

FELLOWSHIP OF ST. THOMAS



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2012



President's letter Jan 2012

Balloch
January 2012

Dear Friends,

January is a time for looking backwards and forwards; we look back with thanks and look forward with hope.

We look back on a year when the Church of South Asia faced persecution and we marked that in some way by our topic "The persecuted Church" at our Annual Celebration in Dunblane. During 2011 there were deaths of two men in Pakistan Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab Province and Shahbaz Bhatti, Minorities Minister and the situation for minorities in Pakistan is still difficult. It was good to read that "Faith Matters Pakistan" have developed a Charter of Non-Violence between Christian and Muslim communities. Pakistani Muslims and Christians working within Faith Matters Pakistan developed this charter and ensured that it was signed by key dignitaries. We hope that this charter can be used to inspire people to push back those who hate and to energise those who want to bring peace and stability to Pakistan. It has been signed by community leaders from Sindh, Balochistan and the Punjab. Perhaps this can be a sign of hope.

The All India Christian Council (AICC) is pushing for a Bill "The Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence Bill 2011" to be presented to Parliament. It was drafted by the National Advisory Council and is now with the Union government. Religious minorities and many members of civil society support it as a way to curb communal violence and bring justice to the victims. The problem KP Yohannan says is that, "People use religion, especially of the illiterate, innocent people, as a means to capture political ground and power. Religious fanaticism always is used by the crafty politicians to get power." Perhaps this is another reason for hope.

Several members of the Fellowship visited the sub-continent in the last few months. I was in Pakistan in October/November and have written a report elsewhere in this Newsletter. We look forward to hearing more of visits by Murdoch and Anne Mackenzie, Eileen Thompson and Farhana Nazir at some time.

We give thanks for the witness of the Church in the sub-continent and hope and pray in the words of the hymn of International Ecumenical Fellowship

*Come to us now, Lord, reign in our hearts,
Bring us together, may we be one.
Lord, be for us the truth and the way,
Come, be our life and give us your peace,*

*Be for us now and always our guide.
Bind us together as the people of God.
Fulfil the Father's plan and make us one!
May we be one in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Nutter

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News from the Church of North India.

We are thankful to Margaret MacGregor for some news from the Church of North India. R CNI Synod took place in Delhi in October 2011 and Rt. Rev. Philip P. Marandih was elected Moderator and Rt. Rev. P.K. Samantoroy was elected Deputy Moderator.

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VISIT TO SOUTH INDIA – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011
KLAUS AND MAUREEN BUWERT

We were thrilled to have the opportunity to visit South India early last year. For me it was a return (after 25 years) to the area where I had spent 9 years working in the CSI Hospital and Polio Centre in Kanchipuram and for Klaus, there for the first time, an opportunity to spend some study leave finding out about the life and work of Lesslie Newbigin and considering the lasting effect he had on the Church in India and lessons which can be learnt from what he did there which are relevant for the Church in Scotland in the 21st century.

We stayed in Chennai, Kanchi, Vellore, Bangalore, Madurai and Kodai. Progress has been made in many areas, especially in the cities, with better roads and buildings (though many still lacking in proper maintenance); ladies now drive their own motor bikes; we saw very few cycle rickshaws; clean, cold bottled water is readily available. Even in the villages, every home has a TV set (gifted by the government, but not much use if there is no electricity!) and most people seem to have a mobile phone. The hospital in Kanchi had 3 doctors in the 1970s but now has huge signs at the gate advertising the many different departments and specialist services available. We were sorry to hear that the Polio Centre had recently closed but pleased when we heard the reason – there is now very little polio in the area – in fact only 1 case was reported in India in 2011.

It was encouraging to visit Churches which are growing. The CSI Church in Kanchi has been extended and the congregation was planning to buy land a few miles away to plant a new Church. Lesslie Newbigin was very much involved with training lay people to serve in the Churches and there is evidence of this carrying on today. The modern LITE (Laity Institute for Transformation Education) Centre, run by the Diocese of Madras, provides many programmes to train lay people to work in their congregations in the towns and villages. We met many people who knew and worked with Lesslie and remembered him fondly and with great respect, including Bishop Azariah and Grace Solomon (now aged 100) who told us she remembered the day in 1937 when he arrived – she was there to welcome him!

The highlight of the trip for me was meeting 5 of my old 'polio children' – now in their late thirties/early forties. All are physically handicapped, having to use callipers and crutches (they were only able to crawl when they came to the Polio Centre) but they have studied hard and found work. One is married with 2 lovely boys.

4 weeks were not long enough to do all we would have liked, but we were so pleased to renew old friendships and we were humbled and encouraged by what we saw and experienced.

Maureen Buwert

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St. Thomas of India Unity Lecture 2012.

This lecture will be held on Thursday, 14th June 2012 in Martin Hall, the University of Edinburgh from 4 pm to 6 pm.

