

SACYN Dubai decides to Look Back and Look Ahead

"SACYN 2014 opened my eyes in a new way to the hard life realities of the South Asians in diaspora who live in different parts of the world not just as migrant communities and expatriates but also as human beings needing pastoral care. The nations from where they come and the churches therein should have a very definite role in addressing their needs. I commit to help the eyes of the church see these realities and the ears of the church hear their pangs. I commit to be the arm of the church in extending our hands of fellowship to these brothers and sisters". These words of Fr. Sam sums the mood at the conclusion of the South Asia Christian Youth Network Leadership Training Programme on the theme 'Discipleship on the Move: God's new communities of Mission.'

Fifty young people from ten different countries had a very meaningful time together. The Dubai Youth Hostel provided ideal setting for a Youth event and the Holy Trinity Church in Dubai provided exemplary hospitality. The highlight of the last day was Ajoy Varghese from the International Justice Mission adding the justice dimension to the whole issue of migration and human trafficking. Rev. Roby Jacob the Youth Chaplain of the Mar Thoma Church shared with the group the nuances of the migrant experiences of young people. Adrian Watkins and Raj Patel led the session on drawing the threads together. The closing communion service was led by Fr. Sam Ponniah and Rev. Vinod Victor. The pain and agony of being branded as "the other" as the "one not among us" was the central theme of the Closing Devotion led by Rev. Vinod Victor. Certificates were

distributed to all the participants. The winners of the participant reflection competition were then announced. Reshmi and Bincy would represent SACYN as its ambassadors in the UK for a short period in 2015. The group expressed sincere appreciation to Solomon David, Allen and Aliena who hosted the event in a meticulously way looking at every aspect of hospitality and logistics of the event. The Jacobite Syrian church hosted the young people for an evening fellowship and Kang San Tan shared the Word. Fr. Eldo Edappat gave the youth the experience of a Jacobite worship.

The Business session was attended by core leaders of all the nations and the senior leadership. After considerable deliberation it was agreed that 2015 would be a bridge year of review and evaluation. A proper process of evaluation would be put in place by Raj Patel the Asia Manager of CMS UK looking at the objectives of SACYN and its achievements and limitations over the past twelve years. SACYN 2015 will be a leaders' forum to take the assessment forward and to plan for the next decade. A proposal to continue the SACYN training for the next five years would also be simultaneously drawn out. India was proposed to be the venue for the leadership forum and Kathmandu the back up choice and the possible dates November 2015.

John Chethri from Nepal having completed his term of three years was then thanked and it was decided to probe the possibility of appointing Miranga Pieris from Sri Lanka as the next coordinator of SACYN. This would have to be endorsed now by the Church of Ceylon and it is expected Miranga would be able

to take up this role from January 2015. The next leaders' forum would decide upon the country coordinators of each participating nation and till then the present team would function. Terms of Reference and Expectations from the Coordinators would be drawn up by Christmas and circulated.

It was decided that the SACYN resource material would be collated and made available to all and Loun Ling Lee and Ravi were asked to take this forward. Adrian Watkins and Vinod Victor will take the evaluation process also into account in trying to bring out a documented book of SACYN's twelve years of exciting journey. It was also decided to see if Sudiptha Sing of the CWM and Leslie Nathaniel of CoE be included in the Advisory Team of SACYN.

Special thanks were then expressed to all the sponsors, CMS UK, Asia CMS, Methodist Church in the UK, Church of Scotland and the Council for World Mission for helping SACYN happen yet again. The Anglican church in the Gulf did a good job hosting the event. Mr. Solomon David the convenor of the event was asked to see if the South Asians in the GCC nations can be helped to have the ripple effects of SACYN and its grass root level programmes and CMS committed to help a programme by supporting the required resource persons. The Dubai CSI Church was specially thanks for the support extended and all the sponsors remembered.

Departing is never easy... People started waving bye bye hoping to see again some other time in the ecumenical pilgrimage.



MY SACYN EXPERIENCE...

Tamara Wray



The SACYN experience is a term that should possess a dictionary definition. Every experience is different and I would like to enlighten you about my own. I will first have to be honest with you, when I first arrived in Dubai on Friday night I didn't know what to expect, the people that I was going to encounter and I had very limited knowledge of the topics that we were going to discuss.

From the very first night that we gathered, I have continued to be in awe of my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The other delegates will think nothing of speaking 2 or even 3 languages, but I stand back in amazement of the possibilities of humankind.

By engaging in conversations, sharing experiences and connecting with one another, I know now more than I have known before...that the blood of Christ knows no bounds.

