

Environmental Initiatives in the CSI Synod(2014-2023)

My tenure as the CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns Honorary Director is over. I served as the Honorary Director for ten years(Three terms). My association with the CSI Synod Ecological Committee began in 2002. I have been actively involved in the ecological committee as a member, Convener and Director for the last 20 years. I have never collected any salary from the CSI. Also, I spent my energy and money on the success of many eco-programmes in the CSI Synod. The CSI got an environmental award from UNDP while I was the Convener of the Ecological Committee in 2009. The Programme, Eco-Ministry of the Church of South India, was among the 2019 UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) nominees while I was the director.

Even though the CSI Synod Ecological committee has been functioning since 1992, it became a department in 2011, with Rev.Viji Varghese Eapen as the first Director. I was the ecological committee Convener when Rev. Viji Varghese Eapen left in 2014. Rev.Dr. D.R. Sadananda, General Secretary, advised me to work as Honorary Director. I became the first Honorary Director of the CSI Synod. He allotted an office and a part-time staff after one year.

I must record the innovative and unique programmes I initiated that have inspired and motivated hundreds of Clergy, teachers and Students in the 23(now 25) dioceses in the Church of South India.

- 1) **Earth Bible Sermons.** Conducted six workshops based on five volumes of Earth Bible edited by Norman C Habel, for Clergy and asked them to write ecological pulpit sermons. I was able to edit sixty sermons and published them as three Volumes titled Earth Bible Sermons. The CSI got the privilege of publishing the eco-pulpit sermons.
- 2) **Green Parables:** It was an attempt to reread, retell, and actualise the parables of Jesus in contemporary narratives. Conducted three workshops jointly for Clergy and College teachers and published them as a book with the title 'Green parables'.
- 3) **Green Clergy and Green Teachers:** Selected 300 Clergy and 400 teachers from the various dioceses and gave training in environmental leadership. We made a WhatsApp group for them to update the latest ecological challenges. The Church of South India has been training Clergy and Teachers to make them Green Clergy and Green Teachers. Green Clergy and Teachers are moulding future generations with sustainable values.
- 4) **Green School Programme:** In 2016, we signed an MoU with the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi. They have been helping us in converting 2000 CSI schools into Green Schools. Every year, they give a Green rating after evaluating the Green audit of the schools. When I presented our concept of Green Schools in a USPG meeting held in London in 2016, USPG appreciated it and supported the Green School Programme of the CSI. Every year we conduct evaluations and honour the schools which made substantial progress. Green School Programme empowered students to use natural resources responsibly and efficiently and practice effective and sustainable methods that will become a way of life. Schools that use little water, optimise energy efficiency, minimise waste generation, catch and recycle water and provide a healthier space for their students as compared to conventional buildings are Green Schools.
- 5) **School Twinning Programme.** Launched a school twinning programme between 10 CSI lower primary schools and ten oxford schools. Programme originated during the chat between Rev.Davidson Solanki and myself in 2018 in the USPG office in London.
- 6) **Climate Resilient Schools and Communities.** In climate Resilient Schools and Communities, the students practice the Green Protocol of CSI, Carbon neutrality, mitigation and adaptation.

These Children will have to transform their houses as they do in schools—a community transformation through students. Hundreds of schools have already joined this programme. Climate Resilient Schools and Communities differ from the Green School Programme. In the Green School programme, students audit air, water, waste, energy, land and food. They relate it to their curriculum and prepare their School for a Green rating. Some of the Green Schools YouTube are given below.

<https://youtu.be/KmVb0ICGgBc> , https://youtu.be/5ch_KW9vno ,
<https://youtu.be/ycMZAqDBgg8> , <https://youtu.be/rvtttdSanG10> ,
<https://youtu.be/ABH04yYkVas> , <https://youtu.be/4Vy2CENzVBQ> ,
<https://youtu.be/6NsZH3eShCU> , <https://youtu.be/xfkkve2iON4>

- 7) **Certificate Course in Eco theology.** Collaborated with United Theological College, Bengaluru, to conduct a 25-hour online certificate Course in Eco theology. UTC agreed to issue certificates. 310 students (Clergy + teachers + lay people) registered in the two batches, we conducted. 230 students completed the course. It was an innovative method of studying the Ecological concepts in the Bible. Listen to the testimony of the students.

<https://youtu.be/XL0iGbwFeEI>

8) **Eco- leadership training for the students**

During 2021 and 2022, we conducted online training for the students from 6.30 pm to 8 pm on all Wednesdays. Around 1500 students from all over south India regularly attended the programme. First time in the history of the CSI, training for the School students of five states was conducted regularly for two years. The valedictory function of the first batch is given here on youtube. <https://youtu.be/JBlI4TLg7BU> . Conducted five batches during the last two years.

9) **Children's Campaign for Climate Justice and Green Protocol.**

Three hundred CSI Children between the age of 12 and 17 addressed around 1000 parishes or schools from July to December 2022 for campaigning for Climate Justice. Children's voices echoed all over the CSI. "When there is no water, how can you preach the good news. We request you to give leadership in implementing the Green Protocol, and protect our future and your grandchildren". By this, we have empowered students to take up significant tasks. It was a good exposure for the students to improve their communication skills, language, and body language. The students created a long-lasting impression.

10) **Green Protocol.**

Prepared a green Protocol for the CSI Church. The CSI Synod executive and Trichy Synod 2020 approved it. Thus, the CSI became the first Church with a Green Protocol for its life and ministry.

