Youth:

Renewal and Reformation:

Never-ending Challenges

Rules and love/ Influencer and influencees/
Cornerstone of society/ Spirituality

Youngsters open up their minds
Clergy Koinonia

Pray in teras for Others
Members of CSI - United to Unite: Taking Pride in and Holding Responsibilities

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We have celebrated the 74th CSI Formation day on the 27th September 2020 with the renewed spirit and commitment to the prayer and call of Jesus Christ, ‘That they all may be one’. Local churches offered special thanksgiving prayers, hoisted flags and conducted special programmes to commemorate this special occasion abiding with the COVID protocol in place. In all these celebrations, the pride and enthusiasm in being the part of the biggest united and uniting church in India which is also the second biggest in Indian churches reflected.

The Synod of the CSI organised an online event in commemoration of the formation day. We were privileged to receive greetings from the World Christian leaders, leaders of the International Christian organisations, National and International level ecumenical leaders, and the leaders of the sister churches. It is my duty to thank Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca; the Interim General Secretary, World Council of Churches, Mr Alastair Bateman; CEO, Church Mission Society (CMS), Dr Deidre Palmer; President, Uniting Church in Australia, Rt. Reverend Martin Fair; Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland, Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann; General Secretary Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS), Rev. Solomon Paul Benjamin; Liaison Secretary East Asia and India, EMS, Rev. Duncan Dormor; General Secretary, USPG, Ms Rommie Nauta; Programme Manager for the World Diaconate of Kerk in Actie, Rev. Dr Deenabandhu Manchala; Area Executive, Southern Asia, Global Ministries, USA, Most Rev. Dr P C Singh; Moderator, Church of North India (CNI), Rt. Rev. Dr Geovarghese Mar Theodosius Suffragan Metropolitan; Mar Thoma Church, Rev Dr Chan Nam Chen; Executive Director, Asia CMS and Rev. Asir Ebenezer; General Secretary, National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) who kindly send the video greetings to bless this occasion. Rt. Rev. Dr Reuben mark; the Deputy Moderator of the Church of South India offered the opening prayer and the General Secretary of the CSI welcomed the distinguished guests. Most Rev. Dharmaraj Rasalam; the Moderator of the CSI gave the keynote address. Prof. Dr Vimal Sukumar; the Hon. Treasurer of CSI gave the felicitation speech.

Dr J. Jerene Jayanth; Director, CSI Kalyani Hospital in Chennai and Dr Keerthana Rajkumar from CMC, Vellore spoke on the various steps taken by the Christian hospitals to combat COVID 19. A short video on the details about the encouraging activities of the church during the lockdown due to COVID 19 and the activities of the healing ministry of the church was also part of this special video presentation. Glimpses of folk-art forms, which were performed in the various synod level programmes in the recent past were also included.

The formation of the Church of South India is one of the greatest events in the world history of church union. The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh 1910 raised a question about the re-union of Churches. This question and discussions led to the inauguration of the Faith and Order Movement in which Protestant Churches of the world began a study of the basic theological problems involved in the question of Christian reunion. This Conference made tremendous changes among the mission fields, and they felt the need for an organic union in their respective mission fields. In 1913, we can see a move in this direction in the mission fields of China, Japan and East Africa. In India, the union happened among the South Indian Churches. In other words, the formation of the church was a mission movement!

In 1908, many important steps were taken for the inter-denominational union of Congregational and Presbyterian Churches in South India and Ceylon. This year the two bodies (Congregational and Presbyterian) have come together and formed ‘The South India United Church’. This movement in South India was watched with keen interest by leaders of the church and missionary statesmen in India and elsewhere. Further in 1909, South India United Church General Assembly committee based on union suggested the formation of “Federation of Christian Churches in India”. Tranquebar Manifesto was a catalyst for the uniting efforts. The Tranquebar conference actually consisted of two conferences, held in...
On the 15th August 1947, India became independent. It was a day of emancipation also for the Christians Church in this country. The inauguration of the CSI on the 27th of September 1947 at St. George’s Cathedral, Madras, hailed by Christian leaders around the globe as a ‘venture of faith’, ‘a momentous achievement in unity’, ‘the greatest step forward in Church unity in modern times’, ‘a beacon in our Christian world’ and also as ‘a schism deliberately planned and carried through’.

Chapter II of the Constitution of the CSI states that the CSI affirms “the purpose of the union by which it has been formed is the carrying out of God’s will, as this is expressed in our Lord’s Prayer- ‘that they may all be one… that the world may believe that Thou didst send me’. It believes that by this union the CSI will become a more effective instrument for God’s work and that there will be greater peace, closer fellowship and fuller life within the Church, and also renewed eagerness and power for the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.”

The development and growth that India is witnessing in the field of education and health care are undoubtedly the results of the vision and mission of the European missionaries in India from whom we received the legacy and continue the commitment to these social interventions. Education became accessible to the marginalised communities because of these social interventions of missionaries. The Church of South India has schools in the metro cities, urban and semi-urban areas in the five southern states. But, most importantly, we can see that most of our schools are in remote villages, catering to the needs of the poor and marginalised students. There are 1,419 aided primary schools, 48 unaided primary schools, 228 aided middle schools, 9 unaided middle schools, 257 aided high school/higher secondary schools, 84 unaided high school/higher secondary schools, 31 aided colleges, 63 unaided colleges, 10 aided technical institutions, 37 unaided technical institutions, 2 aided paramedical institutions, 22 unaided paramedical institutions, 1 aided professional institution, 13 unaided professional institutions, and 30 other educational institutions. Many of these schools are the leading ones in the respective states while many other struggles to face the challenges of the commercialisation of education system in India but continue to be missional in nature and spread good news through education to multitudes. Many of our colleges are regularly in the list of the first 100 colleges by the central government and a few of them appear in the first ten. We should be proud that our educational institutions are well-known for quality education. The first college and the first-ever girls’ school in South India are the institutions of the Church of South India is another fact that we should be proud of. There are hundreds of hostels, boys’ and girls’ homes, and other institutions for the childcare under the CSI Dioceses which help thousands of orphan/semi-orphan and poor children for education and living.

Health care sector in India has become a cut-throat business. It is a wonder that many of the CSI hospitals are still able to carry the missional attitude facing all the challenges. Our hospitals are still accessible for the poor and serve the society with utmost commitment. There are 46 hospitals, 1 medical centre and 3 other medical institutions under CSI Dioceses.

The Christian responsibility of every member of the Church of South India is understanding the rich legacy of the church and live a life that follows the motto, “that they all may be one”. We should understand the intricacies of this prayer by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This prayer includes a vision of equality and justice, diminishing of borders, and solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalised.

Let us dream together and work together for that noble goal!

C. Fernandas Rathina Raja
General Secretary, CSI.
Renewal and Reformation: Challenges for the Church and Society in India.

Reformation day is being observed annually on 31st October, the day Martin Luther’s 95 theses were nailed to the door of Castle Church at Wittenberg 1517. From a historical perspective, the Reformation is much too complex to reduce to a single event, but this significant act by Luther focused attention on his protest against papal authority and the teaching of the Church.

The Cry for Reform

The term ‘Reformation’ immediately suggests that something—namely, western European Christianity—was being reformed. Like many other terms used by historians to designate eras in human history, such as ‘Renaissance’ or ‘Enlightenment’—it is open to criticism. For example, the twelfth century witnessed a comparable attempt to reform the Church in western Europe, but the term ‘Reformation’ is not used to designate this earlier movement. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the term ‘Reformation’ is generally accepted as the proper designation for this movement, it linked with the recognition of the need for a drastic overhaul of the institutions, practices and ideas of the western Church. The term helpfully indicates that there were both social and intellectual dimensions to the movement which it designates. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was obvious that the Church in western Europe was in urgent need of reform. The cry for reform in head and members summed up both the nature of the crisis and its perceived solution. It seemed that the life-blood of the Church had ceased to flow through its veins.¹

The Concept of Reformation

The term ‘Reformation’ (from Latin reformation, literally ‘restoration, renewal’) is used in a number of senses, and it is helpful to distinguish them. There were four elements involved in its definition, namely 1. Lutheranism, 2. The Reformed Church (often referred to as Calvinism), 3. The ‘Radical-Reformation’ (often referred to as ‘Anabaptism’) 4. The ‘Counter-Reformation’ or ‘Catholic reformation.’ In its broadest sense, therefore, the term ‘Reformation’ is used to refer all four movements. The term is also restricted sense to mean ‘the magisterial Reformation’ or ‘mainstream Reformation’ thereby excluding the ‘Catholic Reformation.’² Rev. Dr Mothy Varkey brings out Alister McGrath statements; “it is more accurate to speak of Protestantism’s in the plural. However, in many scholarly works, the term ‘Reformation’ is used to refer to that linked


with the Lutheran and Reformed Churches’ and excluding the Anabaptists.³

**Martin Luther**

Martin Luther was born to Hans and Margaretha Luther on 10th November 1483 in Eisleben, Germany, and was baptized the next day on the feast of St. Martin of Tours, after whom he was named. His father owned a copper mine in nearby Mansfeld. Having raised from the peasantry, his father was determined to see his son ascend to civil service and brings further honour to the family. To that end, Hans sent young Martin to schools in Mansfeld, Magdeburg and Eisenach. At the age of seventeen in 1501, he entered the University of Erfurt. The young student received his Bachelor’s degree. According to his father’s wishes, Martin enrolled in the law school of that university. After earning the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Arts at the University of Erfurt, Luther began the study of law in the summer of 1505. A few weeks later, however, he abruptly changed his mind, sold his books, and decided to become a monk. All that changed during a thunderstorm in the summer of 1505. A lightning bolt struck near to him as he was returning to school. Terrified, he cried out, “Help, St. Anne! I’ll become a monk!” Spared of his life, but regretting his words, Luther kept his bargain, dropped out of law school and entered the monastery there. True to his word, Luther spent a last evening with his friends and on 17 July 1505, at the age of twenty-one, he entered the monastery of the Augustinian Hermits in Erfurt.⁶ Luther wanted to dedicate himself completely to the monastic life. He tried to do good works to please God and to serve others through prayer. However, he realised that it is difficult to find peace in his life because he was becoming too much aware of his own sinful nature. He devoted himself to fasts, flagellations, long hours in prayer, pilgrimages and constant confessions.