The lecturer will be Brian Dunn (from Canada), a doctoral candidate in theology at Regent's Park Oxford University.

Brian has entitled his lecture "**If you can drive in India you can drive anywhere: adventures in Indian Christian Theology.**" From this he hopes to show the relevance of Indian Christian theology to the global church, and I am sure this will include some of his doctoral studies on Appasamy. He is busy writing his thesis as well as pastoring a church half-time.

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Vacancy for Secretary.

Applications/nominations are invited for the post of Secretary of the Fellowship of St. Thomas from October 2012. Applications should be sent by 31st May to the present Secretary – Rev. Murdoch MacKenzie, "Torrison", 4 Ferryfield Road, Connel, OBAN, Argyll PA37 1SR or by email to mackenziema@ymail.com so that an appointment can be made at the next AGM in September 2012.

PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA DECEMBER 2011

Having not been to India since 2004 we felt the urge to return, mainly in order to meet old friends. Thus we flew by Emirates from Glasgow arriving in Chennai on 14th December. Apart from two nights in Kodai we were in Chennai for three weeks in all. Most of the time we stayed in the YWCA International Guest House but also had a final few days enjoying the wonderful hospitality of Joshua Thangaraj and his family.

When we left what was then Madras, in 1978, there were 3 million people in the city. Today in Chennai there are 4.68 million within the area administered by the municipal corporation and an extended metropolitan population of nine million. My final sermon in 1978 had the title 'Be Indian. Buy Indian'. A lot has happened since then. India is shining but not for everyone. With a population of 1 billion 140 million people over 30 per cent of India's citizens still live in dire poverty. In a discussion we had with a young lady she told us that it was more like 80 per cent! On December 18th 2011 the Times News Network reported a subsidy in exemptions to the rich in India in 2010-2011 of Rs 4.60 lakh crore while the subsidy to the poor is now down to Rs 1.44 lakh crore for 2011-2012. Of course the same kind of thing is happening here in the United Kingdom and it is a scandal.

Traffic, which on the first day seemed horrific, soon became quite normal. Within 24 hours we became convinced that Indian babies are now born with cell-phones in their hands. Huge shopping plazas are everywhere. The Connemara is now one of five Taj hotels in Chennai. In Kodai large bisons roam around and can destroy a garden in minutes. Reputedly they can jump a six foot fence from a standing start. Coaker's Walk, the Van Allen Hospital and St Peter's Church are in excellent condition as is Annleigh, former Church of Scotland Mission bungalow now cared for by the Madurai Diocese. A cyclone centred on Cuddalore delayed our return on the Pandyan. In Chennai we lunched with Leela and Israel Selvanayagam at the Gurukul Theological College which still produces the excellent Gurukul Daily Devotion by far the best notes for daily devotion available anywhere. We attended the Christmas programme at the Madras Club, had a tumultuous welcome in Vyasarpady with huge bill boards on various

street corners announcing our forthcoming arrival and with drums and dancing in the streets. When Rowan Williams visited Chennai in 2010 he requested to preach in a slum church of Anglican origin. Thus he went to St Peter's Vyasarpady where Murdoch worked in the late 1960s. In those days the weekly offering was less than Rs2. It is now several thousands of rupees each week. Murdoch preached there to a full to overflowing congregation. Next to the board on which previous ministers' names are listed there is a large brass plaque on the wall recording that the Archbishop of Canterbury preached there!

Murdoch also preached in St Andrew's Kirk on New Year's Day to several hundred people. At the beginning of our ministry there in 1972 Lesslie Newbigin challenged us 'to preach the gospel to those who had not heard it, to serve people in the slums and the hospitals, and to support the work of the church throughout the hundreds of scattered villages in our diocese.' We began in small ways with 20 children in the day care centre and work in 3 poor villages near Pulicat. Today there seems to be no end to the outreach of the Kirk. We marvelled at the vibrancy of the Women's Fellowship, Sunday School and Youth Fellowship, at the excellence of the music and the Choir and their amazing DVDs The Old Rugged Cross, Ancient of Days and Lead Kindly Light. We also rejoiced at the Vacation Bible Schools, the Camps and Retreats, Bible studies, Healing Services, Prayer Cell meetings, House Church, District Meetings, Monthly Fasting and Prayer, 23 young people confirmed on 2nd October 2011, the Hospital Visiting Programme, the Asha Project among mentally challenged young people and the Day Care Centre at present with 90 children, the leprosy work at Balramapuram in Villivakkam, the Centre for Continuing Education, the Friendship Club, the Evangelism Project with new congregations and splendid church buildings in Thirupalaivanam, Kosapur and presently being built in Avariwakkam. The small clinic at Thirupalaivanam is now replaced by a hospital unit which cost many lakhs of rupees and is serving villages far and wide. All this is but a glimpse of what we experienced on our recent pilgrimage to India. As far as we are concerned it is the Lord's doing and wondrous in our eyes.

