

## Easter Message from the President- NCCI



The Cross and Resurrection are two important cardinal principles of Christian faith. The Cross can be best understood in the light of Resurrection and Resurrection can be best understood in the light of the Cross. These two historical facts are two sides of the same coin.

Jesus Christ the son of God came into this world in the form of a man lived on this earth for about 30 years. He did public ministry for about 3 years, preaching, teaching, healing and inaugurated the kingdom of God. On various occasions he explained the nature and the dynamics of the kingdom of God as recorded in the Gospels. His teaching was revolutionary, sometimes contrary to the then existing religious traditions and rituals. People thronged at the villages and towns where he went and was very popular among the common people of society. His mission according to His Father's will was to die for sinners on the Cross. Satan tried to tempt him to avoid His cross on various occasions but Jesus Christ was determined to go ahead to bear the Cross and to fulfill His Father's will. At the fag end of His ministry, He made a public announcement before the disciples. Mark 10:32-34, Mathew 20:1-7, Luke 18:31-33, He predicts His death and Resurrection. It was prophesized as we see in the scriptures. Like His birth which happened in the fullness of time, His death was also predestined for the appointed hour. He didn't want to die before this hour. Infact He prepared for this hour and faced death very bravely, deriving strength from God and submitting totally to the will of the Father as we see in the garden of Gethsemane. He didn't want people to shed tears for His death. He rather asked to shed tears for our children. Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." Luke 9:23-24.

Jesus bore the pain of the cross, deriving strength from the hope of Resurrection. The Cross is not an end itself, but a means for achieving the much more powerful event of Resurrection.

The Cross of Jesus Christ brought Salvation to all humanity but there is a cross that each disciple has to bear and witness; self-denial and taking up Cross daily is the unavoidable way of life for a true Christian. It's not simply confined to the Lenten season but relevant to all the days of our life. The world says "accumulate and enjoy" but the word of God says "give up and gain". The Cross must be a daily experience of a Christian.

St. Paul in II Corinthians 4:10-12 says: "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be

revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So the, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."

Jesus rose again, was the victorious slogan in the early church. It was a celebration of victory over death. Resurrection is historical; some doubt the fact of Resurrection; if you delete this truth from Christian faith, Christianity suffers as a religion without hope. For this reason St. Paul writes a long chapter containing 58 verses in (I Cor.15) on the subject of Resurrection. In verse 17, he says "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. In verse 19 "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men". Paul talks about the Resurrection of dead which every Christian must believe. We are redeemed people with hope. Faith, love and hope are three important virtues of Christian faith, which connects one with the other.

The application of the meaning of Cross and Resurrection is of paramount importance for a meaningful, effective Christian life. St. Paul is the example who describes his experience of Cross and Resurrection in his personal life and ministry. We are all co-labourers with God in establishing the kingdom of God on earth. It is not only the future hope we carry but also do something with our present by applying the principles of Cross and Resurrection in our day to day lives and ministry. In II Cor.4:12 Paul says "So then, death is in work in us but life is in work in you."

There are many things that are working against the Kingdom of God. When we look at the socio economic and political religious scenarios, we witness so many inequalities and injustice which makes people victims of dark and evil forces. In the fight to establish God's rule over is based on justice and righteousness, the dark forces must die and a new order of hope, resurrection must take birth as the signs of God's kingdom. So death to satanic forces and light in the form of Resurrection will dawn upon the victims. In the process the victim will become the victor. The Cross and Resurrection are involved in this transformation process. St. Paul quotes in Romans 8:36-37 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long: we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us". Jesus is the one who died for us on the Cross and the one who rose from death. We proclaim Him as the hope of this world. In this Lenten season, let us declare this hope to the world, to make it a better place to live on earth.

May God grant you the power, the Cross, Resurrection to you all.

Bishop Taranath Sagar  
President, NCCI

## Lenten Greetings from the General Secretary, NCCI

### A LIVING MEMORY

Dementia is a dreaded disease which in simple term can be called as 'memory fadeout'. The first signs are small and all too easy to dismiss. First one may lose words, and then barely continue a conversation then one will end up not knowing where one is going. The issue is important in the context of a country that runs into modernization and urbanization at a speed and at a cost of ignoring the value of joint family and rural fabric of our society. It does not strip just the memory of a person but also the humanity. Amazingly it leaves vision and hearing completely untouched. "Vinod Chugh got his first symptoms right after retirement that followed with mood swings. He lost his sense of night and day. His wife would put him to bed but he would wake up and walk around 20 or 30 times at night. Suddenly he would go missing and she would get phone call from the police. He could not recognize people. Every act of care also made him suspicious and scared. His wife bore it all, but at a high price. For her, life became: her home, her patient and nothing else" (*India Today*, March 9, p64).