**The Indulgence in Controversy and the 95 Theses**

In addition to his duties as a professor, Martin Luther served as a preacher and confessor at the Castle church, a foundation of Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. This church was named ‘All Saints’ because it was the repository of his collection of holy relics. This parish served both the Augustinian monastery and the university. It was in the performance of these duties that the young priest was confronted with the effects of obtaining indulgences on the lives of everyday people. The Dominican friar Johann Tetzel was enlisted to travel throughout Archbishop Albert of Mainz’s Episcopal territories promoting and selling indulgences on the lives of people. The whole exercise of 95 theses represents Martin Luther’s ‘zeal for truth’ and his ‘desire to bring to light’ the truth. Luther theses nailed on the Castle church in Wittenberg represents Luther’s deep sense of responsibility towards the Church and his sincere desire to correct the teachings and practice of the Church.⁴

On October 31, 1517, according to traditional accounts, Luther’s 95 Theses were nailed to the door of the Castle Church as an open invitation to debate them. The Theses condemned that the Church has become greedy and worldly and asked for a theological disputation on what indulgences could grant. The 95 Theses were quickly translated into German, widely copied and printed. Within two weeks they had spread throughout Germany, and within two months throughout Europe. Luther argued that “the true treasure of the Church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.” In Luther’s arguments in the 95 theses, the decisiveness of faith and certainty of the promise of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the debate. The 95 theses was a call to repentance which instead of the onetime event is to be understood as a permanent inner attitude of life. The whole exercise of 95 theses represents Martin Luther’s ‘zeal for truth’ and his ‘desire to bring to light’ the truth. Luther theses nailed on the Castle Church in Wittenberg represents Luther’s deep sense of responsibility towards the Church and his sincere desire to correct the teachings and practice of the Church.⁵

**Luther’s Teachings Five Solas**

The Protestant Reformation of the


⁴ Jhakmak Neeraj Ekka, “Luther’s Theology of the Cross as Luther’s Theology of Mission” Bangalore Theological Forum Vol. XLIX, No.1 (June, 2017): 151.

⁵ Emilie Hall, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-life/what-was-the-protestant-reformation.html (October 2020)
16th century changed Christianity forever. One of the enduring legacies was the Five Solas, which are five Latin phrases that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers’ theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity, based on Scripture.

1. **Sola Scriptura** (Scripture alone)
The Bible alone is our highest authority. This doesn’t mean that the Bible is the only place where truth is found, but it does mean that everything else we learn about God and his world, and all other authorities, should be interpreted in light of Scripture. The Bible gives us everything we need for our theology. (Romans 15: 4, 2 Timothy 3: 16-17)

2. **Sola Fide** (Faith Alone)
We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We are saved solely through faith in Jesus Christ because of God’s grace and Christ’s merit alone. We are not saved by our merits or declared righteous by our good works. (Luke 7: 50, Romans 10: 9, John 3: 14-16, John 20: 31)

3. **Sola Gratia** (Grace Alone)
We are saved by the grace of God alone. We can only stand before God by his grace as he mercifully attributes to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ and attributes to him the consequences of our sins. Jesus’ life of perfect righteousness is counted as ours, and our records of sin and failure were counted to Jesus when he died on the cross. (Ephesians 2: 8, 2 Corinthians 5: 21)

4. **Solus Christus** (Christ Alone)
Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King. God has given the ultimate revelation of himself to us by sending Jesus Christ (Colossians 1: 15). Only through God’s gracious self-revelation in Jesus do we come to a saving and transforming knowledge of God (Acts 4: 12). Because God is holy and all humans are sinful (Romans 3: 23), neither religious rituals nor good works mediate between us and God. Hebrews 7: 25 There is nothing by which a person can be saved other than the name of Jesus. His sacrificial death alone can atone for sin (1 John 2: 2).

5. **Soli Deo Gloria** (To the Glory of God Alone)
We live for the glory of God alone. God’s glory is the central motivation for salvation, not improving the lives of people—though that is a wonderful by-product. God is not a means to an end—he is the means and the end. The goal of all of life is to give glory to God alone (1 Corinthians 10: 31). As the Westminster Catechism says, the chief purpose of human life is “to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Glory belongs to God alone because only he is worthy (Revelation 4: 11, Psalm 145: 3, Psalm 18: 3).

**Renewal and Reformation: Challenges for the Church and Society in India**
In India everyday justice and peace denied because of the racial and caste barriers, deforestation and ecological degradation, women, girl child sexual harassments, human rights violation and arms-attacks on innocents, Dalits, Tribals, Adivasis rights, mob-lynching, unjust labour policies, COVID 19 threats to human life. The Book of Revelation reminds and cautions “look, I am making the whole creation new” He will wipe all tears from their eyes” Revelation 21: 4. The Church of South India’s former Moderator Rt Rev. Dr Govada Dyvasirvadam says that “500 years faith journey of Reformation is hoped to give strength to cast out and trample the evils and divisive forces in and around our communities towards building the “borderless
community, the ‘One World’, Christ’s World.”

Chris Fergusen, the General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, in his reflection on “Living God, Renew, and Transform Us,” the theme of the 26th General Council Meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, observes that, “the Reformation commemoration is for us not about theological nostalgia. It is about putting the Reformation into the present tense. This means not just here and now; it means bringing the Reformation into the present tense. This means not just here and now; it means bringing

renewal and reformation is an
ongoing journey.”

Reformed traditions, theology and the confessing faith stance into the tense present-into tensions, conflicts, violence, suffering, beauty, wonder and promise of this historical moment.”

George Zachariah brought out two important challenges for renewal and reformation of the Church and Society in India. The first one is “Towards a Borderless Church” and the second one is “Towards a World without Walls.” Towards a Borderless Church, the Reformation faith journey is an occasion for the Church to become self-reflexive and to undergo a radical renewal and transformation. ‘Church reformed is a Church in need of continuous reformation.’ The Church/People of God theological formulations continue to remain elitist and racist, and our Biblical reflections and liturgical practices are not sufficiently capable to inspire and inform the congregations in their discipleship journey to bring about healing and restorations in our communities. The Church happens as fellowship, solidarity, love, care, compassion, justice, and restoration in the lives of the people, who go through the tragic experiences of utter God-forsakenness.

The Indian Church and Society to make and renewal and reformation a living experience in the life of the Church, it requires a costly commitment. M.M. Thomas rightly observes that “there cannot be a true Church with the continuity of existence in the world. It is a contradiction in terms. Die and get resurrected—everyday a new fellowship—a new creation—not the old one continuing. That alone be Christ’s Church.”

Towards a World without Walls, George Zacharia views that “we live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all.”

The renewed and reformed Church is called to be a witnessing presence in the public sphere, and hence it is a public Church. Arvind Nirmal reminds us, the Church should engage in public witness: “the ‘original’ and the ‘given’ in this context is our own situation, our own history, our own struggles, our own aspirations, our own fears and our own hopes,

God is dynamically present in these. God is savingly active in these. This is where we have to discern the Gospel happening and becoming.”

In India, the Church and Society faith journey towards renewal and reformation is an ongoing journey. The Church having being reformed and is to still be reformed. The recent caste-based oppression of the 19-year-old Dalit girl was brutally raped and killed by four upper-caste men in Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh shattered secular India. She was brutally raped, grievously injured and died in a Delhi hospital and was burnt to ashes by the police authorities. Caste crimes and discrimination are continuing. As the people of God, we should stand for justice so that the reformation will ensure the entire Church and Society in India. Here I conclude with Allan Samuel Palanna’s statements that, “Reformation is never a finished event. It further challenges faith communities to identify moral gaps in any spaces, re-imagine theology and spirituality and calls for re-forming these through the life-affirming values of the Gospel. This is the unfinished task of the Reformation.”

"Here I Stand, I can do no other, so help me God, Amen"

~Martin Luther~

‘Our days are different from yours’ is a very popular defensive statement of many youngsters and this is triggered when they are cornered by their elderly mostly. All the values that are taught to them as kids are questioned because of the modern standards which are unconsciously embedded into their brain through media and diverse social spectrum. The youth today are under the constant dilemma of what to believe and what to do in their everyday life. When they approach the elders and church to clarify their doubts, the perplexed youth always get an answer that doesn’t meet their expectations.

“Don’t be silly. It is obvious as it is written in the Bible”. Mostly, this statement, in particular, many a time leads us a strong hatred towards Christian beliefs and also causes hatred towards society. The person’s mind gets filled with unexplained questions which the person believes to have the answer. These beliefs often turn into revulsion while coming across people with a different opinion from theirs. The main theme taught by Jesus Christ is love. All of his lessons and sermons focus on love. He broke the principles of the people of his time who followed the traditional rules given by Moses. God, through Moses, gave guidelines of what to eat and what not to eat in order not to be tainted. But Jesus said, “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth” (Matthew 15:11). Many Pastors and the elderly preach sermons from a particular verse from the Holy Bible leaving behind its cultural implications and their social background. Often it clashes with the other cultures and some social setup. Subconsciously, Christian youth face various complexes in their lives and the majority fail to get clear answers. When this situation repeats itself, many Christian youngsters get disheartened and misled from their lives as the result. The world is facing so many complexities in the last few decades and the path of righteousness seems to be blurred for some and impossible for many. I have come across some elders rebuking the youth for their behaviour. They advise them to follow standards which they consider to be perfect and when they see someone deviate from those standards, they tend to judge the person to be irresponsible and treat them with indifference. When such youths struggle in their faith, the elders would not have opened arms for them. In the recent times, many youngsters struggle with their heart and mind and without proper guidance of someone who understands their psyche, they go down the wide path which seems to be more adequate to their life. Thousands and thousands of youngsters live without understanding what Jesus want us to be, simply go down.

The main reason for this situation is the inability to understand the youth in their psychological level. I have heard some elders...
teaching me that the Bible is for all times, it is forever. But often we forget that a particular rule which was essential during the time of Abraham and Moses were shattered by Jesus. Jesus looked past the orders and rules. He tried to understand what and why a person has to do this. He understands the psyche of the tax collector and chose him to be his disciple. He did not condemn people who did not follow the commandment of God. Instead, he showed the Love of God and people followed him. He chose a woman who was filled with demonic spirits and Mary Magdalene found a place in history. People, who suffered from leprosy, were shunned away in accordance with the Jewish law, but Jesus touched them and healed them. The Jewish priests found Jesus to be a lawbreaker. The Pharisees and Sadducees hated him for his teaching as they found them to be against their principles. The son of God was accused of blasphemy. But Jesus rose above them all. Even Jesus was treated with scorn for not following the rules given in the Holy book. But Jesus understood his world. He knows how people suffer. He knows what is behind the cheerful smile and the hurtful cries. He gave importance to people rather than the rules. This eventually got them to stick to the right track. People followed Jesus and travelled far and wide for him. For the radiance of love and acceptance, sinners repented. There was a revival wherever he went. One of the important reasons for that is he accepted all range of people for their blemishes and their sin.

Jesus showed us that only love can reach people; not rules and orders. He accepted the sinners and sacrificed his life for them. This is what is required while taking care of today’s Youth. With mainstream media and easy approach towards sinful habits and lifestyle makes more people prone to an unhealthy Christian life, it is difficult for the youth to find the righteous path. For small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7: 14). But in the present scenario, the path seems to be hazy and there are a very few people who find the right path. The youth at the present are disdained from the path by rejecting them for their ways of approaching an acceptable social life. Many Christian youngsters started avoiding Christian meetings when they find out they are not acceptable by the Christian standards and thereby move farther apart. No preacher, church elder sit down and ask them what went wrong and check how it really went wrong. It is always easy to judge and avoid a person rather than accept and love the person.

With no one to understand what is really going on in their minds and without analysing the root cause of the issues, they are neglected; by the Christian elders and by themselves. I have come across a situation where a girl got a tattoo of her favourite quote in her arms. The next day, this fine Christian girl was slut-shamed by her teachers and some elders of her church. She became the
gossip of the month. People in her church who barely talk to her now tell her how God hates her for this ‘obnoxious’ act. She went into depression and stopped going to church after a month. She was rejected in a place which gives her hope. She scorned the rules of Christianity that made her unacceptable to a church. It has been 3 years since she goes to a church but she hasn’t given up praying. But other people accepted her and appreciated her irrespective of her tattoo and also because of her tattoo. Now she is with the people who love her and accept her.

