

Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute

Chennai

Contextualizing Theological Education:

Raising, Equipping and Supporting Leaders to the Church and Society

2008

Contextualizing Theological Education: Raising, Equipping and Supporting Leaders to the Church and Society

Chairperson of the Gurukul College Council, Rt. Rev. Anand Sebeyan Hemrom, and members of the Gurukul College Council (GCC) and my colleagues:

This is my third report as Principal of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute to the Gurukul College Council. It is a privilege to be able to give leadership to a ministry that is committed to raising, equipping and supporting leaders to the Church and society. It is good to be part of a team of Church leaders, who gives your counsel and encouragement. I have been greatly impressed by the competence and dedication of our faculty and I continue to value greatly the hard work of my colleagues.

Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute endeavour to equip Christian ministers to be at the forerunner in proclaiming the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the Nazareth Manifesto as stated in our mission statement as liberative praxis of Theological Education in Gurukul.

CONTEXTUALIZING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Contextualization of theological education is the Bold Theological Vision of Gurukul. It seeks to renovate existing and accepted methodologies and approaches. It means the experiences of relating the study of the relationship between God and the people to the immediate context. That context is made up of socio-political, economic, cultural, spiritual and ideological components, which is needed to evaluate the experience of teaching and studying theology on the one hand and of doing theology (theologizing) on the other.

Thus, contextualization is a radical knowledge construction methodology that seeks to interface academic theological education to spiritual formation and the community of the poor, oppressed and marginalized people. Further, it is an attempt to bridge the gap between academic notion of knowledge production and application of the knowledge. There is no way that we can engage this process of contextualizing theological education, without taking into cognizance the indigenous, community based hermeneutical, ethical, historical and biblical questions of the community the church seeks to serve. Reading of the Bible and life experiences become inseparable points of reference when we use the contextualisation methodology of teaching.

When we engage the contextual methodology of theological education, we are trying to interlink the study of relating to and the created order, in the process responding to the search for meaning and answers to questions being raised by the community. Our efforts are therefore, trying to relate theology to the struggles of local communities, communities that are our interlocutors or dialogue partners with the academic institution. These struggles of the community include issues of land, suffering, political and economic power relations in society, gender injustices and inequalities, issues of health care (inter alia HIV/AIDS), etc.

The recent happenings of atrocities on Christians and other minorities is a public concern on the rise of fundamentalism. It is presented as antidemocratic, anti-modern and mostly violent caused in the name of religious fundamentalism taking the societies back into pre-modern times. However, fundamentalism presents a challenge for theological education as much as to the church and society.

Communities may be asking questions about the threatening environmental crisis, environmental degradation and environmental injustices in their localities. How do the local congregation, church, the institutional church and the theological seminary/colleges respond to such anxieties from the community? How integral are these problems in the communities to the way that we equip our students for the life outside of this institution? Whose questions are our students seeking to respond to? Which direction will their ministry and diaconal service take, once they are through with their formal theological training? Are we training ministers or people whose services to the church and community will be irrelevant? How will we know, how best our service, through teaching theology, has met the needs and contributed to the struggles of the people? These are hard questions that we need to engage if we are exploring using contextual methodology of teaching and doing theology within our faculty.

Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, taking seriously these questions is engaged in agreement with the Senate of Serampore College is engaged in reformulating the curriculum to find answers to such questions. As pioneers in contextualising theology with the concern for mission of the local congregation to the marginalised people, and with the motto of Bold Theological Vision, Gurukul has ventured into some of the areas of concern through consultations and workshop and participation in the life experiences and struggles of the community.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Introduction of Critical Pedagogy in Theological Education with particular emphasis on the new thrust areas of Gurukul, with the support of **the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia** has been on the agenda to develop new curriculum for the new thrust areas of our study, such as Women's Studies, Dalit Studies, Communication Studies, Studies in Science and Religion and Social Analysis. The aim of this programme is to develop contextually relevant methodology for teaching these subjects with the focus on the poor and marginalized people. We are in its final stages of the preparation of the curriculum which may be shared with the Christian Higher Education Institutions, so that it may become the subjects to be taught at the Christian secular Education programmes in the Colleges/institutions as well.

GREEN THEOLOGY

Like in the past Gurukul has taken initiative to reflect on ecological crisis and to develop "Green Theology" contributing biblical and theological reflections as we train students basically for the ministry in the Local Congregations. In the present day Indian context a theological shift has taken place, which has not yet become popular to the pastors and the people at the grassroots context. A National Consultation was held during 14-16 November 2008, where eminent theologians and activists presented papers on "Green Theology" from different perspectives – Biblical, Theological, Dalit, Women, Tribal and Social Movements. 32 participants from other seminaries and churches as

well as our Gurukul faculty and Doctoral students attended this consultation where intensive discussion and interaction took place to understand the relationship between ‘humans and nature’ in our own context. These representative presentations and interactions have widened horizons for a better understanding of relationship between ‘humans and nature’ for an authentic witness to the Gospel in a multicultural and multi-religious society like India. There was also an interesting session from church leaders on how the churches can respond to ecological degradation and act in their own limited way.

