

**BOARD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
OF THE SENATE OF SERAMPORE COLLEGE**

SECRETARY'S REPORT – 2015-2016

BOARD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF THE SENATE OF SERAMPORE COLLEGE

3rd Floor, 73, Millers Road, Benson Town P.O, Bangalore – 560 046

Secretary's Report for the period February 2015-January 2016

“This implies a re-location of theological education, and an intentional attempt to do theology *from below*, reading history and interpreting the texts and contexts from the perspective of those who are pushed to the underside and their visions of a new world, the coming reign of God - of justice, dignity and life for all. The credibility of theological education, therefore, depends on its ability to enable this process - to be constantly on the move, open to change, discerning change, in order that we may not only stay relevant but also play a creative part in shaping the Church and through that the contexts in which it is placed, in ways that make sense to the lost, the least and the last.”

This was the theological challenge of Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala from WCC in his paper he presented in the last year Board Seminar on the theme ‘Relocating Theological Education in the Marginalised context.’ With this challenge we started our activities last year. Wherever possible we reflected on this challenge in our programmes. From Relocating Theological Education we are now moving to “Transforming Theological Education.” The Executive Committee of the Senate has approved the theme for this year; it is “Transformative Theological Education and the Future of Ecumenical Movement.”

I had also said in my report last year that ‘I am experiencing God’s miracle in the life of BTESSC in the last few years. It also proves that money need not be the criteria for the growth of any organization. BTESSC has achieved a permanent place in the world ecumenical theological education map by its life and witness.’ It is proved once again in our life last year. Another leap in the last year’s activity is from the Ecumenical world - we were also able to move to strengthen our relationship with

the Evangelical world without compromising our theological positions. BTESSC was able to achieve all these because of the leadership of our Senate fraternity. For that, I am always grateful to our Master and President.

Honorable Master, Respected President and my dear Colleagues,

Greetings to you all from the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College in the name of our Liberator Jesus Christ.

I like to express our warm welcome to our beloved respectful Master Rt. Rev. Dr. John S. Sadananda whom I consider always as my mentor and counsellor. I still have to learn from him the skill of solving the problems with a smiling face. Thanks Master and I welcome you on behalf of myself and the officers and members of the Board. “An organization can be successful only if that enjoys freedom and BTESSC enjoys that freedom under the leadership of our Chairperson Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos. He is very quiet, unassuming, and very humble. A model for Christian leadership – I think each one of us should learn this from him.” I cordially welcome you dear Bishop.

I am also very happy to welcome my colleagues the Registrar Rev. Dr. Santanu K. Patro, Rev. Dr. P.T George, Dean, Research/SATHRI and Dean of SCEPTRE Dr. Wati Longchar. It is amazing to observe the smartness of Dr. Patro, how quickly he is able to learn all the rules, regulations and procedures and accommodated himself to the new context. Hats off to him.

I am fortunate to have good colleagues as full time officers Dr. P.T. George and Dr. Wati Longchar. George can win any one by his smile and he is a good Pastor. Wati my good friend’s biggest strength is his scholarship. We are proud to say that we work together as a team.

I would like to recognise the presence of Dr. Amele Ekue, Programme Executive, ETE/WCC, the Board Seminar speaker, Dr. H.S. Wilson, Executive Director, FTESEA, Dr. Limuel Equina, Executive Director, ATESEA, Dr. Paul Cornelius, Regional Secretary-India of Asian Theological Association, Dr. Dieter Mitternacht from Church of Sweden, Rev. Dr. habil Klaus Schafer from the Evangelical Luthern Church in Northern Germany and Dr. Alex Malasusa, Bishop of the Eastern and

Coastal Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania for their greetings and for their support. We look forward to their continuous solidarity.

‘To organize consultations, seminars and conferences on relevant theological issues in order to stimulate theological thinking in the member institutions,’ is one of the important functions of BTESSC. The Senate concentrates more on formal theological education and BTESSC on contextual theologies. Some may think what is the use of organizing meetings, seminars, consultations? But one observes the impact of these activities will realize the need for such programmes. All the contextual theologies were born out of programmes like these. Our new courses like Dalit Theology, Tribal/Adivasi Theology, Feminist theology, Eco theology were born out of these informal programmes.

Activities of the last year:

Consultation on ‘Contours of Tribal Theology:

A Consultation on ‘Contours of Tribal Theology,’ jointly organized by BTESSC and Mizoram Presbyterian Church was held at the Synod Conference Centre from 18th to 20th February 2015.



To begin the consultation, Rev. Dr. Lalramliana Pachuau (Senior Executive Secretary, Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod warmly welcomed all the participants, and applauded all for making an effort to participate in this timely needed seminar.

Rev. Dr. A.Wati Longchar gave the keynote address. In his keynote address, he mentioned some of the achievements of tribal theology – past and present, yet cautioned the participants from complacency. He said that people have recognized good things about tribal theology and this must continue. Although some barriers and misconceptions of Tribal theology have been broken or eradicated, there is a commonality of strength and power noticeable in tribal cultures. However, he

identified the need for a transformative praxis-oriented theology and the need to sharpen tribal methodology.

During this consultation, nine papers were presented by the young and upcoming tribal theologians, and new insights and challenges were brought by them which are as follows: 1. Land is a gift from God, given to humans for survival. It plays a vital role in tribal cultural identity and spirituality. Without land there is no concept of God in tribal theology. 2. Masculinity is a social construct. It is imposed upon both men and women. This has an oppressive baggage attached to it which hinders humans from flourishing. There is a need therefore for deconstruction along with reconstruction of a liberative masculinity. 3. Denominationalism weakens unity of the Tribal church. This has become a cause of concern for tribal ecclesiology. The challenge is how to bring different denominations together and fight for a common cause. 4. The other concern is the use of indigenous element in Tribal Christian worship. 5. *Rediscovering Ancestral Testament*: There are many good elements found in tribal culture in northeast India that can be used as a Testament for theological articulation that can also act as a source for Tribal theology. The two-day consultation was truly brainstorming and enriching.

Theological Consultation on ‘Human Sexuality’:

The BTESSC organised a two-day Theological Consultation on “Human Sexuality” from 30th to 31st May, 2015 at the United Theological College, Bangalore



for the post graduate and doctoral students. 35 students from all over India participated in this consultation. The bottom line of this consultation was to listen to friends from the Sexually Diverse Communities (SDC) to educate,

enrich and enlighten the participants through their life experiences, theological

reflections and questions, challenging the whole theological fraternity with the God-question.

The theological educators responded to the questions and concerns raised by the SDC academically and ministerially. This learning facilitated the students towards articulating four theological themes such as ‘communities of colours,’ ‘radical koinonia,’ ‘sexuality and the image of God’ and ‘the spirit that unites and liberates.’ They also released a statement to this effect: (Appendix No. 1)

“Thereby, we commit ourselves to work in making our Church and society becoming an ‘inclusive Rainbow community,’ by conscientising individuals and faith communities and to actively participate in the struggles of sexually diverse communities, to embrace each other and to propagate and promote dignity and justice to all. We also confess our homophobic attitude which has discriminated and marginalized sexually diverse people for centuries and will attempt for appropriate interpretations of our faith witness.”

The participants sent a request to theological institutions, ‘to offer/reserve residential admissions for sexually diverse communities with full scholarships.’

Thanks to Dr. P.T. George for his co-operation in organizing this programme.

National Consultation on ‘Christian Social Ethics’:

The BTESSC and the Department of Theology and Ethics of the United Theological College, Bangalore organized a National Consultation on Christian Social Ethics from 30th to 31st July, 2015 at the United Theological College Bangalore. Around fifty participants attended the Consultation from different parts of the country. Rt. Rev. Dr. J. S. Sadananda, the Master of the Serampore College inaugurated the Consultation. Rev. Dr. Santanu K. Patro (Registrar, Senate of



Serampore College), Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer (Secretary, BTESSC), Rev. Dr. Sunil Caleb, Fr. Dr. Maria Arul Raja, Fr. Dr. X.D. Selvaraj, Rev. Dr. Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, Rev. Dr. Y. T. Vinayaraj, Dr. Asangla Lemtur, and others presented papers. Faculty members from different colleges along with the post-graduate and research students from UTC attended the Consultation.

This consultation introduced the new trends in Ethics and helped the teachers and other participants to revisit the whole Ethics syllabus from a new perspective. The papers presented at the Consultation will be published as a book. That will be a resource book for B.D and M.Th students for the Ethics course. I thank Dr. Allan Palanna and Dr. George Zachariah for organizing such a useful academic exercise.

I suggest that the Senate should seriously promote this kind of subject-oriented programmes to update knowledge in the recently explored development on the subjects.

International Conference on ‘Revisiting Reformation: Explorations on Religion-State Relations Then and Now’:

The year 2017 marks the 5th centenary (quincentenaries) of the Reformation and the worldwide Christian Communion prepare themselves to greet the occasion with a number of programmes, projects and events. In view of this historic occasion, the Department of Theology and Ethics of the United Theological College, Bangalore, and the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College have made an attempt to revisit the Protestant Reformation, especially the social,



religious and political sides of it, in and through the conference on the theme ‘Revisiting Reformation: Explorations on Religion-State Relations Then and Now’ from 4th to 7th August 2015 at the United Theological College, Bangalore.

Eminent scholars from across the globe, cutting across denominational and national affiliations, intensely explored, deliberated and discussed the socio-political impacts of the Reformation then, especially in a context in which *religion* (spiritual realm) and *the state* (temporal or secular realm) were inseparably intertwined; and the kind of impact it could make in our own context in which *religion and state are mostly separated yet closely related* as we experience in the Indian social-political domain today.

The consultation was started with the welcome by Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer, followed by the introduction of the theme of the conference by Rev. Dr. Mervin Shinoj Boas. Rev. Dr. R. Sahayadhas, the Coordinator of the Conference, introduced the guests and participants. Marking the inauguration of the conference, the Rev. Dr. J. R. John Samuel Raj, Principal-UTC, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the significant contributions that Luther made in the area of scriptural interpretation, which was critical to the reform process of the Church and society then.

International scholars like Prof. Robert Kolb, Concordia Seminary, Missouri, Prof. Gudrun Löwner, United Theological College, Prof. Philip Krey, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Prof. Paul Rajashekar, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Prof. Mathias von Kriegstein, Prof. J. Kiran Sebastian, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Prof. Fr. Leonard Fernando, Vidyajothy, Delhi, Prof. R. Sahayadhas, United Theological College, Prof. Christopher Duraisingh, Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Prof. Don Schweitzer, St. Andrews College, Saskatoon, Canada presented papers on different titles. They stimulated intense and sensible debates on issues pertaining to the Protestant Reformation and the contemporary situation of religion-state/politics interface. Deep appreciation and thanks to Dr. Sahayadhas who helped us in organizing such a historical event very systematically and effectively.

Christian – Muslim Conversation on Secularism and Democracy:

A three-day Conversation was held at the Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad among theologians, practitioners and students of both Christian and Muslim faith from 1st to 3rd September 2015 which was jointly organized by BTESSC and HMI on the theme ‘Christian Muslim conversation on Secularism and Democracy.’

The Conversation was organized in the present context where both Secularism and Democracy are in danger; and that a pattern of politics is emerging to erase the political history of India from the mind of Indians, and replace it with a religious history



devised by the fundamentalists and communalists of this country. The conversation affirmed the Democracy that enables us to protest and question the State when it goes draconian against the common collective living of the people. “Jeopardizing Secularism and Democracy and replacing it with Communal history is against the fundamental principle of all religions which call for unity, relationship and living together,” was the declaration of the Conversation.

Participants called upon the Christian and Islam Faiths and other Religions to have conversation among each other so that all can live in relationship with each other protecting the secular and democratic fabric of the nation. It also asked each citizen to take time to relate with one another so that the spirituality of human beings is revealed each day. The participants brought out a Declaration namely “Shivarampally Declaration” (Appendix No. 2).

Dr. Packiam Samuel, Director HMI chaired the inaugural session. Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer, Secretary BTESSC, Rev. Dr. T Matthews Emmanuel, Principal, Andhra Christian Theological College, Rev. Dr. Ch. Vasantha Rao, Prof. Aisha Farooqui, Dr. Faheen Akthar, Rev. Dr. Praveen Perumalla, Dr. Joseph Dayam Prabhakar, Dr. Munawar Hussain, Mr. Ramesh from HMI and Rev. Nissi Ratna Prakash acted as the resource persons. Mrs. Sribala from HMI was instrumental in organizing the entire programme.

Public Lecture on Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero:

The BTESSC and the Indian Social Institute, Bangalore (ISI-B) jointly organized a public lecture on “Oscar Romero-His Mission of Faith and Justice- A Contemporary Relevance,” at ISI premises on September 14, 2015. About 200 participants attended the lecture from various walks of life, pastors, priests, nuns, Christian laity



and also representatives from many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Rev. Dr. Charles Irudayam, the Executive Secretary of the Commission for Justice, Peace and Development of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, New Delhi delivered the lecture. Dr. Mohan Larbeer welcomed the gathering. In his welcome address, he explained the importance of such lectures and the background of the idea to organize this joint program. He also asserted that the life of Oscar Romero has influenced greatly people of all denominations because of his commitment to the poor and the marginalized of his country.

Rev. Dr. Charles Irudayam, the main speaker spoke about an hour, on the various aspects of the life of Blessed Oscar Romero. He started with the influence of Blessed Oscar Romero on his life when he was a young seminarian and how he sustained the interest in and influence upon his priestly life and ministry. He organized his speech at three levels: some sketches of the life of Blessed Romero, his public life as an auxiliary bishop and later as the Archbishop of San Salvadore and his political influence in favour of the poor plantation workers. As the archbishop moved closer and closer to the life of the people, he took a political stand against the Latin American imperialism supported and sanctified by the American interference in the life of the people of El Salvadore. His close friend and Jesuit social activist Rutilio Grante’s assassination shocked his life and altered his position towards the state. He demanded that the government should take responsibility for the murder of Rutilio

and apologize to the people. Thus the archbishop gradually moved away from the political and economic establishment towards the plight of the poor workers.