“Rules are rules. Don’t ask too many questions. Do not question the Bible. This is blasphemy to talk like this”. Without answers, young souls get disheartened and leave. This is the base story of so many youths in Indian society.

Without acceptance and with indifference, they deviate far away from the love of God. The youths with high hopes and good faith are forced to run away as well. The world is more complicated in recent times. Those who are more exposed to it are more likely to have muddled and unclear ideas and principles. Such youths will not be convinced without proper evidence supporting the judgement. But without any social relevance to the incident, a rule from the divine book is not sufficient for them. Instead of providing the cultural significance and social relevance, the rules are imposed on them and without clarity they are unable to accept them wholeheartedly.

It all comes down to this -love. Love is what all human beings crave for. Everyone wants to be empathised irrespective of who they are. Everyone wants to have a sense of belongingness. No human can exist individually always. Being a part of something is as important as having an identity. To be accepted and loved is a basic need for anybody. But we are quick to judge. We find it very difficult to understand and accept a person who is different from us. Jesus said,” The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. There is no other commandment greater than these”. Jesus considered that to love one another is greater than not committing a murder. It is bizarre for us to imagine that. When we think about it, it is the most difficult commandment. But only that could bring people into the light. Only love can drive people out of the deep dark forces. In the end, without love one cannot live as an example to others and definitely not bring people to Christ. I, being a 23-year-old, in my short experience, found that so many of my friends go down the easy road for the sake of being loved. If the church elders and youth leaders could love and empathize the struggling youth, the kingdom of heaven would rejoice.
Have We Met the Biggest Influencer Yet?

**Introduction**

With the advent and pertinent use of social media, Information overload and (over) feed has become the new normal. Hours are spent globally consuming irrelevant (sometimes misleading) information; the lines between real and virtual world are fading away. This phenomenon has made it extremely difficult for the young to navigate their life, enjoy their journey and make the right choices. We are in a situation now where the choices are many and as the choices grow, so does the difficulty in deciding what is right! The young generation of today clearly stands at a very climactic juncture and it is interesting to learn and understand what builds their personality and drives their behaviour.

Have you heard of this before? The world population today majorly holds Gen X, Gen Y and the Gen Z! It is a good idea for all of us to get accustomed to these terms and how they are coined. Birth years are used to define these generations. It is fascinating to know the various characteristics of each of these groups and understand their personalities.

Did you know that during the last decade, businesses have started to consider this analysis very crucial to help keep their workforce satisfied, to drive engagement and to increase productivity? For consumers, various marketing tools are now available to help assess, analyze and provide intelligent insights into the right customer base for a business or a product. Understanding what influenced or influences each of these groups as they stepped into adulthood, helps us empathize and relate better to their perspectives and challenges.

**Overview of Influencer**

Each of the generations mentioned above had certain characteristics in common. These characteristics were a result of the various landmark events and happenings during those times. Landmarks are considered to become the influencers. What or Who is an influencer? Merriam-Webster defines Influencer as “one who exerts influence: a person who inspires or guides the actions of others”. Webster dictionary also says an Influencer is “One who, or that which, influences”.

Yes! Every generation had its influencers – a person, a thing, an incident! To understand the impact of Influencers, let’s look at each generation closely.

**Traditionalists:** Born between 1922 and 1945
**Baby Boomers:** Born between 1946 and 1964
**Gen X:** Born between 1965 and 1980
**Gen Y or popularly known as Millennials:** Born between 1981 and 1996
**Gen Z:** Born between 1996 and 2012

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and never revolted against anything? Their influencers were The Great Depression and World War II.

Baby Boomers, on the other hand, being children of the hardworking Traditionalists had the most child-focused upbringing. The Great Depression and World War II.

Gen Y or Millennials. They are termed as the “Entitlement Generation”. They grew up with Computers, Cell Phones, internet etc. They were more culturally and racially tolerant, entrepreneurial and achievement-oriented. They however were focused on instant gratification and not long-term wins. Patriotism also was of keen interest to them. Debts, loans, especially Student Loans were an ignorable trait of this generation. Their influencers were, very clearly, the rise of the internet, Y2K, and Terrorism.

The current generation of interest and the target of all influencers is Gen Z (the Youth today).

Gen Z grew up with the World Wide Web (www). Highly connected to the internet, high speed in everything they do, open book philosophies with hardly anything being private, not very detail-oriented and they thrive on small bits of information, independent yet lacking community orientation. Their influencers are all very well known to us starting with Facebook, YouTube, 9/11 attacks, increase in terrorism, Hurricane Katrina, global warming, Swine Flu and the Great Recession. This generation has seen the toughest of them all but seems to be the easiest to influence. Is it really easy to influence Gen Z though? Or is it the influencer that has become so much more powerful than the influencee?! Some food for thought here: Somebody (rightly) pointed out about Social Media “Distracted from distraction by distraction”. David Levithan expresses his thoughts “It’s a highly deceptive world, one that constantly asks you to comment but doesn’t really care what you have to say.” Yes, we are here, and it is now. It is definitely the greatest influencer so far!

**The greatest Influencer of all times: Social Media**

Social Media has revolutionized the way we communicate, transact or even educate. Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram etc are platforms that...
claim to help you stay connected to your loved ones for free. They actually have managed to do that! Long lost friends have met, missing members of families have united, school reunions have happened and so much more. Think about it! If you are reading this article right now, social media has influenced you in some form or the other. You got some tips to decorate your home, to cook a meal, some medical tips, contact information and crucial stuff that you can’t imagine doing or getting otherwise. All new inventions are mostly intended for the good of the society but over a period of time, the same invention can be a bane that threatens our sanity (think about Plastic).

It becomes crucial for us to start having these important conversations about the impact of social media in our lives. Don’t wait until it’s too late!

Addiction
Have you caught yourself scrolling up and down some social media page without specifically looking for something, not realizing it’s been at least an hour you’ve been doing this? Social Media Addiction is the worst of all addictions as it plays with your mind. I once saw my colleague scrolling on his phone while he was on a famous social media website on his laptop too. A closer look revealed that he was clueless about what he is doing because it was the same website on the phone and on his laptop! He didn’t even realize until I mentioned to him that he was doing this. That’s how powerful and addictive this can be!! How many hours of our day goes into living this addition?

Data and Logic
Every time you log in to a “Free” website or download a “Free” app, you are giving your information out for “Free” too. This is the kind of information that social media websites need to create their databases, algorithms and marketing solutions for its customers. Always remember, nothing comes for free. Corporations and companies pay huge amounts of money to get access to these databases. This helps them build logic and understand what product they can promote for which user. Did you ever experience you were searching for something specific on Google and almost immediately all your social media accounts start showing you ads/products related to your search? Well, that’s data and logic for you! How many times did we end up buying something we don’t need coz we see them time and again?

Misinformation
Did you know that newspapers are endangered? There are a lot of famous publications that have either shut down, have reduced their production or have reduced the number of pages published. All of us would have the same news read and discussed erstwhile. Today, we are never able to figure out what is true and what is not. There is always a question in our heads about the authenticity of the news, irrespective of the source on Social Media. How many times did our parents and grandparents believe a Whatsapp forward? Think about it! How many times did we read that UNESCO declared Indian national anthem as the best in the world? While it would be awesome if that was true, this viral message is a hoax (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/times-fact-check/news/fake-alert-no-unesco-did-not-declare-indian-national-anthem-best-in-the-world/articleshow/70731926.cms).

We will have to educate ourselves and inculcate certain habits to ensure we have a sane Young generation coming ahead. “Your walk always talks louder than your talk talks” So here are five
Be’s for a healthy Social Media life that I would encourage the Young to follow.  

**Be Intentional**
Log in to your social media accounts, intentionally. Stay on mindfully and logout from the browser and app after your session (where possible).

**Be Real**
Don’t need to post a happy picture, when you are sad. Don’t need to tell everybody where you are all the time. Don’t need to have thousands of friends when you are interested to spend time with about a handful of them. Try building real and not superficial friends.

**Be Positive**
Follow people and pages that bring joy to you. Do not subscribe to every channel or every page that comes your way. If you feel there is some ‘trending news’ that is adding to the negativity in your life, step away.

**Be in the moment**
When you are out with your family, friends, colleagues..., forget about what you will post or an unquenchable need for clicking a picture so you could tag people later. Be in the moment, enjoy it, cherish it, LIVE IT!

**Be vigilant**
Social Media makes you want a product or a service by presenting the same thing to you again and again and again. Always, look for what you need and not what you think you need. Avoid clicking on any promotional links, recommendations or anything that come to you. Be vigilant about your conversations and who you are meeting on Social Media platforms.

**Conclusion**
Our families, society and the church need to start talking to our youth about the boons and banes of Social Media. It is a part of our life now and no one can run away from it. With our Gen Zers almost stepping into adulthood now and the next generation to come who would not even know a world without social media, social media laws and regulations hopefully will become a mandate. Similarly, planned rules should be made at home to guide our children. Screen time should be planned and restricted. Think about not allowing cell phones in bedrooms post 8:30 PM. Use alarm clocks instead of phones as alarms. Restrict phones on the dining table. Have a good time dining together, instead! Plan outdoors with your children, encourage using an actual camera than a phone camera. The intent is never to scare you away. Social Media is real. It is gonna be with us for a pretty long time, hence it’s best to be diligently prepared and make the best use of it.

**Endnotes**
1) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/influencer#:~:text=%3A%20one%20who%20exerts%20influence%3A%20one%20who%20way%20of%20life.%E2%80%94
2) http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/Influencer
4) https://www.conehealth.com/services/behavioral-health/7-healthy-habits-of-social-media/
The word education is derived from the Latin word educo, which means ‘to train the child or to lead the child to the right path’. Education is very much essential for the growth of each student and is instrumental in their active participation in society. The term school from ancient Greece means ‘to have fun while learning’, but the notion of schooling today is to pour a large amount of information in the mind of the students and to force them to score high marks for the benefit of the school. The role of a school is to teach the students apart from their difference in ability without any partiality, but some institutions that come out for business, especially the private sectors focuses only on 1% of the students out of 100% that are present to compete with other institutions for better recognition.

Niccolo Machiavelli, a renaissance writer of the 14th century, said that when merchants and auxiliaries are left free in a country, they would definitely dominate one day or the other. We can see today that this notion has not changed as large conglomerates occupy with the help of the government the actual role of education has changed into a competitive environment and the youths are dragged into this whether they like it or not “the surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently_ Friedrich Nietzsche”.

