

The Ecumenical Family

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HERALDING GOD'S NEW CREATION

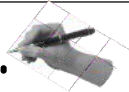
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Editorial.....



THE BIRTH OF JESUS: HERALDING GOD'S NEW CREATION



Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad

In this bulletin, we would like to integrate the theme of the 2018 English Congregation Convention [The Mission of God (Gen. 1:28): From the Present Creation to the New Creation] with the message of the birth of Jesus Christ. Hence the theme – The Birth of Jesus: Herald God's New Creation.

I would like to share two reflections on the theme. The first is by Pastor Aaron Christie (<http://www.trinitywels.com/home/2161/2161/docs/Isaiah7-10>). He says:

In the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, Wise king Solomon writes “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” (Ecc 1:9). . . Winds blow. Waters flow. Babies cry. Boys bicker. Girls gossip. Boys and girls fall in love. They grow up and marry. Women talk about labor and delivery war stories. Men brag about the big one that never quite got into the boat. Chariots or cars tend to break down when you need them most. Those who refuse to learn History's lessons are doomed to repeat them.

Think of it this way: Jesus, when He took on human flesh, became the end all and be all of humanity. To borrow a phrase from Neil Armstrong: **“What Jesus did was one small step for the Son of Man, one giant leap forward for mankind.”** Christ steps into obedience to His Father's law and we leap forward as those who love God's law. Christ steps out in faith in His Father's promises, and we now leap forward in faith as sons and daughters of the Father in heaven. Jesus steps up to a cross, and our sin steps up with Him - to be nailed with Him to the cross, to be forgiven, to be done away with, we leap forward into a brand new status from sinner to saint! Jesus steps out of a grave, you and I leap forward into a new life in Christ that will never be taken away from us.

Indeed Jesus brought in a new creation!

“Hark the Herald Angels Sing” is one of the popular Christmas carols. However, like all popular and commonly sung or said texts (including the Lord's Prayer), we fail to realize the deep significance of the content of our songs and prayers.

One of the verses of “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” states:

Hail! the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail! the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth
Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King”

Here is the “good news of great joy” which Christmas proclaims! Christ has entered into our fallen world to bring “light and life, healing, victory over death, and **raising us up to be reconciled members of God's family through our second birth!**”

A message from the Greek Orthodox Church of Boston (<http://www.schwebster.org/sermons/2014-sermons/hark-the-herald-angels-becoming-new-creations-in-christ>) states,

“This is a reminder that we don't simply celebrate the birth of a baby born in Bethlehem, but we celebrate the entrance of God into our fallen and darkened world! We are not only NOT ALONE, but we are BEING RAISED UP to live under God's new reign on earth. As St. Athanasios the Great summarized in his classic writing *On the Incarnation* – “*God became human so that humans can become divine.*” ■

[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 2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-20

The ministry and message of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 “*God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.*” (New International Version)



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

As we are in the advent season celebrating the birth of Jesus that brings God’s new creation for humankind, let us remind ourselves once again that we are saved to serve the Lord and proclaim the good news to the world.

Christians should be committed to reconciling people to God. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Paul tells us that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. He calls us ‘Christ’s ambassadors’ to share the message of reconciliation with others. This is our call to witness to those who are not yet reconciled to God through the cross. In the Bible, reconciliation with others accompanies reconciliation with God. Our response to God’s saving grace is expressed through our response to others. The Bible shows that broken relationships are at the root of poverty, marginalization and conflict. We are living in a world where human rebellion against God has led to self-centeredness, which in turn results in exclusion, mistrust, greed and injustice. God’s intention is reconciliation and community. There are many places in the New Testament where Christian unity is emphasized, and guidelines about how to live at peace with one another are given. In the rest of this section we look at some biblical principles in order to come to an understanding about why Christians should become involved in encouraging reconciliation.

Jesus Christ began His public ministry by declaring the Kingdom of God. He called people to repentance and gave them hope. He gave them encouragement and healed their diseases. Even more, He possessed the power to forgive their sins. Christ’s countrymen were astonished that He spoke with such authority, and people excitedly crowded about Him everywhere He went. The popular response to His message was remarkable. The main part of His message, after all, was that all of mankind could be reconciled to God. He explained that salvation wasn’t offered to the Jews only; it was extended to Gentiles as well.

Reconciling with others, we must bear in mind that our relationship with God should affect our relationship with other people as well. “Beloved,” wrote John, “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). Reconciling with each other becomes nothing less than a necessary part of our calling. As Christ’s ambassadors, Paul said we must set an example to show others that they too can be reconciled to God and reconciled to man.

Ultimately, that’s what the Kingdom of God is about: being reconciled to God and man. In the Kingdom every human being will at last come to a right relationship with God – a relationship that had been prevented by our sins. This is a vital part of the message Jesus Christ preached to the people of Galilee, and then to Judea, and that’s the message the disciples began to spread throughout the world.