He made his life relevant and meaningful by being with the people, taking sides with them and dying for them. His death on March 24, 1980 shocked the world, but gave a new direction to people's struggle against economic and political fascism. Dr. Selvaraj Arulnathan SJ thanked the gathering for responding to the call.

Re-locating Mission and Ecumenism in the Context of Margins: An Adivasi Perspective:

A three-day seminar was started on 18th November 2015 with the welcome address by Rev. Dr. M. M. Ekka, Principal Gossner Theological College, Ranchi. It was followed by the inaugural address by Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer. His inaugural speech was an eye-opener to this seminar. This was followed by a Bible study which was led by Rev. Dr. Naveen Rao, Principal L.T.C. Jabalpur.

Bishop Rev. Dr. A. S. Hemrom presented a paper on the topic 'Mission as Social Movement: An Adivasi Theological Perspective.' The main focus of this presentation was about the missionary attitude and the social agenda of the mission which was



further discussed as mission agenda for empowerment of the people and mission as a social movement for change and upward mobility. Rev. Dr. M. M. Ekka, in his paper focused on the role of the mission and missionaries for the liberation of the so-called Adivasis of this region. His emphasis was that the mission work had focused not only on the spiritual aspects but also on the holistic mission work which transformed the life and thinking of the Adivasis.

A paper on 'The Role of Adivasi Women Pastor(s) for building a Just Society,' was presented by Rev. Idan Topno, Lecturer G.T.C. Ranchi. Her main focus was

to empower and enlighten the women pastors to work for the church and for the Adivasi society which is a challenging task. 'Re-visiting Luther's Theology of Mission in the Life-situation of Adivasis in Chotanagpur,' was presented by Rev. Dr. J. N. Ekka, Vice Principal N.D.T.C. Malar, Ranchi. The presenter's central focus was on Luther's Theology of the Cross. He focused, how the understanding of the Theology of the Cross helps the Adivasis of Chotanagpur who are in a marginalized situation today.

Conversation between ATA and SSC:

To strengthen the Theological Education in India, the Ecumenical Theological Education of WCC and the Foundation of Theological Education jointly facilitated a conversation between ATA and SSC at SCEPTRE, Kolkata from 24-25 February 2015 in which representatives from these two fraternities participated. At the end of the two-day conversation they recommended, "Ten member representatives team from ATA and ten from SSC will meet for a dialogue to understand each other in detail, and bring recommendations to some of the key issues discussed especially regarding recognition of the degrees. It was decided that the Secretary of BTESSC will organize a meeting before October 2015 so that ATA and SSC get the approval of the recommendations from their Executive Committees."



In turn, this 20 member group met in CSI Synod Center, Chennai on 11-12, September 2015. In that meeting, Dr. H.S.Wilson of FTE, Dr. Gnana Patrick HOD, Dept. of Christian Studies, Madras University, Dr. Wati Longchar, Dean SCEPTRE, Dr. Brian Wintle, Dr. Paul Cornelius, Regional Secretary-Asia, ATA and Dr. Santanu Patro, Registrar of SSC presented papers which helped the participants to find various possibilities to work together.

It was decided that four representatives from each side would meet again at SAIACS on the 30th October 2015 to study a little more in detail the issue of equivalencies and comparability between the two systems and curricula. It was agreed that ATA and SSC upgrade the Joint Committee to a full-fledged consultative body. It was suggested,

1. To nominate 4/5 members each to meet regularly;
2. To exchange views;
3. To co-ordinate theological education in India;
4. To strengthen contextual theological curricula and theological education in India;
5. To promote ecumenical fellowship.

The team also expressed its concern on mushrooming of theological degrees offered indiscriminately and nomenclatures created without any justification as this brings down the standard of higher theological education as well as the degrees that are offered in India. Therefore, in the interest of theological education and Indian Church it was decided to issue a statement to the churches and Christian public at large (Appendix No. 3).

Board for Theological Text Book Programme of South Asia (BTTBPSA):

This is one of the functions of BTESSC to promote theological literature in vernacular language in different regions of the country. The Secretary of BTESSC by virtue of being so is also the Secretary of BTTBPSA. Because of many reasons, it was not effectively functioning in different regions for the last few years. But at the same time, there are a few regions effectively functioning and trying to bring out text books in their own vernacular languages. Considering the situation, the Secretary took extra effort to re-organize the regional committees and also the National committee. The National Committee which met on 7th September 2015 at the CSI Centre, Chennai reviewed the different programmes of BTTBPSA and took decisions for its effective functioning. The National Committee was re-organized and the following officers were elected for the next term (2015-2018):

1. President : Rev. Dr. T. Matthews Emmanuel
2. Secretary : Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer
3. Treasurer : Mrs. Omana Mathew

It was resolved to distribute the following grants to regional committees for the year 2015-16:

Malayalam	Rs.75,000.00
Kannada	Rs.75,000.00
Hindi	Rs.75,000.00
Tamil	Rs.75,000.00
Bengali	Rs.50,000.00
Telugu	Rs.50,000.00
Mizo	Rs.25,000.00
Ao Naga	Rs.25,000.00
Kuki	Rs.50,000.00

One of the decisions of the National Committee is to promote theological writers in different regions. On that basis, a Writers' Workshop was organized for North India at UBS, Pune and the Writers' Workshop for South India is planned for the next year.