The role of higher education is also a problem nowadays as the students rarely wish for higher education and opts for a job as soon as they complete their degree, even though India is called as the youngest nation today the passive role of the students to settle early and to get married early drags the nation down and also sustains the current social issues dragging it to the next generation. We all know that ‘time and tide wait for no man’ and time being the most important aspect of human life, it has to be used well.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

“A time to be born and a time to die,
A time to plant and a time to uproot,
A time to kill and a time to heal,
A time to tear down and a time to build,
A time to weep and a time to laugh,
A time to mourn and a time to dance,
A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
A time to embrace and a time to refrain,
A time to search and a time to give up,
A time to keep and a time to throw away,
A time to tear and a time to mend,
A time to be silent and a time to speak,
A time to love and a time to hate,

Youth: The Cornerstones of Indian Society

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A time for war and a time for peace.” (Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, NIV)

There is a time for everything and this particular ‘time’ has been exploited at every corner of the society, especially the youth. The youth grow with creative ideas and dream bigger to live better, but their dreams from that at the school level become disruptive when they see the reality of the society they are present in. The mode of the system drastically changes in their functions and fundamentals when a student leaves from a school-based institution to a college-based institution and young people keep searching for an alternative to live a carefree life neglecting their responsibilities.

There are a number of solutions for the youth regarding education

1. The teacher should not focus only on bright students and segregate them from the rest

2. The teacher must inculcate the notion of unity within the minds of the students

3. The teacher should not focus only on the grades of the student, but to help them harness their skills

4. The teacher should help a student by not valuating them according to how they study, but by how well a student can perceive their innate talents and shape them into reality.

The teacher must, more importantly, focus on a student by helping them to follow ethical practices and moral judgments.

The teaching practice must change from a teacher-student evaluation to student's self-evaluation whereas this would bring a change from the grassroots level of thinking of the students to understand what they can do and what they cannot do.

The above five points are legible only if they are under the rules and policies of an institution. These policies are implemented by the Board of Directors and the Executive officers of an institution and it is the duty of the Principal to see that their policies reach the students. Seeing this you will be able to understand how the youths are taken through a number of training sessions as they have to obey their parents, obey their teachers, obey the rules of a society and are unable to speak out what they actually need and what is actually necessary. This voiceless reaction is due to the number of accumulated training sessions they have been through and once they reach their prime, they would become ‘passive citizens’. Noam Chomsky, an American Political thinker, said that people are passive because they are trained to be passive and he gives an example saying that “it is like how people watch a football match where there are players in the field and even though the people can participate they would always stay in sidelines passively cheering on the players and would never participate to be a role-playing character”.

If the youth are trained to be passive through means of education the arising problems in the society with not subdue but would rise exponentially.

**Human Security**

Most of the youths seek a job at an early age to lessen the burden of their family’s financial problems. Some enter a private company and some enter into governmental services, either way, they need a job for human security to sustain their livelihoods. Even though there are a number of government programmes and schemes for the youth in India such as National Young Leaders Programme (NYLP), Youth for Development Programme (TFDP), Neighbourhood Youth Parliament (NYP), National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC), National Youth Leaders Award (NYLA), National Youth Development Fund (NYDF), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangatham (NYKS), National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and so on there no awareness among the youth and even though some learn these schemes through awareness programmes there is no guarantee that they will be able to get into a secured position to the limited number of seats and vacancies.

A job with human security is
one such area that guarantees a person to work sincerely and live a tension free life. Now that the population estimation has gone up higher than expected some of the youths have dedicated themselves towards private sectors and their interests for a large package of salary and some have started their own business and start-up companies to self-sustain themselves. Even after all the struggles to secure a job and to take care of their family, the youth have to face the unacceptable decisions made by the leaders of their country because of national and international tensions. These problems occur because of the generation gap between the young and the old and George McGovern, an American Politician, once said: “I’m fed up to the ears with old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in”. Problems that occur as such can be solved if youth leaders are placed at a decision-making committee and their decisions must also be taken into account to decide what is actually necessary at the present and what can be achieved for a better future.

The Pandemic of Coronavirus Crisis
Migration is something that cannot be overseen in India as there are a number of migrations such as urban to urban migration, rural to urban migration and also international migration. These types of migrations occur duly to families seeking to settle in another state or another nation or it might also be because the youths seek for a new job or a new place to showcase their talents and skills. Mostly migration occurs in India for better job opportunities to live a better life than usual. The largest-ever migration could be seen in India when the coronavirus took a number of lives and lockdown was initiated, this lockdown was more gruesome to the poor people and the middle-class families and they had to migrate to their own towns by walking thousands of miles with their children, some youths who were still studying at another state with their respective families were devastated as their dreams and goals have come to a halt and they had to go back to their home town and be helpful to their families. Amidst the pandemic, there are some youths who stood back as they were working and some were part of a couple of NGO’s and some were part of government institutions for crisis management, these youths took immediate steps to help the people around them by providing food and sanitation to the elderly and the poor. These youth were not given orders to do so but did what was right at the right moment, these quick decisions and actions are not taken lightly as the youths in India not only showed their might during the pandemic but also during a number of natural disasters.

Conclusion
The youth are the cornerstones of the Indian society though they face certain challenges and are always able to face any kind of situation that is present to them. The role of education and the role of human security highly influence the youth to be active citizens and ensures them hope for the future, this hope would help them light a new path for the next generation. The youths are none the less the best decision-makers during a crisis situation and India being the youngest nation in the twenty-first century must be able to find new alternatives to use the potential of the youths to build a stronger foundation and a stronger country. It is the responsibility of the present leaders to find new ways to help the youth reach their heights by guiding them the right path and to inculcate good moral values for the development of the nation.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22: 6.)

Works Cited
Goodreads, Youth Quotes, https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/youth
Central Statistics Office Government of India. Youth in India, 2017
“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”
I Timothy 4: 12 NIV

Ever since the inception of the world, the youth are in focus. The Holy Bible has come up with wide examples of legends that were young and focus much of their lives during the youthful days. We can see examples from Joseph, Daniel, David and many others who lived up to the standards of God and brought a good report.

The issues of today’s world are not completely different from what happened in Biblical times. We have upgraded to a different level, but the pertinent issues remain the same.

Time and again, it has been communicated by God, the prophets and the Christian leaders of the world, the importance of the youth in the building up of the Christian community. However, the vile of the devil is seen in almost every part of human life. The current pandemic, notwithstanding, has brought a question in the mind of both the believers and non-believers alike, where are we heading towards?

Like in the past and even present, the entire humanity looks forward with a question in the heart. Where are we heading towards?

When I had a conversation with one of my friends, on the issues of life, we were stuck at a point in our conversation. The youth of today are blessed by God with a multi-fold of talents and opportunities. We can see them prosper in various fields bringing in changes to the society in a very positive manner. Their energetic living pumps the nation’s growth, bringing in prosperity to the society. The progress over the past few decades in the Indian context has been unimaginable, and more progress is bound to happen in the years to come. We have a youthful population; we have a desire for growth.

As much as the progress made in the worldly life has been phenomenal, there are huge parts of the world that are in crises. The issues of life like poverty, unemployment, refugee crises, natural disasters and more importantly the current pandemic, have created a wide range of questions. There is a disorder in the world and we are reeling under a great number of crises for which our spiritual quotient will determine how we respond.

This brings me to the most pertinent issue that life has brought forward on the status of where we stand in this world of confusions. Delving more into the context of my writing, I would illustrate the life of Daniel from the Bible.

A refugee in Babylon, who was taken as a captive by King Nebuchadnezzar, who served until the term of King Cyrus. He had the options well placed in front
of him, that is to choose the food
given by the royalty or keep his
precepts by having vegetable and
water. He stood by his values,
and God blessed him. He ensured
that the devotion that is to be
given to God was given at all
times, praying facing Jerusalem
three times a day. Despite the
rule coming in place, he stood
and carried out his daily prayer
to God with utmost devotion and
sincerity. In retrospect, we could
feel God’s presence leading till
the point of death, we could see
the faith in God that he had held
so close to himself. As a human,
what possibly could have he
felt, trusting God even when the
outcome of it was unknown? As
readers of the Bible, we know the
end, but to him, at that moment
he stood the test of faith.

The example of the life of Daniel
and his utmost devotion to the
living God in trying circumstances
is a reminder of our selves. Despite
trials and tribulations in life,
where do we stand in this test of
faith?

Like Daniel, we face opposition
that does not understand our
faith or believe in our God. They
need and deserve our compassion
and our witness. But they will
receive neither unless we live with
such integrity that they see the
unmistakable imprint of Jesus
on our lives. If sceptics are going
to find fault with us, let them say
that we are too committed to our
Lord.

Where do the youth of today stand
during trials and tribulations?
Whom do we trust during the most
testing times? This is a question
that arises to all of us. When the
nonbelievers are looking into our
faith, where does our witness lie?

This is the right time for us to
give our witness to the world.
Our lives are not for ourselves
alone, but salt to the world. We
need to go beyond our physical
circumstances and move forward
in our lives serving and helping
people. The pandemic had brought
all our lives to a standstill, though
we are trying to regain our lives
together and move forward, this
is a constant reminder of how
important our lives ought to be.
Today, we are moving to church
with utmost safety precautions,
with social distancing and fear.
As we interact with each other
we tend to fear contracting the
virus. Today, God has demolished
all the existing doctrines, we
needn’t really be in the midst of
the church building to worship
the Lord, but can worship Him
anywhere in Spirit and Truth. We
want to all go to church, that is
where the fellowship comes from
and we drive ourselves every
week to get the manna for the
enrichment of our souls. However,
every dimension has changed
completely in this period, and
God is breaking all barriers and
changing all pre-existing ideologies
in this period.
Today we see the youths organizing online services in church, engaging in humanitarian activities during the pandemic, and shouldering support to all possible people in need. We are moving to a Christian life engaging with the world and giving all the love that Jesus Christ would have given if He was living amidst us today. We are moving to be a practical Christian, whereas St Francis of Assisi once said: “Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words”. Amidst all the progress made towards reaching the gospel to all parts of the world, we need to live a life where the world sees in us a difference. We are not perfect, we cannot obtain the holiness that God expects us overnight. Every single day, and in all possible ways, we need to see and introspect on whether our lives are aligned with the world. Without the leading of God in our lives in the world is going to be a horrible place to live in. We are bound to be depressed, saddened and without hope if we look at the events around the world, and the people whom we interact with. But as we align our lives with the Living God, we can for sure overcome our temptations. As apostle Paul describes in the Letter to the Corinthians –

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV)

As a youth, with the advancements that we have made in our lives, we are in a better position to access all the necessary data we required to enrich our souls. The internet has drastically enabled to access and delve into information more than ever before. We ought to have precautions to on what information that needs to be taken that will be beneficial. The same access to technology can irreversibly damage our perception about God, Christianity and views of life altogether. We should be cautious as we take our lives forward and use the resources judiciously.

From what I had learnt from church, godly people and with my personal experience with the Lord, I would want to conclude the writing with a few practical steps that will help in growing spiritually in the Lord. Firstly, let Blessings flow from you to the people around you.

Let our blessing received from God not be stagnant completely in our lives alone. Stagnant water stinks and turns poisonous. Secondly, count your blessings. Have a diary and record the good things that God has done in your lives. When we go through tough times, we can be reminded of how God has been faithful in our lives and that the current situation will also change because of His faithfulness. Thirdly, let your mouth overflow with words of blessing. Let the words you speak enrich a deprived soul, let them find solace and experience God through the words you speak. Fourthly, have a shared prayer life. As much important is the personal prayer life, when we come together as a group of believers we can share our life happenings to find comfort. God really loves when we come together and share each other’s burdens. Fifthly, when someone is going through a tough time, restore their faith by sharing your experiences and brings words of life from the Holy Bible. Sixthly, be a grateful person. Thank God and people in your lives that stood by you, helped you and moulded you till this day. Seventh, spread your love to the people around you. In all your acts and deeds, spread love to people, the love that Jesus Christ had can surely be reflected by us to the people around. Eight, fast and pray. Letting go of our physical needs like food, enables us to have self-control, and focus our attention on the Lord. We have heard multitudes of the testimony of how fasting and praying have changed lives. Ninth, be reliable. In every deed you do, let people testify that you are a reliable person. It starts with the family, church, work and society in large. Finally, like Daniel exercise your power of choice. You and I are called to be different in this world. We ought to make different and tougher decisions. The decisions we take today, not just affect our lives today, affect eternity.