It’s as timeless a message now as it was then: We need reconciliation. We can be thankful that God allows us not only to experience it, but also to share it with others as He proceeds with His plan to offer salvation to all of mankind. ■

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

Music Page

JOY TO THE WORLD

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
 Let earth receive her King;
 Let every heart prepare Him room,
 And heaven and nature sing,
 And heaven and nature sing,
 And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.*



Anne Nduku

*Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
 Let men their songs employ;
 While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 Repeat the sounding joy,
 Repeat the sounding joy,
 Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
 Nor thorns infest the ground;
 He comes to make His blessings flow
 Far as the curse is found,
 Far as the curse is found,
 Far as, far as, the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
 And makes the nations prove
 The glories of His righteousness,
 And wonders of His love,
 And wonders of His love,
 And wonders, wonders, of His love.*



About The Christmas Hymn:

“Joy to the world,” one of the most joyous Christmas hymns, was composed by an English writer, Isaac Watts. However, it was not originally written as a Christmas song. In 1719, Isaac Watts published a book of poems in which each poem was based on a psalm. Rather than translating the original Old Testament texts, he adjusted them to refer more explicitly to the work of Jesus as it had been revealed in the New Testament.

While in his teens, Isaac Watts was dissatisfied with the psalms singing in the church. At that time the music in every worship service consisted only of psalms or sections of Scripture put to music. He found the practice monotonous and sensed a lack of joy and emotion among the congregants as they sang. He once famously said, “To see the dull indifference, the negligent and thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is upon their lips, might even tempt a charitable observer to suspect the fervency of their inward religion.”

Isaac Watts’ father often heard his son complaining about the lyrics. Tired of his complaining, he issued a challenge. He told Watts that if he struggled with the songs they sang, then he ought to do something about it. Perhaps, he should attempt to write something different. At the age of 18, young Isaac took up his father’s challenge. For the next couple of years, he wrote a new hymn for each Sunday. He became like a preacher-poet, well loved by his congregation.

Isaac Watts paraphrased the entire Psalm 98 in two parts, and it first appeared in his famous collection, *The Psalms of David*, from which we sing, “Joy To The World”. A century later (1836) Lowell Mason found Isaac Watts’ poem of joy and wanted to publish it. However, he didn’t have a proper musical setting. In his search, he came upon a beautiful melody in “Messiah,” one of the great sacred classics composed by George Frederick Handel. Lowell Mason set Isaac Watts’ poem to Handel’s music and created one of the world’s most beloved and popular Christmas songs, “Joy to the World.” The words of the hymn are based on Psalm 98:4- 9, Psalm 96:11-13, and Genesis 3:17.

Psalm 98:4-9 *“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity” (KJV).*

Psalm 96:11-13 *“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice, before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth” (KJV).*

Stanza three is based on Genesis 3:17, *“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (KJV).* ■

Sources:

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(Mrs. Anne is a former member of E.C., currently residing in Bengaluru along with her family. She is a Homemaker and is involved in Christian ministry as well.)

SUMMARIES OF SERMONS, E.C. ANNUAL CONVENTION 2018

PREACHER : MR. L.T. JEYACHANDRAN**THEME : THE MISSION OF GOD (Genesis 1:28)****From The Present Creation To The New Creation****SUMMARY OF SERMON – I****(12/10/18)**

In Genesis 1:28, God blesses Adam and Eve and tells them to look after His creation – His first commandment to them. We should not think that God supersedes His orders; rather He expands them and so the ‘Great Commission’ of Matthew 28:18-20 should be seen as a subset of the first commandment.

The Bible is not a religious book but a reality book – it gives us all the salient features about reality and gives us the big picture of what God’s mission is. God desires to have fellowship with us so that we can participate in His mission. The word ‘fellowship’ in Greek is ‘koinonia’, which means to have something in common. “These things I write so that you can have fellowship (share a common life, according to New English Bible) with us.” (1 John 1:3a). Once we are ‘born again’, we are born into God’s family – so our little story becomes a part of God’s big story which begins in Genesis 1 and 2 and continues till and beyond Revelation 21 and 22. The purpose of our lives should be to make sure that this is so. We become participants in the ‘Mission of God’.

The cultural context of Genesis 1:28 has to be understood to appreciate Genesis 1 better. The Egyptians worshipped nature and considered the Pharaoh to be the expression of the divine – ‘the image of God’. God is telling His people that nature is created by Him and we are to look after it. Paul defines idolatry as ‘worshipping creatures instead of the Creator (Rom.1:23,25); we may blame idol worshippers, but visible idols are less dangerous than invisible ones. This is why Paul writes to Colossians that ‘greed’ is idolatry (3:5).

In Genesis 1:28, God has appointed us to rule over nature on His behalf. We are to be responsible stewards of God’s creation. God reigns through His people. We are His Vice Regents – Kings/Queens. God says, “If you keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession” (Exodus 19:5,6). We see our additional roles as Priests/Priestesses. As Priests/Priestesses we are praying to God for His creation and looking after it on His behalf.

We rightly thank God for saving us from our sins, without fully realizing we are saved for a purpose – to be Kings/Queens and Priests/Priestesses (Rev.1:5,6; 5:9,10). The Bible was not written for us to just be born again but it is the means by which we see and enter the Kingdom of God as Jesus had said to Nicodemus (John 3:3,5). We should not stop at being born again for that is not the Gospel. What is the Gospel? It is the good news that the Kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:14,15). God becomes King, particularly over our lives.

Jesus had three primary roles – as King, Priest and Prophet, even as we have. Prophecy is not fore-telling but telling forth the will of God. The Christian community is a prophetic community and we are to live such exemplary lives that people are called to repentance. We need to live out the Gospel as Kings/Queens, Priests/Priestesses and Prophets/Prophetesses and this theme is continued into the New Creation (Rev. 22:5); that is the mission of God. We need to understand that every part of our lives is sacred and that we should fulfill God’s purpose for our lives wherever we are.

