



COVENANT 2026

A bimonthly bulletin of COVENANT BAPTIST CHURCH DIMAPUR

ISSUE #18 / MAY - JUNE

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

- Sunday Service : 10:00 am
- Youth Express : Saturday 5:00 pm
- Sunday School : Sunday 10:00 am
- Board Meeting : Once a month
- Women's Fellowship : 2nd Saturdays
- Prayer Meeting : Wednesdays at 6:00 pm
- Men's Prayer Breakfast : 2nd Saturdays at 7am
- Holy Communion : Once a month
- Crossover Fellowship : Once a month
- Nagamese Fellowship : Sundays at 4:30 pm

VISION

- To glorify God and advance His Kingdom.
- To strive to bring men and women to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.
- To build a vibrant and worshipping community.
- To share and propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ here and beyond.

MISSION

- To make disciples of all nations beginning within our community in and around us.
- To be Christ centered in our worship, preaching, teaching, fellowship and all Christian related ministry.
- To reach the unreached within the community and beyond.

Soul Food

Revival Within

Pastor Yabang Longkumer

Dr. William MacKay wrote the hymn "Revive Us Again" where he takes us on his journey from despair to spiritual renewal. Though raised by a Godly mother, the pressures of academic life may have led him to a path of moral decline and heavy drinking. His addiction was so bad that in desperation he even sold the Bible his mother had given him. However, while serving as a doctor, his life took a dramatic change where he met a young mason helper who he was attending to. Despite his critical condition this young man always managed to have a happy expression on his face. Unfortunately, he passed away due to life-threatening injuries. Since this young man had no family, his belongings, which included a Bible, were handed over to Dr. William. To his utter shock it was his own Bible which his mother had given him. It was at this point that Dr. William realised that the Bible had given this dying

man comfort and strength despite his circumstances. In the story behind this hymnal I quote, "Be it sufficient to say that the regained possession of my Bible was the cause of my conversion. The story of William MacKay and "Revive Us Again" is more than just a piece of hymnological history; it is a narrative of redemption, a demonstration of the transformative power of God's word, and a call to revival that transcends time and circumstance".

Dr William Mackay may have sold the Bible but the very Bible that he sold came back to him, transforming and reviving him. Thus, inspiring him to write this beautiful hymn "Revive us Again". We all need a revival within, to be revived again by His divine grace. You and I today may be far away from God, but God is never far away from us. He loves you and he cares for you. He wants to fellowship with you. The people of God were reminded in 2 Chronicles 7:14, where it says, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." This verse speaks volumes of the importance of repentance and seeking God's presence as a means of experiencing spiritual revival. Revival on the inside does not just happen unless we are willing to humble ourselves, identify the areas where we have gone wrong and seek His Face. Friends, what a beautiful reminder for all those who are burdened and lost. To know that we have a God who is ready to revive us, leave your brokenness at the feet of the cross, trust in Him and He will do the rest.

Mission Committee Report

Four members representing CBCD went to the mission field at Assam on the 31st of May. Prof. Yanger shared the Word of God to the congregation based on Mathew 11:25, "25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children" (NIV). The team also discussed skill development projects with the church members at the tea estate which will be initiated by Dr. Yan Murry. The team also had productive discussions with the church members for the development of the church at the tea estate. The Mission Committee requests the church to continue praying for the mission field, especially for our missionary and the Pastor at tea estate, and to continue to uphold those members who are seeking to get water baptism. The committee also solicit the prayers of the church for a few children who are planning to attend the Vacation Bible School at CBCD this July, that it will be time for growth in their faith and also to have a fun, memorable experience worshipping with other children.



CBCD Members fellowshiping at the mission field

Youth Express Report

Mrs. Kewi Pfüno, Assoc. Pastor (Youth)

We thank God for His faithfulness and guidance throughout the months of May and June. During these two months, the Youth Fellowship was blessed with meaningful worship services, active participation from our young people, a special fellowship program, and a spiritually enriching discipleship camp.

One of the initiatives we have introduced this year is to encourage greater participation among our youths by allowing them to take turns leading services according to their colonies, hostels, and residential groups. This has provided opportunities for more young people to be involved in worship and ministry while fostering creativity, responsibility, and fellowship.