You and I know that as youths of this world, life is tough. Our struggles are real and often greater than non-believers. But we know that the God of peace will lead us in every single journey of our lives, guiding us to paths never seen. My prayer and wish is this, if you and I as an individual can make a difference in the immediate environment, we can see the changes happening in the world like never before. God will lead us in the days ahead!
The real life stories given below are brought out from CSI Wesley Tribal church (Velubelly), which is Telangana Tribal Mission, in the Karimnagar Diocese of the Church of South India.

Ms Gundeti Lakshmamma is a 67 years old native of Velubelly. Six years ago, both of her kidneys failed since then she has been going through dialysis for alternative days though it was expensive for her. Initially, she had to pay the amount for dialysis on her own for 4yrs since it was a Private Hospital in District headquarter (Warangal) which is 60 kms away from her village. But from 2 years onward she is taking Dialysis in a Government Hospital in nearby town (Narsmapet) which is 25kms away from Velubelly. She experienced a very hard situation during Covid-19 pandemic because there was no transportation at all, so they used to borrow a bike to go to hospital along with his son. Lakshmamma’s situation even got worse because of the heavy rainfall in Telangana for almost 10days in the month of August. Now even they couldn’t use bike to go to the hospital because all the surrounding villages were cut off and the water had overflowed the bridges and roads, so it was really hard to move from the village. Lakshmamma had to stay at home and she couldn’t go for Dialysis for 8days. Her family members and relatives thought something serious would happen to her because she did not go through Dialysis. But her strong faith in God and prayers made her not to deteriorate her health. As I said, she is very strong in her faith though her situation is painful. She encourages her family members to pray and depend on God every time especially in difficult times. Lakshmamma also encourages her grandchildren who are below 10 of age, to attend Sunday School without missing any Sunday.

Mr Shadrak Babu is a native of Velubelly. He is a farmer and he also does labor work in a small cement bricks making factory in another village which is around 20kms away from the village. They have 3 daughters who are married and a son who is an unmarried younger daughter’s marriage last year. Recent situation of COVID-19 and lockdown for 2-3 months made his labor work stopped and no income for his family. But it’s almost 6 months since he has no proper work (As a Mission work, under the leadership of our Bishop and Deputy Moderator the Rt. Rev. Dr K. Reuben Mark and the Diocesan officers, we were able to distribute essential goods to both Lakshmamma and Shadrak Babu’s families along with other villagers during lockdown period). Recently, Shadrak Babu faced another problem was heavy rainfall in Telangana due to which his hut (one side of mud wall) fell down but nothing happened to any of his family members. Their house was surrounded by water for almost a week. Now slowly they are repairing their house with twigs and mat. The heavy rainfall also damaged his paddy crop. So, for him it is a financially great loss year. Their only hope is in God that God restores them to normal life.

Reported by

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Karimnagar Diocese
On behalf of the Department of Mission and Evangelism CSI Synod, a month-long prayer observance named as “AUGUST 2020 PTO” has organized in the month of August 2020. It was the special prayer engagement in the severe situation of the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus Decease to intercede for COVID free Church, Nation and the World. The concept of PTO as follows:

**Concept**
PTO is a well-known acronym, which stands for ‘Please Turn Over’. It is an invitation for continued exploration and learning. The meaning of ‘PTO’ is hereby metaphorically transformed for our use, to mean “PRAY IN TEARS FOR OTHERS”. COVID-19 is a pandemic spreading everywhere and creating havoc in the normal life of all people, their families, and communities. Amidst this unprecedented crisis, we must continue to pray diligently and without any hesitation for healing around the world. Therefore, a wakeup call, or a rejuvenation is need amongst us, so that we can engage in the mission of God during this critical time. We must remind ourselves that COVID-19 is not the end of the story, rather, an opportunity to be more alert in our day-to-day life. Thus, we will experience a great deliverance soon by the grace of God. With this hope and faith, consider this as an invitation to PTO (Pray in Tears for Others).

**Particulars**
- A month of prayer observance - 31 days of prayer in August 2020
- A general prayer to get the healing from the pandemic
- Prayer in individual or family circles that we all may adhere to the COVID-19 protocol
- Sharing prayer requests with each other
- Composition of short prayers, prayer songs, prayer drawings/paintings etc.
- Identifying, reporting, and sharing of real stories of people’s agonies and struggles from the mission fields
- Collecting, addressing, and responding to these stories in mutual empowerment.

**Modus Operandi**
- Sending the PTO details and schedules to the Bishops through email and mark a copy to the Mission Directors of each Diocese
- Mission Directors will translate (if needed) the collected materials into English and send to the Synod Mission Department through email and mark a copy of the same to the Diocesan Bishop.
- Synod Mission Department will make soft copy and hard copy of the compositions in a timely manner for the future reference and to be made available through publications.
- After receiving people’s stories of their lived experiences and challenges, the Synod Mission Department will try their best to do the needful in consultation with the Synod Officers, alongside the respective Diocese.

**Schedule**

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Pray in Tears for Others was an open invitation to all to pray for each other in the severe situation of a pandemic. It was a missional wake-up call to pray together, stand together, and act together for the well-being of everybody during the time of any crisis. Furthermore, it was a prayer movement to rejuvenate everyone in everywhere to intercede for COVID free Church, Nation and the World. Tears signify the burden on our heart for the well-being of everyone. Everyone from everywhere across the Church of South India have taken part in the August 2020 PTO. It was strong faith and hope in the gracious God who heals and saves everyone. Emphatically, it was the complete trust upon God who answer the prayers and loves everyone. Even though a special month-long prayer observance - August 2020 PTO was concluded in the same month, PTO- Pray in Tears for Others will sustain forever! God will never ever forsake us!

PTO organized by the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod along with Dioceses’ Mission Departments.

**Rev. Maxcin John**  
Director, Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod
In regard to the August 2020 PTO, The CSI Synod Officers and the Synod Mission and Evangelism Department Chairman have highlighted the relevance of the PTO (Pray in Tears for Others) as it is the need of the hour.

“Prayer is the basic essential aspect of Mission and for the Church growth” highlighted by the Most Rev. Dharmaraj Rasalam, Moderator, Church of South India during his message in regards to PTO. He further added that this is the time for those who are in participating in the mission and Evangelism must stand in the sense of more responsibility in prayer and intercession for whole world and for the Church. In connection with mission, as narrated in Mathew 9:37 and Luke 10:2, Lord Jesus Christ asked his disciples to pray to God who is the master of the harvest to send more laborers to the vineyard as harvest is plentiful but laborers are few. The opportunities, the challenges and the needs are plentiful. Presently, the need for prayer is effectively relevant not only for the Church but for the whole world. All missionaries are supposed to constantly pray for others since the prayer is the first step of Mission, Moderator said.

“We began our prayer with great faith and confidence in prayer answering God” said Rt. Rev. Dr Reuben Mark, Deputy Moderator, Church of South India while he was delivering his greetings in terms of PTO. Furthermore, prayer is all about our faith matter and commitment to others. Todays special situation made us to look to the Lord in specific one-month prayer to look to God because we were being haunted by the CORONA Virus, the pandemic situation. All are in a fear situation because of this pandemic. We can’t recover by ourselves. But God is with us who is the answering God to our prayers and God will help us and recover us. So, let’s continue to pray in confidence and faith” Deuty Moderator emphasized the need of prayer.

“PTO is the new initiative of the Department of Mission and Evangelism CSI Synod to pray to God in tears for others in the context of COVID-19”, said Adv. C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, General Secretary, Church of South India. He further stated that Pray in Tears for Others is the need of hour. Nowadays, we are suffering out of the virus outbreak. Some of our dear ones and near ones passed away. Now we are forced to live with this situation. Through PTO, we are encouraged to pray in tears for others. Definitely, God will hear our prayers, said General Secretary.

“Church of South India continues to be an effective instrument of God’s Mission to have greater peace, fuller life and closer fellowship”, stated by Prof. Dr. B. Vimal Sukumar, Honorary Treasurer for the Church of South India. He further added in the present-day context, there are so much of uncertainty and anxiety, but the need is there more ever before to proclaim the Gospel and share the love of Christ. As the August 2020 PTO has organized by the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod through the Dioceses’ Mission Departments. It was a month-long prayer observance to pray in tears for others in the situation of COVID-19.

Rev. Maxcin John
Director for the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod.
www.csi1947.com
In regard to the August 2020 PTO, there were pertinent responses from the Ecumenical Churches and Organizations. It was the source of encouragement for the Missional engagements of the Church of South India. The main responses are as follows:

**World Council of Churches (W.C.C)**

Thank you for your message and the prayers of the church for the World Council of Churches. As you, your fellow CSI Synod members, and all in the Church of South India conclude your month of prayer for a COVID-free church, nation, and world, we, in the worldwide fellowship of the WCC write to share your commitment to “Pray in Tears for Others.” We earnestly join your lament for the untold suffering occasioned by this pandemic, we join hands in your petition to the Lord for mercy and compassion, and we pray for strength and courage for the whole synod.

Of tears we have plenty. We know that the coronavirus has taken an enormous toll on India’s people. We know that it has also caused tremendous economic dislocation, physical dislocation, and hunger. We know that it has exacerbated ethnic, religious and class tensions and tested the capacity and ability of governance to adequately address this many-sided pandemic.

Yet, we also know the tremendous power of the Church of South India’s faith and witness since its founding nearly 75 years ago. We know that, with ecumenism in its very DNA, the church has championed a bold, engaged, utterly relevant Christian faith, working to address poverty and hunger, class and religious division, not even shying from the steepest ecclesial challenges of our day. We are so grateful that CSI remains a hub of ecumenical solidarity and an indispensable witness to Christ in today’s India. India and the world need its witness and work.

One hundred years ago, at the Tranquebar Conference, V.S. Azariah pointed to the essential character of Christian ecumenical fraternity when he said “We believe that the challenge of the present hour... and the present critical situation in India itself, call us to mourn past divisions and turn to our Lord Jesus Christ to seek in Him the unity of the body expressed in one visible Church.

Grace, mercy, compassion: What we ask of the Lord we must also show to one another. So, in this time of grave peril and real suffering, we unite with you in prayer to strengthen our bond, renew our courage, and serve all humanity with the example and power of Christ’s love.

Yours in Christ’s love,

**Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca**

**Interim General Secretary**

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**Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)**

Greetings from the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) headquarters.

Many thanks for your message of 29 August 2020, sharing information with us about an initiative of the CSI Synod that CCA has been observing a month-long prayer chain, “PTO” (‘Pray in Tears for Others’) for a COVID free Church, nation and the world. It is indeed a very unique initiative, and we very much value this noble gesture of CSI at this critical time.