The story is true, meaningful as well as devastating. Memory is a gift that sustains the fabric of a life, a family, society and a nation. Perhaps one of the cause of being ungrateful in our lives both to God and to fellow human being is 'memory fade out' that is not given due consideration in our journey of faith. The basic value of

life is to be grateful to God for his act of grace and to our fellow human beings for the support and encouragement that we get in times of need. The little things do matter in life but often forgotten in a world that sometimes suffers from short of memory.

Paul in his first letter to Corinthians in Ch15 begins the story of resurrection "I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures"(v.3). Retelling the story of resurrection during Easter is to refresh our memory of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a reminder in our journey of faith which might suffer from memory fadeout. The story is a constant challenge to our perceptions and understanding but also a source of strength and inspiration. There are no short cuts in spiritual formation. It involves a process with no magical formulae but a gracious process where we are called to be partners in faith journey. God though he lacks nothing to himself, nevertheless open himself up to otherness. This otherness is the whole created universe. The God and father of Jesus Christ is the living God and life means relationship. The space where there is no memory, no relationship, no calling and no answering can be easily described as 'sphere of death' that is frightening. A refusal of relationship and demeaning others on the grounds of sex, caste, class, race as well 'what is mine and what is yours' is a cancer of the society. We proclaim the good news during Easter that Jesus is alive. His presence with us is an embodiment of divine power that calls in to being a fellowship which is the human historical fellowship that becomes a witnessing community.

**Bishop D.K.Sahu**  
General Secretary-NCCI

## Towards a Practice of Christian Education



The NCCI Presidium at the Executive Committee Meeting held from Feb.26-29, 2009 at ECC, Whitefield.

Rev. Dr. Valson Thampu, Principal, St.Stephen's College, New Delhi as resource person. In his well prepared paper, he highlighted the Churches' Service in the spheres of literacy and education to the country, which is far and large a significant contribution of Christian community in promotion of education.

Elaborating its impact on nation's development through education he emphasized the need for formation of a Policy on Education with proper vision with a desired goals both within the Institutions and individuals as educators. He also suggested to

In the sideline of NCCI Executive Meeting held at ECC, Whitefield in February 26-28, 2009 a seminar was organized 'Towards a Practice of Christian Education' with

initiate the process of designing a Policy on Education in order to create awareness of the Christian presence, in constituting a National Commission for Christian Education (NCCCE). One pertinent concern was to create awareness in all local churches.



Rev. Dr. Valson Thampu leading the Seminar.

He concluded that any Christian practice either in development or education has to be understood and undertaken within the mandate of Jesus to 'preach' and 'heal'. The institutions must have a healing impact on the society at large and not to be succumbed to existing the patterns.

**Anjna Masih**  
Secretary, Commission on Policy, Governance & Public Witness

## A Clarion Call for Common Mission Programmes among Churches

In a series of three theological conversations among churches in India, the first theological conversation among churches on “Churches as Just and Inclusive Community” held from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at the Juhanon Marthoma Memorial (JMM) Study Centre, Mananthala, Trivandrum, called for a Common Mission Programmes (CMP) among churches. During this historic conversation among churches in India, which is the first of its kind, the participants univocally urged for a united witness through common mission agenda among churches. It was expressed that this CMP will serve as a witness to the united character of the Church in India, and shall foster healthy bonds of friendship and inclusivity among churches, overcoming all cultures of exclusions and divisions of doctrines and denominations. The basic affirmation in this CMP is that the issues of Dalits, women, ecology and people with disabilities shall be perceived and addressed as justice and human rights issues by the churches. The emphasis for the churches to become and affect as just and inclusive communities was reverberated during the conversations. The participants also expressed the need of the churches today in India to be sensitive to the grave needs of the people. These conversations were organised jointly by the N C C I -



Commission on Dalits (COD), and the NCCI-Commission on Unity, Mission and Evangelism (COU) in partnership with the World Council of Churches. The first conversation was among the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church, Chaldean Syrian Church of the East, and the Church of South India. 45 people, who include Church leaders, priests, lay leaders, women and theological teachers, participated in this first conversation.

