the new birth in the heart of another person.

As we are living in the fast changing society, everything is changing very quickly. Our faith has been challenged by materialism, liberalism, atheism and many more. Other religious groups are also trying to subdue Christianity in our own country. So we need the Holy Spirit to empower us to witness to the truth of the gospel. We have to encourage our fellow Christians to be faithful unto death, and join together with one spirit to show the love of God in our own contexts.

The time has come again to defend our faith. We are now called again to be apologists, to protect our faith and preach the gospel truth. We should remember that Christian apologetics has two themes which includes (a) objective reasons and evidence that Christianity is true (it corresponds to reality) and, (b) the communication of that truth to the world.

The unsaved world waits for our personal witness. The Holy Spirit waits to bless our personal witness. God has called each of us to be personal witnesses, and the need of the hour is for us to be faithful to our calling. ■

(Pastor Vanlalruata is also Assistant Professor, Christian Counselling in the Aizawl Theological College, Durtlang.)

Music Page

RESCUE THE PERISHING



Zoramawii Ralte

**Rescue the perishing,
 Care for the dying,
 Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
 Weep o'er the erring one,
 Lift up the fallen,
 Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.**



*Rescue the perishing,
 Care for the dying;
 Jesus is merciful,
 Jesus will save.*

**Though they are slighting Him,
 Still He is waiting,
 Waiting the penitent child to receive;
 Plead with them earnestly,
 Plead with them gently;
 He will forgive if they only believe.**



**Down in the human heart,
 Crushed by the tempter,
 Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
 Touched by a loving heart,
 Wakened by kindness,
 Chords that are broken will vibrate once more**



**Rescue the perishing,
 Duty demands it;
 Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
 Back to the narrow way,
 Patiently win them;
 Tell the poor wand'rer a Savior has died.**

About The Hymn:

Beloved American composer and poet, Fanny J. Crosby, penned *Rescue the Perishing* in 1869. As with many of her hymns, this hymn was written based on her experiences in New York mission work. William H. Doane, who composed this hymn, sent her the text ‘Rescue the Perishing’ as a theme for her next hymn. A few days later, the inspiration for this hymn came to pass.

Ms. Crosby was addressing a large group of working men one summer evening in 1869, when she had a persistent feeling that some mother’s son had to be saved that night or not at all. She made a plea to those gathered that, “if there was a boy present who had wandered from his mother’s home and teaching, he would come to me at the close of the service”.

At the end of the service, a young man of eighteen approached Ms. Crosby and said, “Did you mean me? I promised my mother to meet her in heaven, but as I am now living that will be impossible.” Ms. Crosby and all those present prayed for this man, and he received God’s love and proclaimed, “Now I can meet my mother in heaven, for I have found God!”

The line “rescue the perishing, care for the dying” kept running through her mind. That same evening, Ms. Crosby wrote the lyrics for the hymn *Rescue the Perishing*, and the following day Mr. Doane composed the melody.

This hymn compels us Christians to rescue, care, snatch, weep, lift and tell. It is a call to action for us believers to reach out and ensure that others also realize that they are beloved children of God. Through this hymn we are reminded to love unconditionally, to walk continuously with others on their journey, to patiently plead with them to not lose hope, and to declare that a loving Savior has died for them, lives forever, and wants to have an intimate relationship with them. We are reminded of our duty to our neighbors – that is to rescue and care for them – and that we can do this through His strength that He will provide. What a beautiful reminder it is.

Ms. Crosby was born in Putnam County, New York, USA, on 24 March 1820. At six weeks, she became blinded due to an improper treatment. However, the fact that she was blind never held her back, and in fact made her focus on a way to serve Him the best way she could. One remarkable fact about Ms. Crosby is that though she is often referred to as the ‘Queen of gospel song writers’, she only began writing hymns at the age of forty-four. Ms. Crosby has penned more than 8,000 gospel songs including the iconic hymns *Blessed Assurance*, *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*, and *I am Thine, O Lord*.