It is really heartening to know that the CSI Missionary Community all over India has been praying since this morning (29 August 2020) for CCA leadership and the entire CCA fellowship including its member churches, councils, and staff members as well as for the forthcoming CCA General Assembly.

The world has been facing an unprecedented crisis during the past eight months. The number of impacted people and those who have lost their lives in more than 190 countries continue to increase daily. As Christians, we turn to God in times of crisis, fear and uncertainty. We pray for God’s love, mercy, and blessings to dwell in us and beseech God’s guidance to face the challenges posed by the
current situation of coronavirus pandemic.

Let us continue to pray and be strengthened that: “He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” (2 Corinthians 1:10-11 (NIV)

Again, I take this opportunity to extend our profound thanks to the missionary community praying for us today, and the Department of Mission and Evangelism of the Church of South India Synod for their meticulous plan of organizing the month-long prayer - ‘Pray in Tears for Others’; the Church, nation and the world. May God Almighty continue to accompany you.

Yours along the journey,

Dr Mathews George Chunakara  
General Secretary, CCA

National Council of Churches in India (NCCI)  
“Thank you very much for your prayers for NCCI and for me. This is a great strength in our ministry. We will uphold you in prayer. As our nation, we are faced with a lot of challenges and intimidations. We see violence everywhere in the name of religion. In this context, we need to commit to pray for each other and we thank you for being an example of showing the way. We pray for your safety and protection. We pray that God will protect you in your ministry. Our heart goes out with every missionary in every diocese of the Church of South India. I thank God for the leadership of CSI and the leadership of the CSI Mission Department.

May God bless you all

Rev. Asir Ebenezer  
General Secretary, NCCI

Church of North India (CNI)  
“Warm Greetings from The Synod of the Church of North India.

Thank you so much for informing us through mail dated 27th August 2020 for “PTO” (Pray in Tears for Others) initiative in this outbreak of Novel Corona Virus Pandemic.

We, as the Church of North India appreciate and thankful to CSI Missionary Community for your prayers. We will surely uphold the current global situation of Corona Virus and CSI Synod in our daily prayers.

Yours on Christ’s Services

Rev. S. Dennis Lall  
General Secretary  
CNI Synod

United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG)  
“Warm greetings to you from all of us here at USPG! I hope you and your family are safe and well.

We are deeply grateful to CSI Department of Mission & Evangelism and to CSI Missionary community for your valuable prayers. It is very encouraging to hear about PTO – Pray in Tears for Others initiative. I believe this is very appropriate in the given time and situation when the whole world is suffering and going through challenges. Please be assured of our continuous prayers and solidarity. USPG stands alongside CSI during these difficult times.

With prayers and every blessing,

Rev. Davidson Solanki  
Regional Manager: Asia and the Middle East

The Department of Mission and Evangelism is grateful to all the Ecumenical Church Organizations for their perennial support and encouragements in connection to the PTO. It was a month-long prayer observance in the month of August 2020 which is named as “Pray in Tears for Others (PTO)”, organized by the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod along with Dioceses’ Mission Departments in every Diocese of the Church of South of India.

Rev. Maxcin John  
Director for the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod.
Clergy Koinonia in Karnataka Northern Diocese

As part of the programme on Capacity Building of Pastors in Christian Ministry, the Pastoral Concerns Department of the Church of South India (CSI) and the Karnataka Northern Diocese (KND) jointly conducted the Clergy Koinonia of the KND on September 18 and 19, 2020 at the All Saints’ Church Compound, Dharwad. The main theme of the Koinonia was “Pastoral Ministry in the Context of COVID-19.” Rt. Rev. Ravikumar James Niranjan, the Bishop in KND, inaugurated the Koinonia. In his inaugural address, he spoke about the prophetic vision of the prophet Isaiah that is mentioned in the book of Isaiah chapter six. He mentioned that Isaiah’s prophetic vision was missionary one and the church is called to practice this missional vision in its daily life even in the midst of this pandemic context. Rev Dr Prinstone Ben, the Director of Pastoral Concerns, spoke about how pastors can serve as missionary pastors in the religiously plural context in India. He said that Jesus had given us both pastoral and missional commission to serve His people. Pastoral ministry is not only for the people those who are chosen to live inside the fold but also for the people those who live outside the fold. The present context of COVID 19, urges pastors to have both pastoral and missionary vision to minister people more meaningfully.

Mrs Rita Dhawale, who is an expert in counselling, conducted classes on the psychological issues people face in the context of COVID 19 with the support of Biblical references. She advised pastors to involve in the psychological needs of the families to overcome their anxiety that created by this deadly pestilence. Mrs Sandhya Solomon, a Microbiologist, conducted classes on what is COVID 19 and how it impacts the immune system of our human bodies. She encouraged pastors to teach members of their congregations and their neighbours to strengthen the immune system of human bodies to combat against this virus spread. A session that was devoted to sharing the ministry experience of the pastors in the context of COVID 19 was a good time of learning and understanding each other. The cultural program arranged by the pastors and laity was a time of fun and fellowship. More than sixty pastors have participated in the retreat program. Mr Vijayakumar Dandin, the Secretary of the Diocese, has welcomed all guests and the delegates and expressed their gratitude to the officers of the CSI Synod.

Rev. Dr Prinstone Ben,
Director, Department of Pastoral Concerns, CSI Synod.

Admission to M.Th. & D.Th. Courses

THE FEDERATED FACULTY FOR RESEARCH IN RELIGION AND CULTURE (FFRRC)
An Ecumenical Post-graduate and Research Centre
(Affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College)

Applications are invited from eligible candidates (II Class / Grade B both in aggregate and respective discipline in which the candidate seeks to study) for admission to the Master of Theology / Doctor of Theology courses for the Academic Session beginning in June 2021.

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Application forms may be obtained on payment of Rs.500/- by Demand Draft, from Registrar, FFRRC, Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, P.B.No.287, Kottayam 686001, Kerala. The last date of receiving application will be 10th December 2020. Candidates must submit their Senate Transcript along with the application form. D.Th. application forms should be submitted to the office on or before 02 Jan 2021.

Fr Dr Jose John,
Registrar, FFRRC.
The LCP (Building Local Capacities for Peace) program of CSI-SEVA have been training young people in the Church of South India over the years to look at conflict situations and work beyond the walls of the Church. These young people along with their diocesan youth groups/ movements of CSI planned and executed a weeklong observance for this year’s International day of Peace (Sep 21st) on the theme, ‘Shaping Peace Together’ by conducting various programs and activities despite difficult pandemic times.

These young people adapted to the new normal by conducting effective programs and activities through online platforms and mechanism by respecting and following the COVID-19 precautionary measures. Madhya Kerala, Krishna Godavari, Karnataka North, Karimnagar and Dornakal were some of the diocese which organized events as part of observances for this important day. The series of events were organized and implemented throughout the month of September 2020.

The key events of this year’s observances were:

I. Madhya Kerala Diocese
   1. Virtual Choir
      The concept of virtual choir was conceived by the youth of Madhya Kerala wanting to include other young people from the entire 12 districts of the Madhya Kerala Diocese (MKD). Due to the ceaseless spread of the virus and the restrictions, these young people were not able to come together and shoot. In order to combat this crisis situation and the song and track was sent to a total of 48 young people, 4 from each of their 12 districts. These young people shot their own video and later collaborated and edited by the team of young experts. The song for the virtual choir was written and composed by the young people of MKD themselves.

Shri. Oommen Chandy, the Ex Chief Minister of Kerala, shared his greetings through the zoom session, which was organized by these young people. He also encouraged young people to expand and take up similar initiatives in the future as well. The Rt. Rev. Thomas K. Oommen also gave his heartfelt greetings to the team of young people. Around 150 people took part in this zoom session, towards the end of the session the video of the virtual choir was premiered. YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/fAfVnCeGGSg

2. Short film – Minutes of Peace
   The short film portrays the story of a millennial generation. No matter where we are in the world, and no matter how peaceful the place we are in, truth reveals that we are haunted by what happens around us. We fall into this vertigo of restlessness without even noticing it. We are trying to find answers to these seemingly challenging problems. How do we combat this? The climax of the short film beautifully showcases the need for being supportive and helping those in need. The short film encourages us to be that light, to guide those away from the power of darkness! As it just takes a moment to be a light.

This short film was scripted, directed, edited by the young people of Madhya Kerala Youth movement. YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/ioRz_UvY5xI

3. Expression of thoughts through Essay writings – Malayalam and English
   English topic: Role of Church in Shaping Peace in a post COVID World.
   Malayalam topic: “Samakalika Lokathil Ningalkku Samadhanam: Oru Punar Vyakhyanam”(Reinterpreting “Peace be with you” in Today’s World)

As most of us started to become idle at home day by day due to the incessant lockdown measurers by the government. The idea of essay writing in order to rekindle the thoughts of the writers seemed very much practical and
needy for the situation we are at. The response from the young people throughout the diocese was also surprising as a total of 33 young people actively and enthusiastically participated.

“Let us encourage each one of us to act with compassion, mercy and forgiveness towards each other. Encourage people to enlarge their perspective on the current situation so that they are not just focusing on the problem, but looking beyond to see the glory of God amidst difficult times, guiding us towards a solution.”
~ Sharon Mariam Abraham

“We do not know what is going to happen after COVID-19, but we believe in God who knows everything”
~ Miriam Liz John

“...From all these stumbling blocks, man always rise again with extreme strength even thought the small shadows of these pandemic exist. How much ever man rise, a peaceful mind is always needed. This peace, calm and purity occur from how the role of church lights upon the human race.”
~ Annuja Mary George

These are some of the words taken from the essays, this surely gives us strength and hope in this pandemic situation.

4. Expression of the theme through photography – Sub theme: A new dawn
Photography was another event which ensured people’s participation and in turn show case their talent and expression through the given theme. The diocesan youth movement decided to modify the theme a bit to ‘A new dawn’ to make a little more interesting for the participants. The responses from young people gave new perspectives and enlightened the team of organizers. A total of 8 young people participated in this event throughout the diocese. English and Malayalam essays and Photography Link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1muVZFWpbr3JialW7wHDlOpOvlgpAD1cB

II. Krishna Godavari Diocese
1. Online Zoom Session
Beloved Bishop in Krishna Godavari, Rt. Rev. Dr George Cornelious Tantepudi, spoke to the young people on this auspicious day. He reiterated the need and importance of peace in this contemporary world. He even encouraged young people to take up similar initiatives towards creating peaceful societies. Rev. Ch. John Nischal Kumar, Director of Youth, CSI-Synod also shared his views on the theme shaping peace together and Rev. N. Vincent Raj Kumar, Youth Director – KG Diocese shared his greetings to the group, he even shared the wonderful responses received from young people in the different events conducted.

2. Quote Writing
The youth from the Krishna Godavari Diocese organized a significant event where young people were invited to show their talents through writing quotes on the peace day theme. There was surprising response of over 30 young people participating in this particular event.

