



SACYN TIMES

01 JUNE 2016

VOL. 7, NO. 1

SACYN 2016 to Deliberate on Disability

The SACYN 2016 will deliberate on the topic of 'Disability', based on the theme 'Accessible South Asia: Creative Responses for Mental Health and Differently Abled.' The SACYN 2016 has selected this theme with an awareness that mental health issues are on the rise and their detrimental effects are evident both within the Church and in Society. The toll it takes, starting with adverse impact on our psychological and spiritual well-being, relationship with others and in the ministry and work context, is significant. About 50 Youth leaders from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh will gather at Country Villa, Nagarkot, Nepal from 1st – 6th July 2016 for this programme.

Over the last 4 years, the SACYN has

completed an Annual Leadership Training series for Youth Leaders on



three themes: 1) Globalisation and Youth Cultures; 2) Asian Christian

Identities; and 3) South Asian Diasporas. A number of enterprising Youth Leaders (such as Nepal National Youth, CSI) have taken these thematic training programmes and cascaded them to national, diocesan and district levels. Against this background, this year's training is hoped to initiate discussions and build awareness on the challenge of disability across South Asia.

The SACYN alumni in Nepal take a lead role in organising this programme, which will see internationally well-known church leaders and subject experts leading the training. Miranga and Stephen met with the Nepal SACYN team and visited the conference site to finalise the arrangements for SACYN 2016.



Miranga delivering greetings at the 56th General Conference of the Kristian Thalai Pawl -KTP of Mizoram

From the Coordinator

Miranga Peiris

It gives me great pleasure to bring Christian greetings on behalf of the South Asia Christian Youth Network! Another year has passed and as we journey in a new year, we are prepared to face this year with a smile. The period of Lent was an appropriate time for us to look deep and reflect on our lives.

We expect a change in our inner lives; we expect to draw closer to God in our spiritual journey. As it is said that the 'Tomb' is the 'Womb' for Christians, we have received a new life through the empty tomb, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We usually try to put aside our old clothes, clothes that are not suitable to present ourselves. Likewise we should try and put aside our inappropriate old habits and sins, things that are not suitable for a Christian and that try to take us far from God.

We clean and paint our houses. Let's sweep away all the garbage in our lives, bad things we have been storing within us for the last so many years. Throw them out and burn them, so that you will never see them again. Colour-wash your lives with new paint and beautiful colours, so that they will be presentable in front of God. Like we decorate our houses with lights and beautiful decorations, light up your lives with the Holy Spirit and GOD's love.

As I have completed one year as the Coordinator, I Thank & Praise GOD for the blessings He has showered upon this network, for the wonderful people of GOD we have met in this journey and for strengthening us for His mission. It has been a period of transition and we have now moved on with the daily functioning of this network.

The Core group meeting was the main program for the year 2015 and it became a reality in October in New Delhi, India. The youth who gathered in New Delhi were able to reflect on the past 13 years and also plan for the next 6 years. Many thoughts were shared and we pray that we will be able to make them a reality, as a team. It was indeed a joyful moment when the Pakistani delegates received visas and were able to enter India for the conference.

We remember the countries which were not able to make it due to many unforeseen reasons, but we will make sure that next time we have full participation from all countries.

The UK Ambassador program was beneficial to both European and Asian churches. We are ever so grateful to CMS UK for hosting the program and arranging all logistics. It not only allowed the participants to taste the flavour of youth work in the UK but also to highlight the importance of the work done in South Asia in furthering Christ's mission.

It is encouraging to see many initiatives coming up apart from the major gatherings. The weekly SACYN prayer chain and local SACYN groups in countries are a few initiatives which have already begun.

The visit to Nepal was my first official visit after taking over as the SACYN Coordinator. It was indeed a privilege for me to start my 'coordinator's visits' from the same place where I started my journey with SACYN.

I visited Nepal at a time when they were facing many difficulties with petroleum and gasoline shortages, and they were in the process of electing the new Prime Minister in a challenging context.

Nepal is edging closer to a humanitarian crisis that is potentially bigger than the massive earthquake that struck in April last year. This time, however, it's a political crisis rooted in Nepal's social divisions.

The new constitution of Nepal has led to this controversial situation, though it was passed with a significant majority of over 90% in the Parliament. Forever I am grateful to my Nepali friends who despite the difficult conditions still welcomed me and gave their fullest support for all my visits and meetings. There were times when they didn't have fuel, yet they found some way out and made sure that all the meetings and programs ran smoothly as planned.