■

Sources : <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-rescue-the-perishing-crosby>
<https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bcrosby4.html>
<http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume34/GOT034129.html>

[Zoramawii (Mimi) is an active member of E.C. Youth and is part of the Worship Team.
She is a managing partner of Mizoram Consultancy Group (MzCG).]

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A HOSTILE WORLD

“Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you’re living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy.” – 1 Peter 3:15, The Message.



- Hepuni Kayina

Let me use a true story to highlight how witness has been happening for us in a hostile environment in consonance to this exhortation. The name of the person has been changed for discretion sake.

I will call this narrative, **“When The Rain Soaks The Earth”**.

Bella came into our life around the fall of 2014. She was then an apprentice lawyer with a firm. Always dressed smartly, well-groomed and confident looking, she made her presence felt with her strong and emphatic opinions and comments. She was famous among our home group for her love of expensive bags and purses, and her passion to make money, yet she lived simply. You could immediately notice her maturity that made others look like kids when conversation took place on matters other than academics. She loved to be in company and liked to laugh. But she could also be brutally honest and very frank with her opinions and feelings. It was always nice to have her because she livened up conversations. Attractive in her own way, she did not lack attention.

Yet, beneath that façade was a little girl whose world was in shambles even before she could begin to understand it.

At the time of her birth instead of celebration there was cursing because her father wanted a son and so she was immediately rejected by her own dad. He must’ve been very vocal about it even over the years. Furthermore, he showed his disgust for his daughter by lavishing all his delight and attention on his brother’s son. Bella grew up denied the love of a father till she also denied him, and had no qualms about saying very publicly that she hated him. Sometime later her parents divorced and she lived with her mom but we never heard her talk about any love between them either. However, she remembers very fondly a dog she once had on which she poured out her love. And when it died she cried for a month.

In her early twenties, desperate to find the love that was missing all along in her life, she found a boy she liked and they lived in together for nine years or more. It turned out to be a tumultuous affair. It was sometime during this relationship that we met her. She brought her relational problems to us just for the sake of telling someone. She was having trying times with her live-in partner because he also came from a very broken background himself. Then one day he left her for good saying that he had never really loved her at all! He said that to her face. One evening she came over and

told us this horrific news. She was devastated and looked very miserable indeed. My wife cried with her. This astounded her but clearly consoled her a lot. And instead of us comforting her, she told us not to go into sorrow because of her plight! At this point, it seemed to her like everyone she loved and was close to had betrayed her. How could so young a person face so much grief and abuse! We had nothing appropriate to say but only to love this poor deprived soul.

Has all this made her bitter and cynical? Cynical? Yes. But bitter? No. Despite her rough relationships, and maybe because of it, she was a regular visitor to our house almost every Tuesday. The reason she said was that she felt at home and peaceful in our home. Much later she said more than once that she wished she could marry again but to a Christian although she resisted every invitation made to her to become one. From being a staunch Buddhist she recently gave it up for psychology hoping to find life's answers in it. Since we are in a situation where there is restriction on and suspicion of the Good News, and since she is oriented against it herself, we have made it a point not to be judgmental and preachy, but instead to show and express our love for her as much as she allows. We have also told her more than once how she is so loved by her Maker. We understand it is difficult for someone in her situation to believe anyone could love her. She is scared to believe in that again, having been seared several times in the desire for it. Why should she not be after all she has been through? No wonder she cannot trust in love anymore. This fear she has to overcome is monumental.

At times we despair she has snuffed out love altogether from her heart.

Yet at times she expresses how beautiful is the love between husband and wife that she sees in our marriage and how fortunate we are. Once she asked us if we loved our six children. Sometimes she says she is one of our daughters. We regard her as one.

The day she came to wish us goodbye a couple days before June 27 as we were going on leave for a semester, she was shocked to find herself so emotional! She said she had determined never to be emotional anymore but that day she could not stop her tears flowing!

To us this was like winter passing and the spring thaw arriving; like when the early spring rains soak the earth causing life to stir! Love never fails! May spring visit her heart for real this time! May she dare to trust just this one more time in love, the love of the Father!

[May we ask prayer for "Bella" to accept Him and enter Eternal love?]. ■

(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.)

EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

An Exemplary Christian Testimony for me was my father, Rev. Ningwon Woleng (L). He loved God and people and served them both all his life. He served God full-time for more than 40 years in different capacities and God used him much beyond his abilities. Many people who knew my dad keep commenting that we, the children are blessed today because of my father. Today I am in the service of the Lord because of him.



- Aylwin Woleng

My father would be away from home from Thursday or Friday to Monday almost every week, preaching somewhere. It was so frequent that we just took it for granted that dad would be gone for the weekend. But we always knew where he was going because he would make sure that the night before he left, all of us prayed for the event in detail. He made us take part in the ministry through prayers. He always said, "Be watchful because as I am preaching far from home, Satan is going to attack each one of you at home because he is jealous of the many people giving their lives to God." At times, just before he left for a crusade or conference, one of us would get sick or some disturbance would come, and he would say that it was a sign that the program would be successful, because Satan was trying to distract the family. So he would, as usual, pray for us and encourage us to pray harder, and then he would leave, not that he cared less about home but he had such urgency of preaching to the many lost souls about the only way to God, Jesus Christ.

Whenever he was home, when we woke up in the morning or when we came back from school in the evening, we would always find him in the living room with his brown leather bound Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, Berkley Commentary, a thick note book and pens of different colors. He would make notes in different colors and underline the Bible with color quotes for promises, instructions, warnings etc. and that's something I learned and practice even today in my digital Bible.

My father genuinely put effort to help any group of people. Of the many instances here is one. There was an alcoholic in our locality and because of his drinking habit he never came to church. Even at home there were fights and quarrels daily. Because of that his wife and children came to my dad for prayer and help. My dad frequently visited their house and just spent time with this man talking about politics, social issues, etc. and befriended him. No preaching or reprimanding for drinking, but just loving him as he was and praying together. The man stopped drinking and when friends asked him, he said, "I don't know when pastor will come and visit me so I better not drink." About two years later he became one of the most committed and active deacons in our church.

Our house was always busy with people day and night, some for counseling, some for prayer, and some just to visit us. He would spend hours listening to them and comforting them. For whatever reason they came, my dad made sure that he prayed for them before they left the house. And in many cases he would call us children to join them in the prayers. Many would come gloomy and would leave the house filled with gratitude as if their burden had been lifted. I watched people's lives being changed and that is what motivated me to be in the ministry.

During our school holidays my dad would take us children along in turns, on his travels for various camps, crusades, conferences etc. I guess being the oldest child, I had the privilege of travelling with him the most. I would watch him preach and watched hundreds respond to his call to come forward. And I thought my dad was great and I admired him a lot. I was young and too naïve to understand that people were not coming for my dad but to Christ. Anyway, I wanted to be like my dad, popular and loved so much by people. He was a hero in my eyes and he still is. And that is how he trained me to be in the ministry, even though he never asked me to.

My dad had a hand puppet, and using that, he taught us as kids to confess our mistakes. He told us that the puppet knew everything and so before the puppet tells dad, which would be very shameful, we better boldly confess to dad. We believed it, so we were quick to say sorry. As teenagers we made wrong choices but I don't remember my dad yelling and beating us. He would take time to talk to us and explain to us why it was wrong and how as a child of God we should respond.

I thank God for giving me such a wonderful father, who showed me the way to God not just by words but mostly by living an exemplary life. ■

[Mr. Aylwin is National Missionary of Shadow Mountain Community Church (SMCC), San Diego, California, based in Siliguri, India. He is a former active Youth Leader and member of E.C.]

WITNESSING AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HEALING MIRACLES

Here the word ‘witnessing’ has limited application. It applies to the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ proclaiming what Jesus has done for him/her and under wider application what the Lord Jesus has done and is doing for the people of the world and how He carries out this service. When Jesus changed the water into wine at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11), He showed His ability to instantaneously and miraculously work a great chemical change among liquids. In the same way Jesus touched and healed the sick people. Thus Jesus, as Messiah, had the power of JEHOVAH ROPHEKA (THE LORD YOUR HEALER).