“Peace follows the intentions ‘we’ rather than ‘me’.”
~ Deva Prasanna Rani

“Everywhere I have sought Peace and not found it, except in a corner with a Bible”
~ Susmitha

“At the end of day, you can only be at peace when your intentions are good, and your heart is pure”
~ Harshitha Joy

3. Photography
About 32 young people from different parts of the Krishna Godavari diocese participated and showcased their talents through their radical photography skills. These young people made their expression meticulously through their art and conveyed the message loudly.

You can view the pictures through this link: https://photos.app.goo.gl/dMfo36qQsmTNQdG66

III. Karnataka Northern Diocese
1. Expression through Drawing
Children between the age of 4 to 15 years showed their talents through drawing on two themes “Shaping Peace Together” and “Combating Climatic Changes”. These children were ignited to think of various ways of reflecting
on the theme through their work of art. Totally 27 children of different age groups participated. An expert in the field - Mr. Daniel Dhara assessed arts of children and gave useful comments and added points for improvisation too. Those comments / points for improvisation were attached to the certificates along with attractive prizes in order to encourage the children.

In order to ensure the concept of eco-friendly, the diocesan youth made use of high-quality recycled paper for certificates, handmade papers for writing the comments and paper bags to distribute the prizes.

2. Case study – Peace and Harmony
A zoom session was conducted on the 20th of September 2020, around 20 young people participated in the event. The overview of the session was to reflect on the theme of IPD-2020. A case study was undertaken based on recent communal violence issue which took place on 11 Aug 2020 in K J Halli, Bengaluru which was the talk of the whole nation. The youth were stirred to reflect on various aspects of the issue by asking them poll question, solving puzzles and answering to questions on Google forms. The main intention was to make them analyse and help them understand various principles of peace initiation.

In the introductory part, the youth presented a power point presentation with the factual information of the issue and then questions for discussion were given to the participants.

The opinions and comments from the Panel of Experts added more weightage to the session. Mr. Manohar Hosea, Senior Advocate, who is actively involved in human rights’ issues presented his valuable views on the case with human rights perspective, wherein he stressed the need for inculcating the human values in the lives of the youth.

Mr. Shivanand Shettar, Head of Gandhian Studies, Karnataka University, Dharwad, threw light on the sociological aspects of the case where in he stressed “Conflicts are inevitable in a society but how we try to resolve and bring change is the most important thing”. The expert’s opinion gave a wider perspective on the discussed case to the participants.

The young people in the diocese shared their thoughts on how we can make Peace. They are encouraging us to help one other especially our fellow neighbours in whatever possible way we could. This small action can help the nation to overcome from this pandemic situation.

Song link: https://www.facebook.com/100024470598338/videos/793869938105352/

IV. Dornakal Diocese
1. Song on the theme – kaliginchu deva nee shanthi ni (O, Lord give your peace to us)
This song reiterates that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the peacemaker and He will restore peace and hope amidst these chaotic situations around us.

A brief description about the song,

“Lord, let there be (your) peace and come to take away our unrest,

There is no peace, there is no integrity in the nation.

Oh, king Jesus, give rest to our country by giving your peace to us.”

The lyrics to this meaningful song was written by the Late Rt. Rev. Vadapalli Prasada Rao, former Deputy Moderator and Bishop in Dornakal Diocese.

The young people in the diocese shared their thoughts on how we can make Peace. They are encouraging us to help one other especially our fellow neighbours in whatever possible way we could. This small action can help the nation to overcome from this pandemic situation.

V. Karimnagar Diocese
1. Zoom Session
The program started at 11.30 am on the 21st of September with an opening prayer by our Diocesan Ministerial Board Convener Rev. Purushotham. After that, a small introduction about LCP (Local Capacities for Peace) and its interventions in conflict transformation, later a video was
played about 2019 peace day celebration.

After which beloved Deputy moderator of CSI and Bishop in Karimnagar, Rt. Rev. Dr K. Reuben Mark thandrigaru shared his message, in which he said that during Peace Day everyone talks about peace among nations, organizations and people. But the major thing is that everyone should question themselves, whether one is living in peace and sharing it with others? In general, we share many things which are materialistic like properties, gifts, money and many more, but we do not share peace as frequently as materials. Sharing of peace should be starting right within our family, if you live in peace then you can make others to live in the same way. Show them love and share peace everywhere.

Desmond Tutu once said that, “if you want peace, don’t talk to your friends, talk to your enemies”. God gave peace not to talk about it, but he gifted us to enjoy, we should enjoy the peace by sharing it with others and making others to live in freedom. A total of 76 young people participated in the zoom session.

2. Photography and 3. Painting
A total of 40 young people from different parts of the Karimnagar diocese took part in this event. These young people shared their artwork through Drawing, painting and through their Photographic skills. The peace day theme was given to these young people, it was wonderful to receive such wonderful responses from young people of the Karimnagar diocese. Few of the artwork were even displayed during the abovementioned zoom session. As part of encouraging these young people gifts and mementos were distributed.

You can view the pictures through this link: https://photos.app.goo.gl/ANkD7CuFsQJ0sVdi6

To Conclude, let us get through this difficult catastrophe, by coming together as a peacebuilding community, peacebuilding country, sitting at our corner of the Earth. Even though we may not be able to stand next to each other, we can still dream together and spread compassion, kindness and hope in the face of the Covid19 pandemic; stand together and use this pandemic problem to fight against hatred and discrimination and shape peace together.

Our sincere thanks and appreciations to the LCP youth from various dioceses: Ms. Ansu Sara Oommen, Mr. Rohit Tera, Ms. Rachana I Malekar, Mr. Sandeep Jason, and Ms. Uharika Sharon and every single youth member from each diocese who took efforts to plan, to improvise and to execute and also to those participants from each of the dioceses who actively participated despite difficult times.

Praveen Daniel S
Program Executive – LCP
CSI - SEVA
A meeting with the Church of South India (CSI), The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE), the United Society Partners in Gospel (USPG) and the partnering Schools was held at 3 pm on 15th September through Zoom.

The overall purpose of the School Twinning Programme is to provide opportunities for mutual learning and transformation for Students, Teachers and school communities within the schools of the CSI and ODBE through an exchange of ideas and practices around environmental issues including energy conservation, environmental protection and tackling climate change. The proposed Covenant covers a pilot programme for two years. If the pilot project is successful, the STP will be expanded substantially within the CSI and the Diocese of Oxford. This pilot phase involves ten primary schools from the CSI Green School programme and ten from the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE).

The two years’ pilot will run until the end of March 2022, unless it is terminated by mutual agreement before that date. The following principles were accepted and decided to launch the programme on 19th January 2021

Core Principles of STP
1. The key purpose and outcomes of STP will be to promote mutual learning, strengthen relationships and promote an exchange of knowledge between students and teachers.

2. That knowledge exchange and mutual learning will focus especially on environmental concerns across the curriculum, however, to be successful schools will also wish to engage in the process of a broader education and cultural engagement to understand the respective contexts more fully.

3. Whilst all the schools involved in the STP are church schools, run by the CSI, and the Diocese of Oxford, explicit sharing of the Christian or any faith is not appropriate.

4. There will not be any direct financial transfers or exchanges between schools. Schools will not raise money for any projects or activities within any of the schools involved in the twinning project. If any schools or other organisations would like to contribute financial resources, then they should channel it to USPG.

5. All communication between teachers and pupils must occur within the proper authorised channels of the schools and overseen by the designated lead teacher/Headteacher.

6. No teacher or student should engage in contact with pupils or teachers outside of regular school communication structures.

7. All schools should be aware of and adhere to the safeguarding policies of their twinned school and ensure that the relevant teachers are also fully informed.

8. Lead teachers in the project are actively encouraged to meet regularly (maybe twice- termly), to reflect on emerging outcomes, methodology, time frame and the roles/ responsibilities of each partner and to share their experiences.

9. The key to a successful pilot is good, clear, regular communication. The ODBE, the CSI Department of Ecological Concerns and USPG should be kept regularly informed of progress and any significant developments.

10. That schools involved in twinning share experience and interests and work towards a bilateral understanding of shared goals and objectives around environmental concerns.

11. It is anticipated that the pilot may involve teacher exchanges and visits. This can only take place following full consultation with the three partner bodies.

Expected outcomes
As a pilot project, it is crucial that all partners work hard to build trust and healthy relationships and regularly review progress. It is anticipated that individual students and teachers will deepen their understanding of environmental issues and broaden their geographical and cultural knowledge and understanding of the world through contact with their twinned school. That this will entail mutual learning, exchange of knowledge and deeper relationships between students & teachers. It is also hoped that the twinning will also strengthen institutional ties between educational establishments within the CSI and the Diocese of Oxford.

The roles and responsibilities of the Partners
CSI & ODBE: Each school select a teacher/staff as the designated lead teacher for this programme.
Dept. of Ecological Concern

During this pilot phase, this may be the Headteacher in case of ODBE. That lead teacher has the primary responsibility for developing a good relationship with their counterpart and overseeing all aspects of the communication between the respective schools. USPG will facilitate the twinning process and be a link between the CSI and ODBE. It will promote open discussion and dialogue, and accompany both Partners through periodic meetings, follow up and learning review, provide input and objective feedback where required. It will also provide support where appropriate to facilitate the planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme activities.

Learning Review
At the end of the two-year pilot, a joint learning review will be conducted. Based on the findings and recommendations of Learning Review, a future plan of action will be developed regarding the next phase and expansion.

Most Rev. Dharmaraj Rasalam, Moderator of CSI Synod, Adv. Fernadas Rathina Raja, General Secretary of CSI Synod and Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad, Honorary Director of CSI Synod, attended the meeting representing the CSI Synod.

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<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>CSI School</th>
<th>Oxford School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CMS Lower Primary School, Ennooramvayal 366 pupils Headmaster: MR. SABU PULLATTU</td>
<td>Holy Trinity Church of England School Marlow 355 pupils Headteacher: Julie Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CSI English Medium Aided Primary School, Eluru. 75 pupils Headteacher: MRS. M. GRACE DEEVENA</td>
<td>Great Rollright C of E School. 104 pupils Headteacher: Michelle Hastings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CSI Nursery and Primary School Ootty 278 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. ASHA JEYAPAUL</td>
<td>Grazeley Parochial C of E Primary 200 pupils Headteacher: Celia Thatcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CMS Lower Primary, Urakam 270 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. LEEMOL. C. VARGHESE</td>
<td>Marlow C of E Infant School 180 pupils Headteacher: Sharon Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CSI Bishop Joseph Memorial High School, Katrapally 247 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. ANCY MARIAM DAVID</td>
<td>St Peter's C of E Middle School, Windsor 257 pupils Headteacher: Andy Snipp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>BEM Lower Primary School Payannur 560 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. JACQUAILINE BINA STANLY</td>
<td>Shinfield St Mary's C of E Junior School 360 pupils Headteacher: Sue Runciman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CSI Vestry Nursery and Primary School, Musiri 175 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. P. CHITRA</td>
<td>Trinity St Stephen C of E First School, Windsor 148 pupils Headteacher: Louise Lovegrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>OCPM Girls' Higher Secondary School, Madurai 60 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. N. MARY</td>
<td>Burghfiled St Mary's Primary School. 210 pupils Headteacher: Antony Gallagher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CSI Aided Primary School, Bhadrachalam 24 pupils Head Teacher: MRS. MAHITA VAN I B</td>
<td>Little Marlow C of E Infant School 79 pupils Headteacher: Katie Healy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CSI PRIMARY SCHOOL (ENGLISH MEDIUM), Nandyal 117 pupils Headmaster: MR. P. RAJA SEKHAR</td>
<td>The Mortimer Federation of St John's and St Mary's 384 across federation (168 Infants, 216 Juniors) Executive Headteacher: Nicola Sumner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CSI guidelines for STP
This is a set of guidelines produced by teachers in the CSI Green School Programme on Communication with Oxford schools.