In Genesis 1:26, we are told that we are made in the image of God. David says in Psalm 8:5 that God has made him a little lower than ‘Elohim’; this word has been translated as ‘angels’ in both the NIV and KJV following the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. But the NASB and the NRSV translate the same word as ‘God’. This is a glorious fact and we need to thank God for making us in His image. Our identity is in Christ. If God is the great I AM (Exod. 3:14), we are the small ‘i ams’ made in the image of God and being remade to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). We are what we are in Christ – not in what we do or what we achieve. ■

SUMMARIES OF SERMONS, E.C. ANNUAL CONVENTION 2018

SUMMARY OF SERMON – II**(13/10/18)**

“Let us make man in our image and let them rule...” (Genesis 1:26). There is a relationship of love IN the God whom we worship – between the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit (John 17:24; Rom. 5:5). Let us look at four levels of human relationships which were adversely affected in the sequence in which they appear in Genesis 3:

1. Relationship with oneself: When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden, the first relationship that was broken was the relationship with oneself – thus shame was the first symptom of their disobedience (Gen. 3:7).
2. Relationship with others: Even though they were husband and wife, they were ashamed of each other when they disobeyed God’s commandment (Gen. 3:7 in contrast to Gen. 2:25).
3. Relationship with God: When God came calling in the evening, they had to hide themselves; fear and guilt before God were the result (Gen. 3:8-11).
4. Relationship with nature: The woman will now find child-bearing painful (Gen. 3:16a); the man will find work – which was present in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15) – as toil (Gen. 3:17).

We are created in the image of God to fulfil God’s creation mandate. The Church is established by the Lord Jesus (Matt. 16:13-20) in order to restore our relationship with one another when we had wrecked it. In the original Greek, the word for ‘church’ is *Ecclesia* meaning ‘the called-out people’. The word *church* always means people – not a building or an organizational structure though these are important. We need to be wary of the extremes we can fall into when considering the church – one extreme is to go into pure bureaucracy and the other is to see it purely as something between oneself and God; it can be easily forgotten that the word *church* also implies relationship with one another! God does not dwell in houses made with hands but amongst His people. In Genesis 1:26, we see that God made us for communities of relationships. A relationship is never forced; it is always freely chosen with God, with fellow-humans and with creation. Simply stated, the image of God in us, is our capacity to relate at all levels that we have already considered.

Worship is our relationship with God and is therefore essential for us. It is the purpose for which we were created. When we are too self-conscious during worship, we lose something of God and of ourselves. True worship of God is not self-consciousness, it is God-consciousness. It is not about what we get out of worship; it is just a happy fringe benefit. Worship is what we give to God recognising His worth. We focus more on His worth than our unworthiness.

On the other hand, work is our relationship with the created world. In Genesis 2:15, the Hebrew word for work (cultivating the land) is *‘Avad* and the word for keeping the land is *Shamar*. The same two words are also respectively used for the worship of God and the keeping of His commandments. So in the Jewish mind, working the land and worship of God were not two unrelated entities. There is no distinction between secular and sacred, for everything is sacred. Worshipping God and working in His world can be continuous with each other and not contradictory. Similarly, no distinction is made between ‘waiting’ on tables and ‘ministry’ of the Word in Acts 6:2,4; the same Greek word *diakonos* – the word translated as ‘deacons’ – is used in both these verses. Paul tells Christian slaves in Colosse that they should serve their masters (including pagan masters) as they are serving the Lord (Col. 3:22-24). Whether a Christian is a prime minister or a street-sweeper, he/she is bringing kingdom values in his/her work.

In Genesis 1 we find four entities which have to be held in tension:

1. God Who is Spirit creates the heavens and the earth which are matter (Gen. 1:1); God takes the dust of the ground (matter) and breathes into it the breath of life and the first human comes into existence (Gen. 2:7). Thus, human beings are the only creatures who are a combination of spirit and matter; thus, a ‘spiritual’ activity has to be expressed ‘materially’; that is why we have to present our ‘bodies’ as a living sacrifice which is an act of ‘spiritual’ worship (Rom. 12:2). This is the Spirit/Matter tension.
2. God creates us in His image; thus the interface between God and humans constitute the second area of tension (Divine/human tension). For example, Paul combines the two in Philippians 2:12,13. We have to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (human responsibility) because God works in us His good pleasure (Divine Sovereignty). These two realities have to be held together.

3. Genesis 1:26 reads this way: “God makes man (singular) in His image and says that they (plural) should rule over the fish of the sea....” This combination of the singular with the plural introduces the individual/community tension; we live as individuals in communities: family, society etc. We see problems, for example, in decision-making where the desire of the individual can clash with the desire of the community.
4. The fourth area of tension is the male/female relationship (Gen. 1:27). Because we are wired differently but in a complementary way, we find areas of disagreement, particularly between husbands and wives.

Because we are made for relationships, the above 4 areas which can be held together in a healthy way, are often fractured because of the break in our relationship with God. This fracture is best described in Gen. 3:16b, God is telling the woman that she would use her feminine charm to control and manipulate her husband and he will respond by dominating her; in other words, our rebellion results in our desire for control and this is the best way to understand the effects of the fall in the above areas of tension.