Writers' Workshop:

A Writers' Workshop, "The Writing on the Wall," organized by Board for Theological Text Book Programme of South Asia (BTTBPSA) with the support of the Commission on Communication and Relations (COCR) of the National Council of Churches in



India (NCCI), and Union Biblical Seminary (UBS), was held at UBS, Pune from November 26 – 28, 2015. The program started with words of welcome by Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer (Secretary, BTTBPSA). He expressed his wish for a greater impetus to the writing of theological material in regional languages to enable the

message to truly reach the grassroots in our country. Rev. Dr. T. M. Emmanuel, President, BTTBPSA led the devotion in which he spoke about the methodology, perspectives and challenges of writing. Rev. Caesar J. David, Executive Secretary, NCCI – COCR then introduced the scope and purpose of the program. Rev. Dr. Shekhar Singh, Principal, UBS delivered the keynote address.

Dr. Muthuraj Swamy, Professor of Theology and Ethics, UBS explained the theological bases for prophetic engagement and elaborated on many practical aspects of writing including the challenges for a writer, the needed knowledge and skills, motivation and perspective. Mr. Samuel Jonathan, Principal Correspondent of *The Hindu*, A.P. listed the various types of writing in categories of scholarly research and functional literature. He taught several skills that are essential for a writer including the inverted pyramid model (Head, Body, Tail) for reporting events, effectiveness through layouts, styles and so on.

Rev. Anilal Jose, Presbyterian, Church of South India highlighted the emerging facilities of technology with special reference to social media networking that is becoming the norm of functional communication in this age. Rev. Dr. Samuel Meshack, President, World Association for Christian Communication – WACC global, gave an overview of the primacy of Communication rights as they are fundamental in the pursuit of justice in all areas of life. The following points were drawn up as an outcome of the workshop:

1. Creating a group-administered “Theological Writers’ Forum” for theological reflections, responses to current affairs/issues, and other functional literature for wider sharing and networking.
2. Theological Text Book writing in regional languages.
3. Adopting a Culture of Writing as individual commitment and contributing articles, features and news in newspapers and other publications in church circles as well as public domains.

Solidarity Fund:

The Solidarity Fund is able to support the needy students, and also assist a few colleges to have creative programmes.

1. D.Th. Scholarship through SATHRI for 4 candidates	Rs.1,20,000.00
2. M.Th. Scholarship through Senate for 5 candidates	Rs.1,50,000.00
3. BTESSC Programmes	Rs.2,00,000.00
4. B.D. Scholarship for 9 women candidates Rs.15,000 each GGM's Indian Theological Seminary, Calvin Institute of Theology, New Theological College, TTS (2), MTSC, ACTC, Serampore College (2)	Rs.1,35,000.00
5. Programme Grant (10 colleges & 1 institution)	Rs.4,70,000.00
Gossner Theol College - 50,000.00	
Mar Thoma Theol Seminary - 50,000.00	
Master's College of Theology - 15,000.00	
Academy of Integrated Xn St - 40,000.00	
MSOT - 40,000.00	
ATTI - 50,000.00	
Serampore College - 30,000.00	
NIIPGTS - 50,000.00	
John Roberts Theol Sem - 45,000.00	
UTC - 50,000.00	
Eastern Theol College - 50,000.00	

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Master, the Chairperson and all the members of the committee for helping us in effective implementation of this programme.

Books published:

1. *Introducing Communication & Media Studies to Theological Students: A Text Book* edited by John Joshva Raja & Margaret Kalaiselvi – Revised Version 2015
2. *Contours of Tribal Theology* edited by Lalramliana Pachuau, P. Mohan Larbeer & Wati Longchar
3. *Faiths Against Homophobia* edited by P. Mohan Larbeer & Christopher Rajkumar

4. *Journeys into the Deep: Hermeneutical Patterns of M.M. Thomas* edited by C.I. David Joy & P. Mohan Larbeer
5. *Spirituality: Towards a Comprehensive Perspective* edited by P. Mohan Larbeer & Santanu K. Patro
6. *Christian Theology: Indian Conversations* edited by Samuel George & P. Mohan Larbeer
7. *A Manual for Researchers & Writers* by Hunter P. Mabry – Reprint

Facilitation Circulars:

For information sharing and also for educational purpose, BTESSC distributed the following materials to all the members.