On 2nd May, a group of youths residing in the same apartment led the service. The Youth Pastor shared the Word of God, and the service was marked by enthusiastic participation and creativity. We were encouraged to see many young people actively using their gifts and talents in the service of the Lord.

On 9th May, we held a special programme titled, 'Royal Daughters Night'. The entire service was organized and conducted by the brothers as a way of honouring and encouraging the sisters in our fellowship. Mr. Neipekreizo Kesiezie, one of our church members, shared God's Word and spoke on the identity and value of young women as daughters of the King and the real, eternal inheritance they should seek to inherit as heirs of God's Kingdom. He encouraged them to live faithfully as Christians. The evening was both meaningful and memorable, followed by a blessed time of fellowship over refreshments.

On 16th May, we were privileged to have Pastor Yabang Longkumer, minister the Word of God. His message encouraged and challenged the youths in their spiritual walk, and we were grateful for his presence and ministry among us.

On 23rd May, the Youth Pastor once again shared God's Word. The service also included a creative segment in which a youth shared what the Youth Fellowship has meant to them personally and encouraged others to invite friends to come and experience God's goodness through the fellowship. It was a refreshing reminder of the importance of growing together in faith and community.

A major highlight of these two months was our (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). We were privileged to have Mr. Athriba Sangtam, Assistant Professor in Pastoral Care and Counselling at Mt. Terogvü Theological College and Dr. Lithrongla Sangtam, Former Associate Pastor, Naga Christian Fellowship Shillong, as our resource speakers. A total of 43 youths attended the camp, including a few first-time participants. The camp focused on discipleship and Christian living through a balanced combination of doctrinal and practical sessions. Topics included Doctrines of Justification, Sanctification, Holy Spirit and Engaging the Word. Devotional topics were - A Faith that Begins at Home, Human Sexuality, A Faith that Stands in the World, and A Faith Fully Surrendered to Christ. Through worship, Bible teaching, group discussions, fellowship activities, and prayer sessions, the campers were challenged and encouraged to deepen their relationship with Christ.

We praise God that during the camp, around ten youths made decisions to surrender their lives to Christ, while many others recommitted themselves to following Him more faithfully. It was truly a time of spiritual renewal, growth, and transformation. We thank God for His work among our youths and request the continued prayers of the church for all the campers as they seek to grow as faithful disciples of Christ.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to our church elders, leaders, parents, and families for their invaluable support toward the success of the Youth Discipleship Camp. Their faithful prayers before and during the camp, words of encouragement to the campers, and generous financial and material contributions played a significant role in making the camp possible. We are deeply grateful for their partnership in nurturing the spiritual growth of our young people.

We would especially like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the family of one of our church members for generously sponsoring the first-aid supplies for the camp. Their thoughtful contribution helped us ensure the safety and well-being of all participants throughout the program. We sincerely appreciate their kindness and willingness to support the ministry. May the Lord richly bless all who contributed through their prayers, encouragement, service, and resources. Their support was a great blessing and encouragement to the Youths and to all who attended the camp.

Our first youth service following the camp was held on 6th June. The Youth Pastor shared a message emphasizing the importance of maintaining a personal and intimate relationship with God through regular prayer and quiet time. Drawing lessons from the life of Jesus, the message challenged the youths to prioritize communion with God in their daily lives. During the service, Brothers Pauchun and Akash shared testimonies from the camp, recounting how God had worked in their lives and how they had been encouraged in their faith. Many youths were inspired to recommit themselves to a deeper walk with the Lord.

On 13th June, the service was organized by the youths from Prodigal's Home. The Youth Pastor preached from Esther 4:14, challenging the youths with the theme, "For Such a Time as This". The message encouraged the young people to recognize God's purpose for their lives and to respond faithfully to His calling. The service was a blessing, and the active participation of the youths made it especially meaningful and encouraging.

As we reflect on these two months, we are grateful to God for His faithfulness and for the growth we have witnessed among our young people. We thank all those who contributed to the various services and programmes, and we request the church to continue praying for the Youth - that we may remain steadfast in our faith, grow in discipleship, and be effective witnesses for Christ both at home and beyond.

To God be all the glory.



CBCD Youth Fellowship's 'Royal Daughters Night'



Youth Discipleship Camp, under the theme, 'Living Our Faith: at home and Beyond'

Yearly Theme & Scripture Focus: *Grow in Faith- 2Peter 3:18*. Through Bible lessons and activities, we aim to teach our children to “Grow in Faith.”