Bishop Dr. D. K. Sahu, the General Secretary of NCCI, inaugurated the conversation, and explained the efforts of the platforms like the Global Christian Forum and the National United Christian Forum in India, where ecumenism is in action for churches of all confessions are in regular dialogue in addressing the issues of life. Bishop Thomas Mar Timotheos of Thiruvananthapuram- Kollam Diocese, of Marthoma Syrian Church, and the Director of the JMM centre expressed his appreciations for initiating such needed timely conversations among churches, for through such initiatives ecumenical spirit can be strengthened among the churches. Bishop Dr. B. S. Devamani, Chairperson, NCCI-COD, in his opening address explained the urgency for the churches to be united in the issues of human rights and expressed the hope of being united as churches even unto the Eucharistic unity. Advocate Suresh Koshy, the Treasurer of NCCI, presented the efforts of ecumenism in practice by the churches and echoed the need for the churches to be

just and inclusive. The Secretary of Kerala Council of Churches mentioned the need to include land Struggle of the indigenous people in our conversation of Inclusiveness, and also expressed for the structures of injustices to be addressed with a commitment for the gospel through such dialogues. Bishop Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios, Chairperson, NCCI-COU, in his opening address emphasised the need for actions with the stress on justice, for he said the justice of God can never be relative and there is a need to re-live justice and inclusivity by the Christians in both church and society.

Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala, Programme Executive, for the Programme on Unity, Mission, and Spirituality of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in his keynote address has set the tone to the conversations by emphasising that justice and inclusiveness are the basic characteristics of our God, and therefore every church is called to live in that character of God to be the real sign and symbol of the reign of God. He termed these conversations among churches in India as historic, because these conversations are not on

' what we believe' but are on 'how does we live our faith today.' He expressed his happiness for the initiation of these conversations by NCCI for he said these

conversations are a trendsetter to the Church at large.

The conversations included panel presentations from the representatives of the churches on the following themes, diagnosing our churches from the perspective of unity and justice, churches as just and inclusive Communities - a missiological interrogation, justice and unity as faith issues our liturgical and theological positioning, and churches in dialogue with other communities for justice and unity. Lively conversations and discussions took place among participants as the group reports were presented in the plenary. An evaluation and feedback session was also held in the end, and most participants expressed their encouragements for the programme and expressed some suggestions like equal participation of men and women and ensuring the participation of youth. A statement has also been brought out, as an outcome of this first theological conversation. The participants expressed their happiness and joy for such meaningful conversations among churches, and strengthened their cordial friendships among each other.

*Rev. Raj Bharath Patta,  
Executive Secretary,  
Commission on Dalits &  
Addl. Charge Commission on Unity, Mission & Evangelism*

## Partners in Mission



Ms. Constanze Ennen (2 from L) and Rev. Dr. Anton Knuth of EMW, Germany flanked by Bishop D.K. Sahu, Gen Sec-NCCI staff with Rev. Awala & Rev. Raj Bharath on two ends on Feb.17, 2009 at NCCI hqrs Nagpur.



Bishop D.K. Sahu receiving a memento from Rev. Peter Lindvall and Anders Salomonsson (not in the picture) of Church of Sweden while visiting NCCI office on Jan. 22, 2009.



Senator (R) Iqbal Haider, formerly Federal Minister, Pakistan in a goodwill visit to NCCI on 04/03/2009



Rev. P.B.M. Basaiwmoit, Vice-President-NCCI speaking during Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2009

## News

### 1. A Noble Ecumenical Local Initiative

In the localization process of the Lutheran World Service India, a India programme of the Department of World Service since 1974, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) and the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) at the invitation of the Lutheran World Federation, constituted a Public Charitable Trust. It is known as Lutheran World Service India Trust a programme for development and humanitarian concerns. A step of ecumenical solidarity to continue the work in India for the marginalized.

2. **Ecumenical Solidarity for HIV & AIDS (ESHA)**, an initiative of the NCCI in partnership with ICCO is launched among churches in India. The policy on HIV/AIDS as a guide to the churches was adopted by the Assembly. The initiative now is to take steps to implement the policy in all earnestness. Towards this end five sectors have been identified to work with mission hospitals, church schools, Development wings of the constituent churches, church life and Theological colleges in India. A workshop is planned from 17-18 March 2009 in CISRS, New Delhi to move forward.