The experience for me has been a learning curve and I have also come to the realization that the synergies between young people across the continents is distinctively prominent. Like a person that looks in the mirror and sees their own reflection staring back at them, I have related to the other delegates in a way that I never deemed possible. Although some aspects in our cultures that are different, mannerisms and humour can transcend to all nationalities.

What I have learned to appreciate about all at SACYN also is your pictorial approach and analogies in conveying a message or a concept. One of my favourite ones being: (within a married life context) "The man is the head of the household...but the women indeed in the neck". Within the short time that I have spent with you all, I have been convicted spiritually, inspired and embraced warmly. I have embraced the perfectly imperfect aspects of all our different cultures. I will take with me from this

experience the "human touch" of South Asia, as you can know everything about a continent but spending time with you all, this place has been personified and has made me fall in love with God's creation and globalization even more. Like a lock that meets its key, that the sky at night is only complete with the moon and its stars and when a partner meets its mate, we are one...as part of the body of Christ.

This experience has been beautifully informative and even after a 4 hour sleep (from connecting with the other delegates way into the early hours!!) I have continued to be energized spiritually by hearing, reading, sharing practices and appreciating SACYN from an South Asian perspective.



Our story is being written by the most creative and innovative storyteller of all time and just like the the Palm Jumeirah from up high, God sees and knows everything, everything works together for his good and I cannot thank God and SACYN enough for my time with you and for the experiences that I will be able to share with the youth within the UK. Learning about migration, the diaspora and the positive aspects as well as the negatives of being a young

person in South Asia, I have humbled myself with the knowledge that the world is much bigger than what I had previously envisioned. I have so much to learn from you all, you have inspired me.

Thank you for making me feel so welcome within SACYN. Although at times I consider myself to be an introvert within a large group, when I have presented it has been encouraging to have engaged faces, listening to my every word staring back at me. Like Dorothy with her bright red slippers, I am finally home.

Thanks to SACYN I have made bonds that cannot be broken, like the invisible umbilical cord that bind mother and child for a lifetime, my friends, in Christ you are my brothers and sisters. It has enabled me to think wider...to open my mind...like an open field in the countryside, it has been liberating.

It has re-instilled in me that I shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Listening to the stories of your own personal struggles, the adversities that some of you have faced as well as the positives, you still possess a happiness and a joy that only our Father can provide and this is not only reflected in your smiles but also in your eyes.

Visiting the Labour camps was an invaluable experience, I met and spoke with people that I would not have been able to had God not have blessed me with the SACYN experience. I will take this with me and this is a memory that will never leave me.

So from the bottom of my heart, I just want to thank all that made SACYN 2014 happen and for welcoming me. I pray that our paths will cross again soon, whether it may be in this life or the next

Yours in Christ,

Tamara



Religious dynamics of Migration: Workshop by Ravi Salgo Merin

The workshop aimed to shed light on the role religion plays in the migration experience. Underlining the importance of the role of church in reaching out and meeting the spiritual and psychosocial needs of migrants.

A brief introduction from Ravi, which leads to a deeper understanding of kinds of migrations and factors affecting it, followed a sharing by all participants on their personal migration stories. A reflection by all participants led to a realization that at some point in each life there has been a situation in which we have all experienced some aspect of the migrant experience be it isolation, discrimination and other treatment which go hand in hand with the experience.

In another group interaction we also realized that migrants sometimes are stereotyped based on the perception, which is held and projected by and large. This challenged us to think about us as the Church and the body of Christ in our own local contexts, how involved and aware are

we in reaching out to the needs of migrants around us.

We then reflected on Jonathan Ingelby's study of the migrant experience, which lead to another interesting discussion with varied viewpoints or whether it is religious ties or cultural / geographical and ethnic ties which are more influential when a migrant enters a new country or context.

Drawing from the biblical story of Ruth followed a sharing of experience in Pakistan.

The workshop ended with an understanding on how important it is for churches and us as Christians to serve the needs and welcome migrants. There was acceptance of the fact that in most cases this is something in which we lack and a commitment to be sensitive to such needs in our churches as we return.

South Asian Novel and Migrant Theme: Workshop by Stephen Edison

There are many novels that discuss the theme of migration, but none of them do it from marginalized point of view. Most of these novels give a perspective of middle class people migrating to other destinations. There could be various reasons for migration, voluntary or involuntary, seasonal, external and internal. But, the push and pull factor shape it in one or other way. It could be better life or necessity to survive.

Often they are nothing but statistics on various reports of human concerns. But they are real and have breathtaking stories, which we found reading a story of a survivor from sex trafficking. As we reflected we shared our own experience with trafficking and migration. We were challenged during the workshop to reflect on our response towards migrants especially



victim of trafficking. In 'God in Brothels' Daniel Walker who served in police to work with trafficked women, who rescued some but witnessed God's redemptions in the lives of victim of sex trafficking, but questioned the role of church amidst such

injustice and dehumanization of humans. As we ended we kept pondering what as Christians we can do for these people?