An important outcome of this consultation was presentation of syllabus on “Green Theology” to be introduced at BD level from next academic year. The Registrar of the Senate of Serampore College was present and moderated the session “presentation of syllabus on “Green Theology” and we hope that other seminaries affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College will also introduce this new course at BD level.

We also propose to publish the presentations and responses in a book form for wider public to bring in awareness about importance of “Green Theology” not only in the Theological Colleges and seminaries but also for the people at the grass-root level in our own congregations. Thanks to the Women in Church and Society (WICAS), DMD/LWF for its support in organising this consultation.

MEDIA MONITORING ON POVERTY REPORTING STANDARDS

Poverty is pain. Poor people suffer physical pain that comes with too little food and long hours of work; emotional pain stemming from the daily humiliations of dependency and lack of power; and the moral pain from being forced to make choices such as whether to pay to save the life of an ill family member or to use the money to feed their children.

Although public attitudes cannot be attributed to the influence of mass media, it is important to acknowledge the media’s pivotal role in responding to and reinforcing public ideas about poverty.

People experiencing poverty featured in fewer than one in eight of the poverty reports. Often, the only source of information was the journalist or broadcaster.

Tracking ‘poverty news’ stories across different Indian media demonstrated how the same issue was presented differently. It also showed the importance of the language used to describe poverty. Reports tended to draw on stock phrases and a familiar journalistic catalog which portrayed government as active, while people experiencing poverty (when not overtly stigmatized) were represented as passive victims. Even when coverage was generally sympathetic, it risked differentiating those experiencing poverty from mainstream society, and portraying them as lacking initiative, unproductive and a burden on ‘us’. The campaigning sector contributes to keeping Indian poverty in the news and is valued by media professionals as a source of comment and a means to access people experiencing poverty. Campaigners recognize that they could be more proactive in generating and promoting coverage of under-reported aspects of poverty.

The World Association for Christian Communication, an ecumenical Global Communication organization, whose head quarters was in the United Kingdom and now being shifted to Toronto, Canada, for which I am serving as the President of the Asia Region, offered to conduct research in

three regions, one in the South (Chennai), one in the North in Jabalpur, and the other one in Mumbai wherein the research reports will be presented to the group of journalists, social activists and church leaders and the final national consultation in New Delhi.

The project will develop national standards of poverty reporting for the media in Asia, starting with India. Through the implementation and monitoring of these standards, the communication rights of the poor, especially women, will be strengthened through increased and improved representation of poverty in the media. To develop an Indian network of media groups, NGOs, academics and gender justice groups to advocate for adoption of poverty reporting standards and to develop such a model in other countries of Asian countries.

Before it is being completed there is also some interest shown on making this project as a long term project to implement the curriculum that will be developed in the region to monitor media reporting on poverty and to challenge the misconceptions of poverty and generate public support for anti-poverty initiatives, so that this movement could bring down the people living under poverty be reduced to half in another five to ten years.

SEMINARY WITHOUT WALLS AND SEMINARY ON WHEELS

Referring to the last year's report to the Gurukul College Council, where I have mentioned about the Seminary without Walls and Seminary on Wheels, where the seminary will serve the local congregations and the members (pastors, lay men and women, youth, etc. We are grateful to the Gurukul College Council for your permission to rejuvenate the Centre for Applied Theology, under which these two programmes, namely "Seminary without Walls and Seminary on Wheels", will function to enable the Seminary to be in the field with the people and with open arms welcome the laity and pastors to come to the seminary to have meaningful interaction.

1. *Seminary without Walls*

The Seminary without Walls is a program for equipping the saints in the city of Chennai. This will be initiated with the support of all the mainline churches in the city of Chennai, such as the TELC, the ALC, the SALC, the IELC, the AELC, the CSI Madras Diocese, the Methodist Church, the Mar Thoma Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church, and the Malankara Jacobite Church with the co-operation of the Bishops and other church leaders in the city of Chennai. The Seminary without Walls will open up the Gurukul campus to the laity of these churches to a well developed informal theological programme. This can take different forms. One can be a non-degree program in which we develop a curriculum which offers them a basic understanding of different theological disciplines with a focus on contextual theology and its implication for the spiritual growth and social witnessing of the local congregations in the city of Chennai. The laity can enrol in this program and the College will offer regular classes. The College can award them a diploma on successful completion of their program. The "students" in this programme can also be encouraged to enrol for the BCS program of the Senate of Serampore College. The Seminary without Walls can also organize seminars and consultations in different churches in the city.