### 3. Kandhmal Peace Process

First peace process meeting was initiated by Nav-Nirman Samiti on the 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.2008 in Phulbani. It is a Peoples' Movement working on the basis of Gandhian ideology. Forty youth for 15 days from 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. to 10<sup>th</sup> Oct 2008 concentrated in a single Panchayat at of Bardurkia in Baliguda for peace process. A two-day state convention on Peace was held among primary school teachers of Kandhmal from 8-9 November 2008 by All Utkal Primary Teachers Federation in Bhubaneswar. With the cooperation of civil society and Utkal Primary Teachers Federation a peace march from 9-17 December 2008 from Dhauli to Kandhmal was an expression of solidarity for peace. Recently the peace initiative, through the cooperation of primary school teachers has been initiated at micro level. It is encouraging and supported by NCCI.

## Sixth Congress of Asian Theologians



Seventy-nine women and men from 15 different countries gathered in Iloilo city, Philippines from February 8 to 14, 2009 at the St. Charles Philippines University for the VI Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS VI). It was an occasion in the context of a challenge to the understanding of mission since 1910 under the theme "Voices from the underside." A call was given to grapple with unjust social political and economic situations in the Asian context and respond positively for an abundant life for all.

## National Consultation on Global Warming

In response to the urgency on the issue of Global Warming, a national consultation was held from 12-14 February 2009 at the CSI Centre, Chennai. It was a South Asia Ecumenical Partnership Programme with NCCI and CSI. Global warming causes climate change which affects the very universe of creation of God in particular the developing countries that experiences rising of sea-levels, reduced yield in crops and spread of diseases. It adversely affects the communities and increases vulnerability of the marginalised communities, the churches in India as a responsible missiological community which is called to engage in meeting the challenges to ensure sustainable development.



Dr. Mar Atsongchanger leading a Bible Study



## 41st Biennial Conference of APCC

The Andhra Pradesh Council of Churches held its 41st Biennial Conference from 16th to 18th January, 2009 at Satyodayam, Hyderabad. The theme of the conference was "Lo, I am with you always". 140 delegates representing the member churches and the organizations attended the conference. The conference was inaugurated by Dr.A.Chakrapani, the Hon'ble Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Council. Dr.Chakrapani, congratulated the APCC for its role in coordinating and consensus building to be



41st Biennial Conference of the Andhra Pradesh Council of Churches, 16-18 January 2009, Hyderabad

together for the mission of the Church in the region. The theme of the conference is an indication of the fact that neither disturbance nor

intimidation of any kind can deter the churches' commitment to serve the poor he contended.

Sadly enough, it is not so now however, it is the endeavour of present government to rise to those levels of partnership with the church so that poverty and disease can be eradicated from our midst, Dr.Chakrapani contended.

## Farewell Zoonak baba

NCCI bid farewell to one of its oldest staff Mr. Zoonak Rao Shende. Zoonak worked for the Council as a Gardener for more than 45 years and the NCCI family wishes him a peaceful and relaxed life ahead!!



**National Committee of Urban Rural Mission (URM)** of the National Council of Churches in India in its meeting held on Feb.2, 2009, elected the following members as Officers and Working Committee members.

- 1.Rev. Dr. R. Daniel Premkumar, Chairperson
- 2.Mrs. Helen Chandra-Vice-Chairperson
- 3.Mr. S.J. Sibloon-Secretary
- 4.Mr. K.J. Yesupadam-Treasurer
- Members:** 5.Rev. George Daniel, 6.Mr. P.C. Jena, 7.Mr. Philip Jadhav
8. Mr. Reggie Gomes, 9.Mr. S. Sekar, 10. Rev. Paramjyothi,
11. 1 to be selected from North East.



Executive Committee of the Urban Rural Mission (URM) on Feb.2, 09 at Nagpur

### Book Release “Lenten-Lantern”

“Lenten-Lantern” reminds us that lantern has been the common resource of Dalits which they have been using for light, and such lanterns have helped many people in the huts and Dalit *wadas* to get inspired and showed them the path towards the journey of liberation. Even today in most of the rural congregations, during the Season of Lent, most Dalit People carry lanterns along with them as they go to attend cottage prayers. In memory of this rich heritage and to move forward, a book *Lenten-Lantern* edited by Rev. Raj Bharath Patta was released during the Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches in India, from 25-27 February 2009, Whitefield, Bangalore. *Lenten Lantern* provides light as we journey in this season of Lent to reflect on the meaning, message and direction of the passion of Christ and the observances of Lent in the context of growing discriminations and oppressions in our Church and society.