What is God’s answer to our desire for control? It is the cross of Christ, where God mysteriously chooses to give up control over His creation and allow His creatures to crucify His Son. Satan, at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, tempted Him to avoid the cross by taking short cuts. Jesus steadfastly refuses to do so. Through Peter, Satan tries to keep Jesus from going to the cross (Matt.16:21-23); but the same Satan enters Judas Iscariot and sends Jesus to the cross (John 13:2,27). We can see that Satan is confused by the cross; he does not know whether to send Jesus to the cross or keep Him from going to the cross! Satan is ultimately defeated in the cross (I Cor. 2:8; Col. 2:13-15).

The only way that God has provided for us to restore the above four areas to a healthy tension of relationships is for us to carry our cross in self-denial as we seek to follow Christ (Matt. 16:24,25; Luke 14:26, 27, 33). So we will be equipped to carry out the mission of God. ■

SUMMARY OF SERMON – III (14/10/18)

God created us to look after His creation on His behalf. A problem arises with the word ‘world’ as there are three different contexts in which the same Greek word *cosmos* is used in the New Testament. (This is the word from which the English *cosmetic* is derived). In John 3:16, the word refers to the world of people. In Matthew 5:14, it refers to the whole created world order. However, the same word is used with a strong negative meaning in 1 John 2:15 where it is referring to the value system of the fallen world over which Satan presides. We need to always look at Scripture in the context it was written, as in Genesis 1:2 where the word ‘darkness’ is not spiritual but natural darkness that constitutes night.

By the disobedience of our first parents, disaster strikes creation. We need to understand the disobedience of Adam and Eve at two levels. **Firstly**, they are proclaiming autonomy saying that they will now decide what is right and wrong, good and evil and they shall no longer depend on God. **Secondly**, they (and we after them) discover that whenever a forward step is taken in the acquiring of knowledge, we are unable to use that knowledge only for good; we are incapable of the right moral action independent of God.

This is God’s world; in spite of the disaster, He will renew it. Revelation 21 and 22 describe a new creation = new heavens and a new earth. We see that the church descends from heaven and that our final destination is here in creation made new by the power of God. The proof of this is in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ who rose again physically into a new order of physical existence.

Let us investigate two contrasting resurrections of Lazarus (John 11:38-44) and of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:2-6; John 20:3-8). Before calling Lazarus back to life, Jesus asks the people to physically remove the stone from the tomb. He then thanks God the Father and calls the dead man to come out. Lazarus does so and is helped out of his bandages on Jesus’ instruction. In the case of the resurrection of Jesus, the angel moves the stone at the mouth of His grave and tells the women that Jesus had already risen! The stone was rolled away not to let Jesus out but to let ‘us’ in! When Peter and John go into the tomb of Jesus they see the clothes exactly in the same position as the body was but the body was not there; that is why John sees the grave-clothes and believes. Jesus’ resurrected body, though physical, had gone through the grave-clothes without disturbing them. He had also gone through the stone at the mouth of the grave and could come in through the wall of the upper room where the disciples were hiding.

Firstly, we should not refer to the tomb of Jesus as ‘empty’ - the grave-clothes were there in the same position as the body was; the scarf around His head was still rolled up – not ‘folded up’ – on the stone where it was resting. If the tomb was completely empty, the conclusion would be that His body had been stolen, confirming the story that the Jewish leaders were propagating. *Secondly*, we should not say that Jesus came back to life; He went forward to a new dimension of physical life where there will be no more death! Because His resurrected body was of a different and higher dimension, the physical objects of our physical world could not present any obstruction. Lazarus came back to life and would have died again later. The resurrection of Jesus is the only irreversible miracle in the Bible that violates the second law of thermodynamics! The new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21 and 22 will be of the same dimensions of Jesus’ resurrected body. Let us not read the Bible for purely therapeutic and utilitarian reasons when it is so much more; it is not a religious book but a book that gives the basis of all reality – physical and spiritual.

When Jesus died on the cross, He didn’t just reconcile humans, but all of creation (Col. 1:19-20). This is why the Bible ends with the old creation being renewed wholly as seen in Revelation 21:5. This is the mission of God – in His eagerness to save us He is redeeming all of creation. The shape of the city is a perfect cube (Rev. 21:16). The Most Holy Place in the tabernacle that Moses made, and the temple of Solomon was perfectly cubical in shape. Now the Church becomes the Holy of Holies; God dwells in us and we dwell in God and thus, marriage is the best analogy for the relationship of Christ and comes closest to the new creation. Revelation 21:22-27 shows that there is no need for a temple, as our Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple and there will be no need of light as the glory of God will light up the place. Our personal, tribal, ethnic, national identities are secure in the God of the Bible. Jesus has done everything for our redemption. We are to live our present lives in the light of the new creation and that should be our daily motivation. ■

SUMMARY OF SERMON – IV (14/10/18)

Paul writes to Christians in Rome 2000 years ago in Romans 13, stating that every authority is a representative of God and hence they should submit to their respective authorities. They should not rebel against what God has instituted. Paul also states that the Christian movement would become global not by violence, but because Christians submitted to authority even if those authorities were the persecutors.