This programme got initiated with the request of the Church of South India Synod for the rural pastors giving them "Personality Development programme" for a period of ten days as intensive

programme. There were two batches of rural pastors from three diocese, namely Dornakal, Kareem Nagar and Nandyal numbering 18 and the next batch of 18 pastors came from the Madhya Kerala, North Kerala and South Kerala Dioceses attended the “personality development programme, focusing on How to conduct Bible Studies through re-reading the Bible, Worship and Liturgy, CSI Church structures, Computer Literacy, Communication Skills, and Spoken and Written English. Communication skills were conducted by Dr. Samuel Meshack and Mr. Thomas Manoj Samuel, Spoken and Written English was conducted by Dr. Adella Paul and Mr. Jeremiah (B.D.I) at Gurukul. We thank the General Secretary, Rev. Moses Jayakumar for giving us this opportunity in serving the Church through this programme. We are committed to offer the same for the next two batches from the Dioceses in Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The pastors were greatly benefited particularly gaining confidence in using Computers and boldly speak in English and communicate effectively and meaningfully conducting Bible Studies using the modern tools and also learning about the Church Structure to which they belong. We are looking forward to such requests from the Lutheran Churches and eagerly waiting to get the opportunity to serve you.

2. Seminary on Wheels

The Seminary on Wheels is a novel attempt of the College to engage in the ministry of doing contextual theology, in association with the local congregations. The contextual theology should combine the spiritual growth and social witness of the local congregation. The Seminary on Wheels is a program that Gurukul launches in which the seminary will travel to the local congregations. A team of faculty and students will go to different towns and villages in India for a period of three to five days, and engage in the ministry of training and teaching contextual theology in association with the local congregations belonging to different denominations. For us this is an opportunity to take our Bold Theological Vision to the congregations to motivate the local congregations to engage in concrete activities of social witnessing under the supervision of a full time coordinator.

As a pilot project Gurukul faculty, in consultation with local church leaders, will select two centres in each language region. To this centre four to five neighbouring local congregation members representing local pastor, two lay-leaders (one male and one female) one youth representative (either male or female) and one Sunday school teacher (preferably female) are invited. Three Gurukul faculty members along with three to four students will travel to these two centres four times in a year and meet the same representatives during weekends in four sessions. This means that “seminary on wheels” will make four visits to the centre and have 16 sessions with the representative of the local congregations in one calendar year. We are developing 16 Modules with an emphasis on re-reading the Bible in our present day context on a broader framework of ‘Worship’, ‘Nurture’, ‘Witness’ ‘Development’ and ‘Ecumenism’ within the context of poverty, dalits and women, marginalization, discrimination, religious and ideological pluralism, HIV/AIDS, ecological concerns, plurality of religions and other contextual realities.

This project is basically to sensitise the members of the congregations to be true witnesses of Jesus Christ in a diversified and distorted world and to be true disciples of Jesus Christ in the context of poverty, dalit oppression, marginalization and discrimination of women, religious and ideological pluralism, HIV/AIDS, ecological concerns, plurality of religions and ideologies, persecution, etc. The

participants will be like catalysts in the congregation to bring in change and challenge the members to be true witnesses and disciples of Jesus Christ. We are approaching our partners to help in this venture. We request your kind co-operation in implementing this programme. On a phased manner the programme shall be introduced in other parts in other languages in the country.

STUDENT BODY AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

Gurukul holds on to its commitment to be an ecumenical institution while continuing to profess Lutheran confession. We are also proud to say that Gurukul is acclaimed to be a practicing ecumenist in terms of the students and faculty composition and the nature of programmes it offers.

As in the past, students are hailing from various denominations. At present we have 147 students enrolled for B.D., M. Th., and D. Th., programmes demonstrating a strong ecumenical representation of Christian churches and a few related organizations as shown below:

STUDENTS DETAILS: 2008-2009

- **Number of Student - As per Church affiliation**

No.	Church Affiliation	B.D.	M.Th.	D.Th.	Male	Female	Total
1	Lutheran Churches	41	3	2	37	9	46
2	Church of South India	30	3	2	33	2	35
3	Church of North India	-	-	3	2	1	3
4	Mar Thoma Syrian Church	23	1	-	24	-	24
5	Orthodox Churches	3	1	1	5	-	5
6	Baptist Churches	-	5	4	7	2	9
7	Presbyterian Church	-	1	-	1	1	1
8	Methodist Church	-	1	-	1	-	1
9	Evangelical Church of India	6	2	-	7	1	4
10	Pentecostal Churches	1	5	1	5	2	7
11	Salvation Army	4	-	-	4	-	4
12	Independent	5	2	1	5	3	8
	Total	109	24	14	128	19	147

Not only have the students hailed from different denominations, but also of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, languages and States. Majority of our students are for the **B.D., programmes** who will return to their respective churches to take up pastoral ministry. Hence we are committed to inculcating Personal Spiritual Formation, Academic Formation and Ministerial Formation to enable them to fit into the mission of the Church to witness to the world.