As the students are from primary schools, they may not write letters. Hence the designated lead teacher/Coordinator has to write letters through emails for the students.

The Principal/Head Teacher to announce about the twinning programme to the students of the senior-most class in the primary school. They will explain the details about the other school and introduce the students studying in that school.

After that, the Coordinator can ask each student what they want to communicate with them. They will consolidate all the comments and send them to the other school.

The following matters could be included in the letter: students to introduce themselves, their ambitions and goals, the cultural background of their place, salient features of their schools, what type of values they want to highlight in their future life, which type of eco programmes/projects in their schools, share sustainable values like water conservation, energy conservation, reducing waste, reusing waste, ecological problems they are facing etc.

The Coordinator has a responsibility to read the letter first before sharing it.

The Coordinator should ensure that personal needs, request for anything, nasty remarks etc. must be avoided.

Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad
Honorary Director, Department of Ecological Concerns

Green School Training Programme Goes Online

The CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns organized a three-day online GSP orientation course for the School teachers from 15th to 17th September 2020. The Centre for Science and Environment gave leadership for the programme. Thirty-nine teachers from 39 schools participated in the training programme. The thirty-nine schools were from Andhra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

From the feedback form we got the following information: 1) Can you pass on your new expertise to your students and colleagues? Thirty-seven teachers marked Yes 2) The training's methodology and efficiency - 34 teachers marked excellent 3). The quality of materials, e.g. presentations, videos etc - 35 teachers marked excellent 4) The balance between theory and activities - 15 teachers marked excellent and others good 5) The overall duration of the training - 30 marked excellent others good 6) The structure of the training - 32 marked excellent and the rest good.

Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad
Honorary Director, Department of Ecological Concerns

Green School Programme: One Earth - One Home Programme

One hundred and seventy-four teachers of the CSI Schools joined in the dedicated WhatsApp group created for the smooth implementation of the “Oru Bhoomi Oru Bhavanam” Project. The CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns in partnership with WWF-India for the “One Earth - One Home” programme. This programme will provide students of Class 1-8 and their families an opportunity to reconnect with nature and build green knowledge and skills, all in the safety of their homes. Content includes expert talks on wildlife and biodiversity, virtual nature trails, radio programs and much more. Principals and teachers will be in charge of implementation through the dissemination of content material and checking on students via WhatsApp and phone calls. A one-day conference, “One Earth Educator Congress”, is mandatory for the teachers.

Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad
Honorary Director, Department of Ecological Concerns

Cover Painting by: Rev. Santhosh
‘The Green God of the Bible’ Released Online from all the Dioceses of the CSI while World Christian Leaders Watch

The Most Rev. Dharmaraj Rasalam, Moderator of the Church of South India, released the first copy of the book ‘The Green God of the Bible’, authored by Prof. Dr Mathew Koshy Punnackad at 2 pm on 15th September 2020 through the Zoom Platform of the CSI Synod. Simultaneously the books were released at the 24 CSI Diocesan Headquarters in Andhra, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Sri Lanka.

The following dignitaries delivered brief felicitations - Mr Iyad Abu Moghli (UNEP, Nairobi), Dr Manoj Kurian (World Council of Churches, Switzerland), Rev. Canon Dr Rachel Mash (Anglican Communion Environmental Network, South Africa), Mr Dinesh Suna (Ecumenical Water Network, Switzerland), Mr Davidson Solanki (USPG, London), Rev. Solomon P. Benjamen (EMS, Germany), Rev. Julie Sim (CWM, Singapore), Rev Sandy Sneddon (Church of Scotland, Edinburgh), Mrs Athena Peralta (Ecology & Economic Justice, WCC, Switzerland ), Dr Mathews George (General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia) and Fr Dr P. Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam SDB (Coordinator, “Ecology and Creation” at Vatican Dicastery)

Adv. C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, the General Secretary of the CSI Synod, welcomed the honourable guests of the function and Prof. Dr B. Vimal Sukumar, the Hon. Treasurer of the CSI Synod proposed the vote of thanks. Prof. Dr Mathew Koshy Punnackad, the author of the Book and the Honorary Director of the Department of Ecological Concerns invited the Moderator and the Bishops to release the book. Rev. Sunil Raj Philip, Director of the Department of Communications, compered the programme. The function concluded with the prayer and benediction of the Moderator.

‘The Green God of the Bible’ is a unique book intertwining Bible, Creation, and eco-ministry of the Church in a graphic format. This unique presentation, of the latest trends in Eco theology in a graphic format, has no comparison in this field of study. This book is the fruit of Prof. Dr Mathew Koshy Punnackad’s eco-theological interactions of the last thirty years. He got the help of Commander Tharian Koshy, for editing and layout, in turn, he guided the artist, Mr Anilkumar, to sketch the story. Eminent theologians, Rev. Dr Chilkuri Vasantha Rao (Principal of United Theological College, Bengaluru), Rev. Dr John Samuel Ponnuwamathy (Principal of Gurukul Theological College, Chennai), Rev. Dr Mothy Varkey (New Testament Lecturer, Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam) and Rev. Dr Jacob Verghis (former President of the Serampore University) have gone through the manuscript and recorded a high appreciation of the work. This book aims to foster a healthy theological discussion among the Clergy and the teachers. The book will be available online on Amazon.in. The video of the releasing function is available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/c/CSILIFE/) and on the online education website of CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns www.csi1947.com ~ Department of Communications
27th edition of the Annual Youth Conference of the Church of South India (CSI) Malayalam Churches in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was held through Zoom Platform on 28th August 2020 with the theme, “Break the Chain”. The Conference commenced with a Word of Prayer by Rev. Varughese Mathew following an official welcome address by Mr. Joel K. George (Al Ain). The event witnessed participation from various emirates.

The event was led by the UAE Parish Vicars and other guest CSI Vicars; Rev. K.M. John (Vicar of CSI Church of Jebel Ali / Al Ain and President, CSI UAE Youth), Rev. Shaji Jacob Thomas (Vicar of CSI Church Dubai and Vice - President, CSI UAE Youth), Rev. Varughese Mathew (Vicar of CSI Church Sharjah and Vice - President, CSI UAE Youth), Rev. Sojee Vergis John, (Vicar of CSI Church Abu Dhabi and Vice - President, CSI UAE Youth), Rev. Sunil Raj Philip (Director, Department of Communication CSI Synod - Guest Speaker), Rev. Byju Eapen (Vicar of St. James CNI Malayalam Church, Borivilli) and Rev. Viji Varghese Eapen (Vicar of Holy Trinity CSI Congregation Dublin, St. Thomas CSI Church Belfast & CSI Church Manchester).

The welcome singing session was led by Abu Dhabi Parish Youth Members. The Singing team emphasized the Conference Theme in every aspect through the melodious session. Psalms & the Bible Reading were chanted by Ms. Edna Lis Libini (Dubai) and Mr. Athul Joe Babu (Sharjah) accordingly which concluded with an Intercessory Prayer led by Mr. Raghul Jose (Jebel Ali).

Inaugural address was delivered by the CSI UAE Youth President Rev. K. M. John.

Rev. Sunil Raj Philip, Director of the CSI Synod Communications presented the theme. He emphasized the negative impact in the society due to the COVID Pandemic situation which adversely affected our social relations, financial security, and a global disaster in various range of fields and thoughts. He insisted the Youths to challenge the pandemic, to raise up and face the situation through unconditional faith & courage leading us towards our mighty Lord as He has promised that the crucified Lord walks with us in the valley of death.

The Theme “Break the Chain” was well defined through 5 Divisional Thoughts.

Break the Chain of Self Centeredness: Through away the inner self and share yourselves to the needy as Jesus shared himself for our sins.

Break the Chain of Bigotry: Break the Intolerance towards those who hold a different opinion.

Break the Chain of Worldly Indulgences: Break the chain of worldly fulfilment and satisfactions.

Break the Chains of Prosperity Gospel: Let us think and look forward to an alternate pattern of development in Christ and self.

Break the Chain of Development from Above: Development from Inner self for a healthy and wealthy relation in Christ.

Theme was concluded by Rev. Shaji Jacob Thomas.

The business session was convened during which the 26th CSI UAE Annual Conference Report & the Annual Reports of the year 2019 were presented and passed by the body. Election of the New representatives to the Youth Committee were conducted along with the selection of 28th CSI UAE Annual Youth Conference Convener. Mr. Teji Jacob George (Abu Dhabi) was elected as the Conference Convener for the year 2021.
As part of the Silver Jubilee Project, CSI UAE Youth Movement supported the mission works in CSI Katrapally Mission through sponsoring a Bolero. A Short Video was presented reflecting the details of the project.

CSI UAE Youth Movement

Reported By,

Mr. Benenet Yesudasan
Conference Convener
CSI UAE Youth Movement

Rev. K. M. John
President
CSI UAE Youth Movement

Attention, Subscribers!

Dear Subscribers of the CSI Life magazine,

We would like to express our gratitude to you for your continual support to the CSI Life magazine, the official organ of the Church of South India Synod. We regret the fact that we were not able to send the printed magazine to you from April to September 2020. The COVID 19 pandemic, which hit across the world, made it impossible to get the magazine printed and circulated. But, on the other hand, the Communication Department of the Church of South India prepared the magazine every month as softcopy and shared on the official social platforms of the CSI Synod such as Facebook Group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/csisynodcommunication/) and WhatsApp Broadcast (+91 9840577404) in pdf format.

The back issues are on print now, but only in limited number which will be shared with the headquarters of the dioceses and kept aside for the documentation purpose. If you were not able to receive a soft copy of these issues, you may send a request to the WhatsApp number +91 9840577404 or mail to csilife2012@gmail.com We will send pdf files of these back issues.

Expecting your continual support

Sincerely

Rev. Sunil Raj Philip
Managing Editor,
CSI Life magazine

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The Green God of the Bible
Online Book Release

Release at 2 pm on 15th September 2020

Most Rev. Dharmaraj Rasalam, (Moderator of CSI Synod)

Coordinating and co-ordinating: Rev. Sunil Raj Philip, Director, Communications

1.30 PM Wishing Room Open

2.00 - 3.45 pm

1) Prayer by Rev. Dr. George Stephen,
   (Chairman of Synod Ecological Committee)
2) Welcome: Rev. Dr. Fernadas Rathina Raja
   (General Secretary, CSI Synod)
3) Rev. Dr. Matthew Emily Perumal: Opening Remarks and
   Book Launch
4) Release of the Book: "The Moderator of the CSI Synod"
5) Release of the book at the Ecumenical Centre
   by the respective dignitaries

Beautening the book page of the Church of South India, Synod Secretariat for the public.
Book will be available on Amazon.in

CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns
Online Education Website: www.csisocol.com
Website: www.csisocj.org

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