What we are Learning (Classroom Highlights):

1. **Happy Hoppers (3 years and below):** Main Bible Lesson topic: Jesus loves little Children. For our toddlers many of the teachings are through singing, toys and play based along with brief Bible story-telling. Scripture Focus: (Genesis 1:1, Ephesians 6:1)
2. **Beginners (4-5 years):** Bible Lessons on Walk with Jesus (road to Emmaus), Giving all to the Lord (poor widow), Singing in the Jail (Paul and Silas) and God's Promise (Rainbow). Scripture Focus: John 3:16; Psalm 139:14
3. **Primary (6-7years):** Bible Lessons on the Epic story of Moses, the 10 Commandments (2 Sundays), King Solomon and Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Scripture Focus: Numbers 6:24-26
4. **Juniors (8-9 years):** Bible Stories on Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, King Saul, King David and King Solomon. Scripture Focus: 1 Samuel 3:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Samuel 17: 47; Deuteronomy 6:5
5. **Intermediate (10 years):** Bible Lessons on Jesus healing the blind man, the Prodigal son, Jesus talking about God's care, Jesus talking with the teachers and Importance of Church. Scripture Focus: Colossians 3:16, Matthew 9:35, Matthew 6:33. Ephesians 2:20 and Luke 15:24.
6. **Intermediate Seniors (11-12 years):** Bible Lessons on Judge Ehud, Judge Gideon, Jesus's Love for us and Bible Quiz. Scripture Focus: 1 Samuel 16:7, Romans 5:8, Galatians 5:22-23
7. **Teens (13years and above):** Bible Lessons on Attitudes of a Christian (Matthew 5:1-12); Pray for Wisdom, James 1:5, Four friends help a Paralytic- How Jesus deals with the Sick (Luke 5:17-27) and Jesus' Teaching about Christian Commitment (Mark 8:31-38). Scripture Focus: Romans 5:8, James 1:5, Romans 1:16 & Romans 12:1-2

Miss Imtina Khathing visited Teens class on May 3rd and led in interactive teaching on making good and right choices. She will be visiting the Teens class for Father's Day on June 21st as well.

Events:

1. **May 2nd:** During the Church “Family Retreat” the children's session was simultaneously organized by the Oriental Theological Seminary (OTS) students. This included Bible Story, singing, games and Bible-movie time.
2. **May 10th:** Primary Class presented a special song and memory verse during Mother's Day under the guidance of teachers Asen, Achumbeni and one of our members, Mr. Imlionen.
3. **June 7th:** Teacher's Meeting and Fellowship took place in view of Vacation Bible School (VBS) in the Babyroom.

Upcoming Events:

1. Teacher's Fasting & prayer for Vacation Bible School (VBS) preparations - **July 4th** (9am-12pm)
2. Vacation Bible School (VBS) is scheduled for **July 23-26 2026**, on the theme: ***Running for the Prize*** – 1 Corinthians 9:24-25.

Registration forms will be available by first week of July with further details.

We praise God for all the children (about 145-155 regular ones) we have been entrusted with and we pray that God will continue to widen our vision as a church. May God bless our harvest in the children's ministry.

Shalom and Blessings.



Nagamese fellowship report

Mr. Benjamin Benny, Evangelist

1. Nagamese Evangelistic Retreat:

By the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Nagamese Fellowship successfully organized a Nagamese Evangelistic Retreat on 25th April 2026 at the Church premises. The retreat was a time of spiritual renewal, learning, fellowship, and encouragement, aimed at equipping believers to faithfully share the Gospel and live as witnesses of Christ in their daily lives. The resource person for the retreat was Ms. Keweneilu K. Thora, Associate Pastor (Christian Education), Chakhesang Baptist Church, Dimapur. Through her insightful teachings and practical guidance, participants were challenged and inspired to deepen their commitment to the Great Commission and to grow in their Christian witness. The retreat was conducted under the theme, *"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news"* (Romans 10:15). The theme emphasized the privilege and responsibility of every believer to proclaim the message of salvation and to be instruments of God's love and grace in the world.

There were two sessions during the retreat. The first session, *"Sharing the Gospel with Confidence,"* focused on overcoming fears and hesitations in evangelism, understanding the core message of the Gospel, and learning practical ways to share one's faith with clarity, conviction, and compassion.