Prof. Ravikant Kant

Moses told the people of Israel: “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.” God is the healer of the body, soul and spirit of man. Jesus paid a heavy price for it. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed” (Is. 53:5). Men are delivered from consuming strong drinks and other bad habits. This brings God’s blessings to those families. Medical persons can clean up the wound of a patient and apply medicine and bandage but healing comes from Jehovah Ropheka.

Jesus is very much willing to pass on the power of Jehovah Ropheka to His disciples. “Jesus gave them (12 disciples) power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.....and to heal the sick” (Lk. 9:1-2).

Jesus is also willing to help us claim healing by faith. My wife was diagnosed with cancer in 2002. She was admitted in Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute in West Delhi for a very long time. Doctor gave her 6 months and advised her to prepare the family for her departure. But I had assurance from our Heavenly Father that she will continue to live. Now in 2018 she happily enjoys living without cancer. We are very grateful to our God Jehovah Ropheka.

Servants of God are invited to pray for the sick. They claim healing miracles in the blood of Jesus. This strengthens the faith of the patients and their relatives. Immediately or gradually the patient rises to good health.

Healing miracles have greatly helped in extending the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ Name is glorified. The missionaries and evangelists are highly respected as they fearlessly proclaim the gospel in the language of the people.

Praise God! Days of miracles are not over. ■

(Mr. Ravikant is presently Minister-at-large, Interserve India and resides in Pune along with his wife. He is closely associated with the E.C. and attends E.C. whenever he is in Aizawl.)

WITNESSING TO THE MONEY-MINDED



- Sam N. Jacob

The risen Lord Jesus sent out His disciples who were witnesses of His death and resurrection to preach the gospel of forgiveness of sins by faith in Him.

They were to spread the good news to all the nations of the world irrespective of their economic or social status. In the process they would face different kinds of people from different cultures and philosophies. Preaching the gospel to such varied groups of people could be done only by the special power given by God Himself. So they were endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit of God before embarking on that demanding task.

Primarily the disciples were to be witnesses of Christ. A witness of Christ is not simply a mouthpiece that repeats what he has heard meaninglessly. He is a representative of the Saviour. Through the witness, God Himself is calling the people to repentance. So the character, attitude and intent of God must be seen in the witness. Otherwise he will only be a false witness.

While witnessing to the present generation that is deeply sucked into materialism, we can make mistakes unless we are led by the Spirit. Whatever be the generation or culture, the gospel of Jesus Christ remains the same. We have no authority to tamper with it. These days, we see a 'new' gospel preached that faith in Christ will make you wealthy and healthy. Neither Christ nor the Apostles preached such a gospel. Just as in the time of Apostle Paul, today also for many preachers 'god is their belly' ['bodily desires' GNB]. The gospel of Christ is not to be perverted to suit the desires of the hearers. On the other hand, the true gospel transforms the desires of the hearers to be conformed to the will of God. It can never be a cover for covetousness. We are witnesses of the One who, "existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross" [Phil. 2:6-8]. The same attitude of giving up privileges to reach out to the unreached people is expected of us too.

Jesus preached to a poor nameless Samaritan woman, Nicodemus the religious leader and to a rich young ruler. In all the situations, He pointed them to Himself. The point of contact was different, but the message remained the same.

One basic principle of communication is to begin at the understanding level of the hearer. Talking to the woman at the well, the Lord started with her felt need of water. He did not give her an easy way to draw water, but led her to realize her greater spiritual need. Nicodemus came to satisfy his religious curiosity. He showed him the futility of trying to fulfill his intellectual pursuit. The self-righteous rich man was shown that his righteousness and desire for God's Kingdom was only a sham and he had to give up his love of wealth in order to enter God's Kingdom. Starting from their current situations Jesus led them to realize their greater spiritual needs.

People may have different philosophies, desires and goals in life. Understanding that is essential for leading them to a greater appreciation of the underlying spiritual needs. Their arguments for holding on to the present material world may have to be demolished before giving them the true gospel of Salvation. This is true of the money-minded people as much as to those holding on to other philosophies of life. ■

(Mr. Sam is a former E.C. Committee member. After entering Christian ministry, he is serving the Lord in various capacities, and currently resides in Bengaluru along with his wife.)