Master of Theology programme is offered in six disciplines as shown below with 24 students.

Sl. No.	Disciplines	Sl. No.	Disciplines
1	Old Testament	2	New Testament
3.	Christian Theology	4.	History of Christianity
5.	Communication Studies	6.	Gender (Women's) Studies

Examination Results

We are glad to inform this august body that setting high academic standards and enhancing achievements with commitment are our goal. The Senate of Serampore College results of our students are indicators of this achievement. Out of 32 students enrolled for the **B.D., final year examination**; one student Mr. Sunil Raj passed in First class, who also bagged two senate prizes, 29 students have passed in second class and three have referred papers. In our **M.Th. final examinations**; out of 21, three got first class, 19 of them second class and one referred.

Admission for the Academic Year 2008 - 2009 for B.D., and M.Th.

There were 86 applications received for B.D., and 48 for M.Th, admissions this year. With great difficulty, we have selected 28 candidates for regular four year programme and two for upgrading from B.Th., to B.D. Twelve candidates were admitted for M.Th, in the Departments of Theology, History of Christianity, Communications and Women's studies.

DOCTORAL STUDIES

With four new students admitted for doctoral studies in the field of Communication, we have 14 students registered with Gurukul for doctoral studies. Out of this fourteen; six are for Communication studies, five are in Systematic Theology, two in religions and one in Old Testament doing research. Several doctoral candidates are in the final stages of their research and are hoping to complete and submit their theses in the coming year. Many of the candidates are therefore making good progress.

We are looking forward to the Senate of Serampore Research Committee evaluation report to start doctoral programme in the field of History of Christianity from the academic year 2009 on wards, adding a feature in its achievements.

FACULTY POSITION

We are grateful to God for the committed faculty members, who are sharing their knowledge and their time with their other resources for the development of the academic as well as extracurricular and extension work of the college. At present we have 27 full time faculty members, in which three are superannuated faculty members. In addition, there are six visiting and part time faculty members for the academic year 2008 –2009.

Two of our faculty members, Dr. David Udayakumar and Dr. Santanu Patro are on their Sabbatical leave during this academic year. Dr. Jesudoss Athyal and Dr. Monica Melanchthon have taken long leave on lose of pay. We are hoping that Mr. Babu, who is doing his doctoral studies in Old Testament in Missions Academy, Hamburg, will be completing his studies and returning to Gurukul in

September, 2009. Ms. Shanthi Sudha Monica is doing her doctoral studies at the FFRC, Kottayam in New Testament, and we hear that she is making a good progress in her studies. Rev. David Augustine is also on study leave doing his studies in Chicago with the Catholic Theological Seminary. Dr. Sam P. Mathew will be going on his sabbatical, during the next academic year 2009 June – 2010 May.

We would like to place on record our thanks for the part-time help rendered by Dr. Mani Chacko, Director, Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, and guiding one of our Doctoral students in Old Testament and Fr. Dr. Vincent Sekar, for guiding one of our doctoral students in Religion. We also would like to place on record our thanks to Fr. Maria Arul Raja of Arul Kadal, taught in the New Testament Department, Dr. Jayanthi Richard of Women's Christian College and Dr. Beulah Herbert for their help in the Department of Gender Studies.

We had a visiting faculty during this year from the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (LCMS): the **Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb**, the world renowned Luther Scholar, who is also one of the Editors of the Book of Concord. He offered two courses for M.Th., and Lutheran Confessions course for B.D. students. We sincerely thank the Global Mission of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and Concordia Seminary for sending him with his wife Mrs. Pauline Kolb to us. We also would like to thank **Prof. Tamke** from Germany for his help in the Department of History of Christianity.

We are grateful to the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church for extending the services of Dr. Jacob Thomas, who continue to give his leadership as the Head of the Department of Theology and also as the Dean of Students. We also thank the Church and the Metropolitan for granting our request to send an Old Testament Professor from the academic year 2009.

Faculty development is one of the great challenges, which needs to be given importance. As some of the experienced professors are due for their sabbatical and retirement and some are leaving, we need to look for committed scholars with academic integrity, particularly in the departments of Christian Theology, Gender Studies, Pastoral Ministry and New Testament. I take this opportunity in placing our request to you the leaders to provide good and committed professors to Gurukul, whose scholarship could be used for the better and wider use in Gurukul. We are also using our website to updating the information on the faculty contributions, in terms of their teaching load, scholarship, their contribution to the life of this community and the wider participation in the ministry of the church and ecumenical participation at the national and international seminars and consultation. Although, Gurukul encourages the participation and contribution to the wider ecumenical community, but not at the cost of our academic as well as community needs. For want of space and time, the reports of the faculty members were not included in this report. Kindly see our website <http://www.gltc.edu> to see their resources and contributions.

MARTIN LUTHER LIBRARY

Library is the backbone of any academic institution. In addition to the books and journals in the library, subscriptions to the e-library enhance the quality of scholarship of both our students and faculty. We are thankful to both Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Lower Saxony and the Leipzig Mission for financial assistance towards membership and subscription for American Theological Library Association. We are hopeful of getting many more subscriptions for e-books and connecting

other important international libraries through the online library, which will enhance the quality of our students and research scholars.

Our thanks are also due to the Lutheran World Federation and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for their contribution in subscribing to the new publications and a few journals that are not listed in ATLA. We also have our annual subscriptions to **questia.com**, one of the world's biggest online library and **eios.org**, (Communication Institute for online service) an online library for Communication studies.

As we are increasing the number of doctoral studies programme, it is mandatory to increase the standard of our library. As we are looking to increase the standard and proficiency of our faculty, we need to give equal importance to the development of library. We need to pay utmost importance to the fields that are offering doctoral studies, particularly Communication, History of Christianity, Theology and Religion. After the long report submitted by the faculty evaluation committee last year, the library is trying to meet the challenges very efficiently under the leadership of Dr. D. W. Jesudoss who serves as the Dean of Martin Luther Library.

LUTHERAN HERITAGE ARCHIVES AND GURUKUL GERMAN LIBRARY

The Lutheran Heritage Archives is one of the most valuable assets not only to the students and faculty of Gurukul, but also to the Lutheran Churches in India and to the scholars and students from other theological institutions and secular Universities and colleges for doing research in Church History. In addition to the resources from Halle, the Evangelical-Lutheran Mission Societies in Hermannsburg and Leipzig have donated a number of books to the Lutheran Heritage Archives. The Gurukul German Library is holding good German books and open for public use, which is housed in the Lutheran Heritage Archives. Dr. Andreas Gross is the Dean of the Lutheran Heritage Archives.

STAFF SEMINARS RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Four Staff-Student Seminars were organized during this year in which Dr. Monica Melancthon, and Prof. Imte Soo (S. Korea) presented research papers. The November seminar was organized as the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Seminar and seminar on developing Gurukul's response to the proposals of the Curriculum Revision Committee of the Senate of Serampore College. We are in the process of publishing two issues of the *Gurukul Journal of Theological Studies* during the year 2009. Dr. George Zachariah is the convenor of this committee and doing a tremendous job.

GURUKUL DAILY DEVOTIONS

Gurukul Daily Devotions is one of the annual publications of Gurukul making an outstanding contribution to the congregations' spiritual growth. It is also acclaimed as a resource book for congregational bible study. We are happy to note that the number of copies printed are increasing and are in great demand. Dr. Sunil Bhanu is putting all his efforts in making it very challenging devotions assigning the themes and getting the right people to do the devotions and mastering in the publishing as well and getting Gurukul Daily Devotions on time to start the year with the new devotional book.

INDIAN BIBLE COMMENTARY PROJECT

The second phase of the Gurukul Summer Institute was continued as Indian Bible Commentary Project. This project aims to bring out a contextually relevant Bible commentary that will meet the needs of the Indian context in a wholistic manner. The text of the Bible will be interpreted employing liberational hermeneutic, looking at the word of God from various Indian perspectives. We have already received commentaries of some books and hope to receive the remaining commentaries soon. We hope to publish the New Testament commentary (Part I) during this summer and the Old Testament Commentary (Part II) before Aug.2009. Dr. Sam P. Mathew serves as the convenor of this project. We are grateful to NMZ for its support toward this project.

WORSHIP LIFE

Gurukul Lutheran Theological College views worship life as an important dimension of spiritual formation and spiritual life is enhanced by daily morning devotion and Sunday evening community worship services. The opportunity of using liturgies of different confessional traditions enriches the corporate worship life of the community. While the staff- students retreats, festivals like Onam, Pongal and Ugadi provide opportunities to interpret the Gospel in the cultural context of the society. Worship Committee is active apart from the regular rigorous theological engagement during this academic year.