Bishop T. Sagar, President-NCCI holding the poster on Lenten Campaign after the release of the book along with Bishop Marandi. On his right are Bishop Devamani and Bishop Sahu.

This book is a compilation of various reflections, poems and prayers written by several experiential people reflecting from different perspectives and contexts, which adds grace and beauty to this book. These reflections express the poignancy of hope, the aspirations for liberation and the struggle for being free from all bondages. The contributions in this book are by itself the hermeneutic of the gospel from the local locality, which will appeal to the people in the local congregations. This book is aimed to challenge and inspire all the readers and congregations to become the harbingers of hope, peace and liberation today. This book is a resource book for the *Lenten Campaign for Dalit Liberation*, a campaign initiated by the NCCI-Commission on Dalits. Copies available at the NCCI Secretariat, Nagpur

### Churches must foster totally a new breed of Political leaders

Keeping in view the Parliamentary and the State Assembly Elections, the Andhra Pradesh Council of Churches held a consultation on



Lighting the lamp is Mr. Swaranjit Sen, former DGP, Govt. of A.P., and Bishop Parmar, President Emeritus NCCI and flanked to the left is Rt. Rev. Dr. B. S. Devamani, Bishop in Dornakal, Dr. J. A. Oliver, Convener, Rev. Dr. P. B. Arnold, President of the M. B. Church of India and to the right is Dr. S. Joseph - President of Baptist Council and Mr. M. J. Rao of FPW.

“Election 2009 Role and Response of the Minorities” at Satyodayam, Hyderabad on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2008. The political concerns secretaries of the member churches and organizations numbering 80 delegates attended the seminar. The issues concerning the desirability of minorities seeking tickets in various political parties as per conviction, the need to influence the manifestos of different political parties, bargaining seats in proportion to population were the focal areas discussed at the consultation.

Dr. Jetti A. Oliver in his address stated that shaping and nurturing democracies is part of christian responsibility and that shying away from the political process amounts to shirking responsibility of giving a fair governance to the people specially the excluded groups of the population. Dr. Oliver contended that while certain minority groups are vocal and active which needs to be encouraged and supported by all possible means, christian minorities are a silent lot and therefore often taken for granted and that

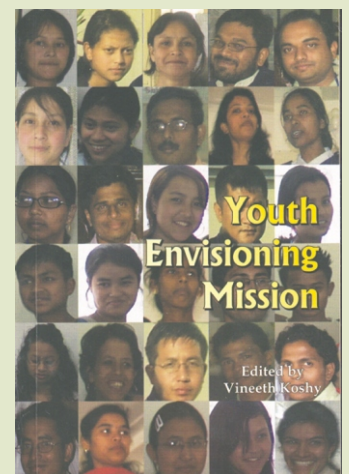
unless such a trend is not changed and the representatives are not sent to the legislative bodies, the voice cannot be heard and the presence cannot be felt. Dr. Oliver called upon the member churches to take the forthcoming elections in all seriousness not only to stake claim in proportion to the population but serve as catalysts to establish people centered governance.

Rev. Prof. D. J. Jeremiah  
Associate Secretary

“Youth Envisioning Mission”, edited by Vineeth Koshy, Secretary-Commission on Youth is a Joint publication of the National Council of Churches in India, World Council of Churches, Student Christian Movement in India. The book is a compilation of opinions on the ‘Mission Perspectives of the youth, by the youth and for the youth’. It is a document of the Proceedings and Recommendations of the Youth Pre-Assembly held at Shillong from 28-30 April 2008 to the NCCI’s XXVI Quadrennial Assembly. The Pre-Assembly of the Youth was an occasion for the youth of NCCI’s member churches to think together and express their vision and aspirations. Bishop Sahu in his foreword has called upon the churches to look at the ecumenical movement from the perspective of the youth, if it has to have a future.

Dr. Prawate Khidarn, General Secretary of CCA released the book by handing over the first copies to Mr. Adam Row, Youth Consultant of CCA and Ms. Sunila Ruth EGY-PAC member from Pakistan on 8 March in Kathmandu, Nepal during the concluding session of EGY-PAC meeting.