1. Dialogue Programme – Shivampally Declaration
2. PIEF Post on Israel and the Palestine issue
3. Article on GharVapasi by Dr.Simon Samuel
4. ITA Statement on Marriage and Family
5. CSAR Grant
6. Change of Principals of affiliated colleges
7. IASACT 2016 Programme Pamphlet
8. Call throughout Germany for BDS
9. Home Ministry directions regarding FCRA

Issues that need to be given importance:

- a. The seminaries need to be sensitive to the LGBT community and encourage them to do theological studies by giving preference in admission and also provide scholarship.
- b. Still many of the theological colleges have not introduced effectively the sexual harassment policy which is mandatory to the educational institutions. It is advisable to implement the BTESSC recommended policy since it includes the disabled, LGBT and HIV/AIDS affected people.

- c. BTESSC's great concern is to promote women to do theological education. Unfortunately, in the North and South India, very few women are studying theology especially at the post-graduate level. So, colleges should give importance to help women to do theological education.
- d. Women theological teachers need to be increased in all the colleges.
- e. The Senate should seriously think to change our education system to transformative system.

Finance:

As informed every year, the financial situation of BTESSC is not encouraging. Our major resource is the membership fees. But sorry to say that it is a difficult task for us to collect the membership fee from the members even though we decided in the last Board meeting that 30th August is the last day. So I request the members to send the membership fee before the end of August. We are also in a small way involved in local fund raising. Many of the programmes are partially supported by our members. But this cannot continue like this.

Transformative Theological Education and Future of Ecumenical Movement:

As I mentioned in the beginning, the Executive Committee decided to have the theme 'Transformative Theological Education and Future of Ecumenical Movement' as a theme not only for the Board Seminar and also as the theme for the year. The Committee took stock of the present scenario nationally and internationally and finally decided to have this theme for deliberations.

Traditionally, theological education has been dominated by a pseudo understanding of spiritual matters, salvation and personal sins the students we nurture inherited dogmas and sets of beliefs and traditions of the church and state. Protection of the church hierarchy and establishment dominated the spiritual formation. Even mission orientations were directed to the so-called non-believers. The tradition and teachings of the West were viewed as universal. Attention to the poor and the marginalized has been a priority of theological education only recently.

Transformative theological education involves creating awareness of the unjust system. It is directed towards helping ordinary people to fight for their own rights and to empower them. The marginalized people need awareness of their own rights because they have become a group of people without hope. 'Transform' means to undergo a complete change in character and condition. Transformative education is intended to bring about a total change in function and appearance of community life simultaneously in political, economic, cultural and social realms for change. This transformation can be achieved only when theological education is committed to serve the poor and the marginalized.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12: 1-2).

The text from Paul's letter to the Romans offers a framework for transformation. Paul is emphatic in suggesting that there is a negation: “do not conform,” and an affirmation: “be transformed.” He also offers a methodology “by the renewal of the mind.” The praxis of transformation goes far beyond reform. A reform of a structure or system does not call for a radical change. Reform retains the contours of structures: be it cultural, political or religious, but attempts to initiate minor changes. While this is valid in terms of bringing some immediate benefit to those negatively impacted by the structure, it does not enable the victim to explore liberation from the same.

Transformation on the other hand has a radical dimension. Applying botanical aspects to the functioning of the state as an example at transformation, would imply pulling the weeds out with its roots. Paul's call to discipleship is to be 'Christ like.' This calls for a radical turning around. At a recent seminar at the United Theological College (UTC), Bangalore, the speaker, Rajendara Sail, a Christian lawyer and a social activist from Chattisgarh, challenged the faculty and students to explore the contours of 'a cow-dung theology.' Raju and Sasi Sail who have lived all their lives as disciples of Jesus, engaged in peoples struggles for Justice and Peace, challenged the community at UTC to close down the seminary and spend a year in villages with the poor. What can we deduce from Raju's Cow-dung theology?

A theology that should emanate from the life experiences of women, children and men, Dalits and Adivasi, whose toil as agricultural workers and farmers feed the peoples of the world, the bread or *roti* of life. Toil in spite of prejudices, denials and discriminations. The ceaseless toil, against all odds, that affirms the life of millions. Cow-dung theology must be set in the frame of farmers' suicides in the country. According to the data from the National Crime Bureau, since 1991, 6 - 8 farmers in debt (Maharashtra alone), commit suicide every day. Simultaneous to the toil of the working class and peasants is the critique of an economy largely influenced by the market demands through state policies which deny the farmers their right to practice organic or natural methods of farming or / and their right to development. Hence, cow-dung versus chemical dependant fertilizer and pesticide.

