



THE INDIAN LUTHERAN E-NEWS

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NEW UELCI OFFICE BEARERS ELECTED - 27TH TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) held its 27th Triennial Conference in Inter-Church Service Association, Chennai. "Overcome Evil with Good" was the theme of the November 27-29, 2008 Conference. Around 150 delegates including the Presidents/Bishops/Moderators, Vice-Presidents, Executive Committee members, Secretaries and Treasurers of the eleven member churches of UELCI, Chairpersons and Secretaries of each Desk attended the Conference.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Devasahayam, Bishop, CSI, Madras Diocese in his keynote address, extensively quoted the violence against hapless Christians in the Orissa debacle. Speaking on the theme he noted, "Suffering is not God's will," and added "How do we respond to the suffering as Christian is what is important". Rev. Dr. Augustine Jeyakumar in the Executive Secretary's report focused on the projects and programmes of UELCI and on the challenges of being in the communion today. Significant challenges in the present context on various issues such as climate change, gender justice, HIV/AIDS, emergency and development, role of youth, dalit/Adivasi concerns, peace and reconciliation, growing gap between the rich and poor, and the necessity for constructive relationships between people of different religious convictions were highlighted in the reports of the respective desks.

With immense gladness we bring the news of inclusion of one more Lutheran church, Nepal Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, in the UELCI family which now has the privilege of serving 12 member churches. Following are the new office bearers elected who will serve the Lutheran fraternity in India in the following triennium.

President - Rt. Rev. Godwin Nag, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States

Vice President – Rt. Rev. Dr. H. A. Martin, Bishop, Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church
Vice President – Mrs. Manikumari Christopher, Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church
Vice President – Mr. Sem Hemrom, Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church
Executive Secretary, UELCI & LWF National Committee (India) – Rev. Dr. A. G. Augustine Jeyakumar, Arcot Lutheran Church
Joint Secretary – Mr. Ramesh Khosla, Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church
Treasurer – Mr. Jaya Rao, South Andhra Lutheran Church

Their contacts could be found in the following web address.

<http://www.uelci.org/office-bearers.asp>

- Information & Communication Desk

SOUTH ASIAN LUTHERAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Seventy five delegates representing Bangladesh, India, Srilanka and Thailand gathered together for the Indian Lutheran Women's IX Triennial conference and South Asian Lutheran Women's Conference held in Chennai between 24 and 26 November 2008. The theme for the conference was "Witnessing to Christ in hostility".

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The different sessions included:

- *Gender Ethics & Visibility of Women in Church and Society*
- *Breaking Barriers in addressing HIV/AIDS & Gender Based Violence with special focus on stigma and discrimination*
- *Biblical hermeneutics from women's perspectives*
- *Churches' response to Climate change*
- *Legal framework to assert women's rights as Human Rights*
- *Holistic Approach to Women's Health Care*
- *Cultural Violence Against Women – Victimization to full humanhood*

The participants had the privilege to receive valuable inputs from the rich experienced resource team. The discussions centered on Christians' witness in varied difficult situations in South Asia. Concerns were raised about growing religious fundamentalism, peoples' intolerance leading to communal violence, terrorism, climate change & natural disaster and women ordination. The keynote speaker focused on the time for public leadership, time for public witness and time for public deliberation. The participants recommitted themselves to continue to build awareness on varied issues in the local congregations. Concrete action plans were drawn by the church women. We hope and pray that their plans would be implemented in the congregations for God's glory.

- **WICAS, UELCI**

WORLD AIDS DAY

On World AIDS Day HIV/AIDS awareness programmes were held in most of the Schools of the Member Churches of UELCI. Government officials working in the field of HIV/AIDS were invited for the respective programmes. The programmes started with devotion and Bible Study on good character, moral life and health by the local pastors. The Resource elucidated the aims and importance of HIV/AIDS awareness in the church and society. They also spoke on the personality with good moral character and emphasized on the importance of good health habits. Following were the topics discussed during the programmes.

- *Invest in youth leadership*
- *Address HIV in the context of young people's realities*
- *Take positive steps to promote and protect young people's rights*
- *Ensure access to comprehensive life skills education*
- *Make sexual and reproductive health services more accessible to young people*

The participation of local community women and the congregation women leaders is noteworthy. By this program participants came to realize that they are equally responsible to their family and to the society.

- **Dr. Evelyn, Coordinator,
HIV/AIDS PROGRAMMES DEPT., UELCI**

FLOOD RELIEF OPERATION

The October and November 2008 floods in the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa caused ruin in various places and heavily affected the normal walks of life among all people especially those living in the rural parts of the states. Their main source of livelihood which is agriculture was severed by the torrential downpour. This produced considerable loss to their investments and income. Many villages were severely affected and this prevented the villagers' commutation. Though the respective State Governments took steps in relief measures still more help was needed to reach the entire lot. This gave an opportunity for UELCI/ACT to pitch in and meet the needs of the victims. Spot visits and surveys were done in the affected areas and the relief materials were distributed to 3000 families in 6 districts in Tamilnadu, 2000 families in 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh and 1500 families in 4 districts in Orissa.