Anne and Murdoch MacKenzie

Persecution of Christians.

Release International (voice of persecuted Christians) works in over 30 countries of the world where Christians face persecution for their Christian faith. Richard Wurmbrand came to the West and told us of modern day persecution in communist block countries. Of course today persecution exists in Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and communist countries.

Richard a Romanian Pastor served 14yrs in Prison for his Christian faith, three of these years were spent in solitary confinement. Richard when in solitary confinement preached to himself every day when he heard footsteps. When Richard eventually was released from solitary confinement and was allowed to enter the main part of the prison he met a man who had committed a terrible crime who said he was a Christian. Richard asked him how he could commit such a crime if he was a Christian. The man replied that every day when he queued for the toilet a ‘nutter’” in solitary confinement preached and he was converted. Richard said “I am that ‘nutter’”. This story reminds us that God can and will use us in all circumstances.

Release International is founded on the verse in Hebrews 13 v3 “Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering” God has called men and woman of faith to serve him in prison, in the torture chamber where ever men and women are who need to hear the gospel of Christ.

Pakistan

In Pakistan Christians face severe opposition from neighbours, militant extremist groups and the government. They have to endure many things including imprisonment, torture, and death.

The misuse of the 295 blasphemy law by neighbours and reinforced by the state puts many in prison.

The 295 A. Blasphemy against Islam

The 295 B. Blasphemies against the Quran.

The 295 C. Blasphemy against Mohammad

Prison for these Christians is not a safe place, as they can be killed by fellow prisoners.

Since the deaths of Governor Salman Teesar who was a Muslim, and Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti who was a Christian, the Reform of the Blasphemy Law has been halted. The deaths of these two men brought bad publicity for the country. There are many more Christians on the extremist's death list. One is a partner of Release International, a lawyer who takes up the causes of those falsely accused and imprisoned under the law. He and other lawyers put themselves at great risk.

In August this year Salman Teesar's son was kidnapped and as of yet no ransom has been demanded and we do not know where he is being kept. Salman's daughter has spoken out against the government and the Blasphemy Law.

Shahbaz Bhatti's brother Paul was appointed this year as special advisor on religious minorities to the prime minister. Following this in July a ministry of national harmony was formed., this ministry will have oversight for protecting religious minorities at a national level. In August the national President Zardari celebrated national minority's day and committed his government to support the protection of minority religious rights. We are pleased with this but we must continue to pray, as many Christians are still facing discrimination, imprisonment, torture and death.

Two men were killed in March outside a Salvation Army service; one of the dead a young married man only 25 years old had been a road sweeper who supported his wife, parents, and siblings. The other was a married man and a father of six.

Rape and forced marriages are of great concern for Christian women.

In August, a girl escaped her captors after being held captive for a year. During her ordeal the girl was physically and mentally tortured. In hospital she was found to have suffered internal damage. This girl and her family are now in hiding as they have filed a complaint against her captors.

A nurse has filed a complaint that she was held at gunpoint and raped by an accounts officer at the hospital where she works. She further states that an accomplice filmed the rape and when she refused to recant her faith or agree to marriage the rapist came to her home and showed her parents and family the tape of the rape. The family decided not to be

intimidated and chose to suffer any shame that would be incurred in their culture and not give their daughter in marriage to this man. Pray for our family in Christ that they will not feel discouraged

The country is now experiencing more flooding, reported to be worse than last time. Pray for the people of Pakistan and for those who would help them during this time. Pray in particular for the Christians that they too would receive aid. Last time of flooding Release's Partner received death threats, which continued until September this year, for helping the Christians affected by the flooding.

Please Pray also for those in Christian leadership as many get death threats on a regular basis, that they would be strong and feel the presence of God very near.

Sri Lanka

Many Pakistani Christians flee to Sri Lanka to escape persecution as no visa is needed for entering Sri Lanka from Pakistan.

Sri Lankan Christians also suffer persecution. and the aftermath of the civil war which lasted 25 years.

The civil war in the North of the country has left many dead and great humanitarian needs. Many have returned home to live in tents, others have found that their lands have been confiscated by the government. Agriculture is the main source of income but land mines prevent agricultural work at the moment. Land mines have also been placed in drinking wells. Conditions for those returning are very hard.

Social and moral problems exist; the purity of the culture has been targeted with the kidnapping and rape of young Tamil girls, paedophilia, and drink and drugs. In the South of the country Christians suffer much persecution in this so called 'island paradise' with its sun stretched beaches.

Release International and her partner organise "Shalom Camps", Peace camps for those who are suffering much persecution. A weekend at the camp takes the form of worship, Christian teaching to encourage and help those being persecuted to stand in faith, and teaching on legal issues to help those being persecuted to use the law to their advantage. It also provides an opportunity to meet with others and share, a safe place for children to learn and play.