The community worship service started on the re-opening day (15 June 2008) in which Rev. Dr. P. Manoharan, the Director, led the Holy Communion service. The first term retreat was conducted on 6 August 2008 and the leader was **Fr. Dr. Raj Irudaya S. J**, the Director of Arul Kadal, on the theme, **“Mission of Jesus today: Johannine Perspectives & Challenges”**.

The second term started on 21 September 2009 with the Holy Communion service led by Rev. Dr. Suneel Bhanu, the Dean of PG studies. In this term, the Reformation Day Retreat was held on 31 October 2008 based on the theme, **“Becoming Ministers of the Gospel”**. The sessions were led by **Rev. Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla**, the Principal of Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

On 16 November 2008, the consultation on Green Theology concluded with a special worship service held in our chapel. **Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius**, the bishop of Chennai- Bangalore diocese of the Mar Thoma church shared the Word of God during the service.

As part of Children’s Day, the Fine Arts Committee along with Worship Committee organized a special worship service and Holy Communion Service on 23 November 2008. The uniqueness of the service was that all the children in the campus conducted the worship service using special order of worship made by them.

During this term BD final year students are given the opportunity to conduct a Holy Communion Service by the first week of December. Worship Committee takes care of all the sermon evaluation services conducting by the BD graduating students on all the Wednesdays.

The preparation of the rosters for morning devotions and sermon evaluation and also the maintenance of the chapel are done by this committee. Rev. Nagaiaswamy, is the chaplain who leads the worship programmes of the community.

The daily vespers in the respective hostels and once a month, a joint worship by both the Pandita Ramabai Hostel and Thiruvalluvar Hostel enriches the spiritual formation under the leadership of the hostel secretaries Ms. Belinda Gracelyn Praisly and Mr. Biju Y.,

FIELD EDUCATION

As mentioned in the Mission Statement, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute strives to offer ministerial training and spiritual formation through bringing equilibrium between the academic exercise and exposure to the social, economic and political realities of our society, vis-a-vis the struggling masses, especially, Dalits, Adivasis and Women. One of the ways of doing this is the through Concurrent Practical work, 2-week exposure programme and the four-month Internship.

The new curriculum of the Senate of Serampore College will be giving credit to the field education to strengthen the practical dimension of the ministry. In view of this, a colloquy, taking into consideration the holistic dimension of ministry, integrating the academic with practical work, was organised to give new ways of looking at the internship with academic learning. We are grateful to all our churches in taking their candidates to put them under the able guidance of senior pastors and the Social Service Organisations such as – NLHMB, MCCSS, and MMM and SWAP, SUCHI, Christu Mitra Ashram, Ankola, MOCHANA, Kottayam and WIDA, Semiliguda for their support. We are also grateful to the Bishop of Arcot Lutheran Church who helped to send our candidates to Kalrayan Hills and Inter-faith dialogue Centre at Thiruvannamalai. These experiences enhance commitment of students for ministry in serving the churches and the needy and marginalised people of our church and society.

In order to sensitize our students to the cause of poor and the oppressed, we have participated in a One day Hunger strike, to remember the United Nations Poverty Eradication Day in co-operation with the Madras Christian Centre for Social Service (MCCSS) and the one day seminar on Problem & challenges of Girl-children conducted at Gurukul in co-operation with MCCSS. The Centre for International Justice Mission also was invited to conduct a seminar on the eradication of forced labour and to end human trafficking.

Gurukul got the unique opportunity in serving the deserving people in the camps of Kandhamal, districts of Orissa through one of our students Dr. Samuel Siddharth Swamidoss, a medical doctor who volunteered to go to help the violence hit sites of Kandhamal to serve those living in fear and health hazards. We appreciate his commitment and also record our sincere thanks Faith Based Organization Coordination Forum, *ORISSA COMMUNAL VIOLENCE RELIEF PROGRAMME*. I thank Dr. Suneel Bhanu, Dr. George Zachariah, Mr. Manoj Samuel, Rev. Nagaiyasamy Samuel and Rev. Solomon James Sudhir in helping me to run this programme meaningfully.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Gurukul is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-denominational community. Strengthening our relationship and learning from one another is an enriching experience and also a herculean task. However, the various activities of student body such as Social and Theological Forum, Student Christian Movement of India – Gurukul Unit, Sports, Fine Arts Society, Environment & Campus management, Gurukul Philharmonic Choir and the programmes organised by the students through

these committee, under the supervision of a faculty enriches the community life. Our Philharmonic choir is contributing to the life of the community as well as creating public relations. For the past two years the group attended the Maramon Convention at Tiruvella and few local congregations in and around Chennai. Apart from these activities the students' involvement in other committees along with the faculty makes it a truly participatory administration which is a learning process as well. It is worth mentioning that our SCM Unit has organised a one day fast to condemn the atrocities on Christians at Orissa and joined other churches and organisations in the fast to condemn that attacks.

