

Report of the South Asian and Middle East (SAME) Regional Conference 15th-19th November 2017

Renewed in the Mind: challenges and opportunities for Nurses in South Asia

From 15-18 November 2017 the second SAME regional conference was held at LAMB hospital in Bangladesh. 140 participants from India, Nepal and Bangladesh attended the conference. The theme was 'Renewed in mind. Challenges and opportunities for Christian nurses in South Asia'. Sadly, members from Pakistan weren't able to obtain their visas in time, and as a consequence the SAME region chair Mr. Sarfraz Masih and other nurses from Pakistan were not able to join the conference.

Highlights of the conference:

The conference started with a wonderful opening ceremony. The guests were welcomed with music and dance from the LAMB nursing students, who had practiced for weeks to make it a memorable moment for all. The venue was decorated beautifully and the chief guest, Dr. Tove Giske, NCFI President, opened the conference by giving an encouraging welcome speech. She highlighted three P's – Preparation, Practice, and Ponder. Kyle Scott, LAMB Executive Director also greeted all the participants. The theme verse from Romans 12:1-2 was read in English and Bangla. Mrs. Rosalyn Jayakaran gave the opening keynote speech describing some of the challenges faced by nurses including overload, stressful situations and expectations. She then emphasised how the bible, prayer and fellowship can help us to stand firm.

During the next three days the theme of the conference was explored looking at the topics 'caring, conforming and creating'. Mrs. Debra Schout, nurse, educator and bible scholar from the US, lead the bible studies. She helped us to see the importance of 'conforming to the mind of Christ'. Reflective questions based on the bible studies were discussed in language table groups. After the morning bible studies workshops were held, prepared by Professor Barbara Parfitt. These were based around the concept of resilience focusing on the same three themes. Participants enjoyed the interactive style and explored the topics through tasks such as drawing, self-evaluation, and writing stories. We learned that resilience helps us to stay healthy in all aspects of our lives and we discovered ways to strengthen our personal resilience.

One afternoon we heard from two nurses, who work in a hospital in the South of Bangladesh and have cared for Rohingya patients since the refugee crisis began in August. This was a valuable report.

The concurrent sessions included papers from Mrs. Suvarnamala (Pune) about the 'mind of Christ', Mrs. Provati Chambugong (LAMB) describing Kangaroo Mother Care and Mrs. Stacy Saha (LAMB) reporting her research on the incidence of 'Suicide'.

A highlight of the conference was the cultural night. It began with a party dance lead by the Bangladeshi nurses. We then had an open-air BBQ with lots of delicious food items and a campfire. Afterwards we returned to our venue and enjoyed an evening of dances from Bangladesh, India and Nepal, songs in different languages and a skit from the Indian nurses reminding us of our theme.

During the Regional Forum a number of important matters were discussed and a decision was made to hold a SAME regional student conference in Nepal in 2019. Strengthening the next generation was

an important theme during our conference and Dr.Tove Giske, in particular, spent a lot of time with the LAMB student nurses and the other younger nurses, which was very much appreciated.

Throughout the conference there were times for prayer and worship and it was wonderful how the Indian nurses led by Mrs. Chinnamma Matthew and Mrs. Sheela Walker continually encouraged us to bring items before the Lord and renew our minds.

Altogether it was a wonderful time of fellowship between the three countries and we really wished we could have had our Pakistan friends with us. We continue to pray for fruits from this conference and that we will be able to put the things that we have learned in practice. We are so thankful that God granted us health and safety.