

## GENERAL SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

***“Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.  
For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.” Psalm 95:2-3***

I thank and praise God for His divine presence, guidance and mercies showered, as we ,the delegates from 27 Dioceses along with, the ex-officio members, fraternal delegates and overseas friends gathered for the 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Synod of the Church of North India, pondering over the theme – *“The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few....” (Luke10:2)*. It was the blessed time to experience God's *‘Amazing Grace’, ‘Loving Mercy’ and ‘Abiding Peace.’* It was an opportunity to strengthen our spiritual union with each other, working together for one mission ... *the very Mission given by our Lord*. It was also time to deliberate on the critical issues of the Church – its present status, challenges ahead and way forward. It was also a time when we tried to understand as to what we, as a Church, have been able to do through our different ministries and what is our vision for the Church of North India.

We recognize that we live in a context where there are tremendous challenges to every citizen of this country and the space for public dissent is shrinking. Freedom of conscience is being eroded away with the push to fall in line with dominant ideology. In the name of development, communities are pitted against each other, for political benefits. Along with this we also notice that there is a curb in religious freedom. The fundamental right that, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and to propagate religion of one’s choice, is there with riders. In the current situation we see a denial of the rights of conscience and choice of religion to people of schedule caste background, particularly Dalits as they lose their reservations and benefits and protection if they convert to Christianity. Anti-conversion laws are euphemistically named as freedom of religion bills in many of our states .Hence we recognize the challenging context of caste, of freedom of religion, of untouchability, of fundamentalism, of poverty and of patriarchy. Such a context calls for a response and necessitates proclamation of the word of God. The right and contextual theological education is the need to equip and empower pastors and lay leaders for effective engagement in mission.

We believe that God has appointed us as stewards of his creation. In a context where the environment is exploited under the guise of development, we are called to stop that exploitation and be care takers of God’s creation so that it may be a blessing to the future generations. Migrants and refugees are exploited and pushed out of their countries all around the world. The Bible challenges us to welcome the stranger and the foreigner and open our doors to them. The church is called to act in a counter cultural way showing God’s love to all people. Presence of youth and women in the governance of the Church and specifically among the clergy needs to be ensured even if seats are to be reserved for them .Church in India is much needed today ,to be an instrument of justice ,peace , hope and courage.

During the Synod meeting we had also had an opportunity of hearing encouraging voices. General Secretary WCC, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit reminded us that the Church of North India has a wonderful history as a united church and that it has a lot to contribute for the unity of the whole church. The General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson looks at the CNI as one of the leaders in the Ecumenical movement in this part of the world. Delegates from our own dioceses have expressed satisfaction that the CNI has already initiated talks on further unity among churches in India.

Three years ago during the 15<sup>th</sup> Synod meeting at Nainital, the CNI Synod had taken a prayerful decision, to celebrate the 2014–17 as Mission Evangelism Triennium throughout the CNI. The same decision has been reiterated and the Synod has decided to celebrate 2017-2020 again as the triennium for Mission Evangelism and to pursue the Great Commission - *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"*.

With this refreshed and renewed vision, the Church of North India continues its journey to fulfill the mission of the Lord - the responsibility to proclaim the gospel so that the good news of God's love reaches every heart and touches every soul.

With prayerful wishes,

Yours in His Mission.

**ALWAN MASIH**  
**Editor in Chief**  
**The North India Church Review**