Guru-Sishiya fellowships where about 10 students are grouped with one faculty to meet together twice a month for prayer, fun and fellowship and the **Tutorial groups** of six to eight students under one faculty member for personal sharing and counselling, providing personal care, to have parents away from home. The faculty member becomes a mentor to the student and liaison between the students and the Administration. They help create good relationship and maintain discipline in the college and enhance the quality of our community life and witness.

CHENNAI INTER-THEOLOGATE SEMINAR (CITS) 2008

In order to promote unity and share our theological thinking among the Seminaries and Theological Colleges of higher education in Chennai, four of the advanced level theological schools come together annually for a seminar known as Chennai Inter-Theologiate Seminar. The students and faculty of Arul Kadal Seminary, Sacred Heart Seminary, the Department of Christian Studies at the Madras University and Gurukul Lutheran Theological College form this core group. This year's **Chennai Inter-Theologiate Seminar was held at Arul Kadal, Santhome**, held on November 7, 2008. The final year BD, M. Th., and Doctoral Students and the faculty attended the programme. There were around 160 participants from the above Institutions.

The theme selected for this year's Seminar was, "From Communalism to Community" The paper assigned to our College is "Role of Media". Dr. Jacob Thomas, served as the co-ordinator of CITS programme of Gurukul.

SCHOLARSHIPS

About 70 % of the students are in some form or the other supported by the scholarship programme of the college. We are grateful to some of our mission boards and agencies such as Dan Mission (partial support to the ALC students), NMZ (support to JELC Students) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for their support to a few of the students, particularly the women students from Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Himalayan and the South Andhra Lutheran Church), Church of Sweden. We are also grateful to a few individuals and families, such as Dr. Pohlman from Germany, Rev. Dr. Fredrick Rajan and Sheila Rajan from the United States of America, Rev. Dr. Yi Ok Hee, from South Korea for their support in granting scholarships to our students. As the demand for admission is increasing on one hand and the finances of the college are not growing, scholarship for students is really becoming a greater task. In order to make the churches participate in giving for this great cause of equipping the saints for the mission, Gurukul has started finance campaign.

The whole Gurukul community was involved in an **intense finance campaign**. Both the members of the faculty and the students visited several congregations as well as individual donors seeking their support. The response to our campaign was quite encouraging. From our friends we could raise a sum of Rs.5,11,822.00 this year. The Finance Campaign is expected to be a regular yearly programme of the College. We look forward to the generous contributions of our partners in Mission both within the country and overseas to continue to offer meaningful and relevant theological education sensitive to the mission and meet contextually relevant challenges.

STUDENT-FACULTY INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

Making use of the INATE exchange programme we have sent two of our students Mrs. Prasanna to the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa and Ms. Anupama Hial to Emmanuel College, Canada. Through the exposure programme of CWM, Ms. Belinda Praisly went to the Pacific Theological Seminary in Fiji and Mr. Aby Paul to Jerusalem. Dr. Sarojini Nadar from the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa will be visiting us during the January term of this academic year for a few weeks. It is sad to say that the INATE programme has come to an end, as there are no funds available to continue this programme. Hence, the doctoral students who get the opportunity to visit and consult other Universities may not have this privilege hereafter. However, we are trying to find some other programmes available for exchange.

PRASANNA KUMARI MEMORIAL CHAIR ON ECUMENISM AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Prasanna Kumari Memorial Chair on Ecumenism and Leadership development programme was organized in memory of the late Rev. Dr. Prasanna Kumari Samuel who dedicated her life to the renewal of the Church in India, particularly in solidarity with the marginalized and to realize her passion and commitment to diverse ministries of the Church. The first training programme was conducted from April 16 to May 7, 2007 to equip the pastors and church workers from different denominational backgrounds, especially the constituent churches of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India to work and witness meaningfully in the contemporary Indian context. It was conducted from the endowments given by the CSI Madras Diocese and the family members of Dr. Samuel Meshack in memory of Rev. Dr. Prasanna Kumari.

Celebrating eighty years of its ministry, Gurukul is planning to start MTh programme in the area of Christian Ethics. This programme, we believe, will provide us an opportunity to integrate the bold theological vision of the College. It is in this context that we propose to establish the **Prasanna Kumari Chair of Christian Social Ethics**, with the endorsement from the Executive Committee of the Gurukul College Council. It is a humble attempt to remember and celebrate the memory of a great visionary who lived her life, challenging the church and theological institutions to do theology and ministry at the interface of the struggles of the excluded.

