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**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
AN EYE OF A READER, TONGUE OF A TEACHER
AND EARS OF A SERVANT**

ALL INDIA CHURCH SUPPLIERS

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Theological Education is Vital for the Renewal of Churches and its Ministry and Mission

EDITORIAL »»

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
It is a real pleasure for me to write to you today. I greet you all with affection and Christian love.

“When he saw the crowds Jesus had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’” (Matthew 9:37-38).

The need for theological education begins in the heart of the God, who sees the people he has created in desperate need. He meets this need in the Good Shepherd who takes away the sins of the world.

Theological education is vital for the present and future of the world. Theological education is fundamental and is the seedbed for the renewal of churches, its ministries, mission and the changing world. The theological education is an integral part of the church in its mission and a necessary component of the church planting strategy. If theological education is neglected by church or its leaders, the consequences would be beyond our comprehension. It may not be visible immediately, but will certainly manifest over the years.

First and foremost every theological institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. This relationship provokes a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and His teaching. In this way, those who meet Him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life that is beautiful, good, and true. It leads to a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the Church.

God’s revelation offers every generation the opportunity to discover the ultimate truth about life. It involves the entire Christian community and motivates each generation of Christian educators to ensure that the power of God’s truth is filled in every dimension of their teaching learning process. In this way, Christ’s Good News is set to work, guiding both teacher and student towards the truth which enables us to proclaim with confidence the hope which does not disappoint.

Let us thank God because the Christian community in our part has in fact made theological education one of its highest priorities and it has come with a great sacrifice. Our forefathers and leaders with great firmness and foresight, laid the foundations of what is today a remarkable group of

institutions are there to enhance the spiritual well-being of the Church and the nation. This sacrifice continues even today. Theological institutions are an outstanding place of hope, seeking to address the material, intellectual and spiritual needs.

Now, the mantle is given into our hands. It would be highly commendable if we utilise the God given opportunity to support and contribute generously to the needs of the theological institutions. By all means, their long-term sustainability must be assured. Indeed, everything possible must be done, in cooperation with the congregation, to ensure that the theological institutions are accessible to people of all social and economic layers. No one should be denied his or her right to the theological education as it in turn nurtures the soul of our nation.

At this juncture, I would like to congratulate all the Dioceses in the Church of South India for taking optimum efforts to send candidates to pursue theological education. We as a Church should encourage women to pursue theological education so as they may serve the Lord more effectively and meaningfully. Pastors in Diocesan ministries should be encouraged and sponsored to study higher education in theology, which in turn would enhance the quality of the Diocese and its congregation. During the course the study, it would be a great support if the Diocese could support the Pastor with financial assistance, so as his/her family needs are met. The CSI Synod is also taking all measures to enhance its sponsorship for higher education with the support of its mission partners. While we talk about quality theological education, the Dioceses should encourage its Pastors to pursue higher education from recognised institution, which would produce the expected results for the benefit of the Diocese and its congregation, rather it should not encourage getting masters or doctorate degree from unknown or unrecognised institutions.

All the Church's activities develop from the awareness that it is the bearer of a message which has its origin in God himself. God's desire to make himself known, and the inborn desire of all human beings to know the truth and the meaning of life. Let us yield ourselves to the divine will, so that the earthen vessels may be utilised by the Lord so as the people around us may know the true purpose of life in this world.

I conclude by expressing my profound gratitude to all the teaching faculty members in the theological education who with their selfless contributions, outstanding research, dedication and generosity are taking these institutions to greater heights.

May God bless and enrich all the theological institutions, its faculty members and students with His knowledge, wisdom and understanding.

C. Fernandas Rathina Raja,
General secretary, CSI.

Theological Education and Contextual Realities in India

Let me begin with a word of congratulation and thanks to all those involved in the 'Appeal to re-locate Theological Education.' This is a timely document and joins the ongoing voices worldwide, emphasising the importance of locating theological education in the day to day life of the society and in the missionary nature of the church. The Appeal's invitation to focus on the crises the society faces that provide the contexts for education and formation; to overcome college settings distanced from the life of local churches; to be intentional about locating the site of theological educational work within the missionary life of the churches; and to see theological training not as an escape into an alternative reality separated from the missionary life of churches — these all are very important concerns indeed.

Theological education and ministry of the Church are like two sides of a coin. Theological formation and ministerial formation respond to the people's many queries on crucial life issues and challenges. Agreeing with the concerns raised in this document, I would like to reflect on contextual realities and theological education in India. One important aspect in India is its plurality, as well as the tensions it brings, which invites those involved in theological education to work for reconciliation, inclusiveness and justice.

1. Theological education and the ministry of reconciliation

In India, in the present scenario, with the growth of religious fundamentalism through political influences, minority faith communities such as Christians, Muslims, and others are having difficulties in expressing and living their faith. To respond to such situation, it is important to invest in education. Lack of education leads to disrespect for faith in other religions, traditions, which is an obstacle for the normal functions of life in the society.¹

Church ministry is not only about preaching the Word of God, but also teaching the entire congregation and equipping them to counteract the religious fundamentalism and communal passions.

In such contexts, one of the primary functions of theological education is reconciliation. The Church's ministry of reconciliation is biblically and theologically mandatory. The work of reconciliation is a God-given ministry to the Church. However, the essence of reconciliation, like justice, peace, love, kindness, selflessness and service are very rare qualities found in the Church, because the churches and their leaders are caught up in maintaining institutions. The property concerns, internal rivalry and cases in the courts which occupy the time and talent of the leaders.² In addition to that, money occupies the center of the Church and the motive of most leaders seem to be profit oriented.

However, sometime instead of modeling the inclusiveness of Jesus Christ, sections of Christians have mirrored exclusive tendencies of the society which is divided by caste, class, denomination, ethnicity, region, language and gender. In our contexts in India, the caste system is affecting the church. Many are reconciled to their own caste identities and not so much with Christ's identity. Sharing in the identity of Christ is to take sides with the casteless, nameless and powerless people, and to build a community of reconciliation. This includes also ecumenical reconciliation between different church denominations and interfaith reconciliation with other religions and traditions.

Moreover, strict binaries between ecumenical and 'liberal' on the one hand and 'evangelical' on the other hand is not a helpful practical approach in theological education, and it is often a stumbling block to reconciliation.



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Thus, the ministry of reconciliation is one of the most appropriate models of our time of transformation and heightened tensions. The tension is prevailing not only within the Church but outside the Church too. There are numerous pressing issues and conflicts among ourselves. The Church is not very clear about the process of reconciliation. The Church is involved in different kinds of ministries but we need to realize that we are instruments in the hands of God and that we are God's co-workers in carrying out and realizing God's mission in and for the world. In other words, the Church in the world is a sign of God's love.³

2. Theological education and dialogue with other religious faith communities

The Scriptures describe God as the Prince of Peace. God sends His representatives and disciples to the world to make peace and reconciliation. Thus, the mission of God is peace and reconciliation. God calls us to become peacemakers in the world which is grossly disturbed by violence due to religious fundamentalism, caste feeling and racism. Most of the time, one is not courageous enough to face such situations, because those unwanted barriers are also subscribed to. Thus we have lost our moral credibility to be

peacemakers in God's ministry.