When Britain ruled over her empire, it was through an army of soldiers, by the authority of the King or Queen. As the Christian faith began to influence political philosophy, the Chief Executive of Britain was no longer the King/Queen but the Prime Minister (the First Servant) ruling now over the empire through the civil service. As Christians, we submit to authority and local laws not just to escape punishment but for the sake of our conscience, because it is right. Our Prime Minister’s pet project is ‘Swachh Bharat’ or ‘Clean India’ and a clean India can be made by clean Indians. Christ showed the principle of true leadership by washing the feet of His disciples. When one exercises authority, one must follow the example of Jesus.

Christianity is not hereditary, but it is contagious. You cannot be born a Christian, but have to come to a fresh understanding of and relationship to Jesus. Conversion is not change of religion but a change of mind about God, human beings and Jesus. *Firstly*, we begin to see that God is holy, and He cannot be bribed. He is holy and cannot tolerate evil. You cannot praise Him in expectation of returns. That’s a form of bribing. *Secondly*, we need to change our mind about ourselves. We are created in great dignity in His image, but we have rebelled against God and therefore are rebels and sinners. *Thirdly*, we have to change our minds about who Jesus is: He is not just a moral teacher or a prophet, but God, who comes as a human to rescue us through His suffering and death by crucifixion.

A digression: When asked if one is an Indian or a Christian first, there is a confusion of categories. God is the Creator; country is one of His creatures. My commitment to Jesus Christ makes me a Christian who is therefore a law-abiding citizen of my country. In Genesis 12:3, God calls Abram out of his country and says to him that his descendants will be a blessing to the whole of God’s creation. God has kept us as followers of Jesus in this country, so that we can be a blessing to India. We are to fight for the betterment of all the citizens, not just for Christians. ■



Summarised by Ms. Thanzuali Tochwang and Mr. Isak Lalrammawia



Sunday School Page



I am a new creation
in Christ



Jed Lawma
Former E.C. S.S. student

(Master Jed stays with his family in Bengaluru and is being home-schooled for Class VII.)



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

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

Youth Page

E.C. ANNUAL CONVENTION BLESSINGS!



Rafyle Rhys Snabi

Someone once told me that in life you never stop learning. We are presented with opportunities to learn new things that not only educate but edify us, helping us gain new perspectives about life around us both spiritual and earthly. The recently concluded Convention was one such blessing. Being part of the Congregation Worship team meant that the excitement and expectations were building up during the weeks prior to the Convention, since this year the youth of the church were entrusted with the responsibility of leading the church in worship at the start of every service. I have been massively blessed by the opportunity to be part of a community open to the concept of praising and worshipping our God through songs and music, and to be able to do so during the Convention was especially uplifting. The fact that we received so much support from the church leaders was very encouraging (an added bonus was that even the Guest Preacher was positively inclined towards praise and worship). Notwithstanding the inclement weather conditions during the three days, the memories are full of joy and warmth. I was blessed by the wealth of knowledge and spiritual wisdom imparted by the teachings we received. I was particularly impacted by how God can use our strengths and talents to carry out His will. To serve God's mission doesn't necessarily mean to separate ourselves from the world we live in, but actually to be the ones carrying the torch for God's message of salvation in the midst of the secular. I was also encouraged to strive to excel in being a better person by God's grace because if we want to preach the message of Grace, we have to be examples of what it means to be a recipient of grace. ■

(Mr. Rafyle is a member of E.C. and also one of the Worship leaders of the E.C. Worship team. He is presently working in the Office of The Accountant General, Mizoram.)

The Convention was really a blessing to me. I was blessed in many ways. God spoke to me in different ways through our Preacher. I got to learn more about living an exemplary life as a Christian and bringing the Kingdom values in many ways. God taught me many things during the Convention, that being a student I can still be His 'vessel,' a vessel that can be used just for His glory; that He loves youth and wants to make each and everyone a part of His great plan. Being a youth, I thought that there's nothing much that I can do for His name to be glorified, but during the Convention God told me that being a youth I can do many things and He gave me this verse in 1 Timothy 4:12 which says, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." I came to know that this is how I can glorify His name and how I can live a life that is pleasing to Him and how I can live the life of an evangelical student through my work and behaviour. In the future, whether I become a doctor, advocate, nurse or anything else, I can still be His 'messenger' and glorify His name and bring His Kingdom into this earth.



Bathsheba Badding

In the Lord's Prayer there is a line which says, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." God told me a beautiful thing from this line, that we are the ones who should bring His Kingdom into this earth and do His will. We should bring His Kingdom into our house, our society, our school, our offices, and welcome Him into our lives to let His will be done. In God's Kingdom there is no pain, no suffering, no uncleanness, no hatred, no worry, etc. So whenever we pray for a sick person to recover, we let the Kingdom come into his/her life because in His Kingdom there is no pain or suffering. Whenever we clean our house or public places, we are bringing the Kingdom value into this earth. When people hate us and treat us badly and we pray for them, the Kingdom comes into their lives because in His Kingdom there is a love that can change a person's behaviour and attitude towards us. Whenever we pray for a depressed person, we are asking the Kingdom to come into his/her life because in His Kingdom there is no sadness or depression. God really has a great mission and He wants all of us to be a part of His mission to bring His Kingdom into this earth. I was blessed because I got to know more about Him. ■

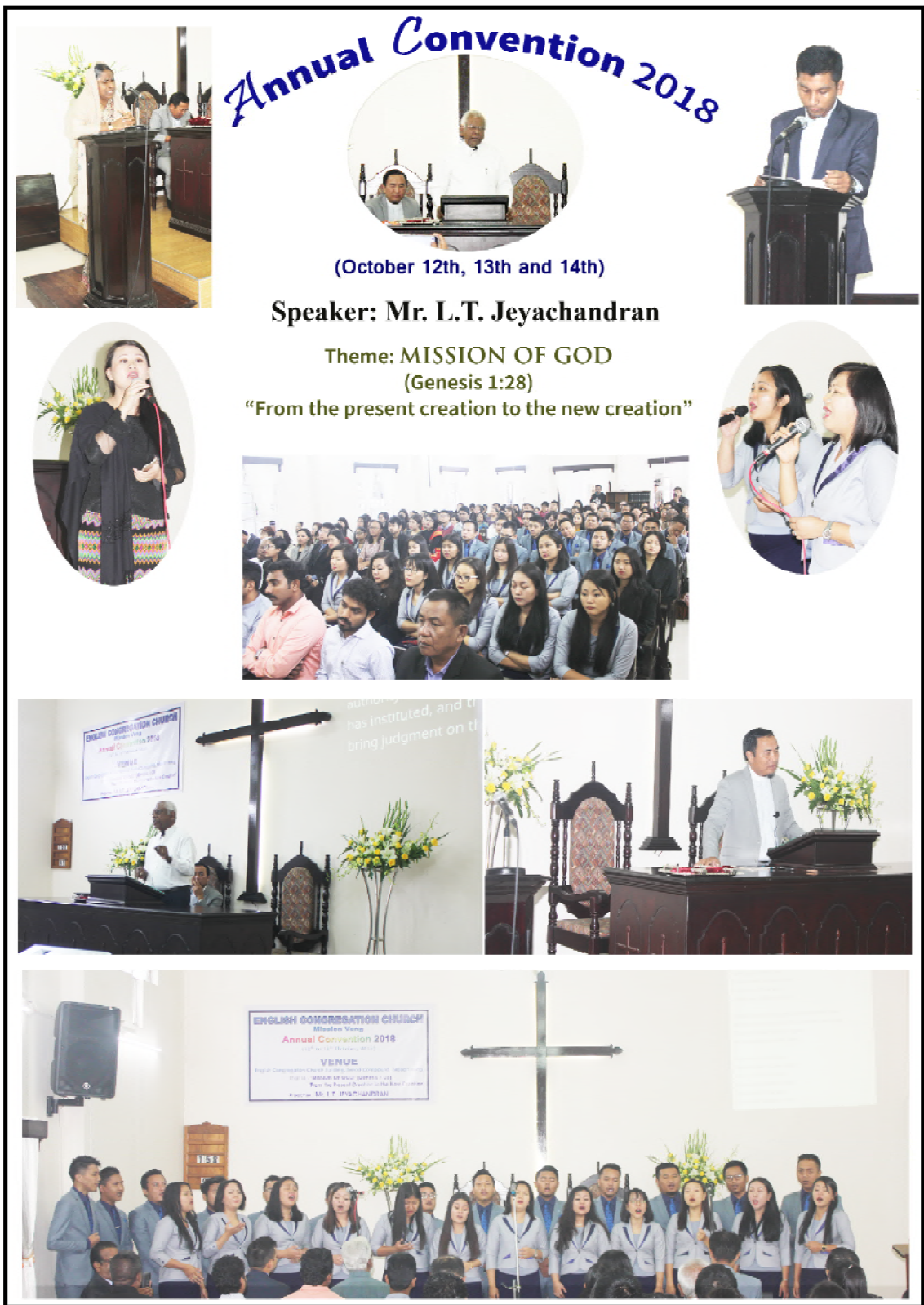
[Ms. Bathsheba is a part of the E.C. Youth and Worship team and is studying in Class XII in Mizoram Institute of Comprehensive Education (MICE), Aizawl.]

I am really thankful to Almighty God. The Preacher's messages during this Convention was such a blessing to me. Mission of God is not just that He created us and provides our needs, but He created us so that we can be a part of His mission. When the relationship with God was broken because of sin, my understanding was that it broke with God only, but I came to know that relationship was also broken with Self, Nature and with All other Creation. Being saved does not only mean we have salvation through Jesus Christ and have eternal life and that's enough, but being born again has a greater responsibility to live right so that others will see Christ in us, and we enter the Kingdom of God to be a part of God's mission in a larger dimension. In presenting the Gospel to others, we should talk about living right and not about dying right. Many a time when I have heard preachers preach the Gospel, I have heard them talking about death and hell, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not about death and hell, it's about the Kingdom of God. One new thing I learnt during this Convention was that one should study one's subject with great joy, knowing that one is studying about God's creation and therefore should enjoy it. Each and every subject has a lot to talk about God's creation. As I am serving in the Students' ministry, what I have learnt during this Convention will contribute a lot to my work and I am very sure my students will also be blessed as I myself was greatly blest. ■



Silme Ch Momin

[Ms. Silme is a Committee member of E.C. and a Staff of Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI), working among post matric students.]