We remember Nepal in our prayers as they go through a very difficult situation after the devastating earthquake in April took many lives and left many families with no shelter or source of living. Now they are facing another challenge for survival. May the Lord hear our prayers and

bring peace into their lives.

The setting up of the Nepal SACYN group was a very good example for all other countries and their response as a team during the earthquake is highly commendable.

As young people of South Asia, we condemn the attacks in Syria, Paris, Belgium and Pakistan, which claimed many lives, forced millions of people to flee Syria and displaced many internally. It is not something that only the Middle East or Europe should be worried about, but all of us who have a heart for these nations and who are part of the great mission that Jesus has called us for. The acts of the terrorists have led to conflicts with many countries. Is this what is mentioned in St. Matthew 24:7, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.'?

The 4th phase of Leaders training is being planned for July 2016. The local organizing team has already begun its work and is looking forward to a wonderful ecumenical gathering. We started exploring the possible venues to host a major conference in 2018 for 300 young people. Many factors need to be considered when deciding on the venue. We need to host it in a place where all South Asian countries can travel in without any visa restrictions and contributions from the local hosting churches can be obtained. Your support in terms of prayer and resources is valued and desired.

While we Thank GOD for the blessing and guidance given in 2015, we look forward to a challenging 2016 with many plans in hand and pray that we will be able to share Kingdom values and be a part of GOD's mission.

My heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Kang San Tan, Mr. Raj Patel, Rev Vinod Victor, Mrs. Loun Ling and Rev Sam Ponniah for the guidance, assistance and mentoring given at all times. Mr. Stephen Edison has been walking alongside me, assisting in all our tasks and guiding right throughout. He was especially kind in bearing all the trouble in organizing the 2015 gathering, which was never an easy task. Thanks too to Rev Anil Jose for handling all communication and

publicity matters while reading for his doctorate. My special appreciation to the core group (Bijoy Idicheriah, Ihtsham Ravi, Esther Jansen, Bikash Adhikari, Charles Francis & John Chettri), who have been working with me coordinating within their countries and churches, while planning all programs and making sure that all training sessions benefit the local youth.

Youth is the prime time of one's life. Once we pass the young age, we will not get it back. There are so many responsibilities to fulfil in our days as a

youth, many duties which cannot be abducted. We need to prepare for our future, while we enjoy to the maximum. Therefore aren't you a responsible person? To whom are you responsible?

St. Paul tells Timothy, 'Let no one look down on you because you are young' in 1 Timothy 4:12. He says this because 'Youth' is a marvellous gift of GOD. It is a time of special energies, special opportunities and special responsibilities. Christ and Church wants your special talents and wants you to be responsible. Use well the gifts which

the Lord has given you. Even though you are young, the time for action is now. Jesus does not have contempt for youth.

I urge you to let GODS' word enter your hearts and then from the bottom of your hearts to tell Him 'Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.' (Hebrews 10:7). May I encourage all young people of South Asia to reflect the light of Christ through your lives of prayer and joyful service to others. GOD Calls YOU, Church needs YOU.

Miranga Peiris
Coordinator – SACYN



Stephen Edison Meets
Archbishop Stephen Than



Stephen Edison Meets
SACYN Alumni in Myanmar

THE DEATH OF CHRIST: THE DEFEAT OF A GREAT MAN?

Dr Ajith Fernando

Some years ago I spoke at a meeting in Sri Lanka on the topic of Christian witness. I was early for the meeting, so I chatted with some of the people in the audience before the meeting started. One of them was a well-known Buddhist writer. He told me that the Buddha was superior to Jesus because, even though Jesus lived a noble life, he was defeated through death in his battle for righteousness.

Paul must have encountered this type of argument often. He said, "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles..." (1 Cor. 1:23). It was foolishness to the Gentiles. F. F. Bruce says, "In the eyes of the Gentiles the idea that salvation depended on one who had neither the wit nor the power to save himself from so disreputable a death was the height of folly." And this is the viewpoint of a typical self-sufficient contemporary person.

Many view Jesus as a

weakling who was too weak or too afraid to say a word in his defense when he was subjected to the humiliation that surrounded the events of the cross. Today's assertive individual would find this picture repulsive and regard Jesus as totally different to their model of a person they would like to follow. But Jesus, the village carpenter, was not the airy weakling he is often pictured to be. We must remember that the same Jesus who subjected himself to death on the cross fearlessly drove the money changers out of the temple a few days before his death. He had earlier thundered accusations at the powerful religious leaders of the day. From such a person we would do wrong to expect the passive resignation of defeat under the hands of his opponents. We will have to look elsewhere for the immediate cause for his death.