Participants were encouraged to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit and to view evangelism as a natural expression of their relationship with Christ. The second session, *"Living out the Gospel Together,"* highlighted the importance of Christian community and discipleship. The speaker emphasized that the Gospel is not only to be proclaimed through words but also demonstrated through lives marked by love, unity, service, and mutual support. Participants were reminded that the Church serves as a living testimony of God's transforming grace when believers walk together in faith and obedience.

The retreat also provided opportunities for fellowship, discussion, reflection, and prayer, enabling participants to share experiences, learn from one another, and strengthen their spiritual bonds. The interactive nature of the sessions encouraged meaningful engagement and personal application of the lessons learned. A total of 35 participants attended the retreat. The Nagamese Fellowship gives thanks and glory to God for His guidance and blessings upon the retreat and prays that the teachings received will continue to bear fruit in the lives of all who attended, empowering them to be faithful ambassadors of Christ in their homes, workplaces, and communities.



2. Nagamese Fellowship Prison Outreach

By the grace of God, Covenant Baptist Church Dimapur organized an outreach programme at the Sub-Jail, Dimapur, on 24th May 2026. The purpose of the visit was to share the love, hope, and saving message of Jesus Christ with the inmates and to encourage them through Christian fellowship and prayer. A team of 12 members from the church participated in the outreach programme. Upon arrival, the team had the opportunity to interact and fellowship with a total of 71 inmates, comprising 61 male and 10 female inmates.

The fellowship began with a time of praise and worship led by the outreach team. This was followed by a Scripture reading by Brother Awan. The message was delivered by our Nagamese Evangelist, Mr. Benjamin Benny.

As a gesture of love and care, the church also distributed small gift tokens to all the inmates to express the church's concern for their well-being and served as a reminder that they are valued and remembered by the church.

We request the church to uphold all the inmates in prayer. Let us pray that God's Word planted in their hearts will bear lasting fruit, that they may experience His transforming grace, and that they will find hope, healing, and a renewed purpose in life through Jesus Christ. We also ask for prayers for the authorities and staff of the Sub-Jail, that God may grant them wisdom, strength, and compassion in carrying out their responsibilities.



3. Nagamese Fellowship's First Cell Group

This year, the church graciously provided the Nagamese Fellowship with the opportunity to organize and conduct its own cell group fellowship. Recognizing the importance of small-group gatherings in fostering spiritual growth, mutual encouragement, and deeper fellowship among believers, the Nagamese Fellowship joyfully embraced this opportunity.

Accordingly, the first Nagamese Cell Group Fellowship was held on 28th May 2026 at the church premises. Members gathered together for a time of worship, reflection, prayer, and fellowship. The gathering served as an important step towards strengthening relationships among members and creating a space where believers could grow together in faith and Christian discipleship.

During the fellowship, Mr. Benjamin shared the Word of God from Hebrews 10:24–25, which encourages believers to consider how they may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, and not neglect meeting together but continue encouraging one another.

The gathering also provided an opportunity for meaningful interaction and fellowship among members by sharing prayer points and praying for one another. The fellowship concluded with a time of interaction over light refreshments.

The Nagamese Fellowship give thanks to God for His guidance and provision and looks forward to continuing these gatherings as a means of spiritual growth, mutual support, and Christian witness. We request the church to pray that the cell group ministry will continue to flourish and become a source of blessing, encouragement, and discipleship for all its members.



As we reflect on the blessings of the past two months, it is a joy to share how the women of our church continue to grow in grace, serve our community and support one another in faith.

On 16th May, the women's fellowship organized a 'Skill-based workshop on Traditional Sausage Making and the Art of Soap making', which was held at Life Ministry Learning Centre, Naga United Village. Mr. Samuel Therieh and Mrs Alemla Samuel graciously agreed to be the resource persons. The day was marked by a time of fun and learning, and an enriching time of fellowship and mutual encouragement. Going beyond practical training, the resource persons anchored our hearts by sharing on the Biblical aspects of enriching our skills, the dignity of labour and what it truly means to be good stewards of the gifts and talents God has placed on our hands

On 2nd June, we attended the DBWU women pastors and leaders dawn fellowship held at our church. It proved to be a vital platform for corporate prayer and strengthening spiritual bonds.