In 1979, the W.C.C. accepted a theological statement and adopted a set of guidelines on dialogue, "welcoming the degree of agreement and mutual understanding represented by it among those who held different theological views". With regard to neighbours of other faith, the statement said, "we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as fellow-pilgrims ..."⁴

The pilgrimage experience differs from person to person. However, we are travelling on a long road to reach the eternal one. In this travel, we need inter-faith dialogue. The process of dialogue is :

Where reconciliation, involving religious communities is sought, mutual understanding and speaking truth is the first step in a process of peace-making and the creation of a renewed community in which there is justice and mutual care. Such a process is called "inter-religious dialogue".⁵ Thus, "coming to understand each other's commitment is part of the process of dialogue".

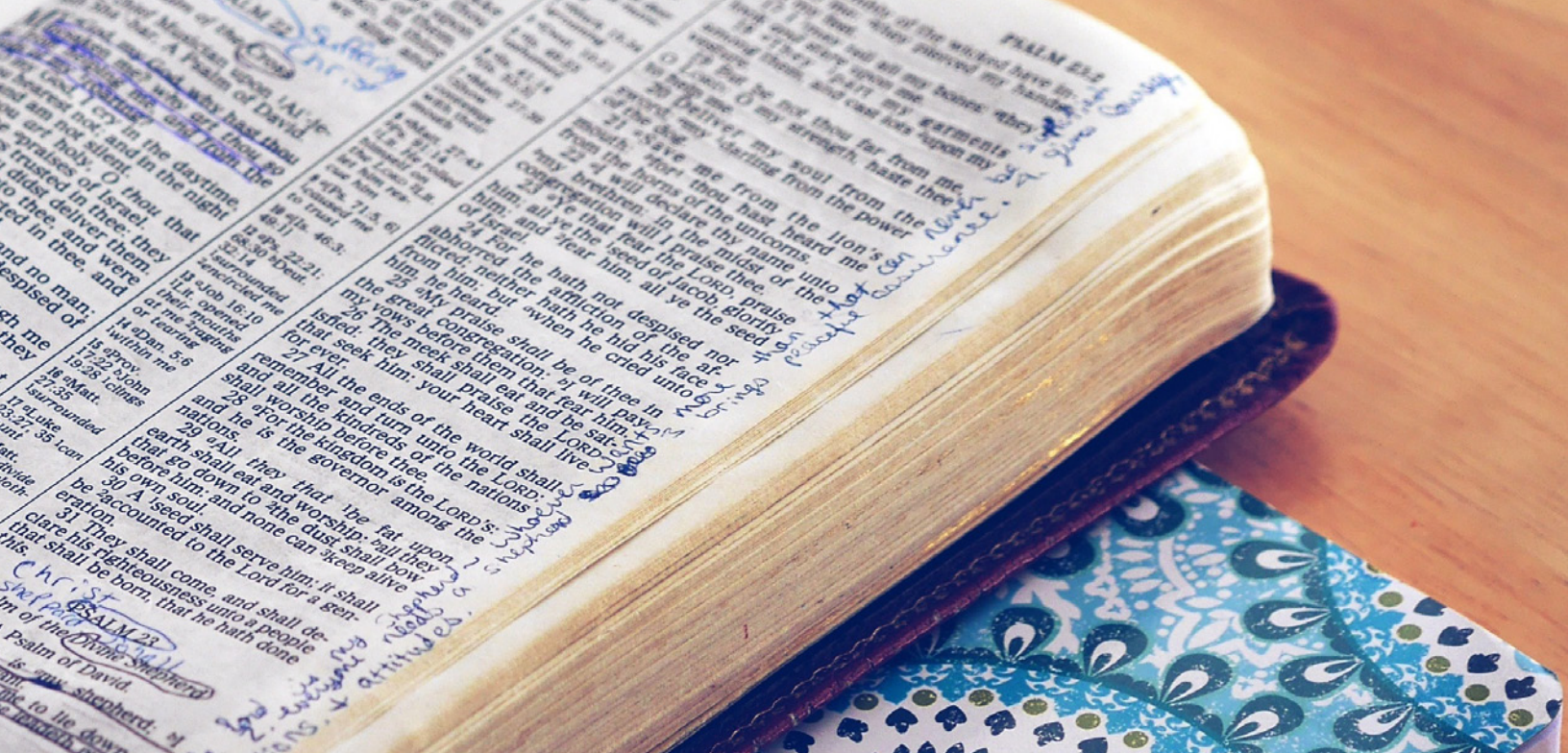
3. Theological education and

inclusiveness

In the Indian context, changes did have taken place in Christian attitude towards neighbours of other faiths. Once the "aggressiveness" of evangelical spirit had a tendency to arm India for Christ and the people of other faiths were condemned for not worshipping the true God. Advancement in technology, communication and transportation has made the religious landscape nearer to one another. People of other religions live in our streets or next to our home. Mission cannot be minimized exclusively to Christians.

The principle of non-violence in Indian culture is well appreciated which continues to be a great challenge to the world. As the world continues to be in a grip of violence, redeeming the local cultural values of non-violence, through religious education, is essential.

What we need today is the spirituality that goes beyond religion and creed. The spirituality that arises out of a faith in one God who is the creator, the sustainer and the redeemer of all the spirituality that embraces all people as members of one family, the oikoumene, the inhabited world of Christian faith, the vasudhavia Kudumlakem, the extended family



of the Hindu faith, the brother / sisterhood of Islamic faith. Thus, there is no claim for exclusiveness of one's own religion. According to Stanely J Samartha, "Our exclusive claim is like a bit of rock in a handful of peanuts. it may break a few teeth, but will never provide nourishment to the body."⁶ In a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi- scriptural contexts, exclusive claim is irrelevant approach. An inclusive approach leads towards a harmonious life.

4. Theological education and redeeming local cultural values

God's inspiration is always on the side of liberation. A sense of liberation activities is intertwined with God's ministry of reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation is to liberate all creation from the pressing issues in their life. God revealed Himself as the liberating God. Exodus 20:2 says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me". In other words, any god, who had not brought you out of the house of slavery cannot be your God. God acted in the history of the Israelites, through the leadership of Moses. In the struggle for freedom, God enabled Moses to stand up in the struggle for total freedom. Therefore,

"God is a friend, God is a servant, God shares our suffering and because such a God is with us we can stand up and continue in the struggle in freedom and hope". According to prophet Amos 9:7 "Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?" declares the Lord. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir". Thus, the trend in the ministry of reconciliation is to be involved in liberative activities in the society.⁷

Religion and culture are not easily separated from one another. In fact, "the dominant culture today is product of rich and powerful upper class and affluent, self- centred, self-seeking and power hungry section of the human society. As such, even those who do not belong to that section seem to be engulfed in such a cultural milieu.⁸ It was true even in the time of Jesus. In the present context, each religion and the faith community people claim their own identity in the same religion. For instance, the tribals and Dalits are claiming their own identity in Christianity: "To them, their identity as liberated people has to provide a sense of mission to liberate themselves and their kind from continuing atrocities of caste dominance". Thus, the understanding of God's mission of reconciliation is redeeming the

oppressed people from all kinds of obstacles and issues in their life.

The policy of non-violence, in Indian culture, is well appreciated which continues to be a great challenge to the world. As the world continues to be in a grip of violence, redeeming the local cultural values of non-violence, through religious education, is essential. For example, religious educational programs offered by various religions, such as, Sunday schools among Christians and other similar educational network in other religions that promote peace and non-violence.

5. Theological education as social transformation

We are living in a changing pattern of mission and ministry in our time. The understanding of ministry is different from place to place. However, the owner of mission is the Almighty God. The one who sustains the whole universe. The present trend of biblical foundation for mission is not only on the great commission "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you to the end of age" [Mathew 28:13-20]. But, rather emphasizing the mission

approach that the holistic, that is, “into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” [Mark 16:15]. God wants to transform the whole universe.