One pastor we met told us how they had been hounded out of their church building, on a Sunday; a mob would gather throw stones, intimidate and threaten the Christians when they arrived for worship. During worship windows would be smashed. The church then met in homes again because folks were threatened and some became so afraid that they stopped attending worship. The Pastor himself has moved 13 times in four years as his landlords are threatened and ask that he and his family leave. The pastor a young man of 27 years old is married with two young children, who show great signs of stress. Every night a mob surrounds their home with shouts for the pastor to come out “so we can kill you” and this young man knows to go out and reason will most certainly mean his death. Instead with his wife and family he prays until the mob disappears.

Another pastor, whose church meets in homes as they do not have a church building, has found himself under great pressure to stop preaching the gospel. He is married with children one a new born baby. His elder child was not allowed to attend the local school because of his Christian witness. One day elders in his church received a phone call from four people who wished to speak with the pastor allegedly wanting to learn more about the Christian Faith. The pastor and the elders went to meet with these four people and were attacked, it had been a trap. A mob surrounded them. The elders suffered minor injuries and managed to escape, but the pastor, who was the real target was so badly beaten that he lost his hearing in both ears.

He and his family continue to walk with the saviour in these difficult times.

In many countries of the world Christians suffer severe discrimination and persecution, sometimes even martyrdom for the gospels sake, please remember our brothers and sisters in prayer.

Linda Oxburgh

C.S.I. LOGO EXPLANATION.



The Logo of the Church of South India is as important and significant as the formation of the CSI through the process of unification. The Lotus and the Cross used in the Logo possess a rich cultural history and heritage which will help us in the understanding of the significance of the unification and our call and mission as members of this great and unique church.

The Lotus, a typical Indian flower, in Mythology is supposed to be not only a temple flower but also the seat of the creator. “Pankajam” one of the Indian names given to the Lotus has a very significant meaning that “it is born in mud”. The Lotus blooms at sunrise and withers at sunset, in other words it lives as long as it can receive the sunrays hence it is also called “Thammipuvu” meaning “flower of the sun”. Whether it means “born in the mud” or “flower of the sun” to the Indian Church, it stands to be interpreted as symbolizing the composition, nature and role of the members of the Church of South India in the bond of the union and in the context of being indigenous and also being dependent on the grace of God.

The petals of the Lotus and the arms of the Cross are beautifully intertwined together with the fiery tongues of the Holy Spirit. This again is an authentic Indian expression of people’s communion with God. The colours being red (for life), purple (for piety and ecclesiastical) and the white backdrop (for purity) implicitly communicate the nature of the mystical union, where, an inseparable companionship is established which, again is a typical Indian thought form.

The words THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE, CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA are embossed in a circle round the Lotus and the Cross. The words, as we know, are taken from the high priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ who prayed not only for the ‘Church’ but also for the whole world. This universality is expressed by placing the words in a form of a circle symbolizing not only the universe but also the inclusive nature of the Church.

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee that they also may be one in us.....” (John 17:21) is an inclusive affirmation showing explicitly that Christ is the Head and the Church, His body. It also symbolizes the prayer of the Church that not only Churches need to be united but all people of this country which can be interpreted as a meaningful prayer for national integration.

The imposing central position of the cross in the Logo conveys the idea that the indefatigable, self less supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is the basis of the Church and its faith. The cross runs through the Lotus depicting its cleansing act working in the hearts of the members of the Church and restoring them to the pristine purity of heaven.

The four ends of the cross made of equal size symbolizes the equality and also the contextual peaceful co-existence and communal harmony. The Church of South India gratefully acknowledges the initiative taken by the Officers and the Executive Committee Members coinciding with the Silver Jubilee celebration of the CSI in 1972.

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New Initiatives at CSI Synod.

The Interfaith Dialogue Centre under the auspices of the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Ecological Concerns was inaugurated by the Most Rev. S. Vasantha Kumar, Moderator, CSI on 3 November 2011 in the presence of the officers, Bishops, executive committee members and the staff of the CSI Synod.

The rededication of the renovated ‘Bishop Lesslie Newbigin Memorial Library’ and the dedication of the archives were also held that day at the CSI Centre jointly by the Moderator and the Deputy Moderator, Rt. Rev. G. Devakadasham.

The newly derived policy on the Higher Education Ministry of the CSI was released by the Moderator during the Executive Committee meeting.

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Garment by *Nimal Wijesinghe*

Jesus has given us two parables - Matthew 22:1-14 and Matthew 25:1-13 on the one subject – The Wedding Banquet hosted by God for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time many ‘Christians’ will be invited to the Banquet but not all of those invited will be chosen and allowed to attend. The two parables help us understand who will and who will not be allowed into the banquet hall, though invited.