On 13th June, we had our monthly fellowship where Mrs Ketuno Imchen encouraged everyone by opening her heart to share her powerful testimony of God's unwavering faithfulness in all seasons of life, drawing inspiration from the story of Naomi. Another blessed time of fellowship.

On 21st June, Father's Day, our women's group along with the church, had the privilege of organizing and participating in the Father's Day celebration through leading, offering prayers and co-ordinating activities. We also presented a tribute song that served as a meaningful message to honour both our earthly fathers and our Heavenly Father. The speaker Dr Anshely Sumi delivered a timely message titled, '*Father: The Family Coach*'. Drawing inspiration from the lives of Abraham and David, her message served as a powerful clarion call, challenging every father to be a good family coach by actively engaging in Godly parenting, spiritual mentoring and Biblical counselling within their homes.

Our women's ministry thrives because of the collective effort of our women who love the Lord, and we look forward to the next season with expectant hearts and complete dependence on God.



Skill-based workshop at Life Ministry Learning Centre



Women's Fellowship on Mothers' Day



Women's Fellowship on Fathers' Day



Women's Monthly Fellowship

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The men's group played an important role, along with the Church in organising the Mother's day program on 3rd May 2026.

On 9th May, 2026 our 3rd Bible study continued based on Revelation 2:8-11: Letter to Smyrna. Smyrna is located 64.3 km away from Ephesus. It is the only one of the 7 Churches mentioned in Revelation that exists till today as a major city, now known as Izmir in modern day Turkey. Smyrna was that city which was once dead, but now has been resurrected to a far better life. Christ Yeshua recognizes three weights on the chest of this church. Number one their poverty, number two, they are slandered as a sub-culture by the so called Jews, and number three Christ predicts that they will face imprisonment and even death. It's a kind of foreboding warning but at the end of the letter Christ encourages them to persevere.

For the month of June, the monthly Bible study continued and was held on June 13th at NMM conference hall at 07:30 AM. The study was based on the Letter to Pergamum from Revelation 2:12-17. Pergamum means 'Mixed marriage', the city was a great religious centre, and now known as Bergama, located 77.2km north of Smyrna. Nearly every major deity had a temple there. No matter what they desired or what they needed or what they dreamt for, people believed that those gods would offer them over there. Making claims such as, Christ is the only true Kings of kings and Lord of lords, not Zeus, Christ alone is the source of ultimate and true pleasure, who gives abundant life, not Dionysus, Christ alone is the provider not Demeter, Christ alone is our healer not Asklepos. Athena is not the source of wisdom, but our Lord God Almighty Christ Yeshua. In a situation as such, Christ Yeshua had a great closing statement in this letter, to those who were faithful to Him. A reward of Manna and a white stone with an individual's name to those who overcome, which were more like a UID and pin number.

The Men's group continued to lead Sunday worship service on the last Sunday of the month on the 24th of May and on the 28th of June.



Fourth Fellowship – 3rd May 2026

The Crossover Fellowship held its fourth gathering of the year with Dr. Kethoser Kevichusa as the guest speaker. The session focused on the topic “*Calling – Finding and Living Your Calling.*” Twenty members attended, engaging in a time of learning, reflection, and discussion with the speaker.

Fifth Fellowship – 7th June 2026

The fifth fellowship was organized as a movie evening, featuring ‘*The Case for Christ*’. The film, based on a true story and adapted from Lee Strobel’s book of the same name, explored the journey of faith and evidence for the resurrection of Christ. Fifteen members were present for the screening and fellowship.



CBCD Family Retreat

Editorial Report

Covenant Baptist Church Dimapur organized a one-day Family Retreat on the 2nd of May, 2026, at the Oriental Theological Seminary in Bade. The retreat focused on strengthening family relationships based on Biblical principles, emphasizing the centrality of Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, and practical Christian living in the home. The resource person was Rev. Dr. Neingupe Chiero, Senior Pastor, Pfütsero Town Baptist Church.

First Session: Building Christ-Centred Homes

The first session emphasized the foundations of a vibrant Christian life centred on Christ. Jesus was presented as the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Believers were encouraged to seek the continual filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), who convicts of sin, reveals Christ, and guides into truth. The importance of abiding in God’s Word was highlighted as the means of spiritual purity and growth. Prayer was described as essential for every believer, bringing God’s peace through thanksgiving and trust, with God answering according to His perfect will. Fellowship with Christ naturally leads to fellowship with other believers (1 John 1:7), while sharing one’s testimony and living in obedience to God’s Word are essential marks of a surrendered Christian life. The session concluded with a time of questions, discussion, and personal reflection.

