

*Living Letter from India* reflection of Decade to Overcome Violence WCC.  
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Good Afternoon!

I feel greatly honored for the privilege of participating in this auspicious occasion. I also wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the organizers of the Kentucky Council of Churches for inviting Me and Rosalyn Laylo as WCC Funded Scholars from Lexington Theological Seminary, to this timely program of ecumenical imperative on the theme, "Planted in faith, growing in love."

I belong to the ethnic Ao tribe of Nagaland, India. Before I start my sharing, I would like to tell a secret. Back at home, we Baptists are known for being blunt. Kindly bear with me if I do the same here.

In my mother tongue, the word, *Nuk-rang-dong* means icon, model or focal point. United States of America is like an icon for the Nagas, and has been for much of the world as well. A rich country—in wealth, in diverse culture, in theological ideas and schools, in Church planting, in influential ecumenical leaders, and in military strength—to name but a few. In such a context, how can I express adequately the quest for peaceful coexistence in my foreign tongue?

In my native indigenous language, the word *Yimchi Yimjung* connotes peace in a community perspective. *Yimchi* means village food, and *Yimjung* means village peace that is attained through sharing equally. *Yimjung* is not complete without *Yimchi*, and together they carry the meaning of embracing the "other" to share food equally, which eventually leads to peaceful co existence! We don't have the concept of peace without mentioning the concept of economic justice.

My community has told me that we learn wisdom from the past. According to church history, American Baptist Missionaries came to Nagaland during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the message of love, peace and forgiveness as a way to live in the light of Christ. The ferocious headhunting and ethnic conflicts due to territorial issues they must have encountered are beyond description. Gradually, my people surrendered all their war weapons, spears and machetes, at the altar of the Church, and have experienced the true light and peace for more than a century. And now, we are 99.9% Christians. The missionaries have planted in faith. I am here as a testimony. But ironically, today we are not far from the global violence. I feel more secure here in the United States than I would in my motherland.

Today, global arms race is tremendous. Because of that, I am reminded of an image. When two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers, which means in the fighting of big

powers in the world, it is the grass-roots people whether from poor or rich countries who are adversely affected, particularly women and children. I believe no one will disagree with me if I say that today, we are caught in the world elephant's fight.

According to my Prof. Dr. Paul Crow, the distinguished ecumenical architect, it is surprising that this semester, the History & Theology of the Ecumenical movement course is being offered only in two schools through out the schools of theology in the United States. One at my seminary LTS, and one at Methodist Theological Seminary of California. For me, the Ecumenical Movement is a crucial subject, particularly for the younger generation of Christians to know deeply why it was started. In the fighting of today's world elephants, the alternative consciousness of peaceful coexistence is an imperative. It takes a spark to light the whole village. It takes a small but true collective voice to confront the evil forces today. If we are to agree with that concept, we need to push our Christian ecumenism further.

Peacemaking, or sowing seeds of love, demands our solidarity with others from all walks of life, like the way of Jesus, who ministered where the people were, ate with them, walked with them, and listened even to their unspoken cries. In a context where peace is all too often an abstract meaning, it is imperative to ask what the Bible says about the children of God.

In order to animate the "Power of Promise for Peace" we are reminded by the apostolic witness of Jesus who spoke against the imperialism of His time. *My peace I give to you, not as the world gives; the peace of state religion, military power, or imperial power to dominate, and uproot the creation. But the Peace I give you is the peace of justice and righteousness. Let not your heart be troubled.* Powerful statement!

My Nukrangdong! Since I've been in the United States, I have an enlarged hope for a spirituality of love, peace, and forgiveness. Americans hold great promise for reclaiming that spirituality which will allow them to be sowers of God's peace and love—as Jesus was. I share that history and that hope with you.

May God enable us to sow that peace of Christ, which Jesus promised, and grow in our ecumenical journey. Amen!