

BOARD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF THE SENATE OF SERAMPORE COLLEGE(UNIVERSITY) (BTESSC)

The history of the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College(University) (BTESSC) begins with the Serampore Mission carried out by William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Word in 1818 at Serampore. As part of their mission they founded the Serampore College which was incorporated by the Royal Charter in 1827 with university rights to confer degrees. It was in 1918, that an Act was passed by the Bengal Legislative Council to that effect, and consequently the Council of Serampore College was enlarged and the Senate of Serampore College was constituted.

From the very beginning the Senate of Serampore College was ecumenical in its character drawing its resources, personal and students from various Christian communities in India. In order to strengthen and to broaden the ecumenical dimension of theological education, the Senate of Serampore College in the year 1975 joined hands with the Board of Theological Education which was functioning under the auspices of the National Council of Churches in India to create BTESSC as one national structure for ecumenical theological education in India.

The Senate of Serampore College (University) is the largest theological university in the world and it is the only recognized theological university in India. Of the 66 members in BTESSC, 50 are theological colleges and 16 are institutions. The colleges as well as the institutions are spread throughout India in different states as Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar kant, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, kerala, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram etc. Serampore also has a few affiliated colleges in Srilanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

Most of these colleges offer the B.D. and some of them offer B.TH course. Ten colleges offer post graduate courses, and six colleges and SATHRI offer the D.TH. Other than these courses, the Senate also offers courses such as B.C.S., M.C.S., D.Min and a number of diploma courses for lay people.

SATHRI is the research wing of the Senate, which came into being to deal with the promotion of contextualized theological research both at the degree and non degree levels, to promote faculty development, to strengthen centers for research, to produce basic tools for theological education, to arrange programmes that would strengthen the relationship between the church and theological education and to deal with publishing research work.

All the theological colleges are involved in various activities like evangelism, rural and urban ministry, community building, social action, healing, civil and human rights, inter-faith dialogue, people's movements, ecological conservation etc., along with grounding the students in sound ecumenical and theological education.

On the whole, the ecumenical theological education imparted through the BTESSC is based on the hope that it would promote the formation, equipment and empowerment of the leadership personnel for the Ministry and Mission for the church in the world and for theological education of the church as a whole.

There are a few challenges before the BTESSC:

- Need for developing a new and relevant paradigm for ecumenical theological education in the context of growing fundamentalist and conservative theological voices.
- To strengthen the solidarity of those who are adversely affected by the forces of market economy mainly the poor and the marginalized, and to deepen the search for an alternative world order based on justice, peace and participation.
- To facilitate our theological education to reflect the idea of the struggle for identity by the marginal people as it is basically the struggle for justice and participation and therefore it must have an open ended and inclusive perspective.
- To develop a theological perspective on ecology that is Asian in essence and spirit.

Our priorities therefore are to strengthen the relationship between the church and theological education, to facilitate a new pedagogy that attempts to integrate the day to day experiences of the people and the theological students, and the experiences of the class room and the reality outside in the context of the new challenges that are facing our faith and life. And also to think about the financial viability that is required to promote these aims. As such that support from Indian churches are very less and the external assistance for various reasons is dwindling. There is thus a financial crisis in most of our theological colleges and in BTESSC as a whole.

We need your participation and support in implementing these aims. We therefore earnestly solicit your co-operation for the following programmes,

1. Scholarship support to poor students from backward areas.
2. Support to Faculty Development Programme
3. Library Development from poor Seminaries
4. Theological Education to Lay People
5. Capacity building for women
6. Programme to develop Church relationship
7. Pastors training Programme

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Chairperson, BTESSC

