



June 2012

This new e-letter on evangelism of the World Council of Churches comes as a response to the need to commit anew to Evangelism, in search of fresh approaches for the proclamation of the Word of God.

As the new programme executive on evangelism in unity, in this first brief editorial let me take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for the privilege to serve in a programmatic area with such a long history that has contributed so much to ecumenical developments.

The aim of this newsletter is to stimulate reflection on new ways of carrying forth Christian witness, inspired and motivated by the mutual sharing of stories and of reflections on evangelism.

To this end, you are all invited to share with us your own thoughts, reflections, stories to be included in the upcoming issues. All selected contributions will be clustered in thematic areas and will go through an editing process.

In this issue the first article is about the CWME pre-Assembly mission event, 22 to 27 March 2012, Manila, Philippines. The second article shared by the moderator of CWME, Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos of Niranam, India is on an example of “outreach evangelism” carried out in India. The third article, by Rev. Dr Claudia Währisch-Oblau, executive secretary for evangelism of the United Evangelical Mission in Germany, is on the mission of casting out demons.



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Thankful for your ongoing commitment
to the call for common witness

In Christ,
Kyriaki Avtzi

Programme Executive
Evangelism in Unity
World Council of Churches

CWME Pre-Assembly Mission Event

Manila-Philippines 2012

More than 200 people met in Manila, 22nd to 27th March 2012 to review the draft version of the new Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes”. The received feedback has been incorporated in the revised statement, to be presented in the 10th General Assembly of the WCC in Busan, Korea in 2013. The document was received with appreciation for its comprehensive and inclusive writing, as a helpful tool for the churches.



Participants of WCC/CWME Pre-Assembly Mission Event, Manila, 2012
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Particular appreciation was expressed for the fresh openness it brings with its pneumatological approach to mission. The four main thematic areas comprising the statement are: the Spirit of Mission, the Spirit of Liberation, the Spirit of Community and the Spirit of the Pentecost, respectively touching upon the area of spirituality, the margins, ecclesiology and evangelism.

Spirituality, as the breath of Life, through the Spirit of mission obtains a transformative character, which expands all over Creation, in an abundance of spiritual gifts. Mission from the margins is steered by the Spirit of liberation, as through struggle and resistance mission seeks out justice and inclusivity for the healing and the wholeness of all. The Spirit of community empowers the life and the unity of the Church in mission. Authentic Evangelism, in the Spirit of Pentecost brings the Good News for all, transcending cultural barriers, integrating proclamation and service in Christian presence. The statement concludes by affirming, among other, the fullness of life as the purpose of God's mission, the source of energy for which is spirituality.



Youth from churches in the Philippines perform in the opening ceremony of the CWME Mission event.

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Outreach Evangelism in India

by Bishop Dr Geevarghese Mor Coorilos

I have had the privilege of providing some leadership to the St. Paul's Mission of India, the missionary organization of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in India, for the past few years. St. Paul's Mission of India is a unique mission activity of our Church in that its particular emphasis has been on "outreach evangelism" which is not very common in the Orthodox world of mission. In the Indian context of caste domination and discrimination, "outreach evangelism" has a particular relevance. Caste system which is an integral part of Brahmanic Hinduism and it has enslaved Dalits for centuries. Unfortunately, some of the

Christian traditions in India, such as the Syrian Churches in India have internalized and appropriated caste system in their ecclesial life. As a result, these church traditions have by and large remained as exclusive caste communities, either excluding Dalits from their ecclesial fellowship or treating them as second class members wherever they are admitted. The caste mentality of Syrian church communities in India has also generated a negative approach to mission and evangelism since these would result in inviting and integrating Dalits and other communities into their fellowship.



A group of activists from India campaign for Dalits' rights.
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The outreach ministry of evangelism that the St. Paul's Mission of India has been doing in various parts of India has effectively challenged this traditional caste exclusiveness of the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in India. With almost fifty mission fields in about 16 states in India, this mission work has brought thousands of Dalits and Adivasis into the Syrian Orthodox Church which was almost unthinkable until recently. I have been blessed to have had several opportunities to witness personally this silent revolution that is taking place within my church. Some of the most spiritually rewarding experiences in

my pastoral ministry have been those occasions when I worshipped with these new converts and shared Holy Communion with them. As I said, this is nothing short of a revolution as common worship and inter communion with Dalits are still deemed unacceptable to several caste minded people within my church tradition.

While this has resulted in a revival of interest in mission and evangelism within the Syrian Orthodox Church in India, it has also radically altered the ecclesiological landscape of the Church in India. St. Paul's Mission and its evangelism work among Dalits and Adivasis have simultaneously challenged the caste mentality and the system of discrimination both within and outside the Church. The gospel of liberation and dignity in Jesus Christ has given the new converts from Dalits and Adivasis a new sense of worth, dignity, and humanity. My prayer is that the Syrian Church traditions in India will be further

challenged by these liberating activities of evangelism that bring dignity and self worth to millions of Dalits and Adivasis who continue to be dehumanized and oppressed in India and through this liberate the Church herself from its exclusive caste mentality and practices.

The Mission of Casting Out Demons

by Rev. Dr Claudia Währisch-Oblau

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he did not only commission them to preach, but also told them “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.” (Matthew 10:8) The immediacy and simplicity of these commandments tends to raise uneasy feelings among many Protestants. Trained in western academic theology, we tend to read this verse metaphorically: The healing ministry (including the fight against leprosy) is delegated to Christian hospitals and diaconic institutions, and raising the dead means bringing people to a new life in Christ through evangelism. And casting out demons? This is something Protestants don't talk about. The United Evangelical Mission is a communion of 35 Protestant churches in Africa, Asia and Germany which cooperate in holistic mission. For some years now, we have realized that we can no longer ignore the issue of witchcraft and demon beliefs. To take just two examples: Our member churches in Tanzania have witnessed the killing of Albinos by people who wanted to use their body parts in magic rituals that were supposed to help them gain wealth and success. People from our member churches in North Sumatra, Indonesia, have been involved in driving out or even killing fellow villagers suspected of



A small statue named “The Power of Prayer” represents a prophetic figure of the church protecting the globe and pushing back unforeseen dangers.
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harboring an evil spirit. We have realized that it is not enough to speak out against such atrocities as human rights violations, and that an enlightenment approach – telling people that demons do not exist – does not take people's fears seriously. The fear of demons and witchcraft is a spiritual issue that also needs a spiritual answer. If the aim of mission is that people find life abundantly (John 10:10), they must also be freed from spiritual affliction and oppression. So how can we understand and practice a ministry of deliverance from evil spirits, witchcraft, or occult powers? Two “Think Tanks”, one in Asia and one in Africa, have tried to define a theological basis for such a ministry and develop some pastoral guidelines. The papers they produced are meant as a basis for further discussion and reflection.

The UEM documents affirm that deliverance ministry is a ministry of prayer in which God's power overcomes any evil and life-denying power. It is a healing and reconciling ministry that encompasses spiritual, psychological, social and political dimensions. It is a task of the whole church, even though there may be Christians who are specifically gifted for this. Those who engage in this ministry should be trained for it and live lives of spiritual discipline. Deliverance ministries should be done in groups and be closely connected to local congregations.

Calendar of Upcoming Events:



26-29 June 2012

Vatican II, 50 Years on: The New Evangelization

A Conference hosted by Leeds Trinity University College in conjunction with the Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University.

Venue: Leeds Trinity University College, Leeds, UK

Please send your comments, proposals, stories or reflections to the email:

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