In the parable in Matthew 22, it is about a person who is not clothed in the proper garment for the Wedding who is excluded from the banquet. In Matthew 25 it is about those who are ill prepared for the Wedding, lacking in what is essential.

These are indeed most appropriate parables for the 21st Century Christians. Increasing numbers of Mainline Churches are experiencing a notable progressive drop in membership with a significant absence of the young. The prognosis by at least one Church Leader is that unless membership numbers increase and with it income, his Church was unlikely to survive the next 30 to 40 years. This is probably true today of all Mainline Churches.

No doubt the finest Christian minds are engaged in finding a solution to the problem. Books have been written, seminars and workshops designed in order to analyse, debate and evaluate the problem in search of a solution. Every so often one hears of a 10-point plan or a 7-point strategy or a 5-stage-solution to the problem of halting the depletion of congregations and boosting Church attendance and with it membership – a hope for some form of revival!

Considering the parable, one wonders if those Christians who turn up at the door only to be denied entry into the wedding banquet hall had ever really understood what the Lord expected of them during their life on Earth. They were invited, they arrived at the door, but then they were rejected and denied entry. They were deemed ill-prepared for the occasion.

People are often recognised by what they wear. Any member of the public wearing a long white coat with a stethoscope draped over the shoulder might easily be mistaken as a doctor of medicine. Similarly the uniform of a policeman or a baker would result in the wearer being mistakenly identified as a true policeman/baker although they might have nothing to do with the security services or baking. They would be imposters!

Something similar can be seen with some Christians. One who is not a born-again Christian can yet be a regular Churchgoer and participate in Bible Studies and Prayer Meetings and hold office in the Church and through these deemed to be a Christian. Their garment which identifies them as Christians would be made up of rituals and strict adherence to keeping appointments. But, until they are born again they are not true Christians.

Some may feel that because they were born into a Christian family or in a 'Christian' country, they are somehow heaven-bound or in the context of our current thoughts, that they believe that fact alone is the 'garment' they may put on expecting God to accept it?

Or it may be a garment made up of a good record of Christian service:
that we have an impressive record of Church attendance?
that we daily read the Bible
that we have engaged in prayer
that we have helped out with Church activities and engaged in Evangelism
that we have held office in the Church
that we have taught in Sunday School
that we have distributed tracts in the streets
that we have given of our wealth to God and to charity
that we have managed to walk on the clean side of the street of life?

And so on... i.e. all of the things we take credit for doing while on Earth

What Jesus tells us in the parables is that while all of the above are important for Christian living, they in themselves do not make true

Christians nor are those who just want to call themselves Christian will as a consequence be a true Christian. Every true Christian has to be spiritually born-again.

In the parable we read that an invited guest was not wearing the garment provided at the door by the King. He probably felt that the garment he had made from the best material, using the best tailor and contemporary design and style was better than what was on offer. But it did not please the King who rejected the wedding clothes and the man wearing it. It was too late at that point for the invited guest to do anything about it.

And so, we may well ask, what is this garment the King approves? It is a garment He alone provides and is explained in Isaiah - **Isaiah 61:10** I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with **garments of salvation** and arrayed me in a **robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Yes, unless we are clothed by God with the Garment of Salvation and the Robe of Righteousness, we will be ill-dressed for Heaven and the Wedding of His Son and thrown out of the banquet hall. But, many will be invited! It will then be the turn of the rejected to be speechless.

It is only the Cross of Christ that can speak to the young and old alike and it is only Christ who can provide the **Garment of Salvation** and the **Robe of Righteousness** that all of mankind need not only for the Wedding Banquet but for abundant daily life here on Earth.

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Matthew 22:14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

Persecution, the Persecuted and the Persecuted Church

by Nimal Wijesinghe – November 2011.

Persecution is mentioned first in the Bible when Jesus speaks of it in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5 verses 10-12. There are many more references by Jesus on the subject in the New Testament and also by Paul the Apostle. It will help all those concerned about the persecution endured by Christians the world over today, to be familiar with what the Bible has to tell us.

Jesus suggests persecution will follow on account of being righteous – i.e. of being in right standing with God. But that those so persecuted are BLESSED. Also BLESSED are those who are falsely accused of all kinds of evil because they are followers of Jesus. Jesus encourages all such people to be GLAD and REJOICE because they are in excellent company – i.e. the Prophets of old – all of whom can look forward to their GREAT REWARD in HEAVEN. What a wonderful future for the persecuted to look forward to!

Recorded in Matthew 24 vs. 7-9 is the account by Jesus of the signs of the end-times. One significant part of the end-time scenario will be persecution of the faithful followers of Jesus, who will not only be persecuted by those in the country they live in but hated by all nations.

That is how it will be for all true Christians. **Might it be pertinent to wonder if it would be proper for any human being to try and stop persecution by whatever means if Jesus has eloquently prophesied that there will be persecution because of Him?**

In the Gospel of John 15 vs.20-21 we read again that the followers of Jesus must expect persecution. They first persecuted Jesus all the way to Calvary and have ever since continued to persecute all who follow Jesus. Is this not the Christian's lot in this world? *Scripture tells us how to face persecution and not how to avoid it!*

Paul, in his first letter to the Church in Corinth ch.4 vs. 10-14, spells out how the world will treat those who follow Christ. Paul's words,

perhaps, describe accurately the persecution we see in parts of the world today which was eloquently described at Dunblane during the Annual Sessions of the Fellowship of St. Thomas on 24 September 2011.

Does Scripture, therefore, tell us that for the true Christian, persecution would be a form of ‘business as usual’?

In his second letter to the Church in Corinth ch.4 vs.7-Paul encourages the persecuted, reminding them that they are not abandoned and will not be destroyed. He acknowledges that those in Corinth are under persecution.

The reality and the fact of the godly Christian life are clearly described by Paul at verse 12 *“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*

In his second letter to Timothy. *Ch.3 vs.10-15 Persecution is inevitable.* And hence, those who escape persecution are either extremely fortunate or perhaps not a target for the evil one who must surely be the instigator of persecution of the true Christian.

Comment

It is natural that to a civilised mindset any form of persecution and cruelty will be abhorrent. However, as Christians should we not shift our vision beyond Earthly existence and focus on the hope all Christians can have of our eternal home where there will be no more pain or suffering, no tears but pure joy? Would that not suggest we should view our time on Earth through the lens of Scripture – see John 16 v.33 and Rev. 7v.16 - which help us view persecution and the troubles we will face in this Earthly life in its correct perspective – a stepping-stone to glory!

But, our Christian brothers and sisters enduring persecution today the world over need our prayers and our support. We cannot stand idly by and ignore their physical needs. Jesus has already taught us how to respond in His Sermon on the Mount, in *Matthew 5:39-45*

And what about the emotional and spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters who are under persecution? Rather than discuss this subject, here is how I would pray for them.

'Almighty God I pray that your Holy Spirit will indwell those under persecution who are your faithful disciples, granting them a superhuman capacity to love their captors and persecutors and to see beyond the worst face of evil. I pray that they will be an invaluable tool in your hands and that they will be given Divine wisdom and knowledge to convey the Message you want them to preach in words and in how they respond to persecution and enable them to witness continually. I pray that the glory of the Lord will be seen in them by their persecutors and that in whatever the forces of evil do, the Lord's name will be glorified! I leave them all and their loved ones entirely in your hands, Lord praying, 'Thy will be done, Sovereign Lord!' Amen.'

Those persecuted in Asia and elsewhere because they are Christians and who will not deny their Lord and Saviour must surely be born-again Christians. They have found that to have Jesus is far, far better than houses or possessions or even their own human families. They live but surely God's Holy Spirit lives in them.

I wonder if these born-again martyrs for their faith in Jesus need our prayers so much as we, in the Western-world, need theirs!

oOo

Observations made on a visit to Gooty and surrounding villages from the 21-28th of December 2011 by Ann Marsden and daughter Liz who previously lived and worked there with the late Rev. Geoffrey Marsden.

A growing Church

The CSI Church in Gooty is thriving. Viktor Sukumar who is the pastor in charge indicated that there were in the region of 500 families attending now. They have just replaced the roof of the church which leaked like a sieve with a new concrete one and have done it very tastefully. They have brought in many hut dwellers from under the railway overbridge by the compound.

Former Hostel Boys

This is a bit of a success story. Under the leadership of C H Joseph, former Gooty hostel boys and tailoring students have formed a sort of alumni group which met when I was there. Hostel boys came from all over the diocese, about 80 of them. Nearly all are making a good living but they are also contributing to their communities. Joseph has good funding and seems to be doing an excellent job. Several hostel boys are in very responsible jobs. Many others have helped their communities.



The Sphere project

The Project that I was involved in was one funded partly by Christian Aid; it lasted about 20 years. We worked in about 30 villages by the end. Initially we formed groups of men and women in each village and made them sit down and think about the problems they were facing. After a lot of thought they decided that their main problems were sickness, debt and lack of rain fall.

Briefly

1. We trained village women in each village to become health workers (VHWS) improving child care, nutrition and delivery and antenatal work. We had nurses who did the vaccination programme that the Govt. neglected
2. We started a savings scheme called the Rupee Bank. In the early days, 32 years ago, they each saved a rupee a week (now 10 rupees) and when they got to a certain sum they could take out twice that to buy something which would help them.
3. We encouraged them to take their difficulties to the correct government offices. We introduced crèches and feeding programmes for infants. We started an example of watershed management by contour bunding in one village and this was very successful.