Second Session: Strengthening Relationships in the Family

The second session focused on family relationships through the illustration of the Cross. The vertical relationship with God forms the foundation for healthy horizontal relationships with family and others, with Christ’s cross bridging the separation caused by sin. Drawing from Ephesians 6, the session emphasized that parents visibly represent God to their children and must faithfully reflect His character. Children are called to obey their parents in the Lord, while fathers bear a particular responsibility to nurture and instruct their families in godliness, as illustrated by Adam’s accountability in Eden.

Everyone who attended was blessed and gained a renewed understanding of the centrality of Christ, the empowering role of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of the Word, prayer, fellowship, testimony, and obedience, providing a clear direction for building Christ-cantered families.



A Special Farewell Blessing

Editorial Report

On 17th May, 2026, during the Sunday devotional service, Covenant Baptist Church, Dimapur, gave a special farewell blessing to two of the most well-known, well-loved Church founding members, Rev. Dr. Zelhou Keyho and his wife, Mrs. Santi Keyho. The church expressed their love, gratitude, and prayers for them, as they prepared to embark on a new mission assignment in Udon Thani, Thailand.

As founding members of Covenant Baptist Church since its establishment in 2010, they have been pillars of faith, service, and encouragement to the congregation. Through their unwavering commitment to God's work, they have touched countless lives and earned the respect and affection of the entire church family. Rev. Dr. Zelhou delivered a stirring message on the importance of mission work, reminding the congregation of Christ's call to share the Gospel beyond borders and to faithfully support God's mission wherever He leads, and that a Church without Mission is a dead Church. The church took the opportunity to say a special prayer for the couple as they begin this new chapter of ministry. A special song was also presented by the founding members of the church.

While this occasion marked their departure from Dimapur for the time being, it was in no way a final farewell. The congregation looks forward with anticipation to welcoming them back in the near future and continuing to share in their ministry journey.

Covenant Baptist Church extends its heartfelt blessings and prayers for their health, safety, and fruitful ministry.



A member care fellowship was held on 27th June at Iwu-shi Garden, Half Nagarjan, Dimapur, for those who hold their church membership at CBCD. The service began with an introduction by our Pastor and singing hymns. This was followed by a time for family-to-family fellowship where families were paired together to get to know one another better, discuss ways on how to serve the church better and also to share prayer points and pray for one another. A time for sharing by taken up by Mr. Zaren, Dr. Yan and Mr. David Koza, where they shared about their journey as members of the church and also their concerns on various issues related to church membership. A time of exhortation was taken up by Pastor Yabang where he shared about the importance of church membership. He shared on how church membership is a biblical concept that should be taken seriously. It is not a club-membership but a covenanted membership. The New Testament also speaks of believers being identified with a local church. In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul writes, *"²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it,"* emphasizing that every believer has a place and function within the church. Likewise, Acts 2:41 records that those who received the gospel were baptized and "were added" to the church, demonstrating that new believers were intentionally joined to the local congregation. He also emphasized that Biblical membership also establishes accountability. The Bible also distinguishes between those who are inside the church and those who are outside. In 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, Paul writes, *"¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."* This distinction assumes a recognizable body of believers who are under the care and accountability of the local church. He also encouraged the members to pray for the widows and widowers, the elderly and the sick within our church. The fellowship concluded over a delicious dinner.



This is a very relevant question to ask these days especially when it comes to Nagaland. We see on one hand, an increase in large Church buildings, with each tribe or town seemingly competing to build the largest building even at huge financial costs, the impact of which will be felt in the coming years, and on the other hand, a mushrooming of prayer houses and independent churches. To answer this question let us look back at early Christian history.

The first century Christians were often persecuted and, as a result, they usually met in secret, mostly at homes. e.g. the Dura-Europos Church in Syria, one of the oldest surviving archaeological pieces of evidence of a Christian place of assembly. Originally a private residence, it was converted into a dedicated meeting and worship space between 233 and 256 AD.

As the influence of Christianity spread, eventually buildings dedicated to worship were established and became what we know today as Churches. The 'Aqaba Church' in Jordan along with 'Megiddo Church' in Israel are widely considered the oldest known purpose-built Church, erected in the Roman empire's administrative Diocese of the East in the 3rd century (c. 293-303 CE).

