Closing Worship Service and Closing Ceremony of the Bicentenary Celebrations of the Diocese of Calcutta on 13th December, 2015

On 13th December, 2015 the Bicentenary celebrations of the Diocese of Calcutta, CNI came to a grand conclusion in the presence of Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon’ble President of India; Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi, Hon’ble Governor of West Bengal; Bishops, Presbyters and Heads of Institutions in the Diocese of Calcutta, NGOs, Government Delegates, Friends and Partners of the Diocese of Calcutta, members of different pastorates of the Diocese and other Guests.

In the worship service The Most Revd. David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church preached the Good News.

He expressed his privilege to share in friendship the Gospel and took pride in being part of the history of the Diocese of Calcutta. While reckoning the past he reminded the congregation of Alexander Duff, the first missionary to India from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, born in Pitlochry in his very own Diocese among...
The 200th Anniversary Thanksgiving Holy Communion Service of the Consecration of St. Andrew’s Church

On 29th November, 2015 St. Andrew’s Church celebrated the 200th Anniversary of its Consecration in a Thanksgiving Holy Communion to give thanks to God for 200 years of God’s faithfulness, also giving thanks for the life of Rev Dr. James Bryce, the first Scottish minister who laid the foundation stone of St. Andrew’s Church in 1815 marking the beginning of the mission of the Church of Scotland in India, and to Almighty God, who gave such grace to the apostle Andrew the patron saint of Scotland that he readily obeyed the call of God’s Son Jesus Christ and hastened to lead others to His light.

The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta was the celebrant and preacher. He gave thanks to God for journeying with the generation of the members who worshiped in this Church since its inception in 1814. He urged the members that with gratitude and thanksgiving we recommit ourselves to continue to worship the Lord and serve Him in the years to come.

In his sermon, Bishop stressed on the importance of the prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. He preached from Acts 2:1-4. There was a person he said, who, on hearing a message by Rev P. Adhikari, on the Holy Spirit gave his life to the Lord and his family has ever since been Christians for two generations. Our Bishop also mentioned the importance of the verse, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,...”(Matthew 11:28,29).

Among those present were Rev Paritosh Canning, Vice-President of the Diocese and the Rev Swarup Bar who is in India on a break from his doctoral studies in Edinburgh.

The Bicentenary choir presented special hymns to mark the occasion. After the service there was time for fellowship over coffee and snacks.

A Testimony - Victor Avishek Chatterjee

Cathedral Mission College. It is here that I was drawn closer to my Lord and accepted Him as my personal saviour. By God’s grace I achieved a First Class degree. I joined Rajabazar Science College (UCSTA) under Calcutta University to pursue Post. BSc. Chemical Engineering (B. Tech). Here too, God blessed me and I did well for my self. I qualified GATE, a national level examination and took admission in Jadavpur University to enrol for M. Tech in Chemical Engineering. On completion, I applied for a PhD. In IIT Kharagpur and was selected by the institute as an Institute Research Scholar. At present, my field of work is Composite Technology.

Through every step of my academic life, I have experienced God’s faithfulness in my life and I am sure God will use me in His Church for His Glory.
Christmas Lunch on Jesus – St. Paul's Cathedral

On Saturday, 19th December, 2015 St. Paul’s Cathedral ushered in the Christmas Spirit of sharing and giving through its Christmas Lunch on Jesus (CLOJ) programme. This annual event is supported by St. Peter’s Church, Derbyshire, Partners in Mission with St. Paul’s Cathedral, Kolkata. The Rt. Rev Alistair Redfern, Bishop of Derby and The Rt. Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta continue to support and encourage each other along the way and so is the Revd. Anita Matthews, Assistant Presbyter of St. Peter’s Church, Derbyshire and Mrs. Patricia Sarma of St. Paul’s Cathedral continued efforts to further strengthen the ties between St. Paul’s Cathedral and St. Peter’s Church through the Annual Programme “Christmas Lunch on Jesus”. Bishop Ashoke Biswas spent time in fellowship with the families and congratulated the Cathedral family for their efforts in making the event happen and in turn providing the families the opportunity to celebrate Christmas in a meaningful way. He said “the very purpose of Christmas should remind us of the resurrection day when Jesus made all things new. He breathes new life, so that we can live free. This year, may we remember what that great dawning means for each of us, and may we choose to allow the Son to arise and shine bright in every area of our lives.”

Rev. Martin A Pakhare, offered prayers and shared the Christmas message, followed by the distribution of Christmas Lunch on Jesus’ Hampers to 350 underprivileged / low income group families. Apart from the hampers, 1400 people were served a lunch of sumptuous biryani at the Cathedral, supported by donors and well-wishers. Volunteers cheerfully helped pack the hampers and distribute the Lunch boxes.