In a time when the tank hasn't been full for five years the idea of making water not run down slopes has become essential and does increase productivity and there is a great deal of imagination about preventing evaporation- like spreading plastic on the beds and planting through holes in it.

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Visit to Pakistan 2011.

I went out last Autumn on a private visit chiefly to see my friend Catherine (Nicol) who you might well remember. Catherine has been in Pakistan since 1962 and in Barahpatthar, Sialkot since 1968. She had eye surgery just before I went out. She is still working in the school in Barahpatthar which was nationalised in 1973 and the church called the Boarding Hostel St Columba Girl's RTC (Religious Training Centre). The School is now registered with the Gujranwala School Board, and there are almost three hundred girls in St Columba Hostel, in Kidley House (the old building) and Scott Hall (a fairly new building). Last year the hostel received money from the Church of Scotland Stamp Appeal and till last summer received a grant from Kindernothilfe, a German Charity. The Hostel and School are running on a very hand to mouth existence, grateful for any donations.

One of my little jobs while in Barahpatthar was to write up the results book for the Board exams. Quite a number of children had failed but reading the marks there was no obvious reason for this apart from the fact that everyone that sat had been forced to sit the Islamiat paper (and fail) although they had prepared for a paper in Ethics which did not materialise. Quite worrying! But during my stay there was general disquiet over School Boards and the Gujranwala School Board building was sacked and all records destroyed.

Education is still sought for in Pakistan but the Hostel has more children from broken homes and disturbed backgrounds. Catherine shared some info on children recently.

MYARA is a rough and tough wee soul. Grandmother brought her and her sister to the hostel in April. Mother had left the home and father later also left. Grandfather wanted rid of the children so we got Syara and Myara. Syara managed to find her mother outside the church during the summer break and she went off with her, which we can only be pleased about. Myara is with us and would spend all day and night on the swing if we would let her. She is not very interested in school but is a very happy child.

MEHR UL NISA came in September. Her mother was most insistent that we take her in. She said her husband had taken away all her three girls of whom Mehr ul Nisa was the youngest. She told her mother that

father had given the other two something to drink and they had died. I do not know how Mehr got to her mother but now her mother is able to work and meet some of the needs of Mehr who has settled happily into the hostel and school.

CAROL. Carol's mother who had been a student here brought her to us in October. She is a very subdued child. Her father had sold up their house and gone back to his family home and told his wife to do what she wanted or to live with his married sisters. She came to a shelter in Sialkot for women who have been rejected in this way and the warden there advised her to put Carol in the hostel so that she can continue her studies. She is a bright little girl and her mother did not want her to be out of school so she is with us. Her father is not happy with this and we have to be careful that she is not snatched away.

On two Sundays I joined the hostel girls for worship in the evening during which there were excellent presentations – one a drama on a parable of Jesus and the other on the people who had served the Church of Pakistan in Sialkot from the time of Thomas Hunter martyred with his wife and child in 1857.

While in Pakistan I met up with the children of some of the people I worked with in Shilokh Hospital, Jalalpur Jattan. Many of them are doing well including Safia a senior nurse in Pakistan Institute for Medical Science, Islamabad and her cousin Sajid who is also a nurse but is running a school in a slum area in Lahore. I did not visit Jalalpur Jattan as the hospital is only a shadow of its former self and there is talk of the majority community taking it over to run as a Medical College.

On my last day in Pakistan I helped serve Communion in Hunter Memorial Church when there must have been about 500 communicants including some recently confirmed girls from the hostel. In spite of or perhaps even because of persecution church attendance is very high.

The Church of Pakistan although faced by many problems continues to witness in many ways and it certainly needs our prayers.

Margaret Nutter

Obituaries.

Rev David Lyon North India (1952-1967) Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham (1967-1972) General Secretary Overseas Council (1972-1985) Born 31 July 1921 Died 28 November 2010

Miss Helen Bee Church of North India (1966-1979) Born 21 December 1939 Died 7 December 2010

Rev Ewing Smith North India (1962-1976) Born 25 April 1928 Died 28 December 2010

Mrs. Jean Bott – Died 26 January 2011

Mrs Beatrice Chirnside Punjab Pakistan (1951-1968) Born 11 November 1924 Died 25 March 2011

Rev William Murison, Santalia, India Asia and Secretary Overseas Council (1951 – 1989)

Born 27 March 1925 Died 10 June 2011

Rev Iain Kay Stiven served in Pakistan. Born 1931. Died 23 July 2011.

Miss Janet Isabelle (Jinty) Kerr, policewoman. Born 9 June, 1948, in Edinburgh.

Died 31 August, 2011, in Edinburgh, aged 63.

Miss Lillian Smith served in Madras. Died on Saturday, 14th January 2012.