Copies available at the NCCI Secretariat, Nagpur



## Serampore College Convocation 2009

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### Forty years journey of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary

In one of the far-reaching theological curriculum reforms the Senate of Serampore College has developed a curriculum based on 3 policies contextual education, interfaith dialogue and social relevance. This was a trend setter for the annual meeting of BTESSC and Senate of Serampore College and celebration of forty years of journey of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary (TTS).

It received the mandate from the Arcot Lutheran Church (ALC), Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC) and Church of South India (CSI) in the year 1969, to train and equip ministers for them using their native language, Tamil. From its inception TTS journeys on, taking indigenisation, Inculturation, Indianisation and Liberative and Contextual Interpretations of the Gospel and Scripture as its guiding principles. In 2009/10 TTS marks forty years of her service to the Churches and Society. As a mark of beginning the Jubilee celebrations, TTS hosted the Senate of Serampore College (University) Annual Convocation between 4th and 7th February 2009.

On 4-5 February the Senate of Serampore College (University) had her Academic Councils, Board Meetings and the Senators' Meetings on the Campus premises. During these deliberations 'Curriculum revision' and SSC (U)'s functioning modalities were under discussion and approval. On 6th February, the commemoration service was organised as part of the Convocation. Prof. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer, Principal, TTS and Prof. Dr. V. Kanagu Nelson jointly led the Service and Rt. Rev. Dr. Dharendra Kumar Sahu, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) gave the commemoration service address. The bishop challenged the graduates and the Senators on the theme 'Telling the Truth and Living the Truth'. On 7th February a total of 371 graduates of all Protestant and Orthodox Christian Traditions from all over India received degrees, ranging from Doctor in Theology and Doctor in Ministry to Master of Theology. Bachelor of Divinity, Bachelors in Christian Studies, Bachelors of Theology and Diploma in Pastoral Counselling. The graduates received their degrees from

Prof. Dr. K. Rajaratnam, Master, Senate of Serampore Council. The Prof. Dr. John S. Sadanandha, President of the Serampore Council presided over the ceremony and Prof. Dr. Ravi Tiwari, Registrar SSC (U) organised the ceremony. Prof. Dr. James Massey, Secretary, SSC (U) and Principals from all the 50 affiliated Seminaries participated and Church and Ecumenical representatives and partners all over the world also were present during the ceremony. Rt. Rev. Dr. Masilamani Azariah, Prof. Dr. E. C. John and His Grace Archbishop A. Chinnappa Malayappan, were the recipients of the Doctor of Divinity (DD) under *Honoris Causa* for their meticulous contributions towards Dalit Liberation, Theological Education and Church Ministry respectively.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Masilamani Azariah being conferred DD *Honoris Causa* by the Master of Serampore College Council

As part of the Jubilee Celebrations, the seminary set-up an exhibition displaying all her various projects to allow visitors to get to know TTS activities better. The ground for the TTS Employees Housing Project (TEHP) was dedicated by Prof. Dr. John S. Sadanandha by a word of Prayer and Grace. A few years ago TTS had a vision to make her employees independent and house owners.

On 6th February TTS organised an evening Public Reception to the Master, Senators and the Graduates. The entire TTS family was involved in this endeavour and Prof. Dr. Peter Singh, served as the General Co-Ordinator.

**Reported by: R. Christopher Rajkumar**

*Director, Rural Theological Institute of TTS*

## NCCN's (National Council of Churches of Nepal) role in the drafting of the Nepal Constitution

After decade long conflict and people's movement-2, Nepalese people got an opportunity to elect the constituent Assembly members to draft the new constitution of Nepal. It is the first time in the history of Nepal that people are Participating in the constitution making process. NCCN, as the representative body of Christians in Nepal, made significant contribution in the conflict resolution and peace process of Nepal.

To ensure equality, inclusiveness, guarantee of justice and full religious freedom in the New constitution of Nepal, NCCN launched a programme under the theme "Role of Religious Communities in the constitution making process and Guarantee of Full Religious Freedom in New Constitution" with a view to

provide recommendations to the Constituent Assembly which is in the process of drafting the new constitution. A national level consultation was organized in Kathmandu with representation from various places to give final shape to the recommendations from the regional consultations before submitting to the Constituent Assembly.

NCCN General Secretary, Dr. K.B. Rokaya has been actively involved in the NCCN's campaign to ensure full religious freedom in the new constitution of Nepal and NCCN's role in the peace process of Nepal and present political situation of Nepal.