A pedagogy of transformation is not motivated by pity but by justice. It is rooted in theological understanding that the work of God always brings about dynamic change. The involvement and work of God in chaos represents subversive action that is dynamic. God's work causes change. God brings down the old and builds up the new. Transformative theological education is an act of empowering the lame and opening the eyes of the blind, including through encouragement and awareness raising. Theological colleges cannot become ivory towers that isolate its students from the cries of the people demanding change in the unjust world structure. Cooperation between the Churches, Peoples Movements, NGOs, faith communities and theological education must take place so that the graduates can apply the call of faith in the midst of people's suffering.

Conclusion:

Thanks to all the Churches, Institutions and Organizations who supported us in organizing programmes and special thanks to Inter-Faith Coalition for Peace, Ethics and Theology Department of UTC, HMI, Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod, Commission on Communication and Relations of NCCI, Union Bible Seminary, Gossner Theological College, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore. Thanks also to our Overseas Partners - Foundation for Theological Education, ETE of WCC, Interfaith Dialogue Programme of WCC, Overseas Division of the Methodist Church in UK, EMW Germany, Church of Scotland, Common Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ, Karibu Foundation – Norway for their continuous

support. This year we look for new partnership with Dan Mission and Church of Sweden. I should make a special thanks to Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala, Rev. Dr. Peniel Rufus, Rev. Dr. Clare Amos, Rev. Dr. H.S. Wilson, Dr. Amele Ekue, Rev. Dr. Packiam Samuel and Rev. Dr. Lalramliana Pachuau for their personal commitment to our programmes.

My sincere thanks to our Master and to our President/Chairperson for their help and guidance. With their assured support, I was able to complete one more year. Thanks to our Registrar, Deans of SATHRI and SCEPTRE for their support. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to my colleagues Ms. Esthaleena Margaret, and Mr. Vasanth for their tireless work especially to Leena for her commitment to her responsibilities. Her long experience and knowledge about the Senate and Board is an asset to the Senate. A word of thanks to Rev. Arun Kumar Wesley who helps us by editing all our publications.

Once again I thank you all for your active participation in this Board Meeting and look for your continuous support in the coming years. Kindly pray for us.

P. Mohan Larbeer
Secretary

03.02.2016

Appendix No. 1
Theological Consultation on “Human Sexuality”
held at United Theological College, Bangalore
From 30th to 31st May 2015

REPORT

The Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) organised a two-day Theological Consultation on “Human Sexuality” from 30th to 31st May, 2015 at United Theological College, Bangalore for the post graduate and doctoral students. There were 35 students from 20 seminaries from all over India as participants.

The bottom line of this consultation was to listen to the friends from Sexually Diverse Communities (SDC) to educate, enrich and enlighten the participants through their life experiences, theological reflections and questions challenging the whole theological fraternity with the God-question.

The theological educators, academicians, counsellors and the Church leaders present responded to the questions and concerns raised by sexually diverse communities academically and ministerially.

These learnings have facilitated the students towards articulating four theological themes such as ‘communities of colours,’ ‘radical koinonia,’ ‘sexuality and the image of God’ and ‘the spirit that unites and liberates.’

Ms. Akkai Padmashali, Ms. Ranjitha, Mr. Manish and Ms. Jaganath Peacock from the sexually diverse communities served as the main resource people.

Rev. Dr. Dyanchand Carr, Dr. George Zachariah, Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar, Ms. Edwina Pereira, Fr. Dr. Selvaraj Arulnathan, Dr. Nalini Arles, Rev. Dr. David Selvaraj, Mr. Vinod Wesley, Rev. Christopher Rajkumar and Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer served as the facilitators and enablers of this consultation. The NCCI-National Ecumenical Forum of the Gender and Sexual Diversities designed and executed the consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

We, the participants of the BTESSC Theological Consultation on *Human Sexuality* with special focus on LGBTIQ communities affirm that human sexuality and its diversities are gifts of God. Thereby, we commit ourselves to work in making our Church and society becoming an “inclusive Rainbow community,” through conscientising individuals and faith communities and to actively participate in the struggles of sexually diverse communities, to embrace each other and to propagate and promote dignity and justice to all. We also confess our homophobic attitude which has discriminated and marginalized the sexually diverse people for centuries and will attempt for appropriate interpretations of our faith witness.

We invite the Churches at large, the Indian theological fraternity including the Serampore family to accompany us in this faith journey to promote the Christian gospel values of inclusion and justice “of” all and “for” all. Hence we propose the following suggestions:

1. To create a platform for articulating and developing theological and socio-scientific resources and materials for local congregations and theological institutions.
2. To organize learning events and equipping pedagogical methods through seminars, consultations, workshops and such on human sexuality where the Sexually Diverse Communities could share their experiences as facilitators, resources, and enablers.
3. To open the church gates and seminary doors for sexually diverse communities to come for counseling and fellowships.
4. To insist all the seminaries to offer a course on Human sexuality as a required course.
5. To request theological institutions to offer/reserve residential admissions for sexually diverse communities with full scholarships.
6. To encourage theological institutions, churches and other faith-related organizations to give education and employment opportunities.
7. To encourage the Field Education departments of the seminaries and the ministerial committees of the churches to send their candidates to organizations working with and among the sexually diverse communities for their internship/ministerial training.