C S I Synod.

At the 33rd Ordinary Session of the CSI Synod held in Kanyakumari in January 2012, Bishop G. Devakadasham of Kanyakumari Diocese was elected Moderator, Bishop G. Dyvasirvadam of Krishna Godavari diocese was elected Deputy Moderator, M.M. Philip the incumbent General Secretary was re-elected as was incumbent Treasurer Bennet Abraham.



LET US PRAY

for the Synods of the CSI and CNI and the follow-up of the decisions made there; for health and wisdom for the Moderators and all church workers;

for the continued growing together of CSI, CNI and Marthoma Church and the Roman Catholic Church;

for the central and state governments in India that their decisions may be for the welfare of all the citizens;

for friendly relations between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka;

for lessening of the wealth divide between rich and poor and that the poor may be relieved from hunger and homelessness;

for relief for those affected by flood or famine or unemployment;

for the churches' work to improve the lot of women and girls in India;

for Christians suffering persecution for their faith;

for the ministry of healing in our medical colleges, hospitals and dispensaries;

for the ministry of education in our colleges, schools and hostels;

for the work of our sister fellowship in England – the Fellowship of the Church in India and their annual meeting on Saturday, 6th October 2012.

Kashmir Shariah court order targets Christians.

Churches in India have decried the verdict of an Islamic court in Kashmir that ordered the expulsion of Christians, including a Protestant pastor and a Dutch Catholic missionary, and recommended government control of Christian schools. "This is totally unacceptable," said Samuel Jayakumar, a spokesperson for the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). "India is a secular country and the personal law of a community should be confined to itself," Shariah courts have no secular legal standing in India. On 19 January 2012, the Shariah court in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir, where Muslims are in the majority, ordered the expulsion of Church of North India (CNI) pastor Chander Mani Khanna who was found 'guilty' of conversions, and four other Christians. "Khanna and his associates have been found guilty of spreading communal disaffection and were involved in immoral activities. They are ordered to be expelled from the state," deputy Grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir Nasir-ul-Islam said. Khanna had been arrested in November by state police after Muslim groups pressed conversion charges against him for baptizing five Muslims and a Hindu. While the pastor was released on bail, the Shariah court went ahead with its own trial. "What surprises us is the silence of the government. Are we really living in a free country?" Bishop Pradeep Kumar Samantroy, CNI bishop of Amritsar, told ENI news.

Source: [Ecumenical News International](#)

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Visiting Student.

Revd Dr J Lamboi Haokip and his wife Boinu have been living in Glasgow while he completed his Ph.D. studies. He has now completed and passed the exams. He hails from Manipur in N.E. India, and plans to work in the Indo-Burma border region among the tribal people. He returns in February to join in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of his church. He will be preaching and leading a seminar during the celebrations while Boinu, a qualified doctor, will be involved in medical work during the programme.

He is interested to collect and preserve cultural resources and discussion dealing with the complex issue of the tribal people in the region. The project is called 'Indigenous Resources Centre'.

He also cares for the orphans in the Bethesda Children's Home and is planning to increase the number of children in the orphanage and start a school for them and other children in the area who cannot afford education.

Lamboi is also developing a website (www.bethesda.org.in) to provide devotional and theological resources for tribal people now in parts of India, Burma and Bangladesh.

Both Lamboi and Boinu would appreciate prayers and emails from friends. Their email address is lamboi@yahoo.com

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Book Review.

“**Cor Blimey, where have you come from?**” is the title of a book recently published by Frank Tovey and his wife Winnie. This tells the story of Frank and Winnie's work in Mysore District with the Methodist Missionary Society. He was surgeon there but was instrumental in developing the Holdsworth Memorial Hospital as a general hospital with an interest in leprosy patients, providing reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation for the patients. Winnie was involved in food distribution to the villagers and having bore wells constructed. She also helped in the resettling of Tibetan refugees in the area.

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**The Fellowship of St. Thomas
Annual Celebration
on Saturday, 29th September 2012
in Dunblane Cathedral.**

- 10.00 am:** Tea/Coffee and registration in
Cathedral Church Upstairs Hall.
- 10.30 am:** Welcome and Opening Prayer
- 10.45 am:** Morning Session
- 12 .15 pm:** **Buffet Lunch at India Gate Restaurant**
- 1.45 pm:** **Annual General Meeting** in Cathedral Upstairs Hall
- 2.30 pm:** **Communion Service in Dunblane Cathedral**
Liturgy – Church of South India
Celebrant -
Preacher -
- 3.45 pm:** Tea/Coffee in Cathedral Church Hall.

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The Friends of the Church in India
FCI Day
Indian YMCA, Fitzroy Square, London
Saturday, 6th October 2012 at 10.30 am

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For information about the Fellowship of St. Thomas contact the
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Tel. 01631 710 550

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