THE PLACE OF COUNSELLING IN WITNESSING



Debbie Zothanpari

How does bearing witness benefit an individual? How is it reparative to anyone? How do we as therapists help others by witnessing to those who have been through unbearable experiences? In psychology, bearing witness is a term that refers to sharing our experiences with others. In legal terms, witness is derived from the root meaning “to bear in mind,” “to remember”. In this light, a witness is one who has knowledge of something by experience and recollection, and can tell it accurately. By this, we are all witnesses for one another.

World Health Organization describes mental health as, “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Despite the fact that mental health in India has been gaining ground in moderate strides, the need for psychological care still remains overwhelming and often suppressed in the face of stigma, taboo and shame. A mental health survey in 2016-2017 reported that 150 million people across the country are in need of mental health care interventions. Researchers owe the high prevalence of mental morbidity to the fast-paced lifestyle, stress, breakdown or absence of support systems or coping resources, and economic instability. Mental distress is believed to be a key reason for suicide among students.

As a counsellor I meet clients, some come with a lot of pain, some come wanting to clear their doubts, some others who are going through what is called an existential vacuum, having no purpose to live. For many clients, through counselling they experience a safe space where they are heard and seen. No interrogations, no judgements, listen to their perception, not intervene, with just a hint of questions here and there for clarifications. Just being given the space to tell their story on that day, in that particular way. This by itself is healing. The person feels he or she matters, that you are worth listening to, responding to, empathising with.

As a counsellor who is a Christian I seek to meet people where they are – emotionally, spiritually and mentally. I have to be comfortable using both cognitive therapy and Scripture if I am to help a client manage cognitive distortions while at the same time comforting them with Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?” Research has proven that spirituality serves as a psychological resource for coping. Without faith many clients find it hard to make sense of suffering and the overwhelming forces of one’s life. Spirituality has space in the counselling room. God is the ultimate Healer. Therapy can assist Christians find their way back to the loving God of the Bible and remove the rigid view of God as quick to strike down and without grace. ■

(Ms. Debbie is Assistant Professor and Head Of Department, Counselling Psychology, at Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, and has recently completed her PhD. She is a former member of E.C.)

Youth Page

LEAD BY EXAMPLE:**A CHALLENGE TO TODAY'S CHRISTIAN YOUTH****(CF. I TIM 4:12)**

Waking up to our world today, it seems inevitable to escape the preaching that encourages one to be more open-minded and shames the other for being narrow-minded. You must have come across, “If you believe that your God is the only true God, you are disrespecting other religions.” “Oh, you don’t support homosexuality? Are you denying them of their basic human rights?!” “Marriage is an age-old meaningless concept. Live-in actually helps in getting to know better whether the partner will be compatible for you or not.”

- Varenina Konghay

It seems more often than not that being a Christian would mean that you’d get labelled as a conservative person, according to the standards of the world. As a student, growing up in the hub of cross-cultural and religious backgrounds of Delhi University, I got to see and hear both sides of the coin. Whilst engaging with people from different faiths and people who are indifferent towards it, there can be challenging moments when your own faith can turn into a small voice, a whisper and then eventually, hushed. Under the talks of being open-minded, the concept of sin has been trivialised so much to the extent that opposing it means you’re “not cool” or “you’re being too traditional”. And I’d ask myself, how much open-mindedness is good? Where do we draw the line? But, what I didn’t realise was that while trying to extend my line, I had become supportive to the ways of the world, I encouraged the ways of the world and I began to seek the joys of the world.

However, during a short summer break when I went home, I found myself having ample time to spend with the Word of God and it was then that I found my answer to where I should stand when the coin is tossed. Discernment of good and evil can come only when you’re constantly in tune with the Word of God through which He will convict you. The more we read the Word of God, the more we become aware of His nature, and the more we know Him, the lesser the world will appeal to us.