Courtesy: <http://www.nccnepal.org>

## Welcome Aboard!!

### Welcome to the NCCI Family, Adv. Anjna Masih



We welcome Adv. Anjna Masih to the NCCI Family. She joins as the Secretary for Programme Commission on Policy, Governance and Public Witness from January 2009. She fulfils long standing need of the National Council of Churches in India to help us in addressing the concerns being based in New Delhi and operate from NCCI Delhi Office. She comes from the Methodist Church in India. A science and a law graduate from the Delhi University and a practicing lawyer, Anjna brings in a lot of experience to the concerns and issues that need to be addressed.

We look forward for extending all possible help and cooperation to her in coordinating the work of the Commission.

### Dr. Hrangthan Chhungi to join NCCI



Dr. Hrangthan Chhungi earned her Doctorate in the field of Old Testament from the Senate of Serampore University in the year 2007, specializing in the Wisdom Literature of the Ancient West Asia and the Hebrew Scriptures. She is the recipient of the prestigious award "Master's Prize" from the Senate of Serampore University in the year 2000 convocation. Presently she is the Dean of the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology, Ecumenical Christian Centre and editor of the reputed ISET publication *Theology for our Times*. Most of her writings reflect upon the contemporary issues on ecumenism and concerns of the subalterns and socially ostracized groups for transformation and liberation. She is the honorary Treasurer for the Society of Biblical Studies in India (SBSI) for 2009-2010. She is designate Secretary, Commission on Tribal and Adivasi, NCCI She will take up the office from May 1, 2009.

### Mr. Christopher Rajkumar to join NCCI



R. Christopher Rajkumar is a member of the Church of South India, Diocese of Madurai Ramnad and hails from Madurai, Tamilnadu. He has done B. Com and B.L., degrees from the Madurai Kamaraj University and B. D., M. Th., from the Senate of Serampore College(University). He served as Tamilnadu Co-Ordinators of the WCC sponsored Rural Christian Youth Programme (1995) and Tiruvalla M.M. Thomas Trust Initiated Mission and Evangelism Study Project (1996). He was the Project Office of the Inba Illam a member unit programme of the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary (1998 - 2003) before he talks up the Deputy Directorship at the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield, Bangalore (2003-2007). Now he serves as the Director of the Rural Theological Institute and on the Christian Theology Faculty of the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary (2007- till date). He has written and published several articles and research papers nationally and internationally and also traveled widely. His wife Kala Sugirtha is a Trained Graduate Teacher and they are being blessed with two daughters Rushenka Vashti (12) and Shyreeti Daveena (6). He will join from 1 April 09.

## Forthcoming Events

1. **Global Ecumenical Conference on Justice for Dalits** is planned from 21-24 March 2009 in Bangkok. It will be an ecumenical conference with approximately 100 international participants to promote ecumenical solidarity with the ongoing struggle of the Dalits for the recognition of dignity and rights.
2. The International Consultation on "**Towards Peace Security and Development in South Asia**" has been jointly organized by the World Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia and South Asia Council of Churches and from 30th March 2nd April 2009 at Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield, Bangalore.
3. A consultation on **Pre-Election 2009** from 1-3 April 2009 at CNI Bhawan, New Delhi is being organized by NCCI in partnership with CISRS (Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society), SCMI (Student Christian Movement of India) and ICP (Interfaith Coalition for Peace). The consultation is a Christian response to the Indian reality and General Election of 2009.
4. **Pre-Centenary Edinburgh 2010**, a consultation is planned from 17- 19 July 2009 at United Theological College, Bangalore. It will be an exploration on Interfaith Relationships from the perspective of Christian Mission.

### Living Letters team to visit Israel and Palestine

Peace-building initiatives by a team of ecumenical representatives from around the world visited churches, ecumenical organizations and civil society movements in Israel and Palestine from 7 to 14 March. It was organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) as part of the Living Letters initiative. The visit focuses on the troubled region, where it sees the ongoing presence and witness of churches as crucial in the struggle for a just peace. Although they are a minority in Israel and Palestine, Christians are active and visible in public life. The delegation learnt about the role of the churches in the area, including the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). The EAPPI aims to work alongside Palestinians and Israelis in their nonviolent actions for peace and to carry out concerted advocacy efforts to end the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories.

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