- 11) **During the Pandemic, motivated and inspired rural congregations.** They recorded their talents with an eco-theme. We got 15 Green Sermons from experts, 21 videos of Children's passion for a new eco-friendly world through various art, ten videos of Prayers to Save the Rhythm of Nature, and 14 videos of the programmes of the locals against Climate change. Through online messages, we give confidence and courage to the rural congregation to face Covid 19. Some videos.

<https://youtu.be/6yHWf2bA5D4> , https://youtu.be/xJ_hfiPoL0Q ,
<https://youtu.be/OyGCKWS1nMU> , <https://youtu.be/jCh1IDhdAcY> ,
<https://youtu.be/RGmdLuWK37M> , <https://youtu.be/-Zd9gbzFeUo> , <https://youtu.be/tQldO-YPAWo>

12) **Green Ambassadors of the CSI**

We have trained 150 Clergies, Teachers and Students as Green Ambassadors of the CSI. They will represent the CSI's ecological department at their regional levels.

- 13) **International Ecological Conferences.** I was the General Convener in conducting five international conferences from 2002 to 2022.
- 14) **International Networks.** I got the opportunity to Address the UN Environment Assembly two times, Addressed UNECO meetings, membership in Anglican Communion environmental Network, Recognitions from UNESCO, UNDP and WCC.
- 15) **Publication of Ecological Books .** I could author 20 books and edit 19 books. Most of the books are eco-theological books. The Green God of the Bible was released in 20 centers with the cooperation of international partners. The book release of the Green God of the Bible; <https://youtu.be/y20Z4gIO3RE>
- 16) **Organizational Set Up.** All 23 dioceses (December 2022) have Eco directors and two teachers to look after student activities. All of them are serving voluntarily, and we met every Monday online to discuss and assess the ecological work in each diocese. We could motivate and inspire them in the eco ministry of the CSI.

2017 CSI Synod Assembly held at Kottayam, reported the work from 2014 to 2017

<https://youtu.be/lteiAOKJx-U>

2020 CSI Synod Assembly held at Trichy, reported the work from 2017 to 2020.

<https://youtu.be/OR5Cg637CsY>

2023 CSI Synod Assembly held at Hubly, reported the ecological work from 2020 to 2023.

<https://youtu.be/XzRgbT4Tfa0>

I would like to record my sincere thanks to Most Rev Dr.G.Daivasirvadam(Moderator), Most Rev. Thomas K Oommen(Moderator),Rev.Dr.D R Sadananda(General Secretary), Adv. Robert Bruce(Treasurer) for the valuable support and encouragement given to me from 2014 to 2020. Most Rev.Dharmaraj Rasalam(Moderator), Rt.Rev. Reuban Mark(Deputy Moderator), Adv. Fernadas Rathina Raja(General Secretary) and Prof. Vimal Sukumar(Treasurer) allowed me to continue from 2020 to 2023 as the honorary Eco director of the CSI Synod. As the General Secretary of the CSI Synod from 2014 to 2020, Rev.Dr. D.R. Sadananda gave a wonderful training to me in my Eco theological journey. I got new insights and ideas from him. Adv. Fernadas Rathina Raja has given me complete freedom to execute innovative programmes in the ecological department. I express my sincere thanks to all of them. Ms. Buella, Mr. Solomon and Augustina, staff of the CSI Synod Centre, helped me in the clerical work. Mr.Anish K Mathew, Rejo Eipe, Yoshuva, Noble Sam Prince, Noyel V Addat and P J Koushick served as interns in the ecological department and helped me in the ecological work. They worked from 8 am to 10 pm every day. It was a new experience for them to work with a workaholic director. Late Rt. Rev. George Isaac (2002-2006), Rt. Rev.Thomas Samuel(2006-2010), Rt.Rev. Thomas K Oommen, Rt.Rev. B N Fenn(2014 -2017), Rt.Rev. M Joseph(2017 -2020) and Rt.Rev. George Stephen(2020-2023) served as the chairperson of the Synod Ecological committee. I am grateful to all the Diocesan Bishops for their support and guidance. EMS, USPG, CWM, WCC, Church of Scotland and Anglican Communion Environmental Network supported the ecological department in various ways. I am thankful to all the officers of these organizations for the encouragement and the opportunities given to me to address and participate in international programmes. I got support and

encouragement from my international friends Dr Manoj Kurien, Mr. Dileep Suna, Ms. Athana Peralta, Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann, Rev. Benjamin Solomon, Rev. Dr. Duncan James Dormor, Rev. Davidson Solanki, Rev. Canon Rachel Mash, Rev. Julie Sim, Dr Mathews George Chunakara and Mr. Sandy Sneddon.

Twenty-three eco directors and fifty-two teachers from the dioceses were with me in planning and implementing the programmes without taking any salary from the Synod. I have mentioned their names in the report. I express my sincere thanks to all of them also. The Diocesan Bishops and the Diocesan officers have cooperated with the Ecological department. I was able to maintain a healthy relationship with all the former and present Directors of the CSI Synod departments and with the Synod secretariat staff.

The General Secretary of CSI Synod has asked me to continue ecological work in CSI as the Honorary Advisor to the Department of Ecological Concerns. I have been a Green Church campaigner since 1992. I will continue my eco-theological pilgrimage and leadership in areas wherever it is necessary. I have been giving leadership in 'net zero carbon emissions' in various projects of governmental and non-governmental organisations. Climate change is a serious issue affecting all creations on Earth. Let us join hands with all those working for a carbon-free eco-friendly world. Wake up.

Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu.