

Nagaland Report  
Exec. Comm; March 2015

A phone call in July 2014 served as the opening for God's liminal space of love and grace. ABC/USA president, Don Ng, called to extend an invitation to travel to Nagaland, India and meet with the Nagaland Baptist Council of Churches for their Triennial Convention. Following the phone call came an email from Rev. Dr. L. Anjo Keikung, General Secretary of the NBCC, issuing his invitation for me and my husband, Fred, to join them from February 3-12 for the convention and a brief tour of this amazingly gorgeous state of India.

So, in the midst of one of this winter's fierce snowstorms, Fred and I left Indiana on February 1 for Nagaland. At the Newark airport we joined International Ministries' Executive Director, Reid Trulson, and his daughter, Emma for the journey. The four of us landed in Jorhat, Assam on February 3 where we were graciously greeted by American Baptist missionary, Katie Longkumer and Rev. Dr. Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary of the Council of Baptist Churches of Northeast India (CBCNEI).

After spending the night at the TABCOM Guest House on the campus of Eastern Theological College in Jorhat, we began the trip to Mon, Nagaland for the convention. As Rev. Dr. Chemyuh, Executive Secretary of the Konyak Baptist Bumeinok Bangjum (Association), says, "Even most people of Nagaland have never been to Mon!" That's because the road is one continuous bump of four inch deep potholes☺! Yet, the trip was well worth the bumps! We attended the convention from February 4-8 in an all-bamboo convention center that held over 2,000 people-not a nail or piece of steel in the entire magnificent structure! Both Reid Trulson and I spoke twice during the convention. We were blessed with choirs and small ensembles from the Nagaland Baptist colleges and seminaries as well as gifted with the eloquence of many dignitaries who brought greetings to this esteemed body of Baptists. A highlight of the convention was a cultural programme called "Exploring the land of Angh". Rice pounding song, gong beating, pottery and gun powder making demonstrations, and war dances brought us into the life of the Konyak tribe's rich and beautiful history.

From the convention we travelled to Dimapur via Assam. Along the way we learned the value of the drivers employed by the NBCC. One vehicle's ball joint broke. The driver immediately set out to repair and through the wonder of Baptists' networking a new ball joint was found and the car repaired!

The remainder of our visit found us on the campuses of one Baptist College and two seminaries. We arrived in Kohima and spent time at NBCC's headquarters. A highlight of the trip was ride up a mountain where we stopped to look out over a valley where the North East India Baptist University will be located. The Baptists of CBCNEI are all working together to see this dream come to fruition. Many North East India Baptist students face persecution and severe mistreatment when they attend university in other places. By building this university the Baptists will take the lead in preparing the next generation of leaders for North East India as well as protecting the lives of their young people. Rev. Dr. L. Anjo Keikung steps down as General Secretary of NBCC to take on the role of chancellor and fund raiser for this endeavor.

Our sisters and brothers of Nagaland and all of North East India carry a deep connection with American Baptists since our missionaries brought the Good News of God's love in Christ to

them. They look to us for wisdom, leadership, and, they are in hopes that we will provide resources so the dream of a university can become reality. They also have asked for Sunday School curriculum samples for both adults and children as well as used books for the NBCC library (theology, Christian Ed., spirituality, ethics, church leadership, etc...)

It is my hope that we prayerfully and creatively consider our continuing relationship with these faithful Baptist sisters and brothers. We will want to explore options for how we might give support to the development of the university. Would we participate with IM? Would we provide a means for Baptists from CBCNEI and NBCC to visit us as a way of connecting them with individuals in the American Baptist churches who would offer support? Would we find ways to assist them through Palmer grants and other means?

I am grateful for the privilege of being in the presence of such deeply committed Baptist believers. Fred and I are forever blessed by their hospitality, joy, faith, music, energy, mass prayer, and love. As a way of prayerfully reflecting, I wrote cinquain poems nearly every day. I leave this report with this poem in response to their beautiful music:

Nagas  
Harmonious, Lyrical  
Engaging, Impacting, Expressing  
People faithfully lifting voices  
Songs

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Judith Fackenthal  
Vice-President, ABC/USA