This new chair is envisaged to strengthen Gurukul's commitment to do theology in solidarity with dalits, women, and adivasis. An endowment fund will be created to provide scholarship to at least one woman candidate each year on merit cum need basis. The chair will also organize seminars and lectures occasionally. The endowment fund will also help the Martin Luther library to acquire new books and subscribe new journals in the field of Christian Social Ethics. One professor could be

named as the Professor of Prasanna Kumari Chair, who could be authorised to raise the endowment to build this chair to become self-reliant. It is proposed to have the memorial lecture on the 16 March, every year.

REJUVENATING ECUMENICAL DIALOGUES

There was a concern raised in the meetings of the church leaders from the CSI synod, particularly its Moderator the Rt. Rev. Gladston to revive the dialogue between the Church of South India and the Lutherans and join in the discussions of the Mar Thoma Church and the Lutheran Church. We felt the need to revive these dialogues for making our united witness in the midst of the challenges the church is facing in India today and broaden our ecumenical relationship.

LANGUAGE SCHOOL

As there are many talented professors and gifted linguists with us and around us and a demand for learning languages; Gurukul is planning to use this opportunity to establish a language school to equip people for better learning here in Gurukul as well as for the public to compete in the global market and to give confidence in speaking and writing. The Executive Committee authorised us to proceed with this plan and hence we have planned to start offering Biblical languages, like Hebrew, Greek and modern languages like German and French and the global language English from January 2009. Mr. S. Jaganathan, is in-charge of this programme. It is envisaged that it should be sustained from the income that this school will generate and this programme will be offered as evening courses and as intensive course during the summer vacation. We also request you to keep this in mind and send candidates who are interested in learning these languages.

CONCLUSION

This 2008 - 2009 Report is dedicated to all of you who have participated through your prayerful generosity to enliven our Bold Theological Vision for mission in preparing and equipping future leaders of the church to serve God and the people. On behalf of the Director, faculty and students of Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, we thank all our revered bishops, presidents and the officers of the churches for your support and seek your continued co-operation in terms of your valuable prayers, selecting and sending committed students for training and our finance campaign. Here we would like to place on record the support given by the Marthoma Church in extending the services of Dr. Jacob Thomas for another year. We sincerely thank the Metropolitan, the Most Reverend Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma and the Bishops, particularly the Bishop of Chennai-Bangalore Diocese Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa for extending their support and sharing our burden in the Mission of God. We would like to place on record the support rendered by our visiting faculty those who were generous in giving their time to guide our doctoral students and helping us with the Master of Theology programmes. We also want to express our gratitude to all the mission boards that are supporting the scholars to come to India, and the individual scholars who are spending their own expenses and coming to help us.

We acknowledge the support and confidence we are enjoying from the Senate of Serampore College, particularly; the officers of the Senate, Dr. John Sadananda, the President, Dr. James Massey, the Secretary of BTE SSC, Dr. Ravi Tiwari, the Registrar and Dr. Samson Prabhakar, the Director of SATHRI

and Dr. Mohan Larbeer, the Chairperson of the Academic Administration. We thank the officers of the GCC, particularly the Chairperson the Rt. Rev. Hembrom and the Treasurer, Dr. C. P. Thangaraj for their untiring support and guidance in our mission. We owe our indebtedness to Dr. K. Rajaratnam the Director-Emeritus for his counsels and support all the time. We wanted to express our appreciation to all the faculty members particularly the Deans and HODs and those shouldering heavy responsibilities with commitment. We will fail in our duty if we do not give credit to the Bursar Rev. Dr. David Udayakumar, for shouldering this heavy responsibility as bursar amidst heading the Department of Mission, Ecumenism and Dialogue. We should acknowledge the untiring work of the Registrar Mr. Thomas Manoj Samuel for his support in the academic administration. To all our secretaries and accountant and all our service staff for their contribution for the well-being of this institution, we owe our thanks. We also would appreciate and thank our student friends for shouldering the responsibilities in participating in our administration and exemplifying in their studies and other activities of this institution. We would like to place our appreciation and thanks to all our Alumnae for being a model in their ministries and getting good name for their Alma Mater Gurukul. We are very proud of them as they are proud of being the Alumnae of Gurukul.

Above all we are grateful to God, the Almighty for granting us the privilege of serving God in this vineyard, the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute. Please do pray for God's continued blessings in our entire mission to grow to be channels of blessings taking its mission to the challenging world, particularly proclaiming God's kingdom to the poor, marginalised and the oppressed and all those in need of God's love.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the students and the faculty,

Rev. Dr. P. Manoharan
Director, Gurukul

Rev. Dr. Samuel Meshack
Principal, Gurukul

26 November 2008
Chennai – 600010