- **Division of Social Action, UELCI**

CHURCHES' CONCERN TOWARD DALITS

A three-day dalit seminar was organised by Dalit desk of UELCI at Tenalli, Andhra Pradesh during November 19 – 21, 2008 at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar College. The theme of the programme is Church - Dalit Concerns and Young Leaders. The programme was inaugurated by the President Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), Rt. Rev. Dr. V. E. Christopher.

Forty participants from AELC and twenty four participants from South Andhra Lutheran Church (SALC) and Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church (GSELC), and from the local congregations attended this seminar. Rev. Dr. A. G. Augustine Jeyakumar, Executive Secretary, UELCI in his address spoke on Dalit awareness and the contribution of Dalit leaders.

- **Dalit & Adivasi Concerns Desk**

LUTHERAN WOMEN RETREAT

Around 148 women gathered on 2nd October 2008 at TELC Arputhanathar Lutheran Church for one day retreat. The theme chosen for the day was "...a new heaven and new earth..." (Rev. 21:1). In addition to the main message, there were special sessions on climate change and economic empowerment through formation of Self Help Groups. The participants were helped to understand the related issues and they committed to mobilize women of the rural congregation to form Self Help Groups and to encourage plantation program in the local congregations. The women secretary also updated them on the communal violence due to religious intolerance in different states of the country. Special intercessory prayers were offered for peace in the country and for the victims of violence.

- **WICAS, UELCI**

UELCI NATIONAL YOUTH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Prior to the UELCI 27th Triennial Conference, Youth Desk called for the National Executive Committee inviting youth secretaries from the 11 member churches on November 25, 2008 at ICOSA, Chennai. The meeting began with devotion followed by the presentation of one year report of the Youth Secretary of UELCI. The Youth Secretaries of the respective member churches presented their report by sharing the youth related programmes held in their respective places/congregations. After the report presentations a special sharing of youth challenges facing the present situation both within the church and the society were discussed both at national and regional level. These were drafted as recommendations which were

submitted for approval in the Triennial Conference. The committee meeting ended with the chairperson's remarks and closed with prayer and benediction.

- **Youth Desk**

COMMUNITY HALL DEDICATION

A very economically backward Dalit community lives in the area of Adavuladeevi village and its surrounding in the Repalli Mandal, Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. UELCI/ACT constructed a Community hall for the community where UELCI and ACT International had built fifty permanent houses. The dedication of the same was held on October 25, 2008. The inaugural address was shared by Rev. Dr. V. E. Christopher, Bishop, Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) followed by the welcome address by Mrs. Mary Grace Raj Kishore Secretary, AELC. Mr. Richard Sarker, Asia Regional Representative, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America dedicated the newly constructed Community Hall. Rev. Dr. A. G. Augustine Jeyakumar, Executive Secretary, UELCI, in his greetings told the people of the village to rethink their social situation and to make use of the community hall for various functions which was lacking for the past years. The local leaders and social workers and people of the other community and faiths appreciated the effort taken by UELCI/ACT.

PERMANENT HOUSES DEDICATION

Shri. Rajendra Ratnoo, District Collector, Cuddalore, Mr. John Nduna, Director, ACT International, and Rev. Dr. Augustine Jeyakumar, Executive Secretary, UELCI dedicated 100 permanent houses in Manthoppu, Pethankuppam and Indira villages of the Cuddalore district in Tamilnadu on October 16, 2008. A Community Hall was also dedicated in Nayakarpettai village in the same district. Mr. Kishore Kumar Nag, Director, DSA, UELCI was also present during the ceremony.

- **Division of Social Action, UELCI**

Visit UELCI's website. You can logon to www.uelci.org to know the news and information about UELCI, the activities of its various wings and its member churches.

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI), is a communion of eleven member churches spread out in many parts of the country, with a membership of approximately 1.5 to 2 million. The Lutheran Communion in India is predominantly Dalit and Adivasi. Each member church has its own unique cultural and historical context, with different mission histories. UELCI is committed to working with poor and the marginalized with a commitment to a participatory methodology and also with a long-term development accompaniment. The communion in India along with the ecumenical community had celebrated the tercentenary of the first Protestant mission to India on July 9, 2006. The communion has played a pivotal role in promoting ecumenical theology of justice and life. We affirm that we participate in the 'Missio Dei' as a communion of churches in the midst of struggles.

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