And so, I went back to my University after the break, a different person. I felt more firm about what I believed in, despite the obvious scorn that followed from friends and others. This reminded me of how in school days, in a bid to fit in so much, we’d compromise on a lot of things to be liked. A “goody-goody Christian kid” tag would mean that we weren’t invited to any of the fun stuff in school. And here again, years later I found myself under the same tag when I refused to do things that by the logic and math of the world – “it doesn’t harm anyone so how is it bad.” But through the guidance of prayer and the Word, I found no interest whatsoever to entertain what I could now clearly see as wrong.

Furthermore, through student ministries like Campus Crusade and EU, I was further exposed to challenging conversations with, now, not only friends but with random strangers. As a part of a mission trip, we went to Chandigarh to visit colleges and share the Gospel with the students there. What I could take back from this experience was that when we rely on how much we know about the Gospel whilst sharing, we end up turning it into a debate. But when it comes prayerfully, God will give us the heart of compassion and concern to reach out to them. I remember having a more meaningful time with a student who did not speak in English than with those who did because I was earnestly praying for God’s wisdom while conversing with her.

As I grew in my “narrow-mindedness” of the world, I thought I would eventually lose my social circle but on the contrary, it turned out that underneath all the mockery and insults hurled against me, I had gained respect from my fellow friends. I could never have imagined that they were observing my involvement in the ministries, and my attitude towards the Gospel. I realised how important it is to live a life that reflected Christ-like behaviour because sometimes the only Bible we can make them read is that from our character and deed. What we don’t realise is that the world is always watching us, so if we tell them that the light we carry is the True Light - then we must reflect that Light for them to know it is the Truth.

“For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behaviour should show it!” Ephesians 5:8. ■

(Varenina is currently pursuing her Masters in English from Delhi University, alongside a certificate course in animation.)

E.C. HAPPENINGS

- I. ELECTION OF NEW E.C. COMMITTEE MEMBERS (13/5/18) :** The following are the E.C. Committee members for the period May 2018 – 2020.
Secretary – Mr. W. Sam Joseph
Joint Secretary – Dr. Joshy Peter
Finance Secretary – Mr. Harish Bajaj
Treasurer – Dr. J.B. Rajesh
Librarian – Mr. Moab Badding
I/c. Evangelism – Mr. Philip Walters
Women’s Representative – Miss Silme Ch Momin
Youth Representative – Mr. Jaison Joshy
- II. E.C. 40th ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING SERVICE CUM PENTECOST SUNDAY (20/5/18) :** A special thanksgiving service was held on Pentecost Sunday to mark the 40th anniversary of E.C. Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau, Senior Executive Secretary, Mizoram Presbyterian Synod was the Preacher and shared a meaningful message. To mark the special occasion, the former Pastors of the E.C. were invited and felicitated and each Pastor was presented with a memento during the service. A souvenir booklet was also released by the Pastor of E.C. on this special day. Various groups and individuals presented special numbers. The service was well attended by E.C. members, friends and well-wishers. A delicious fellowship meal followed the service which was again followed by a meaningful time of worship led by BURN 24 X 7.
- III. SOME SPECIAL DAYS OBSERVED:**
- MOTHER’S DAY (13/5/18):** The E.C. Youth honoured the mothers of the Congregation with a special program – a speech, solo, gift and special prayer.
 - FATHER’S DAY (17/6/18):** The E.C. Youth honoured the fathers also with a special program – a speech, special number, gift and special prayer.
- IV. THE CONGREGATION WAS HAPPY to catch up with –**
- Miss Merilyne (former E.C. Youth and student of RIPANS);
 - Miss Hephshibah, d/o. Mrs & Mr. Badding;
 - Mr. Jacob Rasaily, E.C. Missionary from ICCC, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.
- V. GUEST PREACHER: Mr. Jacob Rasaily** on 15/7/18
- VI. NEW MEMBER: Mr. Rafyle Rhys Snabi** was welcomed into the E.C. on 26/8/18 by E.C. Pastor, Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata.
- VII. WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP:** Annual House F’ship at Sis. Madawngi’s house at Saron Veng was held on 16.9.18. The ladies had a very blessed, enjoyable and meaningful time there. The host family received the ladies warmly. It was a time of refreshing for all.

