

Building Life-Affirming Communities:

Face To Face with the many poor and the many faiths in Asia

For several years now the Council for World Mission has been involved in the organization of cross cultural exchange to enable a wider global dialogue on theology, spirituality and mission. One of the means for facilitating this dialogue has been through the Face to Face programme which enabled the immersion of students from different parts of the world into a context different from their own. It was hoped that this immersion would enable theological students to reflect on both the motivation and method of mission in different parts of the globe and bring this reflection back to their own contexts.

Over the last few years however, the Council for World Mission has moved away from just inter-cultural missional immersions towards a deeper engagement with the socio-political realities that were affecting different parts of the globe. This marked movement from inculturation to contextualization was an outcome of the Council for World Mission's statement on Mission which insists that resistance to Empire is essential to mission.

Several years ago, Fr. Aloysius Pieris argued against Latin American formulations of liberation theology arguing that the Asian context did not only have to take into account the many poor but also needed to take into account the many faiths. There can be no doubt that doing theology in India means engaging with these two realities and the interconnections that lie between them. After all these are not disconnected realities, more often than not religion has been used to reinforce the status quo and is used for the legitimization of both exploitative poverty and the immoral accumulation of wealth. At the same time religious resources have also been galvanized towards the resistance of demonic systems of exploitation.

The Face to Face programme in India will therefore be concentrating on these two contexts to enable the students who participate in this programme to be able to both experience these two realities while being offer an opportunity to theologically reflect on them.

The programme will involve three separate but integrated aspects, immersion, reflection and seminars. Conducted at two locations, Bishop's College, Kolkata and Henry Martin Institute, Hyderabad, the effort would be to bring exposure and reflection together. The exposures will include live in experiences, visiting organizations that work among the poor and intensive visits to centres of religious importance.

Alongside exposures the students will also be accompanied to biblically and theologically reflect on these experiences. This will be done through sharing sessions, Bible studies and required readings.

Further two seminars, one on reading the Bible in the context of poverty and one on Inter-Faith dialogue, will be organized involving leaders in the field. Both seminars will necessarily include local theological students to enable a wider interaction. The Bible Study workshop will also offer tools on re-reading the Bible in different contexts.

Objectives

- To enable theological students to engage in a global dialogue on theology, spirituality and mission
- To enable intercultural exchange and theological reflection
- To facilitate immersion programmes, Bible Studies and Seminars which would enable students to reflect on doing mission in the context of Empire
- To engage students with the specifically Asian context of the many religions and the many poor

Expected Outcomes

- The organization of two seminars, one on re-reading the Bible in the context of poverty and one on inter-faith dialogue.
- A reflective online blog that is updated by the students on a regular basis
- Contributing towards creating a global network of young theologians
- Offering native students and local communities the richness of inter-cultural exchange.

Who is this for

This is open to students of Theology; either currently enrolled or has already graduated, but are not ordained ministers.

Programme Dates

The Programme will be from **24th February to 8th April 2017.**

Where is it

Through the entire programme the participants will be located on the campus of the Henry Martin Institute, Hyderabad or Bishop's College, Kolkata and will have opportunities of engaging with the theological students and faculty resident there.

CWM Research and Capacity Development Unit administers the Face to Face Programme. However, the actual implementation is a shared responsibility among CWM, the sending church/college, the host college, and the participant.

The Council for World Mission will arrange for and will cover the participant's international travel, accommodation and meal expenses throughout the Programme, including stipend during the field placements. The Participants will need to arrange for their own passport and required visa, including transit visas if necessary. They may seek assistance from the Church/college. **CWM will not cover cost of passport nor process the participant's visa requirements.** Participants will need to bring extra spending money for expenses outside those covered by CWM. They are expected to prepare an individual paper under the guidance of a college advisor, which critically reflects on their experience. This Programme is not designed to form part of any other degree or diploma course, however the paper may be included in the assessment process for the participant's academic coursework, subject to prior agreement with the participant's home college. CWM may also consider these papers for publication.

How to Apply

Interested applicants may contact the General Secretary of the Denomination Church or the Principal of the Theological College. Application forms may also be downloaded from the CWM website at: **www.cwmission.org**. You may also contact Sudipta Singh, Mission Secretary – Research and Capacity Development at (email): **empowerment@cwmission.org**.

Duly completed application must be submitted via email at the above-mentioned email address or at hard copy to this address: *Research and Capacity Development Unit, 60 Paya Lebar Road, #11-14 Paya Lebar Square, Singapore 409051.*

Deadline of application is on 15th November 2016.