Appendix No. 2

Shivarampally Declaration On “Christian–Muslim Conversation on Secularism and Democracy”

We, both Muslim and Christian participants, mostly students, also scholars and theologians from Christian and Islamic faiths, from different parts of Indian theological circles, came together for a three-day Conversation from 1st to 3rd September 2015 at the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad, titled “Christian-Muslim Dialogue on Secularism and Democracy in India.” This Conversation was organized by HMI and the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College.

The objective of this Conversation was to bring together people from Christian and Muslim faith backgrounds, especially students of theology, to discuss on contemporary conditions of communalism and other forces that disturb ‘The fabric of Secular and Democracy in India.’ Also the Conversation was intended to raise awareness of the problems, values, and possibilities of Interfaith Conversation of all faiths in the present situation for a renewed collective spirituality of co-living in a context where fundamentalism and communalism are thriving to rewrite the political secular history of India into a majoritarian-sectarian religious history, through appropriation of political governance.

Affirmation of Participants:

We the participants affirm that we are conscious through our faith understanding that we are all created by one God as a common humanity. We also affirm the presence of diverse faiths and collective living of human beings.

We learn that Islam and Christianity have different understandings of law and behaviour towards the State. In the understanding of Islam, only God has the sovereignty and affirms peace and justice and the co-existence of all people under His divine rule. In Christianity, we also affirm a worldly State that establishes social peace, that follows and believes in God regarding the God’s absolute rule now and

in the hereafter. We believe that Christians and Muslims, and all people must be accountable to God and the people at large.

We also learn that democratic and secular ideas can be found in the Holy Scriptures, and though they were not fully established in the times of their foundation, they were expanded in later traditions in both the religions.

God's secular nature and His being beyond religion shows us that He suffers with all the marginalized, is worshipped by all believers, and He (or She) wants peace and social justice for the whole common humanity.

Appeal:

We as students under the Senate of Serampore and related theological Institutes need more study facilities on the topic and issues of secularism in our education.

We call upon the people of these two faiths to have conversations between them, also between other faiths.

We call upon you to identify all communalism - within and outside our faiths - and distinguish between politics and religious issues to live in a plural secular democracy.

We call upon all faiths to promote and understand the values of a secular, religious-friendly democracy; fair share in the decision-making process of politics and public discussions, freedom of rights, religions, thoughts; safety and equality in terms of right.

We call upon all people of faith to focus on human rights and create an environment that supports diversity of faiths and thoughts according to the people, as we face unity in diversity on earth.

We negate communalism, social and religious oppression of minorities, and corrupt media. We encourage all democratic media and politicians to affirm the secular and democratic ideals and that all people must support dialogue and understanding in public and within our own communities.

We also call all people of this democratic secular country of India to study about religions, traditions, politics and history to understand the present situation so that we are independent of corrupt media and politics.

Appendix No. 3

Concern on Mushrooming of Theological Degrees (A Joint Statement of Asia Theological Association and Senate of Serampore College)

This is to inform the general public and in particular to the Christian communities of India that Asia Theological Association, India (ATA) and the Senate of Serampore College (SSC) are very much concerned with the rise of theological degrees offered indiscriminately and nomenclatures created without any justification. This brings down the standard of higher theological education as well as the degrees that are offered in India. Therefore, it is in the interest of theological education and the Indian Church, we issue an advisory/ statement as follows:

1. We appeal that the Christian leaders, including lay leaders to refrain from accepting such honorary degrees and even otherwise which are offered by individual institutions without any credential in imparting theological education at a higher level. While some institutions do not impart theological education, yet they offer degrees such as Ph.D, D.Th, D.Theol etc., as a reward for their ministry.
2. Academic theological degrees are not offered for merely being in the ministry. In most cases, the candidates do not meet the basic qualification requirement to receive such degrees.
3. ATA and SSC do not give permission to its accrediting and affiliating institutions any power or permission to confer any degrees particularly PhD and honorary DD degrees.
4. Churches and Christian communities are called to discern whether the person/s who has/have received awards, has/have any academic degrees or credentials prior to receiving degrees such as M.Th and PhD/D.Th/D Theol/DD, whether one has any credible academic work or any outstanding contributions to Church and society.

5. Institutions and churches should not recognise such degrees by such dubious prefixes or mentioning such academic degrees while addressing them.

Such Institutions are not recognised either by Asia Theological Association or by the Senate of Serampore College (University), the largest accrediting and affiliating bodies in India respectively of academic theological degrees. To know whether a degree is either recognised by ATA or Senate, please contact these respective bodies.

BOARD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF THE SENATE OF SERAMPORE COLLEGE
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