OBITUARY

- The Congregation was deeply saddened by the sudden passing away of its former Committee member, **Mr. Jothi Jenkins Vetharaj**, 62 years, on **9/6/18** in his hometown in Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu. He is survived by his wife, and two married sons.
 - The Congregation was once again saddened by the passing away of its member **Mr. Victor Zokhuma**, 80 years, on **11/10/18** in Aizawl. He is survived by his wife, married son and married daughter. *(More details on page 15)*
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REMEMBERING OUR FORMER MEMBERS:**MR. JOTHI JENKINS VETHARAJ****24.5.56 – 9.6.18**

Mr. Jothi hailed from the village of Poovancode, Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nadu. He was the eldest of five children with three younger sisters and one younger brother, to his parents Mr.V.Rajian and Mrs. P.P. Chellathai.

He came to Mizoram in the year 1981 and joined the Synod High School and taught Maths, Science and Sociology for the High School students. He joined the English Congregation Church in its early years and became actively involved in its life and ministry. He got married in the year 1985 and his wife Mrs. Jeevi too served as a Sunday School teacher from the time she came to Aizawl till she left. Their two sons Jackson and Jeejo were part of the English Congregation Sunday School till they left Aizawl. Mr. Jothi served as Treasurer in the English Congregation Committee for several years and also as Secretary for a very brief period of 10 months or so. He was a very dedicated member of the E.C. and carried out all his responsibilities faithfully.

In the year 2003 he underwent open heart surgery to replace two valves. He finally left Aizawl in 2007 on voluntary retirement. Back in his home-state, he once again took up his teaching profession in the Gurusankar Government Higher Secondary School, Munanjipatti, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu and worked there till May 2014.

Towards the end he had problems in the liver and also stone in the gall bladder for which he was hospitalized. He became weaker and passed away on 9.6.2018 and the funeral was on 10.6.2018.

The English Congregation remembers with gratitude the valuable services rendered by Mr. Jothi during his time here. May our loving God's strength, peace and comfort be with his wife Mrs. Jeevi and sons Jackson and Jeejo and their families. ■

MR. VICTOR ZOKHUMA**31.7.38 – 11.10.18**

Mr. Victor was born and brought up in Kolkata, the eldest of four children to his parents, Pu Sebela Ralte and Pi Lalhmingliani Sailo. He came to Mizoram in 1985 after his marriage to his wife Pi Rozami Hmar. His two married children are Michael Sangkhuma and Cynthia Lalmuanpuii and he was blessed with seven grandchildren.

He was a Steel Fabricator and started a Steel Fabrication Industry in Aizawl. He designed and constructed the E.C. Church building, and also prepared the plan and estimate of the building free of cost. We thank God for his significant contribution to the E.C.

Let's pray for God's comforting and strengthening presence to be with his wife Pi Rozami, son Michael, daughter Cynthia and their families. ■

E.C. Anniversary 2018



(20-5-2018)



Felicitation of former Pastors

Remember your Leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way and imitate their faith.

-Hebrews 13:7



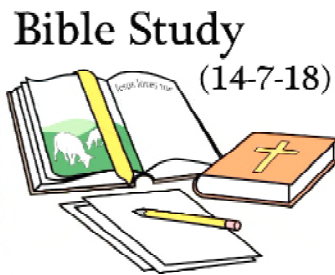
Praise and Worship



Special number by Meha



Fellowship
Meal
after
Anniversary
Service



Bible Study
(14-7-18)

Led by
Ms. Lalremruati Kiangte



Women's Fellowship:
Annual House Fellowship at
Sister Madawngi's House, Saron Veng



(16-9-18)