Annual Convention 2018

(October 12th, 13th and 14th)

Speaker: Mr. L.T. Jeyachandran

Theme: MISSION OF GOD
(Genesis 1:28)

“From the present creation to the new creation”

The collage features several photographs: a woman in a white dress speaking at a podium; a man in a white clerical shirt at a pulpit; a man in a blue suit at a podium; a woman in a black dress singing; a large audience of people seated in a church; two women in blue uniforms singing; a man in a white clerical shirt at a pulpit with a large cross in the background; a man in a grey suit at a podium with a large cross in the background; and a group of people in blue uniforms singing in front of a large cross and a banner.

Convention cont...



Convention cont...



Women's Session

Youth Session





Visit of Mr. Hepuni Kayina & Dr. Mrs. Zawmi Kayina
(28-10-2018)



Visit of Mr. Aylwin Woleng and Mrs. Abeni Woleng
(28-10-2018)



Special Number by Visiting Campus Crusade team
(11-11-2018)



Pushpak Fellowship and Sharing of Testimony by
Ms. Silme in Pushpak Fellowship
(11-11-2018)



Farewell to Ms. Silme
from E.C. Youth
(25-11-2018)

*God be with
you
till we meet again...*

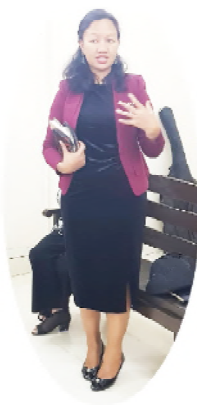
E.C. HAPPENINGS!

- I. E.C. ANNUAL CONVENTION 2018 :** Was held from 12th to 14th October 2018 and the theme of the Convention was **MISSION OF GOD (Genesis 1:28), From the Present Creation to the New Creation**. The Guest Preacher was **MR. L.T. JEYACHANDRAN**, a man deeply committed to God, whom God has greatly used in the building of His kingdom, during his years in government service and even after he took voluntary retirement, leaving his post as Chief Engineer, Post & Telegraph Department. His is a life of witness for Christ, wherever he is, inspiring many, both young and old, through his life and words. He inspired the Congregation to live out our lives for Christ in whatever we are called by God, to do or be. As usual there were choirs, groups and individuals who gave special numbers. There were also refreshments and meals after each day's meeting. All Convention meetings were well-attended. His Excellency, the Governor of Mizoram, Shri Kummanam Rajasekharan, attended the Sunday morning Worship Service on 14/10 on invitation by the E.C. Committee.
- II. The Congregation was blessed** by the presence of – (1) The E.C. missionaries **Mr. L.H. Kayina and Dr. Mrs. Zawmi Kayina** on 28.10.18, when Mr. Kayina brought the anointed Word of God to the Congregation. (2) Former active E.C. youth members, **Mr. Aylwin Woleng** and wife **Mrs. Abeni Woleng**, shared a few words with the Congregation on 28.10.18 when they attended the Sunday morning Worship Service, along with their two little daughters and niece, during their brief visit to Aizawl.
- III. E.C. Women's Fellowship (W.F.) :** The ladies had their last W.F. meeting for the year on 18.11.18 in which they acknowledged the faithfulness of God and also bid farewell to **Ms. Silme Ch Momin**, the Women's Representative in the E.C. Committee. After a time of worship, Ms. Silme shared her farewell message from the Word of God, after which there was more singing, prayer, a time of sharing by all the ladies, handing over of farewell gift, a special prayer for Ms. Silme and a special song.
- IV. Youth Fellowship :** The E.C. Youth bid farewell to Ms. Silme on 25.11.18 and organized a special farewell programme for her followed by a surprise lunch.
- V. Guest Preachers :** (1) Mr. L.H. Kayina on 28.10.18
(2) Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad on 25.11.18
- VI. Visit of Campus Crusade Team :** A team of 12 members attended the E.C. Service on 11.11.18. They gave a special number and one of the team members shared his testimony.

CORRIGENDUM

In the previous bulletin, The Ecumenical Family, October 2018 - the issue number on the cover page may be read as **No.58** instead of No.59.

*Farewell to Ms. Silme from Women's Fellowship
(18-11-2018)*



"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

-Numbers 6:24-26

We will miss you



HELEN KELLER



(June 27, 1880 – June 1, 1968)



Lavi Joseph

Helen Keller was born as a normal baby on June 27th 1880 in Tuscumbia, Northern Alabama to Kate and Arthur H. Keller. She had two older half-brothers and a younger sister, Mildred. Before the age of two, she suddenly fell sick with what they called acute congestion of stomach and brain and was not expected to live. She recovered from this, but sadly, lost her eyesight and hearing for the rest of her earthly life. But even through the consequent darkness, she still remembered some of the sights she had seen when she had her vision.

Being observant, she got to learn many things in spite of being blind, deaf and mute. Her mother helped her understand many things. She was very close to her mother and acknowledged her mother's love and wisdom for all that was bright and good in her darkness. Helen's father was very loving and indulgent and loved to make her happy. She had a growing desire to express herself beyond the few signs she used, but could not do so, however much she tried. This resulted in great frustration and anger and she would break down in tears and get physically exhausted. Helen's parents tried to get in touch with people who could help her. For her education, they were guided to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, and through him to Mr. Anagnos, director of Perkins Institution for the Blind of Boston.