If the cross was folly to the Gentiles, it was, says Paul, "a stumbling

block to Jews" (1 Cor. 1:23). The word translated "stumbling block" has the idea of something that "gives offense or causes revulsion, [or] which causes opposition...." Gordon Fee says that "'Christ crucified' is a contradiction in terms, of the same category as 'fried ice.'" As a Jew Paul must have been repelled by this idea before his conversion. Quoting Deuteronomy 21:23 he said, "...for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'" (Gal. 3:13). When Jesus announced how he was going to die, Peter reacted like a typical Jew: He "took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'" (Matt. 16:22). Later Jewry referred to Jesus derogatorily as "the hanged one." The contemporary Jew reacts in a similar way, as the following quote from the Jewish Encyclopedia shows: "The very form of his punishment would disprove those claims in Jewish eyes. No Messiah that Jews could recognize

could suffer such a death; for 'He that is hanged is accursed of God' (Deut. 21:23), 'an insult to God' (Targum, Rashi)"

The Muslims have a similar attitude. They regard Jesus as a prophet, and, according to their thinking, a prophet could not die in this way. The Qur'an says, "They denied the truth and uttered a monstrous falsehood against Mary. They declared: 'We have put to death the Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, the Apostle of Allah.' They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but they thought they did." (Sura 4:156).

The Muslims give different interpretations for the story of the cross. Some say that God cast a spell on the people and someone else was crucified in his place. They say that at some point he was raptured into heaven and that he returned to earth and visited his disciples and commissioned them to take his teachings into the world. Some say that it was Simon of Cyrene who was killed. The so-called "Gospel of Barnabas," which was written in Italian in the fourteenth or fifteenth century by a Christian convert to Islam, says Judas Iscariot was crucified. Recently the idea that Jesus swooned on the cross and recovered has been suggested by the Ahmediya sect which other Muslims consider to be heretical.

Because this attitude to the crucifixion was prevalent in the first century it would be good to look at how the New Testament evangelists responded to it. As the Gospels were evangelistic documents and there are many evangelistic messages recorded in Acts, we have ample material to work with. What we find is that the New Testament evangelists, without seeking to defend this idea, took the positive approach of presenting it as a triumph planned by God and not as a tragedy.

The preaching in Acts focuses on the fact that this was God's plan from the beginning and was predicted by the prophets. At Pentecost Peter said, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Acts 2:23). Then, after the healing at the Temple, he said, "But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold

through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer" (Acts 3:18). Paul said in Psidian Antioch, "The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb" (Acts 13:27, 29).

The Gospels record Jesus saying so often that it was necessary for him to die and rise again and that all this was fulfilling prophecy. Here is a sampling:

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled" (Luke 18:31).

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26)

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day..." (Luke 24:46).

Sometimes he said that he could have avoided this death if he wished, as the following passages show:

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father (John 10: 17-18).

"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matt. 26:52-54).

In John's Gospel the cross is often equated with glory (John 7:39; 12:23-28; 13:31; 17:5). The word "glory" is used when the nature and character of God has been manifested in its splendour. And that is what happened at the cross. We saw the full expression of his holiness and love which forms the essence of his nature. His holiness was manifested in his hatred for sin that caused him to

punish it so severely. His love was manifested in his giving his only Son to die in our stead. The fullest manifestation of the glory of the cross, however, is in heaven where the object of worship and central figure is the lamb who had been slain.

The evidence we have presented shows us how wrong some of our approaches to the cross are. Some people don't view Good Friday as a "good" day but as a bad day – a day that commemorates a terrible tragedy. That is not the approach of the Scriptures. If there is mourning, it should be about our sin which caused the spotless Son of God to die in this way. The mourning aspect of Good Friday is eclipsed by the fact that on that day the Lord Jesus cried out from the cross, "It is finished" just before "he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30). Leon Morris commenting on this verse says, "Jesus died with the cry of the victor on his lips. This is not the moan of the defeated, not the sigh of patient resignation. It is the triumphant recognition that he has now fully accomplished the work he came to do."

Paul says that rather than being defeated by his enemies, Jesus defeated his enemies on the cross: "... having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:13b-15).

Each year during Holy Week the newspapers in Sri Lanka carry articles about the bizarre ways people commemorated the crucifixion. Their mourning and their self-infliction of wounds do much to communicate to the world a message very different to the victorious message of the Bible.