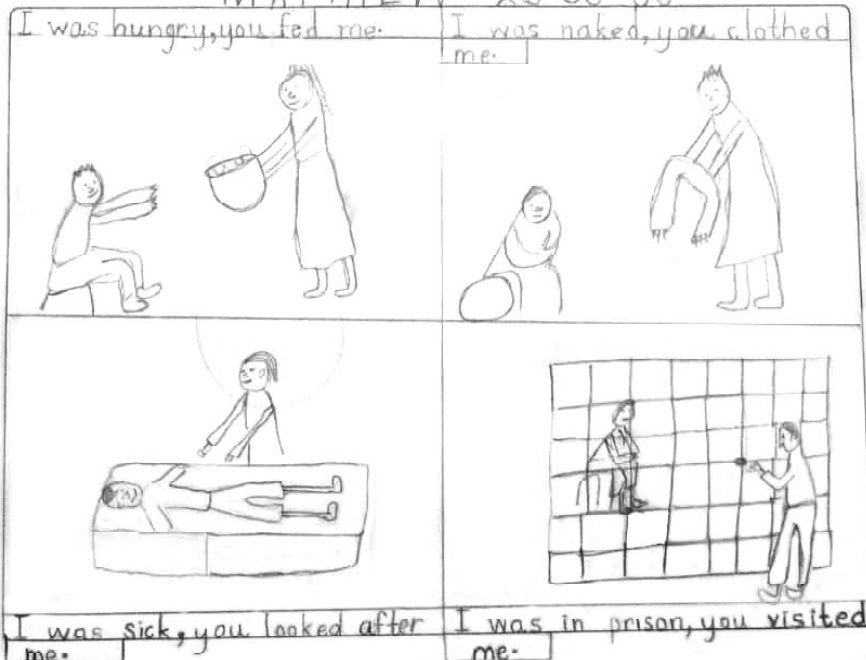
Sunday School Page



Neha R.S.
Junior Class, E.C. S.S.

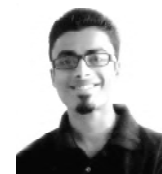
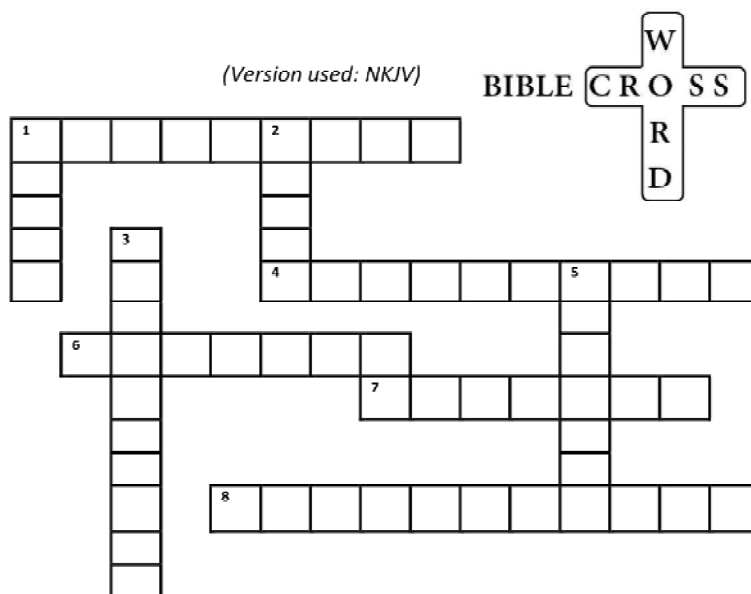
(Neha is studying in Class V, Mary Mount School, Aizawl.)

MATTHEW 25:35-36



Bryan Enga

(Bryan is presently in Bengaluru and studying in Class I through Homeschooling.)



Jaison Joshy

Complete the crossword given above by finding the missing words from the verses given below:

ACROSS:

1. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be _____ to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." [Acts 1:8]
4. ...that is, that I may be _____ together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. [Romans 1:12]
6. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a _____ to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; [1 Peter 3:15]
7. _____ from every form of evil. [1 Thessalonians 5:22]
8. Now then, we are _____ for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. [2 Corinthians 5:20]

DOWN:

1. And He said to them, "Go into all the _____ and preach the gospel to every creature". [Mark 16:15]
2. Let your light so _____ before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. [Matthew 5:16]
3. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, _____ to God, which is your reasonable service. [Romans 12:1]
5. Therefore do not be _____ of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,...

(Mr. Jaison has been part of E.C. for a long time and after completing M.Tech in Computer Science, he is now working as Guest Lecturer in Mizoram University.)

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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