On 3rd March 1887, Miss Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came from the Perkins Institution to the Keller home to be Helen's teacher. Miss Sullivan loved Helen and used creative and practical ways to make her little student understand and learn things that were otherwise difficult. She taught her to find beauty in nature and the world around her. Though Helen had to put in a lot more effort, she was eager to learn. Miss Sullivan was very patient and took great pains to teach Helen, understanding that such a child needed a lot more time to learn than normal children. She was determined to do her best for Helen to be able to learn well and Helen thoroughly enjoyed her studies under Miss Sullivan, who went down to her level and made it very interesting and exciting for her. Miss Sullivan understood a child's mind and was loving and sensitive to Helen. Helen credited Miss Sullivan with enabling her to realize what she could do and achieve and for making her life sweet and beautiful.

In May 1888, Helen joined the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston, where she was delighted to be able to communicate with other blind kids in her own language, and they all had fun together. Helen and Miss Sullivan spent their summer vacation at Brewster on Cape Cod with their good friend, where Helen thoroughly enjoyed her holiday near the sea. In later years, she made other delightful trips and learned a lot through them.

Helen had a deep desire to go to college and learn with those who could see and hear. She worked very hard for it, overcoming many obstacles along the way with Miss Sullivan's strong support. Finally entering Radcliffe College, she eagerly began her studies there, but realised there were disadvantages too.

Helen loved reading with her fingers and read various books and authors, and thus had a wide knowledge of literature. Poetry was her favourite, followed by history. Her very favourite book was the Bible. Helen had various interests. She truly lived and enjoyed her life to the fullest. She was able to appreciate and enjoy things that normal people did. She also enjoyed, at times, the darkness and silence. Like the apostle Paul, she learnt to be content whatever her situation was. Aware of the fact that there is joy when one forgets oneself, she concentrated on other people and being happy for or with them.

Helen faced situations of deep disappointment and learnt to overcome them, thanks to Miss Sullivan.

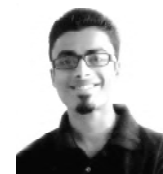
Helen acknowledged the role of her many friends in making her life so happy and enjoyable despite her own handicaps. Some of her treasured friends were authors, poets and well-respected people of her time, whose friendship and kindness to her she greatly cherished.

Listed here are a few of Helen Keller's major achievements: (1) Helen Keller was the first deaf blind person to earn a Bachelor's degree. (2) She published her famous autobiography *The Story Of My Life* in 1903. (3) She published 12 books in her writing career including *Light In My Darkness*. (4) She co-founded Helen Keller INTERNATIONAL in 1915, which was started to help soldiers blinded during World War 1 and now helps the world's vulnerable by combatting the causes and consequences of blindness, poor health and malnutrition. ■

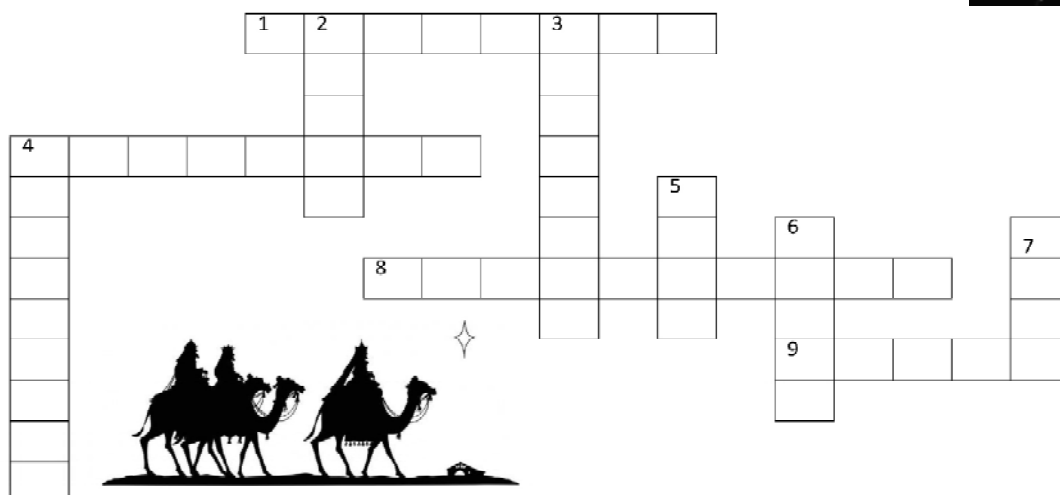
Sources: • *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller; • <https://learnodo-newtonic.com>; • Helen Keller International <https://www.hki.org>

(Miss Lavi is always willing and available to use her talents to glorify God and be a blessing to others.)

BIBLE CROSSWORD
(Version Used: NKJV)



Find the answers by finding the missing words in each Bible Verse given below:



- **Galatians 4:4-5:** But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the _____ (1-ACROSS) as sons.
- **Luke 2:11:** For there is born to you this day in the city of _____ (2-DOWN) a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
- **Isaiah 7:14:** Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name _____ (3-DOWN)
- **Psalms 72:10:** The kings of _____ (4-ACROSS) and of the isles will bring presents; The kings of _____ (9-ACROSS) and _____ (7-DOWN) will offer gifts.
- **1 John 5:11:** And this is the _____ (4-DOWN) that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.
- **Zechariah 9:9:** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your _____ (5-DOWN) is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.
- **Isaiah 11:1:** There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of _____ (6-DOWN), And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
- **Isaiah 9:6:** For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the _____ (8-ACROSS) will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(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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