To those who discover its truth this message becomes a source of pride and joy. Paul, who had been such a vehement opponent of the idea of a crucified messiah, wrote after discovering this, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). Samuel Zweimer (1867-1952) who has been called "The Apostle to Islam" has said regarding the Muslim response to the cross, "We find that, although the offense of the cross remains, its magnetic power is irresistible."



Miranga at the CKTP Gathering

The 56th General Conference of the Kristian Thalai Pawl -KTP (Christian Youth Fellowship) of Mizoram, Presbyterian Church was held from 3rd – 6th March 2016 at New Champhai Field under the theme of 'Pathian Kohhran' (Mat. 16:18,19). The SACYN Coordinator was invited for the conference and indeed it was a great opportunity for me to attend the same.

The Conference consisted of Sessions, Worship, Talent Show and glamorous entertainment evenings, with Rev. Vanlalbela being the main speaker.

As I travelled 196kms on the road from Aizawl to Champhai, I saw many youth travelling to the conference in buses, trucks and bikes with all the flags and banners displayed. No words could express the energy, enthusiasm I saw in their faces.

It was hard for me to believe my eyes on the first day as I entered Champhai Field, when I saw the outpouring number of youth for the conference. It was well attended by over 30,000

young people from different parts of Mizoram.

It was a major effort by the organizing committee. They have looked into every bit of details in arranging all requirements for the delegates. From the time I landed in Aizawl till I entered the airport for departure, the Central

handed, but to take back something home and challenge themselves for greater service for God.

All the invitees were taken care of very well and we were hosted to a dinner by the Moderator of Mizoram, Presbyterian Church. Also one day was set aside to visit a few cultural places in Aizawl and the Theological College.

Also I was able to have fruitful meetings with the Senior Executive Secretary of the Synod office and Elder Zonunmawia, the General Secretary of the Central KTP.

During the meeting with SACYN alumni and the church leadership, they expressed their willingness to host a major conference for 300 people in Mizoram in 2018.

The time spent in the beautiful mountains and the loving people of Mizoram will be remembered forever.

I would like to Thank Dr. Julie Fambawl, Samuel Laldingiana, Vanlalpeka & Dr. Liansanga for arranging all logistics for me and coordinating all meetings.



Miranga with the SACYN Alumni

KTP committee took care of everything and we were treated with great care and hospitality.

I was given an opportunity to share greetings on behalf of SACYN during the conference, where I left them a thought: not leave to this place empty

Fruitful time in Myanmar

Stephen Edison volunteered to visit Myanmar on behalf of SACYN with the objective of meeting Archbishop Stephen Than and SACYN alumni.

It was a fruitful time with Archbishop Stephen covering many areas such as current political and social situation in Myanmar, Asia CMS Gateway training, exploring the possibility of co- mission partnership, importance of identifying a country coordinator for SACYN and specially on the representation from Myanmar for the SACYN leadership training in Nepal.

Archbishop Stephen further explored the possibilities of conducting

training for 100 people, hosted by Myanmar in the future.



Stephen with Myanmar friends

Stephen allocated time to spend with the SACYN alumni in Myanmar and had open discussions with them. It was a time to share updates on

personal life, ministries, academic pursuits and also on issues faced by youth both within the church and in general in Myanmar.

Everyone was educated on the upcoming SACYN program and the importance of identifying a country coordinator for SACYN. The young people openly shared their views and they will be attending SACYN 2016.

The support received from Mrs. Sar Htoo is commendable and she has been a great source of help in arranging all meetings and gatherings.

John visits Bangladesh



John Chettri with the SACYN Alumni

John Chettri, the Ex-SACYN Coordinator, visited Bangladesh on behalf of the coordinator and it was time well spent with the Bangladeshi youth. The main purpose of the visit was to meet Bishop Paul Sarker and to engage with the young leaders.

John was able to have a fruitful meeting with Peter Mondol, Youth Coordinator. A meeting with the

Bangladesh SACYN Alumni was held at St. Andrews Church in Mirpur. John was able to share detailed information about SACYN and also to update on Dubai training and the planning meeting in Delhi and the upcoming programs. Many views were shared and the Bangladesh group explained the difficulties they faced during the last 2 years and for not being able to

join us for both training sessions in Dubai and Delhi.

The Bangladesh youth are eagerly waiting to join the 2016 Nepal Conference and to be in the loop again. The team requested for a training session hosted by the Church of Bangladesh in 2017. They have done it in 2012 and will be more than happy to host another for SACYN.



Miranga & Team with Dr. Bal Krishna Sharma



Stephen Edison Meets Nepal Team



Miranga with Executive Secretary & CKTP General Secretary



Miranga Meets Ram Prasad Shrestha