Christmas invites us to dream of the peace God promises. Let each one of us go out into the world and find our homes, not as a place of emptiness, but a home sheltered under the wings of God; where followers of Jesus courageously seek peace. God invites us to believe in this child, and to believe in the power of God to bring light into our darkness, and peace to our world.

Ms. Mamata Bandopadhyay, Hon’ble Chief Minister of West Bengal; Mr. Derek O’Brien, MP and Mr. Surajit Kar Purkayastha, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Kolkata Police were present among other dignitaries, guests, members, believers and friends from other faiths who came in large number to be a part of the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Christmas Eve Service at St. Paul’s Cathedral

On 24th December, 2015 the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at St. Paul’s Cathedral ushered in the spirit of Christmas with congregational carols and music sung by the Cathedral Choir. The Bishop of Calcutta preached the Message of Christmas and as the background material for his message chose the book of Isaiah. He said when Isaiah wanted to speak to our deepest longings, the prophet chose light as the symbol because he knew how dark the world can be.

Isaiah believed that the chaos of the world would be answered by the birth of a child. He preaches “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon His shoulders; and He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and His kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this”. Isaiah 9:6-7
Bicentenary Celebrations of the Diocese of Calcutta

others from Scotland. Bishop David is aware of the many links his congregation shared with Kolkata – links of nostalgia and sentiment and remarked "When we return to Scotland, we shall see if God the vine-grower will prune - will help us to reshape those connections so that they become more fruitful - fruitful in the living Church in India today".

"We from Scotland are privileged to be your friends in the Gospel. But we are also part of your story. All around us here are reminders of Scotland. Some of those reminders belong to colonial times. Alexander Duff founded Scottish Church College. We also saw his name on the school at Chinsurah", the Bishop said.

The Diocesan Youth Fellowship, Sunday School, Women’s Fellowship, Bengali and English Choir actively participated in the worship service to add meaning to the Closing Worship Service. The Most Revd. Pradip Kumar Samantaroy, Moderator, CNI brought greetings from the Church of North India; Mr. Alwan Masih, General Secretary, CNI and Ms. Sushma Ramswami, Communications Secretary, CNI were present as special guests; The Most Revd. Thomas D’Souza, Archbishop, Archdiocese of Calcutta; Rev. Ivan Satyavrata, Senior Pastor, Assembly of God Church, Kolkata; Pastors from our neighbouring Barrackpore Diocese, other Church leaders and NGOs’ heads, government delegates, friends and partners of the Diocese blessed us with their presence.

The Rt. Revd. Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta, in welcoming all in the Church service said, “Jesus is the Chief Stone and the Founder of the Diocese of Calcutta which today completes 200 years of its Mission and Ministry.” He thanked each one for coming to the celebrations and making it even more special with their presence.

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon’ble President of India was the chief guest for the closing ceremony of the Bicentenary Celebrations which began at 4:30 p.m. in the Cathedral ground after the Worship Service.

The President of India was received by The Rt. Revd. Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta; The Most Rev Pradip Kumar Samantaroy, Moderator, CNI and Mr. Alwan Masih, General Secretary, CNI.

At the beginning the Police Band led in the National Anthem, followed by the welcome address of The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta. In welcoming the gathering he said “As we gather here at the completion of the bicentenary celebrations of our great and historic Diocese with grateful thanks, we remember the labours and contributions of our founders who came 200 years ago in the year 1814 with a vision and mission to establish a community of God’s own people called the Diocese of Calcutta. As Bishop Fanshaw Middleton set out to work, the journey was challenging and beckoning. 18th century India and particularly Bengal, was ridden with superstitions, prejudices and discriminations. However through the Bishopric of Calcutta and the witness and mission of the Calcutta Diocese, call for a more just and equal society began to be heard. Hence the story of the Diocese of Calcutta has been a story of the proclamation of the Word, empowerment of women and children, health and wholeness for all and education that changes lives. It is for all these songs of accomplishments, that I praise and thank God along with you all for the long line of Bishops of Calcutta, retired presbyters and lay leaders of the past who have entrusted us with this great inheritance of faith and kingdom legacy.”

Rev Paritosh Canning, Vice President, Diocese of Calcutta, CNI said the opening prayer, followed by the lighting of the lamp by Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon’ble President of India, the Invocation-Rabindra Sangeet by St. James’ School Choir, Felicitation of the Dignitaries on the Dias by The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta, CNI (comprising of an Uttoriyo and Memento- Replica of St. Paul’s Cathedral), Greetings from the Church of North India by The Most Revd. P. K. Samantaroy, Moderator, CNI; Special

The President congratulated the Diocese of Calcutta on completing two hundred years of its fruitful journey of service and commitment to the city of Kolkata and the society at large. He said it has shown the way through its respectful conduct of multifarious humanitarian activities and set an example for others to follow. He urged the Diocesan Family of Kolkata to keep up the good work and continue making a difference to the lives of citizens.
Bicentenary Celebrations of the Diocese of Calcutta

Rev Abir Adhikari, Hony. Secretary, Diocese of Calcutta, CNI proposed the vote of thanks.

And finally the Police Band once again led in the National Anthem.

The visit by the President of India was meticulously planned with involvement of officers of various departments of the Government of India and West Bengal. An advance team comprising of the police (intelligence, traffic, Special Branch, detective department, etc), fire department, press and media along with conveners and members of the Bicentenary Celebration Planning Committee met in advance to discuss the programme elements and made frequent visits to the venue.

The Diocese of Calcutta, CNI, had a yearlong celebration while crossing the Bicentenary milestone between December 2014 and December 2015 with various mission-oriented projects and celebratory events. The Diocese through its various projects has continuously enriched the lives of its people and becoming a community of Hope, Light and Life for the people in the larger society irrespective of caste, creed, colour or race.

At 5:30 p.m. the President of India left for another programme but the celebrations continued with choirs of the Churches and Institutions presenting special items for guests. There was also time for the Diocesan Sunday School Committee to give away prizes to children being the winners of the Annual Competition Rally and for the felicitation of the Guests- The Most Revd. David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, his wife Alison Chillingworth and his team, The Most Revd. Paul Siir Sarkar, Moderator of the Church of Bangladesh, The Most Revd. Thomas D’Souza, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Calcutta, CNI Bishops and other dignitaries. The celebrations came to a close with fellowship meal for all.

Our special thanks to Rashtrapati Bhawan, Government of West Bengal and Kolkata Police for their immense support and co-operation.

This day of the Closing Ceremony of the Bicentenary Celebrations will be remembered as a day when the people of Calcutta came together in unity and friendship to be witness to the life and work of the Diocese of Calcutta in this part of the country.

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Diocesan Family Get Together 2015

On 17th December, 2015 the Diocese of Calcutta organised the Diocesan family get-together for all Clergy, Heads of Institutions, Executive Committee members, related Organisations, Office Staff and friends. This time of the year the Diocese of Calcutta and friends come together to socialize, rejoice in catching up with friends and the Diocesan Family. It is also an evening of sharing, games and special songs.

Mrs. Kajori Biswas and Rev. Margaret Ali were the Emcee for the evening, Mr. John A. K. Ghosh and Mr. Aniket Debroy were responsible for the games for the men and women, while Mrs. Angela Ghose took care of the games for the children and their gifts.

The Clergy and their family enthralled the gathering with the singing of carols and a good number of the Diocesan family participated sportingly in the games.

The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta offered prayers and thanksgiving to God for the good health of all. He conveyed his good wishes to the entire Diocesan family and to all those who are associated in one way or other while handing over individual gifts to all present.

The events of evening concluded with a fellowship dinner.
On 17th November, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. St. Paul’s Cathedral Kolkata hosted the Annual Canon Subir Biswas Memorial Lecture with the theme “Canon Subir Biswas and Power of Weakness” as part of the year long bicentenary celebrations of the Diocese of Calcutta.

In the beginning there was time for tea and fellowship for all who attended in the Cathedral lawns which was so welcoming with an opportunity for interaction with one another. Soon after the tea and fellowship the gathering moved into the Cathedral. Rev Nigel Pope, Jt. Convener. Bicentenary Celebrations Committee and Vicar of St. Paul’s Cathedral said the opening prayer. The Rt. Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta gave the opening address. He took this opportunity to thank and congratulate the St. Paul’s Cathedral family and the Bicentenary Celebrations Committee for all their planning and preparations and for the hard work put in to make this day possible. He specially thanked and welcomed the speaker Bishop Michael Westall for taking the time and effort to travel all the way from Hertfordshire in the U.K. to deliver the lecture mentioning the fact that “Bishop Westall is no stranger to the Diocese and a former Principal of Bishop’s College in the 1970s”, while also extending his heartfelt welcome to Bishop’s wife Mrs. Punita Westall.

Bishop felt as the Diocese of Calcutta celebrates its bicentenary, it is only fitting to remember a clergyman who contributed to equipping the Diocese in becoming a community of resistance and hope. The Rev Canon Subir Biswas, was a dynamic visionary and prophetic Vicar of St. Paul’s Cathedral in the 1970s. True to his prophetic nature, Canon Biswas took the risk of initiating the Church to work for the poorest of the poor, and become a voice for the voiceless. He was a prophet, a visionary, an inspiration and a man of God. During the dramatic events when millions of refugees fled from the genocide in East Pakistan which called for his response, he turned parts of St. Paul’s Cathedral into a great store for refugee needs. Day after day, night after night, he worked to the point of total exhaustion – visiting refugee camps with relief, and later going into the new nation of Bangladesh to rebuild hundreds of houses and set up rehabilitation schemes. Through his commitment to the poor of Calcutta and the refugees from what became Bangladesh, and through his clear witness to the dignity and worth of all people, he became a world-known figure who ushered not just the Cathedral but the entire Christian community in Kolkata to take seriously its role to offer fullness of life to all. Reflection on the life and work of the Late Canon Subir Biswas comes to us as a challenge and call unto the service of the greater plan of God in our lives. It is the life of such man of God which helps us realize there is more beyond the faith and fellowship that we practice and indulge. Faith in action and fellowship through unconditional love and service for all, especially for the lost and less fortunate in and around us is what we are called to pursue. Canon Subir was an exemplary Priest and servant of God; humble and meek, lifting up those who were weak. Yes friends, the prayer of his heart as seen through his awesome life was to be a servant. In conclusion Bishop once again welcomed and encouraged all present to sit back and enjoy the lecture and re-visit the life, leadership and works of one of God’s most blessed servant – the Rev Canon Subir Biswas.

The children of Cathedral Relief Service presented a special song followed by the felicitation of Bishop Westall and his wife Punita; Ms. Theodora Gomes and Ms Luna Dutta who worked alongside Canon Subir; The Rt Revd. Ashoke Biswas, present Bishop of Calcutta and The Rt. Revd P. S. P. Raju former Bishop of Calcutta, CNI, with flowers, gifts and an Uttariyo(shawl) to honour their presence. The Cathedral Choir presented a special hymn in memory of Canon Subir Biswas. Rev Philip Peacock introduced the speaker of the lecture to the diverse audiences, resounded the theme and the entire idea of Christ among and with the poor, the powerless and what it means in finding a certain power in weakness is none other than Bishop Westall, who studied at Cambridge University. He spent two years at Cuddesdon Theological College, near Oxford, followed by one year at Harvard Divinity School, USA. From 1966-1970. He was assistant Priest in St Martin’s Parish in Hertford and was a lecturer at Bishop’s College in the ’70. Was Vice-Principal of Bishop’s College from 1976-79 and Principal from 1979-83. From 1984-92 he was Principal of St Mark’s Theological College, Dar-es-alam, Tanzania. From 1993-2000 was Rector of a rural benefice in Worcestershire Diocese, UK. From 2001-2006 Bishop of the Diocese of South West Tanganyika in Tanzania. Returned to UK in 2006 intending to retire, but managed only semi-retirement. From 2007-2012 was Vicar of St Luke’s Church.

Continued on: Pg.7
The Annual Canon Subir Biswas Memorial Lecture

in Torquay, Devon, and an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Exeter. He retired
fully in 2012 and moved to Hereford, where he continues to be an Assistant
Bishop of the Diocese.

Bishop Westall in his opening statements expressed his pleasure to be invited
to give this Lecture, and was grateful to The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta,
and to Dr Alfred, the Revd Nigel Pope, and the Pastorate Committee of St Paul’s
Cathedral for the invitation. He found it a
privilege to speak in the setting of this
historic Cathedral and in the bicentennial
year of this Diocese, which has played
such an important role in the history of
the Church in India. It was also a pleasure
to speak in memory of one whom he
loved and admired in equal measure. He
found it easy to make the Lecture into a
panegyric about Fr Subir. But that would
be unfair to one who thought so
creatively. He preferred rather to explore a
theme which he believed lies close to the
heart of Subir’s life and ministry, namely
the strange inter-relation of strength and
weakness in Christian life and ministry,
and began long before the birth of the
Church, back in time, to the Old
Testament with a narrative exposition of
the theme of power and weakness where
it emerges in various specific ways in the
course of Old Testament history. Giving
examples, of Gideon in the Book of Judges
(chapters 6-8). When the angel of the
Lord tells him that he is the one to deliver
Israel from the Midianites, he begins by
stressing his weakness: he belongs to the
least of the clans in his tribe, and he is the
least in his family (6.15). (This theme will
return.) And then when it comes to
fighting the Midianites, the people with
Gideon have to be reduced to a mere
three hundred, to make it clear that the
victory belongs to God, and not to their
own strength. Weakness allows the
power of God to be recognised. Likewise
he continued with the choice of David to
replace Saul. The account of the slaying of
Goliath by David and his lack of
equipment, his weakness, allows him to
rely on God. The theme returns in a
variety of ways in the prophets Elijah,
Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah to
demonstrate the strange inter-relation of
power and weakness at several levels and
in many parts of the Old Testament and
the variety of thought about power and
weakness.

In the New Testament he examined the
opposing view, which is interested only in
power and becomes immediately
apparent in the request by James and
John to Jesus: “Grant us to sit, one at
Your right hand and one at Your left in
Your glory” (Mark 10.37). The request is even
more direct in Matthew, where it is made
on their behalf by their mother: “Declare
that these two sons of mine will sit, one at
Your right hand and one at Your left, in
Your kingdom” (20.21). They are thinking
of power. Jesus in his reply returns to the
theme of weakness: “You know that
among the Gentiles those whom they
recognise as their rulers lord it over them,
and their great ones are tyrants over
them. But it is not so among you: but
whoever wishes to be great among you
must be your servant, and whoever
wishes to be first among you must be
slave of all” (Mark 10.42-44). Closely
related is the passage in which the
disciples ask Jesus who will be the
greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus
places a child among them and says:
“Truly I tell you, unless you change and
become like children, you will never enter
the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever
becomes humble like this child is the
greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven”
(Matt. 18.3-4). The emphasis here is on
the weakness and vulnerability of
children. But they can also stand for
another contrast between strength and
weakness: the contrast between
knowledge and ignorance. So Matthew
has Jesus saying: “I thank you, Father, Lord
of heaven and earth, because you have
hidden these things from the wise and
the intelligent and have revealed them to
infants” (11.25).

The theme reappears again in the feet
washing in St John’s Gospel. Peter recoils
from having Jesus wash his feet. For Jesus
to do this sends out all the wrong signals
about power and authority. After the
washing, Jesus says: “You call Me Teacher
and Lord - and you are right, for that is
what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher,
have washed your feet, you also ought to
wash one another’s feet” (13.13-14).

In the Lecture Bishop Westall expounded,
in the Old Testament, the theme of the
power of weakness did not mean that the
desire for power had died. So too in the
New Testament the old desire has not
disappeared and how slow the disciples
were to grasp the kind of authority of
which Jesus was speaking. And for Luke
at least the old desire has not died even
after the death and resurrection of Jesus.
So at the beginning of the Acts of the
Apostles he has the apostles say to Jesus:
“Lord, is this the time when You will
restore the kingdom to Israel?” (1.6) But
we have seen Jesus' understanding of
power and weakness both in His teaching
and lived out in His passion and death.
And it is St Paul above all who develops
this theme. Paul sees with startling clarity
the way in which the cross of Jesus
overturns our usual understanding of
power and weakness. On the cross we
see God’s weakness which is stronger
than human strength (1 Cor.1.25). And
even at this beginning of our exploration
we can note how he links another aspect
of the power-weakness paradigm: at the
cross we see also the foolishness of God
which is wiser than human wisdom.

Bishop briefly reflected on what happens
to this question of power and weakness
in Christian history, before coming to Subir
Biswas and the Power of Weakness. How,
at the heart of the Christian Gospel, lies an
upheaval in the way we normally view
power and weakness: the power of God is
focussed in a man who loses all power.
Even in the New Testament there is
resistance to such a Gospel. And as the
church became powerful, there was an
inevitable tension between the power of
the institution and the Gospel it
proclaimed, in many cases forcing those
who wished to reclaim the Gospel to the
edges of the institution. Stating that
early in his ministry, Subir was alive to this
tension.

So it is not surprising that Subir was
looking for another way. This was
already true of his ministry in
Durgapur. But the tension became
acute and the need to find another way
became imperative when he took
charge of a major institution, namely
this Cathedral. The occasion was the
Continued on: Pg.8

Continued from: Pg.6

The Annual Canon Subir Biswas
Memorial Lecture
The Annual Canon Subir Biswas Memorial Lecture

refugee crisis of 1971. As he launched into work in the camps, the Cathedral became a sort of godown for the stores which were needed. This was not simply a way of finding much needed space. It was a statement about the Cathedral's relationship to questions of power and weakness. And brought to birth by the refugee crisis of 1971 the Cathedral Relief Service. At the end of the year the crisis ended and the refugees returned to what is now Bangladesh. After a brief spell of work in the newly liberated country, Subir redirected CRS to work in Kolkata. The manifold activities of CRS became a new and compassionate expression of the Gospel in the city. Subir was never content to allow this to become a comfortable institutionalised expression of care. Bishop Westall concluded with Canon Subir's life and love for the Church. He began one of the meditations he wrote in hospital with these words: "I was such a busy person, busy from early morning to late at night. So busy that others could not approach me for help: 'How could we disturb you?' they said. I was doing great things for the kingdom of God, for justice, for truth, for the Church, and for the poor. I had built a whole world around me which depended on me. And then came sudden illness and the cessation of all activity" (Day 5).

And in that state of weakness he rediscovered the power of God visible in the weakness of the crucified Christ. After the lecture The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta, released the book published on the occasion and the Moderator for the lecture, Rev Philip Peacock opened the discussion. The vote of thanks was proposed by Rev Abir Adhikari, Jt. Convener, Bicentenary Celebrations Committee and Hony. Secretary, Diocese of Calcutta, CNI and Rev Paritosh Canning, Vice-President, Diocese of Calcutta, CNI said the closing prayer. Bishop Michael Westall pronounced the benediction.

Visit of the Most Revd. David Chillingworth and the team from the Scottish Episcopal Church.

The Most Revd. David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church and his team were in the Diocese of Calcutta to be part of the Closing Ceremony of the Bicentenary Celebrations of the Diocese on 13 December, 2015. During this time the team visited various projects in the Diocese. The first being a project run by the Cathedral Relief Service, Dum Dum. Mr. Rig David outlined the projects' challenges and achievements.

Bishop Chillingworth and the team interacted with Women's Empowerment Group who are being rehabilitated and given an opportunity to find a sustainable source of income for their children and the community below the poverty line, in the Dum Dum Municipality area. The team were presented with the products prepared by the women that are also sold in the open market.

The team were made aware of the children outreach programmes at Chinsurah Child Development Centre and St. James' Church, Kolkata, Child Empowerment Programme. They also visited the Bosekati project.

On 10th December, 2015 Bishop Chillingworth and his team were part of a seminar on Girls, Children and Women and Human Rights jointly organised by the Diocese of Calcutta, CNI; All India Council of Christian Women and the Scottish Episcopal Church at Bishop’s College.

On 13th December, 2015 Sunday the team members were taken to different Churches in the Diocese where they attended the morning worship service, preached the Word of God and participated in the celebration of the Eucharist. This followed the Closing Worship and Closing Ceremony of the Bicentenary Celebrations of the Diocese of Calcutta, CNI, beginning from 2:00 pm.

The Most Revd David Chillingworth, on this visit was accompanied by his wife Mrs Alison Chillingworth, Revd Nick Green, Revd Graham Taylor, Revd Canon Bob Harley, Revd Shona Boardman, Revd Liz Baker and Mrs Lis Burke, Lay reader.
Induction Ceremony of Rev Jacob Amirthasingh as Presbyter

On Sunday, 6th December, 2015 Rev. Jacob Amirthasingh was inducted as a Presbyter in the Diocese of Calcutta, CNI by the Rt. Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta. The induction service was held at St. Mary's Church, Kolkata. The ceremony included Holy Communion and was attended by Clergy and Heads of Institutions in the Diocese of Calcutta, friends and family.

The Bishop presented a Bible to the newly inducted Presbyter, saying:--
"Take this Book, a token of the authority which you have received as Presbyter to preach the Word of God and to minister the sacraments in the congregations to which you shall be appointed. You are to love, serve and pray for all the people among whom you work, caring alike for the young and the old, the strong and the weak, the rich and poor. Remember that you are called to serve rather than to be served, to proclaim the faith of the Church and no other, above all after the concerns of Christ. So that we may know that you believe yourself to be called by God and that you profess the Christian faith."

Rev. Jacob Amirthasingh as a Presbyter will help in the Sunday Worship Services at St. George’s Church and at St. Thomas’ Pastorate, Howrah. At St. Paul’s Cathedral he will help in house-visits and in the Counseling Centre at St. Paul's Cathedral.

In the concluding part the ceremony the Bishop introduced Rev Jacob Amirthasingh to the congregation and in turn urged the congregation to welcome Rev Amirthasingh.

After the service there was a time of fellowship and refreshments.

Inauguration of Tuberculosis Outdoor Clinic

On 2nd November, 2015 The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta inaugurated a health checkup centre at the Outdoor Clinic of Calcutta Diocesan Tuberculosis Relief Trust at 167, AJC Bose Road, Kolkata – 700 014.

Calcutta Diocesan Tuberculosis Relief Trust – Outdoor Clinic - This Trust runs an outdoor clinic for Tuberculosis patients. Here patients are provided with DOT (Direct Observation Treatment) and are given medicines free of cost. The clinic conducts extensive awareness programmes and has benefited several thousands of patients since its inception in 1969.

The center will initially take up examination of patients with basic health problems by the existing doctor and facilities. The Bishop emphasized the need for such healthcare initiatives to reach out to the poor and benefit the society at large. He pointed out that regular health check-up helps in identifying problems at early stages and taking preventive measures. Present on the occasion were Rev Paritosh Canning, Vice-President and Mr. Pradip Kumar Mitra, Hony. Treasurer of the Diocese of Calcutta and Mrs. Meribah Suresh, Principal, Pratt Memorial School among others. Bishop in his inaugural message made an appeal to the Churches and Institutions to extend all possible infrastructural and other support for such activities in the future which would benefit a good number of patients.

DEM Fete

On 5th December, 2015 the Diocesan Education Mission Fete was held in St. Paul's Cathedral Ground. Institutions in the Diocese of Calcutta, CNI actively participated in this annual mega event. The Rt Rev. Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta, CNI, inaugurated the Fete. Office Bearers and Heads of Institutions of the Diocese were present along with other dignitaries at the inaugural ceremony. The proceeds of this fete are utilised for the benefit of vernacular schools in the Diocese.

A large number of people flocked to enjoy the variety of games and food, the stalls offered, apart from stalls for artefacts, household goods and clothes. Items were also available on sale by various Christian organisations.

Calcutta Diocesan Tuberculosis Relief Trust – Annual Christmas Programme

On 18th December, 2015 the Calcutta Diocesan Tuberculosis Relief Trust organised the Annual Christmas Programme for patients of the TB Clinic and their families at St. James' Church Vicarage lawns. About 127 patients attended the programme. Rev. Shreeraj Mohanty, Secretary of the Trust shared the Christmas Message and distributed a sweater, a blanket and a box of sweets to each of the patients. Also present were Mr. Philip Gupta, Church Worker in the Diocese of Calcutta and the TB Coordinator from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation health department.
Remembrance Sunday is held in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth member countries as a day "to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in the two World Wars and later conflicts". It is held on the second Sunday in November, the Sunday nearest to 11 November, Armistice Day, the anniversary of the end of hostilities in the First World War at 11 a.m. in 1918. Calcutta, once the second city of the mighty British Empire also observes the Remembrance Day.

On 8th November, 2015 in the morning a service was held at the Glorious Dead Cenotaph in the Maidan, while the memorial service was held in St. John’s Church in the evening.


The service was attended by representatives from the Governor of West Bengal, representatives of the Army, Navy, Air force and Police; British High Deputy Commission; the US Consulate General, the representative of the Chief Justice of Kolkata High Court and East India Charitable Trust, British Citizen (East India) Association. Some clergy and Heads of Institutions in the Diocese of Calcutta along with their teachers and students were also present at the service.

The second part of the service was held at the Memorial Corner located at the North – Western corner of the Church where several brass plaques dedicated to the fallen British Soldiers of World War I are placed. These brass plaques were originally from the Glorious Dead Cenotaph in the Maidan and were placed in this section of St. John’s Church in 1959.

The service concluded with the placing of wreaths by the Bishop of Calcutta, followed by the representatives of the Diocese of Calcutta, the Hon’ble Chief Justice of Kolkata High Court, Army, Navy, Air force, Police, British High Deputy Commissioner; the US Consulate General and the Schools in the Diocese of Calcutta.

The service concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Mrs. Chhaya Biswas, Hony. Secretary of St. John’s Church followed by a time for fellowship and tea.

Christiyo Ananda Mela – Diocese of Barrackpore, CNI

Barrackpore Diocese- On 23rd December, 2015 The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta, CNI and Moderator’s Episcopal Commissary for the Diocese of Barrackpore inaugurated the 52nd Christiyo Ananda Mela, the annual event of St. Paul’s Church, Keorapukur, Diocese of Barrackpore, CNI in a ceremony in the Church ground. The locals felt the need of such a mela during the Christmas festive season to gather together in joy at one place form distance places to have a time of joy, festivity and fellowship in a unique urban-rural interface.

Bishop brought greetings from the Diocese of Calcutta and wished the people of the area, the Pastorate Committee, Clergy and all gathered a fruitful festive season while he shared his joy to be a part of both the Dioceses and looked forward to the support and prayers as he fills the gap for the time being as well shoulders the responsibility of shepherding the Diocese of Calcutta and the Diocese of Barrackpore.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of blankets to the poor followed by fellowship, tea and sharing of Christmas cake.
Duff Church 167 Anniversary Celebrations

On 8th November, 2015, Duff Church celebrated its 167th anniversary in a Thanksgiving Service. The choir of St. George’s Church was invited to be part of the anniversary worship service. A Special song was presented by the Students of Sunday School that was appreciated by all.

The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta preached the Word of God. In his opening statements he encouraged the Church to maintain a record of its history. He said in the past, the Church in general has been less concerned with records. In the early years of our history this is understandable, for there was as little formal organisation as possible. However, as in the current times when ownership of non-moveable assets is challenged it is necessary to preserve records. Besides knowing about our heritage it helps in developing a complete understanding of the Church and her mission. It provides a needed perspective on today’s world and its problems. We need to know about the people who laboured before us to bring the Church to the place where She is today. Historians need records in order to write intelligently and accurately. Persons planning for retirement often need ecclesiastical records like Baptism for verification purposes. Individuals researching their family history look to the Church for records. Bishop further suggested that either a person or a committee may be designated to carry the responsibilities for historical preservation. Most Churches have members interested in history. Persons chosen should have a “sense of history” and an aptitude for organizing materials. Their responsibility includes the collection, dating, organization, and keeping of records and other materials. It should be clearly understood that all materials are the property of the Church. He reminded the congregation as they remember how much we are of value in God’s eyes, to remember to be kind and loving to all the people because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, and the great worth He has placed on us all.

After the worship service the anniversary cake was cut and the Church Calendar for 2016 was released by the Bishop. Special hymns were presented by St. George’s Church Choir and a special song by the organist of Duff Church, Mr. Sourav Choudhury. White pigeons were released into the sky by the Bishop and the elders of the Church representing love, happiness, prosperity, and unity shared among the congregation and with the people at large, followed by a time for fellowship and snacks for all gathered.

Holy Trinity Church 189 Anniversary Celebrations


The Bishop released the Church Calendar for 2016. The Sunday School, Women’s Fellowship, Youth Fellowship and the Church Choir presented special songs that were appreciated by all.

The Bishop preached the Word of God. He stressed on the importance of prayer in our lives. Saying prayer life keeps away imaginations, self-love, self-knowledge and our own methods. Prayer life allows us to function under God’s plans for our lives. Prayer life will foster fellowship with the Lord and the fellowship will encourage close relation with the Lord and the relationship will encourage love and the love will offer the dedication and the dedication will give life for one another.

Bishop further added that before Jesus died on the Cross He exercised His prayer life all the time and in every situation. Without prayer life we cannot reach the Cross and without the cross there is no salvation. The Celebrations came to a close with a fellowship dinner for all present.
Serampore- Johnnagar Baptist Church (CNI) - Home Festival Closing Ceremony

On 15th November, 2015, Serampore-Johnnagar Baptist Church (CNI) celebrated its Home Festival Closing ceremony in a Thanksgiving Service. The service was conducted by Rev Sujoy Sarkar, Presbyter-in-Charge. The Rt Rev Ashoke Biswas, Bishop of Calcutta presided over the service and preached the Word of God. He said "As we have all gathered together today for the Home Festival Closing let us ask our selves, in the presence of the Lord. Are we able to say that 'He is our Lord and He is our God?' Can we say in our hearts, 'I am a Christian. Jesus Christ is my Saviour'? Do we confess that also with our lips? May all who hear the Good News of Christ and believe in the message, receive salvation and become disciples of Jesus Christ."

Bishop concluded by saying. Students from Serampore Theological College presented a special hymn and Children of the Sunday School performed in a dance to give thanks and praise to the Lord.

The Closing of the Home Festival was celebrated by lighting candles. After the service there was time for fellowship and refreshment for all present.

Kolkata Christmas Festival

On 16th December, 2015 the Diocese of Calcutta had the privilege to be part of the inauguration ceremony of the Government of West Bengal's initiative—Kolkata Christmas Festival at Allen Park, Park Street. This is the fifth year of the Festival and the organisers decided to extend the duration of the festival from being a week long affair to a fortnight festival.

A number of popular events were organised in the festival, from popular city bands performing to school students participating in a Christmas parade. The Diocese of Calcutta was represented by the Scottish Church College Choir.

Food stalls were set up along Park Street that offered delicacies ranging from cakes to other Christmas specials from various parts of Bengal and India.

St. Elizabeth Girls' Hostel Students join Christmas Party at Raj Bhavan

On 15th December, 2015 Children of St. Elizabeth Girls' Hostel were invited to Governor's House as part of the Children's Christmas Party organised by Calcutta Foundation for children and NGOs. The children had a time of fun and games. His Excellency, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi, Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal, in his welcome address said this was the best day in the life of the Raj Bhavan, with the laughter of children echoing in the lawns. He also remarked that never before in the history of Raj Bhavan has been an event such as this.

The celebrations came to a close with the handing over of gifts by the Governor to all children present.