Yet some will argue that a Church is not a building structure but Christians themselves. In the New Testament, there are many images of the Church including:

1. The Church as the Body of Christ: Ephesians 1:10; 4:15 describes Christ as the head of the Church and Christians as the body.
2. The Church as the People of God: 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10 say "I will be their God, and they will be my people."
3. The Church as the Bride of Christ: 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:7; 21:9

So, depending on the context, the Church can mean both 'The Christian community / people' or 'The Physical building.' Therefore, the statement 'The Church meets in the Church' does make sense.

Fellowship, worship and ministry are all conducted by people, not buildings. Church structures facilitate the role of God's people, but they do not fulfil it. At the same time the community of Christians required a place of fellowshiping together, which was met by the house Church initially and later by the purpose-built Church.

Now, let us look at the purpose of the Church given in Acts 2: 42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

We see that the purpose / activity of the church is or should be the following:

1. Teaching Biblical doctrine
2. Providing a place of fellowship for believers
3. Observing the Lord's supper
4. Praying.

Teaching doctrine: Ephesians 4:14 *"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."*

Fellowship: A place where Christian can:

1. Be devoted to one another and honour one another (Romans 12:10),
2. Instruct one another (Romans 15:14),
3. Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32),
4. Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and
5. Love one another (1 John 3:11).

Prayer: The church is to be a place that promotes prayer, teaches prayer, and practices prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Starting from the 1960s, a new concept of dual or multipurpose Church building began, largely driven by the rise of megachurches, which were based on 'Seeker-Sensitive or Seeker -friendly church' ideas. These buildings and its services were designed in such a way that is welcoming and non-intimidating for the unchurched people or non-Christians.

This model prioritizes a “front door” experience to help guests feel comfortable while they explore the Christian faith. Therefore, the Churches transitioned from fixed-pew structures to flexible auditoriums designed to host worship, concerts, sports, and community events. Three types of buildings emerged:

1. Separated: The Church and the multipurpose hall,
2. Upper and lower floors, and
3. No stage at all: open for both Church and secular use

Nagaland is no exception and many of the traditional Church buildings have given way to Churches with an auxiliary building for other activities or Churches with multiple floors for different purposes. With this changing attitude towards the Church building, even the concept of the altar is also being transformed.

I remember when I was younger we used to wear our best clothes every Sunday to go to Church but as I became a bit older, I could see that the Church altar / stage was also being used for music and other events and I could hear my parents as well as seniors murmuring why it is wrong.

Mushrooming of independent Churches as well as prayer centres can be viewed in this context, although there are many other factors involved too.

Most of the prayer centres do not even have benches to sit on, instead believers are to squat and move about freely. Most of these prayer centres also have a corporate meal, cooked at the site itself.

Keeping all these in mind there are some questions in need of clarity.

1. Is the Church only a fellowship of believers? If yes, does it mean only those who believe in Christ Jesus should be attending the Church?

Yes, the Church are believers themselves and any gathering of believers, meeting anywhere can be called a Church. And in order to live out the faith, being the follower of Christ, a place of fellowshiping becomes a necessity. The Church as a building is for the convenience of the Church (Believers) to fulfil its corporate functions of prayer, prophecy, fellowshiping, encouragement, teaching, worship, baptism, love feast, and charity especially supporting widows and orphans.

Now the question is, is the Church only for believers? Is a bit more complex or difficult to answer. Personally, I am of the opinion that the Sunday devotion service should be in the spirit of seeker friendly service, where everyone is welcome to participate, at the same time the sanctity of the altar and Church decorum is to be maintained. While cell- groups fellowship should be a ‘Only Believers gathering’ where most of the Acts 2:42 is fulfilled. Thus, the cell groups play an important role in the functioning of the Church.

2. As CBCD plans to construct our own Church building, what kind of building do we envision? A multipurpose church or a separated Church? A seeker friendly church or a traditional church?

For me the Church building should reflect our Christian heritage as well as our cultural elements. It should be a building where the sanctity of the altar is maintained but also open and welcoming to seekers as well as non-believers. A Church building is much like a hospital, living and dynamic, where order and rules are maintained but is at the same time open and welcoming. A place where the sick and needy should find relief.

To be continued...



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