God’s mission of transformation is not only personal, psychological or individual, but rather to address the whole human race. The Good News of transformation in our context is “The poor are looking for the alleviation of poverty, the Dalits, the women, the tribals, are all looking for liberation, the whole eco-system is looking for transformation, religions in India are awaiting transformation”.

Theological education not only serves the ministry of the Church from the perspective of Kingdom values, but it also generates social awareness, social involvement, political discernment and promotes Christians to participate in the transformation process of the society. Investment in theological education is a direct investment into social and political development of the society.

In the past, the purpose of the Bible was generally understood to be for the spiritual upliftment of the individual or community. Given our contextual

realities and challenges, the Bible should be a guide for all the issues in our community life. But, there is a tendency to minimize the purpose of the Word of God. Further, every religion should get to work out a proper interpretation of the scriptures. Religion should be liberated from being a force that divides people and made to serve humanity in bridging people together by removing barriers and building up bridges. In order to achieve this transformation in religion, we should have clarity in our faith, and theological education has a very important role to play here. Faith in God, which is the basis of all our human relations. The socio-political implications of a faith in one God should be taught to the believers. Also proper approaches to their scriptures are an important aspect of Christian formation.¹⁰

To conclude, the theme of this Lambeth Conference is ‘God’s Church for God’s World.’ It is a call to take up a holistic approach to the world. The Church of South India [CSI] is celebrating its platinum anniversary [75th year] on 27th September, 2022. The theme for the Platinum Jubilee is “Envisioning together an open

Church in an open world”. The universal Church comprises primarily of four traditions: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Reformed and Pentecostal. The CSI was formed as an union, comprising of a few Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. The Congregational component is the dominant part of CSI. The Congregational element comprises “the whole Church” with “every member” having immediate access to God, each exercising his/her gift for the development of the whole body.

The Covid pandemic exposed many realities of the world which the church needs to address urgently. Theological education to all equips the church to carry out its holistic ministry and mission, and the church can no longer ignore it.



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Theological Education: Shaping Faithful Christian Witness

A traditional prayer for theological education pinpoints to the real mystery of God - talk in our context: "Almighty God, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself... through Jesus Christ your son our Lord." As we are in a liminal moment of history due to pandemic, it is important to evaluate and meditate the relevant framework of a well-equipped ministry with training exposure and ability to read times and texts. It is important to redefine the meaning of the concept of knowledge economy as we invent our talents in the ministry of the Lord.

The loss of trustworthiness and witness in terms of our ministry in many places seem to be a big challenge in redefining the faithful Christian witness. Several leading church leaders now agree that there should be quality theological training to shape ministers of the church who can make significant changes in the church and society by partnering with the gospel.

Theological education as portrayed in 1 Timothy 6:11-16 should enable us to identify the potential of knowledge. 1 Timothy 6:14 "That you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing". It shows the theological training is a great responsibility based on the scripture. Cardinal Neuman argues that in a theological training all knowledge should be based on the perfection of Christ. It should be noted that the development of mind by seeking God with an authentic humanity which will ensure justice and freedom in our society should happen through the theological education. A document prepared by the University of Bonn namely WDT1 states: "The field of 'Exegesis' has long been characterized by a broad disciplinary diversity, but also ambiguity, combining biblical studies, historical - critical exegesis, early

Jewish studies, early Christian studies, Ancient Near Eastern studies, Greco - Roman and classical studies in various ways. This is to say nothing of the more recent development of contextual and engaged exegesis as reflected in feminist, liberation, postcolonial and queer Biblical exegesis". Therefore, theological education today must pay adequate attention on the dimension of contextual interpretation of the Bible. Two thousand years after the Bible was written, the Bible continues to challenge and transform many lives in many forms. Thus, it remains the core of the theological education in any context.

1 Timothy was written to address some major concerns emerged within the ministerial framework of the early church. As the Pauline tradition continued in 1 Timothy, the author advocates three major concerns in the text namely a) proclaiming the way of holiness b) rekindling the prophetic spirit c) unmasking the reality of faith. This is again a mandate offered to the body of Christ namely the Church. Only through this ministry, there will be transformation in the society. A contextual understanding of ministry is required. "Theological Education: Shaping Faithful Christian Witness" is a very challenging theme as the Anglican communion places theological education as a gift of God. It is really a gift of God as it is a participation in the ministry of the spirit of love which draws all creation towards God. This ministry of drawing together, being drawn towards God is fundamental to human life and the whole creation" (Bishop Stephen Pickard). In a post-covid 19 context, it is noted that the ministry of theological education cannot be a profession but a vocation given by God. This vocation is directly attached to the process of building up of the body of Christ. Human schemes and plans may not work here, as we need abundant Grace of God. As Charles Massan says: "The Church grows



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towards Christ, it does not expect him to come to it". It demonstrates the truth that the ministry of the Church is mainly to guide the people of God in the Covenant of God. The Covenant is a dedication and commitment. 1 Timothy was written in the context of Asia Minor where a number of new churches emerged and their leaders required training from the Apostles. Many of them were influenced and misled by the false prophets and teachers. In order to fix them in the knowledge of God, the author of 1 Timothy used very firm biblical and theological phrases and ideas. It should be followed today. The concern of accountability in ministry is emphasized very meaningfully in 1 Timothy as a manifesto for the pastors to follow. It was a time of transition from the Apostolic leadership to the Post-Apostolic leadership. I continue to explore the features of the First century churches, So that there may be some foundations laid for a meaningful exposition of the text. It is important to identify and analyse every theological and ideological institution and words found in the text, for understanding

the content and significance of the text. In the writings of Philo, the early followers of Jesus had been qualified to be elect ones and the channels of transformation, Such as elevated positions and understanding about the early Christians by Philo indicated the real life situation and significance of the early followers of Jesus. We also encounter almost same situation. After the Second World War and Colonialism new atmosphere emerged. The atmosphere of freedom and justice. That atmosphere 'prevailed in mainstream theological education for about five decades. Since that could initiate a discussion on the area of redefining mission and ministry of the Church, the Church of South India could offer a new direction in the field. It is evident in our mission statement and mission priorities. Unfortunately, it has been institutionalized by the wrong theological and pedagogical patterns we followed. Now it is high time to feel the change; be the change! The text, 1 Timothy 6:11-16 clearly demonstrates that "the growth of the Church seems to depend on the ministry of the Church"(Ralph P. Martin). The ministers of the Church

through theological education should experience the gift of God. It is a ministry of establishing in ones heart respect for the precepts of God as it is a ministry of word and sacraments.

In Mark 4:9 "Come follow after me, and I will send you out to fish for people". This is a free translation of the text. However the intention of Jesus calling the disciples is very clear here. Theological education offers a clear choice for the ministers to invest in others' life to build up a community of equality and freedom. Theological education during this period also faces a major challenge of nonavailability of resources. In India, we see a steady and swift growth of the Church in many ways. And the theological seminaries and colleges participate in the ministry of the Church in a meaningful manner. Many studies have been published revealing the post-covid19 turmoil in theological education. In my opinion, based on the experience during the covid-19, there should be a sincere and systematic effort to broaden our vision of God by connecting ourselves with the realities of suffering and hope in



the society. Therefore, the theological education becomes a time of meditation and prayer for deepening our knowledge of God. E.Scott Fitzgerald says: “Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone.. just remember that all the people in this world have not had the advantages that you have had”. We are called to keep values of theological education based on the Kingdom of God and Christness. Roger Gaikwad, a former principal of Aizawl Theological College and the General Secretary of NCCI affirms (Gaikwad: 2019).

Radical Discipleship : Following the way of Jesus through a life of service with and for others.

Critical Pedagogy: Uprooting the logic of empire in the self that blocks our call to discipleship.

Community Building: Loving others to form mature, reconciling Christian community.

Fearless Leadership: Moving from self - preservation to self less advocacy.

Public Witness : Proclaiming God’s peaceable reign out of the community’s parabolic witness.

Ecological Restoration : Imagining and embodying regenerative ways of life in this world.

If we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in doing our ministry our focus will be: “Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). Let us try to understand the need for a more fruitful theological education which will enable us to joining with Christ. In the light of current trends in the ministry, Lalfakzuala raises the following concerns: “Historically , theological education has been simultaneous with the ministerial formation or training of a church minister. However it has become a more complex , diverse and often problematic task for both the church and the seminaries to define theological education ‘ in the twenty - first century. Pertinent questions often raised are: What is theological education for ? What are the aims and purposes of theological education? Does our current theological training

pay adequate attention to church ministry formation ?” (Zuala: 2019). But, in the current scenario, it is likely that a systematic pattern of theological education can bring radical transformation in the horizon of ministry. We need to demonstrate determination to assess and realise some of the longstanding aims of the ministry of the church.

Shaping the faithful Christian Witness today through theological education is a challenging task. Though it is challenging, it is important for us to work towards shaping a framework for doing ministry with faithful witness. The context of the Pastoral epistles in the first century emerged due to many conflicts and issues. Similarly, we also encounter many conflicts and issues and it is appropriate for us to shape a ministry depending on the message of the Bible by interpreting the Bible in a contextually relevant manner.



Theological Education in India Ecclesiastical Ministry Formation: A Historical View

Christianity is about remembering in gratitude and celebrating in community God's act in Jesus Christ in redeeming and renewing the whole of creation. From the inception of Christianity education has played a major role in enabling the tradition of the Christian faith to be remembered and celebrated. As Christianity emerged as a new faith within the Judeo-Palestinian tradition and had to survive amidst the Greco-Roman milieu, it embarked on appropriate education to ensure that its faithful were soundly rooted in their faith and prepared to defend it when challenged by adversaries. Early Christianity, being deeply rooted in Judeo-Palestine tradition, thus had an intrinsic commitment to education from the very beginning. As early as the Gospel of St. Luke it is pointed out that Christians had a high sense of responsibility for passing on the "tradition of the Apostles" to the next generation. Likewise in the Acts of the Apostles; (Acts 1,1-2 and Acts 2: 42). From the very beginning Christianity, was a learning and teaching religion, as the sources of Christian faith were not just inner emotional feelings of the individual but a complex tradition transmitted in narratives, in hymns, in liturgy and later in creeds common to a majority of Christians at different places which could be memorized and had to be re-appropriated anew in each generation. It is very significant in biblical tradition that Timothy for instance is exhorted "to continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 3,14-15).

Historical Journey of Theological Education in India

Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, started a mission seminary for training workers

and wished to train suitable European students and Tamil Students (27th September 1709). He also supported the idea that either he or Grundler should possess necessary ecclesiastical privilege to ordain others to serve as missionaries. In 1818 the first Theological College was founded in Serampore by the missionaries William Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward known as the Serampore Trio. Their aim was to give an education in arts and sciences to students of every "caste, colour or country" and to train people for ministry in the growing church in India. King Frederick VI of Denmark originally granted a Royal Charter giving Serampore College the status of a university to confer degrees in arts and theology. The Royal Charter of Incorporation was issued on February 23, 1827, in Copenhagen, Denmark (Charter, 1, Charter, 2, Charter, 3) in response to Joshua Marshman's visit to King Frederick in August 1826. With the later establishment of the University of Calcutta in 1857 the arts, science and commerce parts of Serampore College were affiliated to the University of Calcutta. However, Serampore College still today continues to enjoy the privilege of conferring its own degrees in theology under the power vested by the Charter and Act of Serampore College which were confirmed by the Bengal Government Act IV of 1918. William Carey, Joshua Marshman and John Clark Marshman (Joshua's son) were designated as members of the first council. At its opening, the Serampore Trio released a prospectus which proposed "A College for the instruction of Asiatic Christian and other Youth in Eastern Literature and European Science." The college was open to all people of any caste or creed, and the founders ensured that no denominational test would apply to faculty members. The present Indian scenario in theological



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Various Mission Programmes



MEGA MISSION FESTIVAL - 2022





CSI WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS





education represents two major polarizations of training and focus: ecumenical Board of Theological Education Senate of Serampore College as well as evangelical Asia Theological Association. Most of the seminaries affiliated with BTESSC tend to train their students towards clergy preparation for the ecclesiastical ministry for the mainline churches. Asia Theological Association (ATA) emerges as the leading accrediting body among the evangelicals, with the patronage of World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), monitoring and regulating Theological Education in India.¹

International Missionary Council and Theological Education in India

The theological education institutions in India in the early 20th century were some of the few positive exceptions it was realized through the International Missionary Council (IMC). The IMC discussed

their meetings about theological education of pastors as well as general theological education of lay people and church workers was one of the most urgent priorities and neglected tasks necessary for promoting the self-hood of churches in India. During the Tambaram Conference (1938) "drew attention to the shocking neglect of ministerial training in the 'younger churches' which were now the growing counterparts of the missions". There was the realization that previous IMC conferences had given scant attention to the development of theological education. One of the key recommendations to emerge from Tambaram was the call for the development of theological education in vernacular languages rather than in English – an echo of an earlier plea from Edinburgh 1910. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, the former General Secretary of IMC and Bishop of the Church of South India, the development of theological education in local/indigenous languages and

utilizing the local resources/models for the sake of addressing to the local ministerial needs and missionary challenges, languages was one of the most strategic and fundamental tasks for the training of indigenous leadership and church ministers, because to develop an Indian theology needs theological training in an Indian tongue.

The intervention of the Second World War delayed the IMC from developing and implementing the Tambaram recommendations on theological education. This was to some extent rectified at the IMC Accra Conference (1958) when the Theological Education Fund (TEF) was launched, supported by a number of American and British mission agencies and a major grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. It was particularly Charles Ranson, the former British Methodist Indian missionary and later General Secretary of the IMC, who had developed a strong conviction that it would be

essential for the future of the younger churches to train indigenous persons for ministries and teaching positions. He was the one who initiated the first important study on the situation of theological education in churches of the South which then was received by the Ghana Assembly of IMC in 1958. The Ghana Assembly created the so-called TEF as a major global fund to promote theological excellency (at this time still understood in terms of promoting Western standards) and to develop creative indigenous leadership in the Indian Churches. The three decisive marks of TEF's concern for theological education in India were specified as Quality combining intellectual rigor, spiritual maturity and commitment authenticity involving critical encounter with each cultural context in the design, purpose and shape of theological education creativity, understood as promoting new approaches of the churches obedience in mission.²

Purpose of Theological Education in India

Paulo Frierei in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* shows that the student is a subject and not an object. The learning essentially takes place in a dialogical inter-change between teacher and student. It is the vocation of each person involved in the process whether teacher or a student to be a subject to transform their own situation by being empowered with theological education. Even the unschooled person is capable of viewing his or her work critically, and finding within their own resources the power to change it. Theological education will either teach the student to conform as object or it will become practice of freedom where the men and women learn to participate in the transformation of the World. But how can the syllabi of the theological colleges be changed to make the liberation of human potential in response to the Gospel basic to the whole programme. The problem is not simply one of improving teaching methods but of the understanding afresh the dialogical nature of the

theological task itself.³

Challenges in Theological Education-Empowering Christian Mission

There is a widespread consensus nowadays that theological education does not only have Christian mission as one of its primary objects and elements of the theological curriculum, but theological education itself is part of the holistic mission of the Christian church and therefore is missionary in its character. There is plenty of material, reference texts and major studies from recent years affirming the missionary nature of theological education and the need of theological education to be more orientated towards the missionary tasks of the whole Christian Church. To put it in a phrase expressed by the last global conference on theological education enabled by World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Theological Education programme in Oslo 1996:

“There is consensus among us on the holistic character of theological education and ministerial formation, which is grounded in worship, and combines and inter-relates spirituality, academic excellence, mission and evangelism, justice and peace, pastoral sensitivity and competence, and the formation of character. For it brings together education of: the ear to hear God's word and the cry of God's people; the heart to heed and respond to the suffering; the tongue to speak to both the weary and the arrogant; the hands to work with the lowly; the mind to reflect on the good news of the gospel; the will to respond to God's call; the spirit to wait on God in prayer, to struggle and wrestle with God, to be silent in penitence and humility and to intercede for the church and the world; the body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit”⁴

Mission is not saving and nurturing souls for the world of spirits as many have traditionally thought, but mending creation, which includes transforming lives and reconciling communities. The mission is God's

and we are called to participate in it in continuation of the life of the 'People of God' with an acute awareness of living in the midst of the 'Peoples of God'. Theological education and ministerial training is meant for equipping all 'God's People' to engage in mission in their concrete context. It is a local act with global vision.

Theological Education and Ecumenical Challenges

The World Council of Churches organizes ecumenical learning programs for seminary students who participate explain that they do not meet other young people outside of their own church tradition. Some young people have followed up this concern by starting local ecumenical projects that bring students together from different seminaries either to pray, socialize or organize a joint workshop on a topic of interest. Theological education can serve as a bridge in two ways. Firstly, theological education is to help transfer knowledge from generation to generation about both the achievements, failures and ongoing challenges of the ecumenical movement. This will help young people to have a sense of ownership of the ecumenical legacy and understand the history that they inherit and will ultimately shape. Secondly, theological education is to facilitate the reception of major church agreements or processes into local reality and practical follow up. Much work is still needed in this area so that the major landmarks and achievements of the ecumenical movement have resonance and relevance in local church contexts. There is a gap between what church leaders and confessions decide together and how this reaches local congregants. Theological education could help the ecumenical movement to work less with top down approaches but rather discover the needs from the local churches first and ensure this informs larger ecumenical processes through participatory methods. Theological education can also mediate communication between different ecumenical actors and be the

testing ground for innovative thinking and new approaches to our work.

Theological Education and Ecclesiastical Ministry Formation

The Church/Ecclesial ministry formation is not an institution but the communion of all those who believe in the absolute values of love, life, truth, peace, justice, freedom, mercy etc. the depth and dimensions of which are revealed to us God's mystery in history, in the life, preaching death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The ministry formation and mission of the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel-this mystery-, this Kingdom of God of absolute values, in its life, words, celebration and commitment. Theologizing is a function of the Church in the service of the faith and mission which receive their specific content in the encounter with the historic-socio-cultural milieu where this profession and mission is articulated. Felix Wilfred raise important question to us From Where shall we start theologizing in India? He made the answer that "we start from where we are, namely from the faith

and the specific nature of the mission of the living community-the Church in India-which introduced us to the realm of, and sustains our faith, but which has undeniably also conditioned and molded it in one particular form. It influences all our evaluations, reflections, confrontations. In theologizing we cannot by-pass the Indian milieu in which our confession of faith is concretely and historically articulated and structured."⁵ He further states that "the Church in India opens up to a dialogue when she shares her experience with other religious traditions which are living communities of faith, no matter how far these communities are organized and structured. This experience based theological dialogue with other communities of faith is pursued with the conviction that the final destiny of humanity and the mystery which encompasses, as the horizon our life is one."⁶

The theological education in India ecclesiastical ministry formation

The Senate of Serampore College continuously engaged and addressing

various issues like subaltern communities Dalit Tribal Adhivasi, Bible Translation, Women, Children, Ecological Crisis, people living with HIV-AIDS and Covid -19 Pandemic, Aging, LGBTQ Communities and so on in their BD MTh DTh Studies and Research Syllabus and Curriculum. In the faith journey, the Church of South India marked its Platinum Jubilee (75 years) with the theme Envisioning Together an Open Church in an Open World affirms its theological ethos that "the Church is the servant of God to carry on the mission rooted in Jesus Christ and based on the Scriptures. The Church through her mission expresses solidarity with the broken communities for a new hope to face the challenges of life. The cross continues to be the sign of hope for the witnessing Church, which strives towards unity, peace and reconciliation as vibrant channel of God."



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Tranquebar Mega Mission Festival Made a Clarion Call for Mission Towards Transformation

The Department of Mission and Evangelism, Church of South India (CSI), Synod along with the CSI Trichy-Tanjore Diocese have organized two days Mega Mission Festival on 14th-15th June 2022 on the sea-shore near the CSI Zion Church in Tranquebar, Trichy-Tanjore Diocese. This festival was part of the CSI Platinum Jubilee Celebration-2022 based on the Platinum Jubilee theme, 'Envisioning Together an Open Church in an Open World' as well as based on a Mission Concept as 'Sustainable Mission Accompaniment towards Radical Transformation'(Be-SMART).

The CSI Moderator, the Most Rev. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam has inaugurated the festival. In the inaugural address, Moderator emphasized about the need of the hour to actively participate in the mission of God which is moving towards the sustainable transformation. Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Chandrasekharan, Chairman for the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod and the Bishop in Trichy-Tanjore Diocese has extended the welcome address. During the welcome address, Bishop highlighted about the Protestant Mission in India and also about the first Protestant Missionary Rev. Ziegenbalg who came to Tranquebar, India for the transformational engagements along with Indian People.

Furthermore, Rt. Rev. Dr. K. Reuben Mark, Deputy Moderator, CSI has delivered his special mission talk. In his talk, he has highlighted the missional engagement with strong faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the Missionary par Excellence and highlighted the need of witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ through daily life. Adv. C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, General Secretary, CSI has delivered General Secretary's address to the gathering. In his speech, General Secretary underlined the Mission statement of CSI and also, he has emphasized the importance of Missionaries as pioneer workers of the

Church. Strongly, he has mentioned that the CSI honors missionaries of the Church and also will continue to extend all possible support and help for the missionaries to enhance their capacities to engage with more commitment and passion in mission and evangelism. Following it, Rev. Dr. A. Alfred Stephen, The Platinum Jubilee Special Officer has presented the CSI Platinum Jubilee theme, 'Envisioning together an Open Church in an Open World'.

As marking the beginning of the Platinum Mega Mission Festival, there was a mega mission procession led by Synod Officers, and Department Chairman. All the Bishops, Guests and participants have arrayed in the Mission Procession with singing, dancing, and various slogans which have resounded the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were various art forms like Mayilattam, Parai, and Drums which have been accompanied the procession. It was gorgeous moments which literally reveals and reflect the enthusiasm and the spirit of the participants towards the mission and evangelism. Moreover, Tranquebar CSI Platinum Jubilee Mega Mission Festival Memorial Tablet which has been erected in the compound of CSI Zion Church was unveiled during the mission procession.

The Mega Mission Festival was enriched by the spirit-filled liturgy, worship and singing. The Synod Directors have led the Opening Worship. The Holy Communion Service was solemnized by the Moderator, the Most Rev. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam, along with other Bishops and Pastors. In this regard, the message from the Word of God was delivered by the Bishop Rt Rev. Dr D. Chandrasekaran. There was a beautiful and passionate choir led by Rev. Augusty Gnana Gandhi and Rev. John Dawson from Trichy-Tanjore Diocese which brought out much enthusiasm, life and spirit to the festival.

Outstandingly, the festival was further enriched by the five regional sessions on the Post-Covid Missional engagements. The respective Bishops and Pastors have led the regional sessions in Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu and Hindi. It was a regional fellowship and gathering in which regional level missional challenges and problems were shared and discussed and recommended feasible and viable missional engagements such as more missional activities in terms of education and healing towards the sustainable transformation. These sessions also have highlighted the need of Missional accompaniment with the most vulnerable in their day-to-day struggles. Along with regional sessions, there was special prayers in regional languages which literally reflected the vital realities of the living context. Besides, there were missional exposure visit to the historical places in Tranquebar like Zion Church, and Ziegenbalg Museum. Also, the festival was enthused with cultural programs from the participants, and with mission reports from various Dioceses which literally provided an inter- Diocesan exposure and learning towards the missional engagements.

The inauguration of CSI Mission Academy- 'MAITRI-SHALA' was one of the unique events of the festival. Besides, leaders of the fishermen communities in Tranquebar and leaders from the local Panchayath also have visited the festival and conveyed their greetings. They were duly honored on behalf of the festival. Not only this, missionaries from Trans-Gender Communities were specially honored and given opportunity for sharing their testimonies. It was a venue to declare solidarity towards the local communities and also towards the most vulnerable in the societies.

Noticeably, various Diocesan Bishops in CSI have graced the festival with their presence, leadership and felicitations.

In this regard, Rt. Rev. Dr. M. Joseph, Bishop in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr. E. Pushpalalitha, Bishop in Nadyal Diocese, Rt. Rev. Timothy Ravinder, Bishop in Coimbatore Diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr. Oommen George, Bishop in Kollam-Kottarakara Diocese, Rt. Rev. H. Sharma Nithiyanandham, Bishop in Vellore Diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr. A. R. Chelliah, Bishop in Kanyakumary Diocese, Rt. Rev. V. S. Francis, Bishop in East Kerala Diocese, Rt. Rev. Issac Varaprasad, Bishop in Rayalaseema Diocese, and Rt. Rev. ARGST Bernabas, Thirunelveli Diocese have attended the festival and conveyed their greetings by which they have motivated the gathering to move ahead for the transformational mission engagements.

Apart from the Synod Officers and Diocesan Bishops, CSI Synod Directors -Rev. Benjamin Inbaraj, Director, Department of SEVA, Rev. Christopher Dharmaraj, Department of Christian Education, Rev. C.H. John Nischal Kumar, Director, Department of Youth and Director In-charge for the Department of Communication, Rev. A. Rajan, Associate Director, Ecological Department, and Dr. Daniel Ezhilarasu, Honorary Director, Board for Education have attended the festival, and led the worship and conveyed greetings. It was a creative

moment to listen and learn about the various departmental activities in Synod level, Regional level and Diocesan level. Besides, Mrs. Roselind Chandrasekaran, Bishopamma, Trichy-Tanjore Diocesan Officers- Rev. S. Sudharsan, Clerical Secretary, Mr. R. Stanley Mathiselvan, Lay Secretary, and Mr. S. Rajendran, Treasurer have led the festival by providing necessary requirements to arrange the festival. In addition to these leaders, Rev. Mary Jessy, Chair-Person, Tharangai-Nagai District, Rev. D. Sekar, Mission Director in Trichy-Tanjore Diocese, Rev. T. Irwin Gnanamuthu, Assistant Mission Director, Trichy-Tanjore Diocese, and Dr. Paul Radha, Sirkalai, Dr. John Arthur, Nagapattinam, Rev. Reuben Prabu, CSI Karaikkal-Tharangai Pastorate and Rev. Maxcin John, Synod Mission Director have made all arrangements along with Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Chandrasekaran for the festival and extended empathetic hospitality to the participants. There was a unique team spirit and coordination behind the whole preparation of the festival in which all District Chairmen, pastors, missionaries, and many members from various congregations of Trichy-Tanjore Diocese have joint their hands together for the creative and meaningful result of the festival.

Tranquebar Mega Mission Festival was a historic missional gathering where two thousand people (2000) have gathered together from across the CSI as well as from across the North Indian Mission Fields to celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as to emphatically declare the CSI Mission as the Mission of God embodied in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit and based on the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, it was the exceptional venue to underline and highlight the Mission as 'SMART'- 'Sustainable Mission Accompaniment towards Radical Transformation'. More vigorously, this Mission Festival was the added merit to the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of CSI by which all the participants were rejuvenated with more passion and zeal towards mission and evangelism in the daily life. Moreover, this festival made a call to all to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the living context through which graciously serve the communities for the well-being and welfare of all without any divisions and marginalization.

Rev. Maxcin John,
Director, Dept. of Mission and
Evangelism, CSI Synod.

CSI Mission Academy-'MAITRI-SHALA' has been Inaugurated

The CSI Platinum Jubilee Mega Mission Festival was uniquely marked with an Inauguration of CSI Mission Academy- 'MAITRI-SHALA'. The Most. Rev. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam has inaugurated the first and foremost CSI Mission Academy along with Rt. Rev. Dr. K. Reuben Mark, Deputy Moderator, Adv. C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, General Secretary and Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod on 14th June 2022 in Tranquebar. There were 2000 people including pastors, missionaries, members from across the CSI and also from North Indian CSI Mission Fields to witness the historic movement of the inauguration of CSI Mission

Academy. Furthermore, strikingly, various Diocesan Bishops in CSI have joined in the inaugural ceremony of CSI Mission Academy. In this regard, Rt. Rev. Dr. M. Joseph, Bishop in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr. E. Pushpalalitha, Bishop in Nadyal Diocese, Rt. Rev. Timothy Ravinder, Bishop in Coimbatore Diocese, Rt. Rev. H. Sharma Nithiyanandham, Bishop in Vellore Diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr. A. R. Chelliah, Bishop in Kanyakumary Diocese, Rt. Rev. V. S. Francis, Bishop in East Kerala Diocese, Rt. Rev. Issac Varaprasad, Bishop in Rayalaseema Diocese, and Rt. Rev. ARGST Bernabas, Thirunelveli Diocese have attended and motivated the new initiative.

"MAITRI SHALA" is a mission movement of Church of South India. 'MAITRI' is an acronym stands for 'Mission Accompaniment for Inclusive Transformation through Radical Intervention'. Furthermore, it will serve as a 'Missionary Academy for the Inclusive Transformation and Radical Involvement. MAITRI Shala is the need of the emerging context of India. Day by day, Indian political, socio-cultural, economic and ecological conditions are varying and changing remarkably. In this case, it is the bounden duty of the church to equip and train missionaries to cope up with the changing scenarios in doing Mission.

Through the MAITRI Shala, Mission

Department of CSI would be able to equip and train missionaries in various capacities such as Inclusive Concept of Mission, Holistic approach towards Mission, Contextual Reading of the Bible, Analytical ability in socio-cultural, political and economical levels, Awareness about the law of the land, leadership training, management qualities, accounting abilities, counselling abilities, communication abilities, and cross-cultural experiences and organizational abilities. Through these comprehensive learning process, Mission workers would be able to practice their Missionary work more effectively in accordance with the contextual needs and necessities.

Missional Academy will be the core of learning, research, exposures, analysis, assessment, appraisal and action-plan. Both theoretical as well as practical exposures will be included in the activities in timely manners. Missional exchange programs will be organized in order to get the vivid views and experiences in doing Mission. As part of the Academy, Department would develop the basic study materials and organize a forum of resource persons on the basis of a stipulated curriculum. This Missional Academic Learning will be translated into five regional languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi which will be more effective and constructive for the learning process of Missionaries. To this end, Department will formulate a forum of translators in regional levels. Through these initial works and actions, Mission Department of Synod strongly believes that this Academy will be the stepping stone for the establishment of Mission Networking cum Research Centre, Church of South India in an imminent future.

A large proportion of the Missionaries in CSI are from the grassroot levels of the Community. They didn't get the adequate opportunities to develop their skills and abilities towards the sustainable as well as creative Missionary engagements and interventions. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to train and equip them in

systematic and proper way. So, this MAITRI Shala is intended to capacitate Missionaries for the contextual reading and re-reading of the Bible in the prevailing scenarios and help to serve as Missionary accordingly. Furthermore, it is to promote the socio-economic status of Missionaries through capacity building for Missional engagements and interventions as well as to promote their livelihood sustainability. Moreover, it is to help the Character formation of the Missionaries to witness the Gospel of Christ through words and deeds, to promote inclusive as well as wholistic Missional approach of the Church towards whole community without any discriminations, to make Missionaries as capable in order to respond to the emerging scenarios of the India, to improve the ability to analyse socio, cultural, political circumstances in their working context, to develop the ability to address the societal issues by promoting human rights and education at all levels and to get the basic knowledge about the law of the Land, to cherish managing as well as leadership qualities to the Missionaries, to improve the communication skills, to cherish the cross cultural experiences, to improve the organizational capacity, to get ability to work in the pluri-faith Context and to help them to become an agent of inclusive transformation for the whole society.

The MAITRI Shala is a people demanded movement and action since Mission Department received considerable feedbacks from the participants those who are participated in the Departmental Programs. Moreover, the Department has received request from the Dioceses of Church of South India to organize a centre for proper learning and training in systematic way. Though there are Seminaris and Bible Schools under the Church, grassroot level missionary training is really lacking since the grassroot level Missionaries' situation is not matching to the basic requirements of such institutions. This is the crucial point at which Department would like to establish a Missional Academy for the grassroot level Missionaries.

Furthermore, many dioceses are depending other independent and para church organizations for the training purpose. It is adversely affecting the Missional concept, ethos and priorities of the CSI. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to form a Missional Academy for the systematic as well as sustainable learning and training for the Missionaries.

Undoubtedly, the department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod is expecting remarkable impacts in the days to come through 'MAIRI Shala'. We could expect competent and qualified Mission Workers to work in the Mission fields of Church of South India as the exponents of Missional Concept of the Church. Since Church is Cherishing Inclusive approach towards the Mission Works, Missionaries those who are trained through this Academy will be working accordingly. It will help to get the capacity to identify and analyse the living context and address the issues and act accordingly. Training will promote the confidence and skills in the Missionaries. Through this Academy, Missionaries will be capable to transform their life as the best medium to propagate Gospel of Christ through the credibility and integrity of their life. Thus, through the trained Missionaries, church could able to bring considerable transformation to the whole society.

Gender equity and balancing are the important policy of the Church of South India. So, the department will make sure the participation and involvement of both females and males in the process of program activities. Moreover, MAITRI Shala will help the Missionaries to work effectively and then, the congregation and whole Community will be encouraged by their work. Ultimately, it will help to transform Congregations as Missional congregations towards building Christ Communities towards the borderless and open church.

Rev. Maxcin John,
Director, Dept. of Mission and
Evangelism, CSI Synod.

AAROGYAA Free Medical Camp in Madurai Christian Mission Hospital

On behalf of CSI Synod Secretariat, the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod along with Home Missionary Society (HMS) in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese jointly organized AAROGYAA Free Medical Camp at CSI Christian Mission Hospital, Madurai from 2nd -5th February 2022. Adv. C. Fernadas Rathina Raja, General Secretary, CSI, Rt. Rev. Dr. M. Joseph, Bishop in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese, Mrs. Dr. P. Leela Manohari Joseph, Bishop Amma & Women's Fellowship President, Madurai-Ramnad Diocese, Rev. Dr. Frank Ben Roosevelt, Deputy Chairman, Rev. D. Jaysing Prince, Clergy Secretary, Rev. J. Rajan, Diocesan Treasurer, and Mrs. Fortune Ponmalar Rani, Headmistress, CSI Capron Hall Girl's Higher Secondary School and W/O CSI General

Secretary have encouraged the medical camp along with their presence and leadership. Besides, Dr. Charles, Mission Hospital Superintend, and Ms. C. Udayakumari, Treasurer in Mission Hospital along with a team of Health care Professionals from the Mission Hospital led the Medical Camp. A forty-Eight Missionaries (48) included that forty Missionaries and eight Bible Women have benefited out of this Medical Camp. AAROGYAA Free medical camp was the initiate from Synod Secretariat under the leadership of General Secretary Adv. C. Fernadas Rathina Raja. "The Church is always concerned about the health care of Missionaries who are serving as the pioneers of the Church", said General Secretary when he was addressed the gathering during the Medical Camp. Bishop Dr. M. Joseph

has appreciated the Synod Secretariate for these important initiatives of free medical check-up for missionaries in the Diocese. Rev. Maxcin John, Synod Mission Director explained the concept of the 'AAROGYAA' as 'Active Accompaniment in Recuperate Outreach towards Grassroots through Yearly Awareness Activities'. Rev. J. Pon Prabhakar, Mission Director in Madurai -Ramnad Diocese along with Mr. Pon Raj and also with other Missionaries have made all necessary arrangements for the medical camp. It was the opportunity to be rejuvenated and also was a great source of help and strength for the missionaries during the COVID 19-era.

Rev. Maxcin John,
Director, Dept. of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod.

Free Dental Care to Missionaries in CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai

On behalf of CSI Synod Secretariat, the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod along with Home Missionary Society (HMS) in Madurai- Ramnad Diocese has organized 'AAROGYAA' Free Dental Camp for Missionaries in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese from 2nd -5th February 2022 at CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai. It was the Dental Camp in collaboration with the CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai. The Management, Administration and Doctors of CSI College of Dental Science and Research have extended creative support and help to organize the Dental Care Camp. All the missionaries had preliminary oral health examination by faculty Doctors of Oral Medicine and Radiology Department. Besides, there were 'Orthopanamogram' (OPG)-full mouth x-ray investigation to make a definitive diagnosis and also to rule out any underlying dental related issues that may arise in future which can be approached in a preventive aspect by proper

assessment. Furthermore, Doctors gave suggestions and treatment plan to improve the dental health status. Some of the beneficiaries had scaling (cleaning of teeth). Moreover, Doctors prescribed necessary medicines and dental care pastes. Not only this, the Dental College also offered follow up treatment whoever needed and it will be free of coast. A forty-eight (48) Missionaries were benefited in the 4 days AAROGYAA Dental Camp and investigations, medicines, treatment worth 500-1000 rupees per beneficiary were done at free of coast.

AAROGYAA Free Dental Care Camp was the initiative of CSI Synod Secretariate under the leadership of Adv. C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, General Secretary and Director, CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai. Rt. Rev. Dr. M. Joseph, Bishop in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese and Chairman, CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai, Mrs. Dr. P. Leela Manohari, Correspondent, CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai,



and Prof. Dr. K. Thanvir Mohamed Niazi, Principal, CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai along with other Health Care professionals in CSI College of Dental Science and Research, Madurai have extended warm reception to Missionaries and led the Free Dental Care Camp. It was the opportunity to get Dental care awareness, diagnosing dental problems, giving proper treatment and also imparting education on maintain oral health and hygiene.

Rev. Maxcin John,
Director, Dept. of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod.

Crave for the Gospel: Mission Exposure in Vedar Puliyankulam

The Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod along with Home Missionary Society has involved in a mission exposure visit to Vedar Puliyankulam Mission Centre under Pasumalai Pastorate, Madurai-Ramnad Diocese on 4th February 2022. It was eye-opening visit to witness and experience the desire of the people to listen the Gospel of Jesus Christ for comfort and solace. The people who are located this particular area are Telugu Speaking people whose forefathers had arrived in this place during the period of Thirumalai Naikar. Now, it is the 4th generation who are living in this place. All people are in a unique welcoming

nature, friendly and eagerly waiting to transform their life in all aspects. They are in a need for the gospel of Jesus Christ to moving ahead with more hope and faith even in the midst of agonies and pains. Mr. G. Manoharan and his wife Mrs. Raji are extending tremendous service to this community through educational engagements and other services for the flourishing of their life. They are organizing Tuition Classes for the school going children. Besides, they are extending their service accompaniment to Transgender Community who are located in Sahaya Nagar. Pasumalai Pastorate with ardent zeal and passion towards mission and evangelism,

extending wholehearted support and help for the missional engagements and developments of this area. Rev. J. Rajan, Diocesan Treasurer, Rev. J. Pon Prabhakar, HMS Mission Director and Rev. Maxcin John, Synod Mission Director have participated in the Mission exposure visit. It was an opportunity to realize and identify with the grassroot realities of which people are enthusiastically waiting to be moved in the most creative and constructive ways.

Rev. Maxcin John,
Director, Dept. of Mission and
Evangelism, CSI Synod.

Prayer is the Power to Work: Setting an Example Towards Service

The Department of Mission and Evangelism participated in a Fasting Prayer Meeting organized by the Diocesan Staffs of Madurai-Ramnad Diocese on Friday, 4th February 2022 at the Diocesan Office, Madurai-Ramnad Diocese. Rt. Rev. Dr. M. Joseph, Bishop in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese has graced the fasting prayer. Rev. J. Rajan, Diocesan Treasurer has organized the prayer along with Diocesan Staffs. Rev. Maxcin John, Synod Mission Director

has delivered the word of God. It was a unique experience to witness the Fasting Prayer by the Diocesan Staffs for the well-being of the Diocese. The Diocesan Treasurer has pointed out that all the staffs are joining together for the fasting prayer on the first Friday of every month without any failures. It is seeming to be mandatory as per the common interest of staffs. They all join their hands together in prayer for the well-being of the entire Diocese and for others. Thus,

this fasting prayer becomes the opportunity to get more refreshed status, enthusiasm, and rejuvenation to render more service for the well-being of the Diocese and for other well-wishers. So, Madurai-Ramnad Diocesan Staffs are setting an example which could be followed.

Rev. Maxcin John,
Director, Dept. of Mission and
Evangelism, CSI Synod.

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay Elected as New WCC General Secretary

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay elected as New WCC general secretary. He is the ninth general secretary in the WCC's history since the fellowship of churches was founded in 1948.

Pillay is currently dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria. A member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, he is from South Africa. Pillay was one of two candidates standing for election to the WCC's highest administrative post. The other candidate was Dr Elizabeth Joy. Pillay will replace outgoing acting general secretary Rev. Prof Dr Ioan Saucă, who began serving in that position in April 2020, when the previous general

secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, was appointed as the presiding bishop of the Church of Norway.

Dr Agnes Abuom, WCC central committee moderator, shared words of congratulations and blessings in Pillay's new ministry.

"May the WCC global fellowship warmly welcome you, pray for you, and show you in every way that we care for you as you take on important leadership in our ongoing journey toward Christian unity," she said. "You and the ecumenical movement are making history—and forming a future in which we can live out God's love for one another and for all."



The general secretary serves as the WCC's chief executive officer, and leads the WCC's work, including final responsibility for WCC's work and its staff.

~CSI Synod Communications

CSI Women's Fellowship Platinum Jubilee Celebration

CSI Women's Fellowship celebrated CSI Platinum Jubilee together with Triennial Conference from 26th May to 28th May 2022 at Bishop Cotton Boy's School in Bangalore.

Triennial Conference began with Holy Eucharist Service at St Mark's Cathedral, with the theme 'Stop the Bias: Re-affirm the Value of Individual for A Better Tomorrow'. Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. P.K. Samuel delivered a thought provoking and inspiring message on the theme.

The inaugural session commenced with the prayer by Mrs Anny Ravindar and the session was presided by Prof. Esther Samuel. Dr Jasmine Alley welcomed the gathering and Rt Rev. Dr Pushpalalitha had given the inaugural address. The inaugural session was concluded with the vote of thanks by Dr Parimala Kalarani.

Topics related to the theme were taken

by Dr Angeline Job, Dr Latha Christy, Rev. Shalini, Rev. Christy Gnanadasan and Rev. Hema John. Sessions were moderated by Rev. Shubakeerthana, Rev. Dr Priscilla Ruben, Mrs Anny Ravindar, Dr Parimala Kalarani and Mrs Udhaya. Around five hundred women from 24 diocese attended the programme. It concluded with cultural programmes performed by the Women's Fellowship members of all the diocese.

The highlight of the conference was the third and final day on which platinum jubilee celebration of the Church of South India was held with the theme 'Envisioning Together An Open Church In An Open World'. The programme started with a procession, followed by the prayer of Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph, bishop of Madurai. Lighting the lamp was followed by Mrs. Shirley Rassalam's prayer. Dr. Jasmine Alley welcomed the gathering for both Triennial Conference and Platinum

Jubilee celebration and Prof. Esther Samuel presided over the programmes and inaugural address was given by the Most Rev. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam, Moderator of CSI. Followed by the theme presentation of Rev. Dr Alfred Stephen, keynote address was given by Rt Rev. Dr P. K. Samuel. Greetings were given by the Rt Rev. P. Issac Varaprasad, Rev. Dr Vincent Vinothkumar, Rev. Dr Dexter Maben, Mr. Solomon Raju, Rev. Christopher Samuel, Rev. E. George Jayaprabhu and Rev. Sr Sukumari. Choir of the KCD Women's fellowship sang songs including theme songs. The programme came to an end with prayer by the Rt Rev. Dr Pushpalalitha and benediction was given by the moderator. It was an ever memorable event for everyone.

Dr. Jasmine Alley,
General Secretary,
CSI Women's Fellowship.

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