SACYN DUBAI ENDS BUT IT'S SPIRIT LIVES ON

T. Bijoy Idicheriah

The evening prayer call from the mosque next to the Dubai Youth Hostel went off, and on cue the prayer by Rev. Adrian Watkins to conclude the last meeting of SACYN 2014, in Dubai. It was fitting that this was how SACYN's conclusion happened after a strong programme in Dubai which is predominantly an Islamic country.

The significance was even more as the next SACYN core meeting has been scheduled in New Delhi, India with a suggested focus on inter-faith issues.

The prayer call from the mosque was like the rooster crowing twice to remind St. Peter of his denial of Jesus, a passage revisited by Fr. Vinod Victor at the end of the closing worship led by Fr. Sam Ponniah.

This SACYN was a great move forward on multiple counts. The network had moved beyond South Asia and come to West Asia to address the South Asian diaspora issue. A new co-ordinator, Miranga Peiris, has been chosen to take the network forward. Greater focus was assigned to the future planning of SACYN by the working group with support from the senior advisors and mentors.

There was a decision taken to look at creating resource material out of the last three training modules and also from the historical work by SACYN.

But, the most significant one was that nearly all the partner churches committed to 50% of travel costs for their representatives and met this commitment. This is a move forward to make SACYN, a network that is South Asian not just in name but also is owned by the network.

Labour camp visits and the wonderful papers presented by the participants on this visit, and on other topics such as human trafficking, migrant issues, diaspora problems, and SACYN's future were all a symbol of how much the participants had benefited from the various training sessions and modules by the

internal and external resource persons.

The key issue of diaspora and their problems, received the necessary grounding through studies from the Bible every morning followed by plenary sessions that covered specific aspects of this issue from different national and cultural perspectives. Additionally, the workshops led to interactions that grounded more specific migrant issues, with effective use of multimedia, assignments and Q&A formats.

Led by Raj Patel and Adrian Watkins, the participants were encouraged to look at how they would take back their experiences and training from SACYN and use it at a personal and national church level.

Kang San Tan helped draw the threads together and keep the training efforts in focus, even as the SACYN delegates enjoyed a Dubai Tour, cruise dinner hosted by Church of South India - Dubai, and a visit to the Syrian Orthodox Church for dinner and fellowship.

It was not just all work, and there was lots of fellowship, worships in the open, night coffee chats, and even a lot of singing and enjoyment throughout the days of the programme. It is this ability to connect across the language and cultural barriers, that remain the essence of South Asia, that was truly exhibited by all the ten countries that participated in the SACYN fellowship.

Led by SACYN co-ordinator John Chettri, Stephen Edison and Solomon David, the dream of a SACYN in Dubai came true. The core team comprising country co-ordinators and mentors will also take a lot of pride in this achievement to take SACYN to Dubai.

And as the sun set on Dubai on Nov 29, 2014, a hundred fires ignited in the hearts of SACYN delegates continued to burn with great strength in their respective countries and in South Asia as a whole.



MIRANGA PIERIS TO BE THE NEW SACYN COORDINATOR

Miranga Pieris from the Church of Ceylon Srilanka is proposed to be the new SACYN Coordinator. He will succeed John Chethri from Nepal from the 1st once the Church of Ceylon endorses his nomination. Miranga has been a regular face in Training modules responsible for Occasional Bible participants. He was key in organising several SACYN programmes in Sri Lanka and with Fr. Sam was able to hold a SACYN Leadership Training Module in Jaffna. Newly married and with lot of enthusiasm he will surely bring in lot of new energy to SACYN. Kasta Dip from India and Insar Gohar from Pakistan were the earlier co-ordinators of SACYN.



SACYN TIMES TO BE QUARTERLY

SACYN Times which has become a regular feature of all SACYN Times will now be published every quarter bringing together news and views from the SACYN Network. Apart from having theological reflections relevant for young people it will also be a mirror for each young person in the network to see what is happening in other parts of the world and around them. Anil M Jose will continue to be responsible for this guided by the Advisory team of SACYN and helped by the Coordinating team.



It was at the 2002 Conference in Colombo that the daily collating of events began to be published under the name The Daily Peace Maker after the theme of the Conference "Called to Peace". It gradually became an inseparable ingredient of all the events of SACYN renamed as SACYN Times.

SACYN Times and its web presence helps the larger world know what is happening in each of the events and provides a space for the creative expressions of the young people.

Send in your creative writings, news, reflections, reports, photos etc., for SACYN Times to: anilalmjose@gmail.com

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WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TODAY, IS
MEMORY IN THE FUTURE

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